Chapter 2  Data collection in South Philadelphia

Danielle:  I would never be able to live anywhere else but South Philly. Like I don’t know how people move to Jersey.
Courtney: I’m a city girl, and that’s it.
Danielle: So am I. I cannot stand– like yeah, don’t get me wrong, I–what you see like in magazines or whatever, them big beautiful houses. I would love to live in them, if it was in the middle of South Philly.

2.0  Introduction

The data for this dissertation are drawn from sociolinguistic fieldwork I conducted at intervals over a year and a half with students and alumnae of a private, Catholic high school in Philadelphia. The fieldwork consisted of ethnographic observations and sociolinguistic interviews. The interviews included formal methods such as the reading of word lists; this data is not, however, discussed in the present work.

2.0.1  Selecting a high school as the research site

A high school was chosen as the research site because school is where teenagers in the target age range of 17-18 spend the majority of their waking hours. Furthermore, it is precisely the transition from the regimented, age-stratified school to the more diverse world of work and college that I wanted to investigate. Unlike other typical field sites for observing teenagers, such as youth clubs or neighborhood hangouts (e.g. Cheshire, 1982), a school potentially brings together a cross-section of young people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, who aspire to a broad range of post-high school careers.
2.0.2 Age, gender, ethnicity

In order to examine the effect of type of post-school transition on speakers’ language, it was crucial to control for as many other extra-linguistic variables as possible. Age was restricted to speakers aged 16 to 18 years old\(^1\); and in the interest both of creating rapport with my informants, and controlling for gender, I interviewed only girls.

All the speakers in the linguistic analysis are white. There has been a great deal more research on the speech of white Philadelphians than any other ethnic group in the city, and studies suggest that non-whites in Philadelphia generally do not participate in mainstream white linguistic changes, even where ethnic communities are fairly well integrated (Adamson & Regan, 1991; Henderson, 1996; Poplack, 1978). In the Philadelphia public school district, however, segregation of whites from other ethnicities can be almost total, at least at the high school level. Public high schools are 13.3% white on average\(^2\), 64.4% African-American, 15.8% Hispanic and 5.6% Asian. An examination of the 2004-5 statistics available for 44 Philadelphia public high schools\(^3\) showed that no school had a white population greater than 57.2%, and that only 8 schools had white student populations greater than 40%. 20 schools (that is, almost half) had fewer than 5% white students.

Thus, to ensure access to a large number of potential white informants, I selected a private Catholic school from within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The student population in 2005, the year in which I began fieldwork, was 79% white.
2.0.3 Socioeconomic status

The socioeconomic background of the students in this study was naturally (and for this study, ideally) limited by the location of the selected school in the lower middle class district of South Philadelphia. Although it is a private school, many students are supported by parish and diocesan bursaries, making it an affordable choice for local Catholic families. These Catholic families are the descendants of mainly Irish and Italian immigrants who have been settling in South Philadelphia since at least the mid 19th century (see section 2.1 below).

To sum up, a private Catholic high school with a majority white student population was selected as the major research site. The school, henceforth referred to as Sacred Heart\textsuperscript{4}, is situated in an inner-city neighborhood representative of the interior Philadelphia social classes, and it is expected that students from this socioeconomic stratum are positioned to make a broad range of different post-high school transitions. Age, gender as well as race were controlled for, so that the effect of transition type and socio-economic background on participation in mainstream Philadelphia phonological change could be examined in real time.

2.1 South Philadelphia

Philadelphia was a major port in the USA’s colonial period, and until the completion of the Erie Canal in the nineteenth century, it was the country’s largest industrial center. It had one of the highest concentrations of manufacturing industries (textiles, printing, publishing, foundry and machine manufacture) on the East Coast (Hershberg 1981).
Much of the nineteenth century industrial boom in Philadelphia was powered by European immigrant labor, especially Irish and Germans.

Figure 2.1 Philadelphia’s wards, 1854 (Daly & Weinberg, 1966).

South Philadelphia comprises the former wards of Passyunk, Moyamensing and Pennsport/Southwark.
With shipyards on its western border with the Schuykill River, and along its eastern border with the Delaware (see Figure 2.1), South Philadelphia was attractive to unskilled immigrants, and expanded rapidly. According to Goode and Schneider (1994:31), whose account of Philadelphia’s ethnic history forms the basis of much of this summary, 30% of the city’s population was Irish, and 16% German by 1880. There were also waves of African-American domestic migrants in the first half of the 19th century. The crowded South Philadelphia peninsula, originally a collection of independent communities that were officially incorporated into metropolitan Philadelphia only in 1854, provided no opportunity for immigrants to cluster in ethnic neighborhoods. The result was a patchwork of ethnicities living side by side in unhealthy tenement housing.

In the late 19th century and early 20th, huge numbers of Italians began to arrive. These new arrivals, along with other immigrants from southern and eastern Europe started to form ethnic enclaves around sites of community importance, such as churches, clubs and stores. General territories emerged, many of which are still important today: the Irish along the rivers, with the Italians in most of the central part of South Philadelphia (see Figure 2.2). African-Americans occupy a thin vertical strip between the eastern Irish in the Second Street neighborhood, and the Italians. (North-south streets are numbered incrementally from Front Street on the Delaware, going westwards to the Thirtieth Street neighborhood, traditionally Irish, on the Schuykill.)
Between the World Wars, Philadelphia, like the rest of the country, faced economic depression. Thousands of African-Americans streamed into the city from the rural South,
looking for industrial jobs that turned out to be extremely scarce. As the trickle of whites to the suburbs became a flood, these jobs slowly became available, but African-Americans still faced poverty and discrimination. In addition, the suburbanization not only of residences but of jobs, especially by the 1970s, caused valuable tax money to leave Philadelphia, and to hasten the city’s decline. Population decreased by approximately 10% in the 1970s, and a further 10% in the 1980s.

South Philadelphia is a microcosm of the city’s slow fall. The influx of African-Americans, especially in the formerly Irish neighborhood along the Schuykill, led to racial tensions and violence. This, coupled with the loss of industrial and shipyard jobs, prompted those white South Philadelphians who could to follow employment to the suburbs and to New Jersey. Almost all the teenagers I interviewed for this dissertation seemed to have a relative in Jersey, or in nearby Delaware County.

Today, Philadelphia is recovering from its long years of decay. The majority of city jobs are now in the service sector, especially healthcare and education, and a generous tax-break policy has encouraged construction and renovation in the downtown area. In South Philadelphia, there is still work to be found in the shipyards and in construction, but like elsewhere in the city, prospects are often better in hospitals and service jobs. Both blacks and whites face some competition from Asians, especially Vietnamese, who have been moving into South Philadelphia in the last two decades. Also moving in are young professionals who cannot afford the rising downtown housing prices. The construction of larger townhouses on wider streets in the southerly Packer Park neighborhood even seems to have attracted those South Philadelphians who left for the suburbs a few decades ago.
2.1.1 The socioeconomic status of South Philadelphia

South Philadelphia is the neighborhood represented in Labov’s Language Change and Variation project (Labov, 2001) by the pseudonymous Clark Street and Pitt Street. Both were in South Philadelphia, and were demographically very similar, but in the Italian-dominated, slightly more prosperous Clark Street median house prices were somewhat higher than in Irish-dominated Pitt Street. Median house price on Clark Street was $11,000 versus $7,800 for Pitt Street, according to 1970 US Census data (Labov, 2001:54).

On both blocks, high percentages of clerical workers and skilled craft workers were to be found. Labov (ibid:55) indicates that one could label them broadly as “upper working class”, although he cautions that “the range within neighborhoods is considerable”. In his description of these South Philadelphia blocks as they appeared in the 1970s, Pitt Street was characterized by male blue-collar jobs: truck-drivers, cab-drivers, manual machine operators, but there were also mechanics and other skilled workers (Labov ibid:57). Women worked in clerical or service jobs, but most stayed at home. On Clark Street, the residents were generally older and often retired, but had held skilled jobs of both blue- and white-collar types: “foremen, draftsmen, contractors, independent tailors, painters and paper hangers, insurance salesmen, car salesmen” (Labov ibid:57-8).

The neighborhoods in which Clark and Pitt Streets were located (central South Philadelphia, and Pennsport, respectively⁵) are still broadly upper-working class to lower-middle class in character. According to 2000 US Census data, presented in Table 2.1, median house prices in these neighborhoods are close to the city-wide median of
$48,000. Pennsport median house prices are $47,900. In central South Philadelphia, prices are lower, at $34,500, but if we combine this district with the two other majority-white, Italian dominated districts in South Philadelphia, Wharton/Bella Vista and Marconi Plaza/Packer Park, the average median price is $53,450, only slightly higher than the city-wide median, and $5,450 more than the price in Irish Pennsport. The economic disparity between Irish and Italian neighborhoods of the 1970s, then, persists into the present, and will prove to be important in later chapters.

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<tr>
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<th>Median residential house price $</th>
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<td>Mean for Italian districts (*below)</td>
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<td>Pennsport (Irish)</td>
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<td>City wide</td>
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<td>*Wharton/Bella Vista</td>
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<td>*[Central] South Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Marconi Plaza/Packer Park</td>
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Table 2.1 Median residential house price for South Philadelphia neighborhoods.  

In short, speakers in the present study come from social backgrounds representative of the middle of the Philadelphia socioeconomic spectrum. Importantly, it is these interior social classes that can be expected to produce adolescents with a wide range of differing life ambitions and opportunities. In contrast, members of the peripheral social classes are more constrained: the lower working class are much less likely to go to college, whereas the upper middle and upper classes are more likely to go to college than not. I focus on the classes in between because for these adolescents, placed as they are on the border
between blue collar and white collar careers, the post-high school options are more numerous.

In the next section (2.2) I describe Sacred Heart school, and give a detailed account of the methods I used to locate and interview students. In section 2.3 I provide a sketch of the total number of speakers interviewed, and the number and social distribution of the speakers who were retained for analysis. Social factors such as social class, age and ethnicity are described and operationalized.

2.2 Fieldwork methods in the high school

2.2.1 Characteristics of the school

Sacred Heart is a private, co-educational Catholic high school for grades 9-12 (ages 14-18). Previously a school for girls, it underwent a merger with a boys’ Catholic school in 2004. In the graduating class of 2005, there were 315 students, 79% of students in this class were white, 12% African American and 7% Asian.

The school was built a half-century ago in the heart of South Philadelphia’s Italian district. Four stories high including its basement, it is an L-shaped building with a parking lot nestled in the crook. There are no school grounds to speak of, except for a narrow strip of grass on two sides, one of which separates the school from a block of residences for nuns. It is surrounded by a high mesh fence topped with barbed wire.
There is no yard, and there are no basketball courts, no fields, no outdoor space; in short, nowhere to go and socialize freely during the school day. Students’ casual interactions are confined to the school building itself, and at the beginning and end of the school day, to the steps, or to the street corners outside. Across the narrow streets from the school, on three sides, are well-kept three-storey rowhouses and a few corner stores selling basic groceries and Italian foods. On the fourth side is a community center with its own small concrete yard area, but I never saw students spend any time there.

Most of the school’s first floor is taken up with offices of various kinds, the hall, the gym and the chapel. Classrooms are located on the second and third floors, and in the basement, which also houses the cafeteria, and a room which used to be the school’s TV studio. Lockers line the halls on every floor, and the remaining wall space is given over to messages of spiritual significance, religious statues or images, and at various times of the year, home-made posters advertising a concert or other event, or promoting candidates for the student government elections.
2.2.2 How I met people

I spent two periods of about three months in Sacred Heart, each one a year apart. I generally showed up at the school before the start of the first class, so that I could observe the groups hanging on the street corners and steps. I spent the three middle periods of the school day, which are the lunch periods, in the cafeteria. The rest of the day, I divided my time between a number of locations in the school. I sat in the offices on the first floor, where students collected late notes, were disciplined, saw the nurse, disputed their grades, sought career guidance, or saw a counselor. In the auditorium, students might be rehearsing for a concert or dance show, or attending a school assembly. The auditorium also served as a holding pen for students whose teacher was absent, and I could usually find a seat amongst them and get talking to people. Sometimes I sat on the stairs or in the halls at different times of day and watched students run errands or go to class. From these vantage points, I observed students and wrote field notes.

Mostly I approached students whom I met in the cafeteria, or at school events like the junior prom and a blood drive, and these students in turn introduced me to their friends. To avoid a sample composed of just one or two large friendship networks, I continued to take a random approach during the whole of each fieldwork period. I introduced myself to a new table every now and then at lunch, or I would get talking to people in the school offices or in the auditorium. I hung around after school most days and talked to students who were participating in after school clubs or events, although even here, the constant presence of a teacher made casual conversation difficult. I had more success attending after-school events like the concert, the art show and a softball game.
There were occasional instances of ‘top-down’ networking. At the blood drive, for example, student government members were overseeing proceedings. We chatted, and when I explained that I was interested in language, they suggested I talk to Hayley, an editor of the school newspaper who had recently written about South Philadelphia speech. “You know,” they said. “Like how we say *wooder* [‘water’] and *youse*.” One of them introduced me to Hayley, and then I met her colleagues on the newspaper and her friends in the cafeteria.

A rather less successful example of this kind of networking occurred when a member of the school administration, trying to be helpful, set up some interviews with students who had poor disciplinary records. He knew that I was trying to reach a cross section of students, and reasoned that these were students whom I might otherwise not meet. Inevitably, some of the students didn’t show up at the designated time, but a few of those who did became some of my most regular lunch companions. However, not a single one of them allowed me to tape-record them. This conflicting behavior highlighted the ambiguity of my role. It seemed clear that these girls didn’t completely trust me not to share their stories with the school staff. I had to think carefully about how I presented myself, and how I might appear to the girls I was getting to know.

2.2.3 The role of the researcher in the school

2.2.3.1 Reflexivity

In ethnographic research, reflexivity refers to the role of “researchers as agents” (Alim, 2007). Ethnographers have always been conscious of their effect on the populations they
observe, and have problematized this effect as a source of bias or error. Lately, however, there has been an understanding that the role of the researcher can itself be the object of study (Alim, 2007). Sociolinguists, like any other field researchers, bring their own personal histories, power roles, beliefs and identities to their encounters with informants. It is crucial that we pay attention not only to how we perceive our informants, but also to how they perceive us.

In many ways, my personal characteristics minimized my otherness. I am white, female, and was educated from the ages of 5 to 18 in Catholic schools. However, these schools were in England, and I am a native speaker of British English. Langacker (1973:55; cited in Preston, 1997:312) comments that “British English enjoys special favor in the eyes of many Americans”, and this has certainly been confirmed by my personal experiences in the US. I was aware that British English is still associated with an external standard norm, and anticipated that students would evaluate me as speaking a more “correct” variety of English than theirs. Furthermore, Labov (2001:49) observes that “‘South Philadelphia’ has become the accepted label for a stereotype of working class Philadelphia speech, as ‘Brooklynese’ has for New York City”. Students were likely to perceive a particularly wide gulf between the social status of their own speech and that of mine. It was possible that they would accommodate to my speech by using their most formal styles, making access to their vernacular much more difficult.

I lessened this possibility by conducting group interviews (described in section 2.2.4), wherever possible and I believe that instances at least of conscious British-American accommodation were rare. One speaker’s use of the British slang word dodgy in an interview is such an example, and constitutes an equally rare instance of a student
identifying my country of origin. My impression was that many students’ knowledge of and interest in the world beyond Philadelphia, New York and the Jersey Shore was limited. It was apparent to them that I wasn’t from South Philadelphia, and that in itself was interesting enough; they didn’t often ask any further questions. Many students couldn’t believe that I didn’t know much about the neighborhood, and were eager to share with me their local knowledge of parks, streets, stores, stereotypically South Philadelphia foods (such as cheesesteaks and Italian water ice) and slang words like *skeeve* (“to find something repulsive”, as in *I skeeve dandruff*).

Another benefit of being an obvious foreigner, was that I had a license to ask all sorts of (to the students’ ears) dumb-sounding leading questions, like, “What’s a prom?”. This gained me access to information that an American would be assumed to possess as part of shared cultural knowledge, and which he or she would have to uncover by observation alone.

Another problem that I expected to encounter at Sacred Heart was the misconception that I was aligned with the teachers, and not to be trusted. As a result, it took me a little time to realize that some people in the Sacred Heart community were forming quite the opposite impression of me. My age (26-28 at the time) and my youthful appearance led both students and staff to believe I was a new pupil. This mostly worked to my advantage, as I didn’t particularly stand out in the crowd. At other times, it created problems because every now and then a boy would think I was a suitable target for his advances; this was awkward for everyone. A bigger problem lay in creating the right kind of rapport with the girls. I was often delighted, in interviews, when they would appear to be comfortable enough with me to talk about dating, or the best places for underage
drinking at the Jersey Shore. Only later would it turn out that I, and they, had been under a misapprehension. Even though I always made it clear that I was at graduate school, the girls often assumed that I was still in college, and were surprised to learn my age, and that I was married. Indeed, my marital status seemed to be a clearer indicator of adulthood for these South Philadelphia teenagers rather than my calendar age.

Some accepted my seniority equably. One girl, Emma, joked, “How do you look so young? Do you drink a lot of water?”. Others behaved as if I’d somehow deceived them, and became noticeably less relaxed around me. In the second school fieldwork period, a year later, I got better at explaining these things upfront, and I also dressed in smarter clothes with higher-heeled shoes.

2.2.3.2 Status asymmetries

I was very cautious about not being identified by students as a surrogate counselor. Spending a great deal of relatively relaxed time with an older person, in which you are the center of interest and attention, is not a situation many adolescents encounter in their day-to-day lives, as Eckert (1989:34) points out. The sociolinguistic interview, furthermore, is designed to elicit maximally unmonitored speech and as such may create moments in which the interviewee describes exceptionally emotional and dramatic experiences in their lives. Interviews are also almost always confidential. This combination does sometimes cause the interviewee to produce highly personal confidences, which they may afterwards regret having shared.

There were a handful of occasions where girls told me their current or past troubles, and these usually occurred at the end of the interview, when they had long
forgotten that they were being recorded. I did my best to find out if they knew how to get support from counselors, family, friends or even the police. The most commonly reported problem, to my horror, was physical abuse by boyfriends. Besides recommending outside help, I felt it more important than ever to ask these particular girls about their future plans and ambitions, and to praise them and support them. This may be stepping outside the researcher’s role as mere observer, but the principal had told me part way through my fieldwork that she was happy to have me in the school as a ‘role model’. “Girls at this school don’t have many opportunities to meet women your age who are well educated and ambitious,” she said. “I’m glad that they’re getting the chance to meet you.” Although being seen as a role model wasn’t my intention at all, this comment made it clear that I couldn’t escape the fact that I was already more than just an observer in the school. In this case, no reflexive introspection was required.

I made efforts, however, to remain a neutral and unobtrusive figure in the school. In particular, I did my best not to be seen talking to teachers—particularly the school management—and I only entered the faculty room to visit the bathroom or make occasional photocopies. My intent was to position myself as an adult who is outside the day-to-day structure and power hierarchy of the school. I anticipated that students would quickly feel more comfortable talking to someone who was clearly a visitor and not an authority figure.

In fact, as I learned in the course of my first round of fieldwork in 2005, presenting myself to students as outside of the school structure was counterproductive. Students inhabit the lowest rung of a highly ordered school society, in which knowing the rules (whether in order to keep them or break them) is essential to daily survival. Students
need to know exactly where you stand in relation to them in the school hierarchy, so that they can gauge whether interacting with you is going to be helpful to them or merely get them into trouble. They need reassurances that you know how the school works. An adult, like me, who asks them to leave the cafeteria during lunchtime, or to miss a few minutes of class, must automatically be obeyed out of respect for their age, but is potentially going to get them in trouble for being late or out of bounds. I discovered that even students who hated Sacred Heart and showed general disregard for its rules would worry about the consequences of co-operating with me. It wasn’t clear to them that if they were asked why they were late for class or why they were not in the cafeteria, it would be sufficient to say “I was with Suzanne Wagner”. They knew I wasn’t a teacher but they didn’t know if the teachers knew me. I had been avoiding public interactions with teachers, after all. Students didn’t want to get into trouble for something over which they’d had no control. In addition, it was precisely those students who had a record of lateness or boundary transgressions who had the most to lose by being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Gradually I changed my methods, and when I returned to Sacred Heart in 2006 my approach was quite different. I found out which school rules it would be in my interest to know. Without seeming too chummy, and still without spending too much time in the faculty room, I let myself be seen publicly interacting with teachers. A few times, I helped out in the special needs classroom. I wore smart pants and heels, so I wouldn’t be mistaken for a student and would look more reassuringly authoritative to my informants. I learned that if I made students late for class, I had to write a special “late note” for them to give to their teacher. This came about when I was conducting a group interview in a
basement room that students usually did not have access to. One of the sophomore interviewees, Bridget, noticed a pile of paper sheets on the table and fell upon them gleefully. They were blank late notes. She pocketed quite a few of them before I noticed and asked her what they were. As a result, I learned the term “late note” and was soon able to reassure girls up front that I would give them the necessary passes to prove their whereabouts, rather than wait for them to timidly ask me.

One day I wrote a late note for a girl named Melanie. She left the room where we’d been talking, then returned and knocked on the door a few seconds later. She’d started down the hall to the bathroom, and then she had decided it would be prudent to tell me that she was going there on her way back to class. At first I was surprised that she thought I’d tell on her; then I realized that she was covering herself, in case a teacher caught her in the hall and I had to be brought to her defense. After that, whenever I could, I walked the girls back to their classrooms, so that teachers could see the girls had been with me.

When I started fieldwork at Sacred Heart, I had assumed it would help my cause to seem as if I were outside the system, yet crucially somehow on the same level as the students themselves. It quickly became obvious that despite my deceptively student-like appearance, none of the students thought of me as a peer, and that behavior I thought of as casual and friendly was confusingly chummy to them, as well as an indicator that I didn’t understand my adult place in the school. At first, for example, I was anxious to let students decide for themselves when they’d like to talk to me, as one would when arranging, say, to go to the movies with a peer. But most of the students I encountered seemed more comfortable if I was brisker and more obviously in control, saying, “I’d like
to get together with you tomorrow in third period. Will you be in the cafeteria? I’ll wait for you by the door, okay?”

2.2.4 Group interviews

To minimize the age, power, culture and dialect asymmetries outlined in the previous sections, I convened group interviews whenever I could. Most of the interviews I conducted were with small groups of two or three girls, in which they usually talked as much to each other as to me. Interviews usually terminated with the bell that signaled the end of a period, so the window for interviewing was 30-45 minutes long depending on the current week’s schedule. Given the time needed to gather the group together, ensure that the girls had collected their lunch if necessary, and walk them to the interview room, there were sometimes only 20 minutes available for an interview. On average, however, interviews lasted about 40 minutes.

As Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis (1968) found in their seminal study of non-standard (African-American and Puerto-Rican) speakers in Harlem:

From the group sessions we obtain our best records of the vernacular grammar, as well as a wealth of information on the use of language.

Labov (1972:xxiii)

The Harlem study combined long-term participant observation of youths with formal tests, individual interviews and group sessions. The group setting “was essentially that of a party rather than an interview” (ibid1972:xviii) in which the boys sang, laughed, drank soda, ate and played cards. Re-creating this kind of informality on school grounds was
never going to be possible, but the group interviews I conducted with the girls were nonetheless full of laughter, overlapping talk, gossip and joint story-telling.

2.2.4.1  Advantages of group interviews

An especially significant advantage of group interviews is that they create an environment in which stories can be told collectively. Not everyone, even among mature adults, is a natural story-teller. I found it extremely hard to elicit narratives of personal experience from some of the girls in this study, who were shy about holding the floor for so long. Sometimes they would build momentum, but then get self-conscious and bring the story to an abrupt conclusion:

SW: Has there ever been a time when you’ve really felt afraid?
Jacqueline: Yes.
SW: When was that? What happened?
Jacqueline: When somebody got shot in front of my house. If I wasn’t at work, I would’ve been on the step.
SW: Tell me about it.
Jacqueline: I was working at the [diner] at the time. And it was eleven o’clock. And I wasn’t gonna work. They called me in and I went in. Eleven o’clock I’m walking home. And it’s a block from my house. I’m walking home and the cops are everywhere. And I’m like, “What the hell’s going on?” So I go to the house. They wouldn’t let me in the house. I’m like, “I live here.” So… And then the guy got shot.

Yet in a group interview, even the more reticent girls can contribute to the joint telling of a narrative, as here, in a story about being camp counselors:
Kaitlyn: I had a little Spanish kid. He was so funny. Pedro. [laughter]
Stacey: Kaitlyn had to speak Spanish to a kid.
Kaitlyn: Pedro was like my little brother. We would go at it.
SW: [laughs] You were fighting the kids?
Kaitlyn: I really was! Well like, he would come in and like, I guess his mom didn’t teach him, like, right from wrong, really. Cause he came in and we were over [?] and he comes over and he said to one kid, he said, “You know what, fuck you”, like that. And I go, “What did you just say?” And he kept saying it and kept saying it. And I’m like, “Pedro, stop saying it.” “What, I only said, fuck you!” I’m like, “Stop!”
Abby: Yeah, me and her had to carry him from his feet and his hands. “But I only said, fuck you!” That’s what he was saying, across the street, crying.

Typically, groups had one member who was a superior story-teller, like Kaitlyn in this group. The more reticent members, Abby and Stacey, were much less likely to initiate narratives of their own, but were quick to contribute to and build on Kaitlyn’s.

Often I was silent for very long stretches in which the girls would ask each other questions, or bring each other up to date on news. Topics came up that were new to me, and which I would not have thought to ask about, such as who planned to ride with whom in the prom limos. Others, such as group sex, illegal betting and underage drinking, received more thorough discussion than would have been likely in an individual interview. Crucially, while a group interview is as much a performance of self-identity as an individual interview (for in adolescence, judgment by peers is a paramount concern), the performance cannot extend to falsely presenting oneself in a favorable light, for other group members will see through the tactic immediately. You cannot claim to be aiming for a college degree, or claim to be tee-total if your friends know that you plan to drop out of high school and see you in the local bars on school nights. Similarly, you cannot
claim to be a street-savvy girl who gets into fights and takes drugs at parties, if your friends know you do your homework on the weekends and hardly ever step off your block. The importance of group interviews to this project, then, is that they are evidence of something approximating a speaker’s “baseline” vernacular. As Guy (2004) has pointed out, speakers’ understanding of what is appropriate interview behavior changes as they mature, so that we cannot be entirely sure whether they are, for example, becoming generally more linguistically conservative over time, or simply better at producing formal “interview style”. The presence of peers is a brake on this style-shifting, and thus makes the speech data from the interviews in 2005 and 2006 more directly comparable.

2.2.4.2 Some problems with group interviews

Not all group interviews, of course, conform to the ideal of a casual, highly interactive session. The groups I talked to varied widely. Some were comfortable and relaxed, while others were nervous and hard to draw out. Even in the better sessions, I often found that I had recorded very little speech from some students. With some interviews lasting less than half an hour, and with background information to collect too, there was little time for gossip and stories. And one obvious disadvantage of the better sessions was that there was a great deal of laughter and overlapping talk that made it hard to code the speech data afterwards.

While the presence of peers, as I outlined above, is an excellent brake on speaker pretension, it can also make speakers shy. Certain topics, such as boyfriends, college plans, even family life were clearly difficult for some girls to discuss in front of their
friends. Sometimes girls were awkward because they weren’t especially good friends with the girls in their group. Although I did my best to convene groups of best friends, the logistics of interviewing in the school setting occasionally made this difficult. Some groups did not represent real friends, but girls who were somewhat friendly with each other and who happened to eat lunch together in the same lunch period. Setting up interviews with girls who were best friends involved coordinating their time-tables and negotiating over meeting after school or during rare free periods.

Group interviews are also harder than individual interviews to compare across time and across groups, since they are harder to structure in a consistent fashion. Sometimes, especially if the girls were nervous, I began the interview with the word list, telling the girls that we would “get it out of the way” and making it clear that we would then chat informally. Sometimes, especially if I had talked with the girls on the way to the interview location and we were still chatting, I would give the word list at the end of the interview, so as not to interrupt the flow. Similarly, I sometimes posed demographic questions at the beginning, and sometimes scattered them throughout the interview at relevant times, depending again on the atmosphere prevailing when we entered the room and sat down. In doing so, however, I ran the risk of not collecting every necessary data point for every speaker. Finally, and perhaps most commonly, I met an informant twice: once to record the word list, and once for the interview.

In 2005, the first fieldwork period, five girls met me only in one-to-one interviews, either because they were social marginals with no friends they could bring along, or conversely, because they wanted to demonstrate their independence from their friendship group. A few girls met me both individually and in group interviews. The
individual sessions were more reflective and personal, and provided me with an opportunity to ask lots of demographic background questions too. Casual speech could then be captured in the group session, unhindered by the elicitation of background information.

2.2.5 Relocating and reinterviewing

I returned to Sacred Heart in the spring of 2006 and re-interviewed 20 of the previous year’s 22 Juniors and Sophomores (now seniors and juniors). In 2006, I had less time to spend in the school, but I already knew this time who I needed to interview, so I could afford to use a more targeted approach. Few girls responded to e-mail and telephone requests for a second interview, however, and of these, even fewer showed up at the arranged time and place in school. I learned that the girls’ preferred mode of non co-present interaction was instant messaging (IM). I took to using IM myself to set up interviews and issue gentle reminders, as well as for general chat, and this proved to be an excellent means of setting up second interviews.

I also used IM to contact the Seniors of the previous year (now mostly college freshmen), and re-interviewed 18 of the original 25, this time in my own apartment in downtown Philadelphia. In some cases, co-ordinating college-goers’ winter and spring breaks was difficult, but the girls were generally keen to meet up again. A few new girls were introduced. I conducted only one interview per person (usually a group interview), since almost all the interviews involved weeks of negotiating for a time and day that suited everyone. In Figure 2.4, each circle represents a Senior group interview, with dashed circles representing the second interviews in my apartment. Bolded names were
Juniors at the time of first interview, and italicized names are those of people whom I interviewed only once.

Figure 2.4 Group interviews with Seniors in 2005 and 2006.
(Dashed circles = second interviews in 2006. Bold = non-Senior. Italics = speaker who was interviewed only once.)

There was very little change to the composition of the Senior groups, and the rate of response to the request for a second interview was high, at 75%. Among the Junior/Sophomore group second interviews, the return rate was higher, at 91%, but the composition of the groups changed a good deal, as can be seen in Figure 2.5. Sometimes
the girls’ school and part-time job schedules made reconvening the same groups too difficult, so a few groups were reconfigured. New girls joined some groups in order to compensate for scheduling difficulties, or to better reflect actual friendships. The structure of the groups interviewed in the 2004-5 school year and in the 2005-6 school year are given in below. Further details on informants’ social networks are given in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.5 Group interviews among Juniors and Sophomores in 2005 and 2006. (Dashed circles = second interviews in 2006. Bold = Senior. Italics = a speaker who was interviewed only once.)
In the second round school interviews, I also tried whenever practical to interview girls individually, as well as in groups. Generally, I would arrange to meet a girl so that she could record the word list, and then suggest she stay until the end of the class period for a chat. These interviews were usually where I explored their thoughts about what had changed for them in the past year, and what they were planning to do when they graduated. This latter topic particularly tended to be a bit awkward if it came up in the group sessions, for all sorts of reasons. It’s an inherently rather formal topic, and in addition, most girls were embarrassed to talk about their post-graduation plans in front of their friends. In some more ambitious groups, it was shameful to admit that you didn’t have any plans at all, while in others it was the girl who planned to “leave her friends behind” and go off to college who risked humiliation. On the whole, then, I tried to make sure that these topics were covered in the individual interviews, leaving group interviews for much more informal talk.

In the second round non-school interviews with Seniors, girls came to my apartment, where I had drinks and snacks for them. These second interviews tended to be long, lasting from one to three and a half hours. They necessarily incorporated the word list reading and the “formal” questions about life transitions that in school I preferred to restrict to individual interviews. But these interviews were generally relaxed and informal in nature: a consequence of both the non-school setting and the girls’ inevitable increased familiarity with me and with the interview situation. Differences in topic, setting, interlocutor and other factors between the first and second round interviews are summarized in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2 Summary of differences and similarities between 2005 and 2006 interviews, for Seniors and for Juniors/Sophomores.

Panel studies, like this one, should strive to achieve the highest possible level of comparability between interviews across time periods. However, the researcher is necessarily somewhat at the mercy of his or her informants, who in the worst case might be lost from the study, for their own or for external reasons (eg. later attempts to relocate all 120 informants from the Montreal Cedergren-Sankoff 1971 study were hampered by the obliteration of a working class neighborhood to make way for a highway\(^8\)). The return rate for second interviews in this study was fortunately high, but the locations, topics and co-interviewees did not remain constant in all cases. However, there was a general balance among these external factors. The composition of Junior/Sophomore groups changed, but the location and topics were roughly the same across both rounds of interviews. The composition of the Senior groups did not change, but the location and topics did. An increase in the formality of the topic (college schedules, future career plans) was off-set by an increase in the informality of the setting (sofas and armchairs in a comfortable apartment). Furthermore, since the Senior interviews often involved reunions of friends separated in college, some of the interviews featured gossip between the girls themselves, rather than responses to my questions.
2.2.6 Style and style-shifting

One way to quantify the concepts of formality and familiarity for the purpose of comparing 2005 and 2006 interviews would be to analyze the amount of casual versus careful speech in each set. However, I did not code interviews for style, and I was able to control only very loosely for topic. Controlling for the formality of topics discussed is a well-known method for eliciting an informant’s stylistic repertoire. In the LCV survey of Philadelphia, fieldworkers created and memorized a set of interview "modules", each based on a topic such as Family, Religion, Work, Children's Games and City Services. The use and sometimes the ordering of certain modules, such as the Demography module, were obligatory, ensuring uniformity across all the interviews collected. Others were considered optional. Although fieldworkers adhered to the "Principle of Tangential Shifting" (Labov, 1984:37), allowing informants to choose and elaborate upon topics, they aimed to collect both "careful" and "casual" speech within the interview and so from time to time they directed the conversation.

The distinction between "careful" and "casual" speech has been debated (see eg. Eckert & Rickford, 2001), but was defined in the LCV as follows. "Casual" speech was the least monitored spontaneous speech: comments to third parties either present or on the telephone, speech outside of the interview proper, and excited, animated speech in narratives. Informants were prompted to tell stories by fieldworker questions such as the "danger of death" question (Labov, 1984), which were designed to elicit maximally unmonitored speech. All other speech within the interview was labelled "careful". This distinction, or distinctions like it, have proven to be crucial in analyses of stable variables
such as (ing), (dh) and (neg), whose non-standard variants have consistently been shown to be positively correlated with casual styles (see Chapter 4).

In the school especially, interviews were often simply continuations of informal conversations begun in the hallway between the cafeteria and the interview site, and were too short to allow much control of topic or variation in style. Loud, boisterous group interviews tended to be loud and boisterous whatever the topic, and quiet, halting interviews were similarly consistent. In groups, furthermore, the interviewer often has little opportunity to change the course of the conversation; in some interviews I was silent for ten or fifteen minutes at a time. Coding for style on the basis of topic could not be done consistently, although in the longer 2006 interviews with the Seniors, stylistic coding would be a more realistic prospect, and could be pursued in further research.

Instead, I assume that the 2006 interviews are generally more informal than the 2005 interviews, due to familiarity of interviewer and (usually) co-interviewees and familiarity with the interview procedure. In the next chapter we will see that some speakers’ use of non-standard (ing) and (dh) decreased in the second interview, despite the expected increase in informality as a result of the familiarity effect.

### 2.3 Speakers and social factors

#### 2.3.1 Pool of informants

I conducted sociolinguistic interviews with girls and women who were attending or had graduated from Sacred Heart during two fieldwork periods: April-August 2005 and
January-June 2006. A total of 67 informants aged 16-26 were interviewed, of whom 66 were female and 1 male.\textsuperscript{10}

Speakers who were high school students in either or both of 2005 and 2006 constitute roughly two thirds of the total interviewed, while the remaining third were already graduates of the school when first interviewed. In what follows, I refer to the girls according to their status in the first fieldwork period as Sophomores, Seniors, Juniors and Graduates. Thus, those girls who were in the senior class (aged 17-18) in 2005 are referred to as Seniors, those in the junior class (aged 16-17) as Juniors, and those in the sophomore class (aged 15-16) as Sophomores. Women who had already graduated from Sacred Heart in 2004 or earlier are referred to as Graduates. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of interviews across class groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004-5 only</th>
<th>2004-5 and 2005-6</th>
<th>2005-6 only</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Distribution of all interviews across time and school status

For the purposes of longitudinal analysis, only speakers who were recorded twice were of interest. This straightforwardly removed from further consideration the 26 speakers who were not recorded twice. In addition, only Juniors and Seniors are included in the linguistic analysis, thus excluding the the 3 Sophomores and the re-interviewed Graduates. For the linguistic analysis, I further removed from the pool 2 speakers whose
first language was not English\textsuperscript{11}. In addition, technical problems\textsuperscript{12} led to some blank or poor-quality recordings of certain speakers, so these necessarily could not be analyzed.

The resulting pool of informants available for longitudinal data analysis was composed of 17 Seniors and 15 Juniors, all of whom were interviewed and recorded in both 2004-5 and 2005-6 (Table 2.4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Distribution of speakers for longitudinal analysis by school status.

In the analysis of both the stable and the vocalic variables, different but overlapping subsamples will be drawn from this pool. Their composition, and the reasoning behind their selection, will be outlined in Chapter 4 (stable variables) and Chapter 5 (vocalic variables).

2.3.2 Social class

Coding for social class is a notoriously difficult undertaking, and sociolinguists have used a variety of categorization methods (Ash, 2002; Mallinson, 2006; Rickford, 1986). Categorizing minors by social class is even more difficult, and it is a well-known problem in both sociology (see eg. Hughes & Perry-Jenkins, 1996 for a review) and sociolinguistics (Cameron, 2005; Eckert, 2000). Since minors are not yet fully engaged in the socioeconomic activity of their community, it is usual to classify them according to their parents’ status.
Eliciting information about parents' education and/or occupation (the most commonly used indicators of social class in Western industrial societies) from minors can be problematic. Even the older teenagers in this study frequently knew little about their parents' educational backgrounds, and even less about what their parents did for a living. Richard Cameron (p.c.) recommends providing informants with a survey sheet that minors can take home and fill out with their parents' aid. Entwistle and Astone (1994) suggest asking for details about the activities associated with the job, since job titles alone can be ambiguous. For example, "secretary" covers a range of jobs with differing statuses, from a data-entry clerk to a company administrator. Asking whether the parent supervises others can be helpful in distinguishing occupational status.

For the present study, I asked participants to fill out a demographic survey sheet, and/or asked them questions in the interview itself about their parents' occupation and education. The survey responses did occasionally clarify descriptions given by the girls in their interviews, but unfortunately, they were more frequently as opaque as the descriptions. Table 2.5 gives some examples of caregivers' occupations (informants were asked to list two caregivers) and their activities. Part A of the table lists inadequate descriptions of caregivers' job activities, and part B lists good descriptions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker #</th>
<th>Caregiver’s occupation</th>
<th>Description of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Poor descriptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Operate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Good descriptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Answering phones, faxing, basic clerical work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Judicial adm assistant</td>
<td>Manages judge’s office, prepares files for court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Accuracy controller</td>
<td>Making sure amounts of packages being sent out are correct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5 Occupations of participants' caregivers: examples.

Careful study both of the girls' written survey responses and their interview comments generally provided enough data to categorize their parents' occupations, or to make a best guess at such a categorization. Following Conn (2005), I coded parents' occupations using ratings for occupational prestige as presented in Nakao and Treas (1994). The Nakao and Treas scores for each parent's job were then converted to Conn's 6-point scale, given in Table 2.6 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation index score</th>
<th>Nakao &amp; Treas SEI score</th>
<th>Example occupations (from Sacred Heart parents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>28 to 30</td>
<td>glazier, mailroom clerk, waitress, toll booth attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31 to 35</td>
<td>babysitter, cashier, office clerk, bus driver, cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36 to 41</td>
<td>longshoreman, typesetter, sales clerk, dental assistant, teacher’s aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>42 to 53</td>
<td>secretary, real estate agent, bookkeeper, loan processor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>54 to 67</td>
<td>police officer, legal assistant, teacher, convenience store owner, accountant, building contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>68 to 92</td>
<td>architect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6 Index of caregiver occupation.

In his update of the social factors used by the LCV survey of Philadelphia in the 1970s, Conn also developed new scales for education and residence value, given in Table 2.7 and Table 2.8. Scores for categories not found in the LCS panel data are in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education index score</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>grammar/middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>some high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>high school graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>college graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>professional school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7 Index of caregiver education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence index score</th>
<th>Residence value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$0 - 27,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$28,000 - $55,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$56,000 - $82,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$83,000 - $111,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$112,000 - $139,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$140,000 +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.8 Index of speaker’s residence value.
Residence value refers to the median sale value of the house within its census tract, based on the 2000 US census. Speakers provided their addresses as part of the written survey sheet, or wrote it down for me when we first made contact, so I was able to pinpoint the relevant census tracts easily. Conn's updated scales were based on Philadelphia data available from the 2000 US census. Since no more recent census data was available for the present study, Conn's scales are not only valuable due to the local nature of their categories (especially for residence value) but also their timeliness. I therefore employed all three of Conn's social scales with no changes.

Given the uncertain nature of some of the coding, the three scales of socioeconomic status (SES) were combined to form a composite index. The SES index score assigned to each speaker is the sum of her parents' mean scores for occupation, education and residence value.

Conn’s (2005:41) SEI (socioeconomic index) scale, shown in Table 2.9 was designed, like the LCV scale on which it is based, to differentiate broadly between working, middle and upper classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OMM Class Category (SEC)</th>
<th>SEI Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LWC</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWC</td>
<td>8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMC</td>
<td>11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.9 SEI score (adapted from Conn 2005:41 Table 3.4).

However, the Sacred Heart students come overwhelmingly from a lower middle class background (as defined by Conn’s SEI) so a more fine-grained scale was needed to distinguish this otherwise socially homogenous group. Table 2.10 shows Conn’s SEI
scores from 10-15+ in the leftmost column. These were simply numbered, for the purposes of the LCS study, as a 6-point scale of socioeconomic status (SES). To ensure adequate cell sizes, speakers were then recoded from 6 to 3 levels of socioeconomic status, as shown in the right-most column of Table 2.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conn (2005) composite index score (SEI)</th>
<th>LCS SES</th>
<th>Recoded SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.10 Recoded socioeconomic status (SES).

2.3.3 Age

The age range for the pool is of course extremely narrow, since all the panelists were 17 or 18 years old at the time of first interview. Ideally, we would want to explore the relationship of calendar age to sociolinguistic variation, by comparing, say the 18-year-olds recorded in 2005 with the 18-year-olds recorded in 2006. The friend-of-a-friend methodology that I employed in Sacred Heart, however, does not produce the kind of socially stratified sample in each cohort that would be required for such a comparison. Any generalizations about age that we might draw from the data would be invalidated by the uneven social distribution of the two cohorts. In the linguistic analyses, I refer to the girls who were Seniors in 2005 as Cohort 1, and the girls who were Juniors in 2005 as Cohort 2.
2.3.4 Ethnicity

The panelists in the present study are all white. However, almost every white student in the school that I encountered mentioned their ethnic heritage, and so I explored this social category further in many of the interviews, and asked questions about ethnicity in the written survey. Ethnicity among the whites at Sacred Heart is of such local importance (see Chapter 3) that I included it in my coding scheme.

In the written survey, participants were asked their ethnicity and how they would usually describe themselves. Ethnicities mentioned in the survey included Irish, Italian, German, Polish, English, Armenian and Chinese. In practice, however, Sacred Heart girls tend to align themselves with one of the two dominant ethnic groups, Irish or Italian. Those of mixed heritage rarely described themselves as eg. ‘Irish-Polish’ but as simply Irish, or simply Italian. In cases of speakers who described themselves using hyphenated ethnic terms, I coded them as Irish or Italian using personal judgement. In making these judgements, I referred to the dominant ethnicity of their neighborhood, information from their interviews, and my own observations of their friendship groups.

2.3.5 Summary

We will see in Chapter 3 that ethnicity at Sacred Heart turned out to be the primary local social categorization used by the students themselves, and that it necessitated a good deal of further investigation with respect to its effect on speech and its interaction with social class, local neighborhood and students’ own changing orientations to South Philadelphia. In the current chapter, however, the basic outlines of the school speech community and
the demographics of the speakers have been described. The school environment and the
data collection methods I used there have also been described in detail. The social
categories established in the latter part of the chapter provide the foundation for the
analysis of stable variables (ing) and (dh) presented in Chapter 4.

NOTES

1 At the time of first interview. By the second interview, some girls were 19 years old.
2 http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/aboutus/, retrieved 11.08.07. Statistics are for the 2005-6
   school year.
3 https://sdp-webprod.phila.k12.pa.us/OnlineDirectory/schools.jsp, retrieved 02.11.05.
4 Sacred Heart is a pseudonym.
5 The neighborhood names I have used in this dissertation are mostly in general
   circulation in Philadelphia, but are used here specifically to describe the
   neighborhood units defined in the NIS Neighborhood Survey
   (http://cml.upenn.edu/nbase) produced by the University of Pennsylvania
   Cartographic Modeling Lab. According to documentation available from the NIS
   neighborhoodBase website: “The 69 neighborhoods used in neighborhoodBase
divide the City [sic] into small spatially-coherent geographic units that make data
   collection, comparison and analysis statistically meaningful in the context of the
   entire city. These boundaries were developed by the Temple University Social
   Science Data Library based on information gathered from the Philadelphia Police
   Department, the Philadelphia Inquirer and historical research. Neighborhood
   boundaries are co-terminus with 1990 census tract boundaries. The CML
   acknowledges that there are other valid neighborhood names and definitions.
   There is no one accepted neighborhood geography for Philadelphia (or any other
   city). Neighborhood names and boundaries vary greatly depending on when they
   are determined, who is determining them, and the reason for which they are
determined.”
6 These are private statistics collected for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and were
   made available to me by the school principal.
7 One of my teenage nicknames was “Babyface”. I am still regularly asked for ID in bars
   and liquor stores.
8 Thirteen years later, in 1984, 60 speaker
   s from the original study were successfully re-
   interviewed. (Gillian Sankoff, p.c.).
Here I discuss only within-interview methods for controlling style. Obviously style can also be controlled using a variety of other devices, such as reading passages, word lists etc on a continuum of attention paid to speech (see eg. Labov, 1966 for an early discussion).

Data from the male speaker are not included in the linguistic analysis.

Speakers 11 and 12, both Juniors, both recorded twice, for whom the L1 is Chinese and Spanish respectively.

Recordings for each speaker were made using a Sony ECM-717 lavalier microphone connected to a Sony MZ-R700 minidisc recorder. On a few occasions this equipment malfunctioned, and the speaker was not recorded. A more common problem was caused by the relatively loose connection of microphone to unit, and it was easy for a nervous or an animated speaker to tug at the cord and slightly dislocate the microphone, breaking the connection. It was not easy to remedy this problem. I usually asked informants to place the minidisc recorder beneath their chair, where it was out of sight and where nervous hands could not fiddle with it. However, the microphone cord was rather short, and if the speaker moved animatedly in her chair, the microphone cord would be tugged a little way out of its socket. If I asked the speaker to place the minidisc recorder in her lap or on the table in front of her, it was vulnerable to nervous, fiddling hands. Finally, there were occasions when I had only two minidisc recorders to hand, and three interviewees, one of whom was not recorded on an individual microphone, but whose speech was picked up sufficiently clearly on her neighbor's microphone for some linguistic analysis.