ABSTRACT

MALLINSON, CHRISTINE LOUISE. The Dynamic Construction of Race, Class, and Gender through Linguistic Practice among Women in a Black Appalachian Community. (Under the direction of L. Richard Della Fave.)

This dissertation conceptualizes and analyzes the dynamic construction of race, class, and gender through linguistic practice in a way that integrates the sociological study of social organization with the study of language in its social context. I illustrate the efficacy of the approach in its application to a field study of the black Southern Appalachian community of Texana, North Carolina. I begin by contextualizing the setting using qualitative evidence from naturalistic observation and interviews with residents. I then focus on the social and linguistic habits of two groups of four women in the community. Drawing from observation and interviews, I analyze qualitative data on the groups' contemporary situations, shared memories, and ways of life. The qualitative data provides content for interpreting quantitative analyses of sociolinguistic data with regard to race, class, and gender identities. Drawing on both data sources, I show that the two groups of women exhibit distinctions based on lifestyle and presentation that divide them into discrete status groups. I thus provide evidence to show how social status is articulated with local character, in everyday practice, but is also rooted in the system of stratification in ways that intersect with gender, race, and language. My findings exemplify how agentive social actors use language as symbolic vehicles in daily interaction, in concert with other social practices, to constitute intersecting social structures. I draw these conclusions from within an integrative framework that incorporates three bodies of social theory: intersectionality and structuration theories from sociology and community of practice theory as it has developed within variationist sociolinguistics. In framing variationist sociolinguistics with two bodies of current social theory, I establish viable avenues for cross-disciplinary collaboration and insight.

THE DYNAMIC CONSTRUCTION OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER THROUGH LINGUISTIC PRACTICE AMONG WOMEN IN A BLACK APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY

by

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DEDICATION

To the community of Texana

To my family

BIOGRAPHY

CHRISTINE MALLINSON was born on September 8, 1978, in Salisbury, North Carolina, and lived there until beginning college at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She graduated *summa cum laude* from UNC in May of 2000, with a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in Sociology and a second major in German. Mallinson then began her graduate study at North Carolina State University in August of 2000 and received a Master of Arts degree in English with a concentration in sociolinguistics in May 2002. She continued her graduate studies in August 2002 by pursuing a doctorate in Sociology at North Carolina State University, with concentrations in race, class, and gender inequality and sociolinguistics. She completed her degree and graduated with her Ph.D. in May 2006. She has accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, in the interdisciplinary Language, Literacy & Culture program, to begin August 2006.

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"I have resisted the term sociolinguistics for many years, since it implies that there can be a

successful linguistic theory or practice which is not social."

William Labov (1972a: xv)

1.1 Introduction to the Study

This dissertation conceptualizes and analyzes the dynamic construction of race, class,

and gender through linguistic practice in a way that integrates the sociological study of social

organization with the study of language in its social context. I illustrate the efficacy of the

approach in its application to a field study of gender, race, and class variation in language

among women in the black Southern Appalachian community of Texana, North Carolina. I

begin by contextualizing the setting using qualitative evidence from naturalistic observation

in the field site and from 40 interviews with 49 residents.

I then move to the central focus of my study: the linguistic and social habits of two

groups of four women in the community, who I argue constitute distinct communities of

practice. Drawing from observation and interviews, I first analyze qualitative data on the

groups' contemporary situations, shared memories, and ways of life. The interplay between

these two types of material provides content for interpreting the linguistic data, especially

with regard to race, class, and gender identities.

In my analysis, I find that whereas the two groups of women would be relatively

close on an "objective" scale of socioeconomic status, they nonetheless exhibit distinctions

based on lifestyle and presentation that divide them into discrete groups. I contend that the two groups can be seen as status groups in a Weberian sense: the women construct and manifest social distinctions based on lifestyle and presentation, in accordance with their versions of femininity, racial identity, class status, and language ideologies. I thus provide evidence for how social class and status are articulated with local character and variation, in ways that intersect with gender, race, and language, in everyday practice.

This study, which examines language variation at the intersection of locally relevant social distinctions that draw on the constructs of race, class, and gender, is applicable to the dual audiences of sociology and sociolinguistics. My findings exemplify how agentive social actors use language as symbolic vehicles in daily interaction, in concert with other social practices, to constitute intersecting social structures. I draw these conclusions from within an integrative framework that incorporates three bodies of social theory: intersectionality and structuration theories from sociology and community of practice theory as it has developed from within variationist sociolinguistics. In framing variationist sociolinguistics with two bodies of current social theory, I establish viable avenues for cross-disciplinary collaboration and insight.

1.2 The Scope of Chapter 1

In chapter 1, I discuss sociological conceptualizations of language as a vehicle of culture and as a marker of cultural capital. I critique this orientation, drawing from sociolinguistic perspectives on the language and society interface. I then move on to discuss the general orientation of variationist sociolinguists to the study of language in society. I provide a brief historical description of the evolution of sociolinguistics. I critique its

development from the perspective of a sociologist, focusing on sociolinguists' difficulties in conceptualizing and analyzing social class. I conclude chapter 1 by noting commonalities and differences between sociology and sociolinguistics in their treatment of language in society and offering suggestions for interdisciplinary collaboration.

1.3 Sociological Perspectives on Language in Society

In early developments, the subfields of sociolinguistics and sociology of language were seen as one and the same. As Paulston and Tucker (2003: 1) note, "When sociolinguistics became popularized as a field of study in the late 1960s, there were two labels—sociolinguistics and sociology of language—for the same phenomenon, the study of the intersection and interaction of language and society, and these two terms were used interchangeably." Goffman, Garfinkel, Sacks, and Schegloff are particularly recognized for their work on language in the sociological traditions of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Other sociologists, most notably Fishman, have further developed the subfield called "sociology of language."

Shuy (2003) also notes sociological contributions to the interdisciplinary origins of sociolinguistics. He recounts the Ohio Valley Sociological Society's annual meeting, held in April 1966, in which sociologists organized a session on sociolinguistics. In attendance was an interdisciplinary group that included the prominent sociologists Garfinkel, Goffman, Gumperz, Hymes, Sacks, and Schegloff, as well as up-and-coming sociolinguists, such as William Labov. Shuy (2003: 6-7) describes the conflict that emerged among sociologists, who lacked training in linguistics and did not see language as a source of sociological data—though they expressed interest in the social patterning of linguistic variables. These

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distinctions have persisted and have led to the split within sociology between those who focused on the "sociology of language" (with the primary concerns of language maintenance and language planning) and sociologists such as Garfinkel, Sacks, and Goffman, who were interested in the analysis of conversation. (I omit a discussion of the subfield of "sociology of language" here, however, as it is largely irrelevant to the current scope of my research.)

At the same time, sociolinguistics continued to diverge from sociology and anthropology, as sociolinguists "seemed interested in broad contextualization but not necessarily in sociology" (Shuy 2003: 6). Part of the problem, too, lay in the time required to understand both sociology and linguistics. Shuy explains, "If a sociology major were to invest the time and effort to become well enough grounded in linguistics to replicate the work of a Goffman, a Garfinkel or a Sacks, they ran the serious risk of sacrificing other aspects of sociological knowledge required by that field. Naturally, the same thing could be said of anthropologists and, conversely, of linguists" (7). Many of these concerns remain current, and I address several of them in this and subsequent chapters.

1.3.1 Sociological Research on Language and Culture

With regard to the study of language, sociology (as noted above) has tended to focus on international language policy and planning, and conversational analysis (CA)—and, I would also suggest, language as a component of cultural capital. I briefly discuss sociological approaches to CA and to cultural capital, predominantly from the status attainment literature.

As a branch of sociology, conversation analysis is concerned with a view of language as a conversational tool or a rhetorical device that informs an understanding of interactional,

cultural, and structural phenomena. Branaman (2001: 11) contends that "a distinctive theme of sociological social psychology is the analysis of the interrelationship between language, thought, and society." In this view, she states, "language is an important agent of socialization…the carrier of the shared meanings of a culture…" In keeping with this perspective, Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003: 776) argue that "a study of 'culture in interaction' offers a crucial complement to analyses of the reproduction of inequality in everyday group settings." Raymond (2003: 961-2) also posits that conversation can be studied as a concrete mechanism that shapes social life, not only in the realm of "culture" (conceived of as a set of beliefs, practices, or values, etc.) but also in the realm of "social structure" (conceived of as various institutional organizations or systems of distinction, such as class, gender, race, et cetera).

Sherwood's (2004) study, which investigates how elites use status markers to select others to join them in social interaction and/or exclude those deemed undesirable and thus reproduce race, class, and gender inequality, is one example of this "sociological social psychological" perspective that Branaman identifies. From interviews with over 30 research participants of five country clubs in the northeastern U.S., Sherwood gives a detailed explanation of how elite country clubs select new recruits primarily on the basis of unstated and unwritten rules of the elite lifestyle—i.e., cultural capital. In analyzing elites' use of the accounts of exclusion that club members give, Sherwood reveals how their discourse casts dominant inequality ideologies as being natural and even good or beneficial. She thus reveals how privilege is conceptualized, justified, and perpetrated in their everyday practices, including language. In her study, then, language is predominantly treated as a principal formant of cultural patterns as well as structural patterns/collective representations.[1]

Beyond the relatively passive role of communicating accounts and justifying inequality, language has been held up as a creator of it. A forerunner in this analytic tradition, Bourdieu (1984) implicated language as integral to creating status distinctions that center on cultural capital. Bourdieu defined cultural capital as tools legitimated and valued by the dominant culture. Cultural capital is signaled to others via symbols in ways that are recognizable to the dominant class—for example, by having "good" manners, "proper" language, and other behaviors. These status markers then serve as criteria that elites use to select others to join them in social interaction and receive the benefits of association with them or as gatekeeping measures to limit the access of those deemed undesirable.

Like Marx, Bourdieu sees the elite as holding the power to set the cultural standard. In defining what is culturally valued, elites help institutionalize dominant culture as prestigious and other forms of culture as having low status. These distinctions are then likewise drawn upon, by individuals and groups and in social institutions, as a basis for categorizing and excluding others. At the same time, as people are differentially exposed to these norms, they learn cultural signals through socialization, internalize the norms (and thereby internalize in some sense the objective structure; cf. Giddens 1979, 1984), and incorporate them into their own habitus. Over time, cultural distinctions come to be seen as natural, and they help organize the social world into seemingly objective social classes.

Other sociologists have examined language as a key component of cultural capital, particularly in the educational system. Willis (1977), for example, examined school as a vehicle of cultural transmission that engenders class reproduction and stratification. His ethnographic research centered on two male, working-class groups who attended school in an industrial British town: the lads and the ear'oles. Willis observed that the lads, who were

disenchanted with school, embraced values and practices that led them to reject the middle-class world of the educational system and develop a counter-school culture. Numerous identity practices that the lads employed connected them to dominant ideologies about race, class, and gender: defying authority, skipping class, snubbing school uniforms, smoking, drinking, "having a laff" (similar to signifying in black culture; Labov 1972c, 1974), and othering women and racial groups. In contrast, the ear'oles respected authority, were never truant, and valued strict teachers. In the working world, these cultural differences bore out too: the lads' and the ear'oles' disparate job outcomes related to the differential socialization and group identification processes they had learned and developed in school.[2]

Later research by MacLeod (1987) also identified language as a key marker and component of cultural capital. In this study, potential employers devalued the cultural capital of black youth, including their mode of dress and their vernacular speech style. Like MacLeod, Farkas' (1996) study shows how teachers judge students positively on specific noncognitive traits, including homework neatness, lack of disruptiveness, and facility in standard English. If students sound, act, and look "better" to their teachers, teachers often treat them better. In this regard, linguistic phenomena are interrelated with the broader context of power relations in society. As these sociological studies have revealed, a multiplicity of cultural, structural, linguistic, and sociopsychological differences lead to differences in achievement, and accordingly, widening inequalities often based on race and class. Standard English is a major component of cultural capital and influences the material via educational opportunities, job opportunities, and access to income and wealth.

Because speaking standard English is obvious cultural capital, it is possible that members of the subordinate culture reject it as a proxy for rejecting the dominant culture.

Some sociological (and sociolinguistic) research has suggested that black adolescents' rejection of cultural capital in the form of speaking nonstandard English (e.g., African American Vernacular English) is a way of rejecting white culture. (The stigmatized language practices also help solidify these students' placement in the subordinate ranks and thereby reproduce social stratification.) At the same time, black students who do not reject standard language practices may be seen as selling out to the dominant culture—or, as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) put it, as "acting white." Speaking standard English is just one of the cultural practices and activities included under the rubric of "acting white." Neal-Barnett (2001: 82) cites taking advanced placement classes, wearing clothes from the Gap or Abercrombie & Fitch, and wearing shorts in the winter as being other behaviors that black adolescents consider to signal an affiliation with white culture.

On the other hand, Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) contend that the "acting white" hypothesis simply is not true. In their 18-month ethnographic study at 11 schools in North Carolina, the researchers found that racialized ridiculing of high-achieving black students was evident for only two of 40 black adolescents, both of whom attended the same school—which was racially mixed but had large black-white income and placement gaps. Even for those students who did experience allegations of "acting white," however, the teasing and ridicule did not deter them from enrolling in advanced courses or striving for success. Moreover, Tyson et al. (2005) found that black students who speak standard English are not the only ones for whom these speech habits are criticized. Standard-speaking, upwardly mobile working-class whites are also often disparaged by their classmates for acting "above their raisings," just as standard-speaking, upwardly mobile blacks may be criticized for "acting white."

Although Tyson et al. (2005) do not discuss it, their findings support the idea that the origins of prejudice against black and white nonstandard varieties of English can be traced to the same source: our standard language ideology. Due to cotemporaneous historical and social events, a doctrine of prescriptivism developed that not only holds standard English paramount but also is tinged with xenophobia and racism (Bonfiglio 2002). As part of the resultant institutionalized language culture, standard English serves as a gatekeeping measure to maintain boundaries between insiders and outsiders (of any race, class, gender, region, et cetera) and to signify outsiders' exclusion from communities of power, such as the academy (Lippi-Green 1997, Collins 1998, Bonfiglio 2002).

In this section, I have discussed how sociologists have paid attention to social distinctions, which may be manifested in and reinforced by patterns in linguistic variation. From this perspective, sociological research supports a view of language as a mechanism through which social structures of gender, race, and class/power are created, maintained, and reproduced (cf. Giddens 1979, 1984; Bourdieu 1977a, 1984)—but this perspective has also not been given much attention in sociology. Thus, sociologists have room to refine their conceptualization and analyses of the role of language in society.

1.3.2 Refining Sociological Perspectives on Language in Society

As has been noted, sociologists have identified language as a marker of cultural capital and distinction, and thus as a mechanism in the reproduction of inequality. Yet, as Coupland, Sarangi, and Candlin (2001: xv) note, this "enthusiasm" for language by sociologists and social theorists remains abstract, "excessively so for those concerned with the study of socially motivated language use." The critique here is not on a lack of breadth in

sociologists' understanding of language as a contributor to inequality, but rather on the lack of depth of understanding of language as a social practice.

As noted in the previous section, many sociologists abstract language from behavior and locate it in the realm of culture and ideologies. In this view, the tendency is to analyze language only in terms of what is said, rather than investigating how language use constructs meaning and accomplishes social functions in and of itself. For example, while sociologists are beginning to show interest in "racetalk," recent sociological treatments focus on the content of racist discourse (e.g., Myers 2005). In contrast, the field of critical discourse analysis analyzes how the structured nature of racetalk achieves an orientation toward race that mirrors and reinforces contemporary whites' racial views (e.g., van Dijk 2000). These approaches reflect the different orientations of linguistics and sociology to the study of language. Understanding language is not only a matter of understanding sentences, as Heritage (1984: 139) explains, but also of "understanding *actions*—utterances—which are constructively interpreted in relation to their contexts."

Some sociologists have found common ground between their studies of language and studies in the fields of discourse analysis or narratology. Sociologist Robert Franzosi (1998: 548) advocates that more attention be paid to language in the form of narrative, but he notes that basic analyses of narratives are foreign to most sociologists:

> Notwithstanding the ethnomethodological approach to text, sociologists have typically not been interested in (nor do they have the theoretical and methodological tools for) analyzing the linguistic nuances of a text—what can one text tell them about broader social relations anyway? Nor have they been interested in the invariant, structural patterns of narrative—yes, it is patterns that sociologists are after, but not patterns of texts (that's linguists' business), rather patterns of social relations.

A limited view of language as a type of sociological data thus appears to be a principal barrier to interdisciplinary communication between sociologists and sociolinguists,

broadly defined. While the sociological perspective typically views language as "the carrier of the shared meanings of a culture" (Branaman 2001: 11), sociolinguists (and other social scientists concerned with the study of language use) argue that language is also a mechanism that constructs, manifests, and constitutes patterns and shifts in social relations. Sociolinguists view language as a primary and overt marker of social identities and as a constituent of the dominant social ideologies that influence agents in the social world.

The problem widens when we contrast the views of sociologists with those of variationist sociolinguists in particular. The central idea of this field is that sociolinguistic variables (linguistic units, such as the *-in* in *walkin* versus the *-ing* in *walking*) vary socially and stylistically. These variables can be measured and analyzed, revealing connections between language and society and between language and identity, to answer questions about why language varies and changes. But because most sociologists do not view language as something that can be studied beyond communicative context (as Franzosi implies), it is difficult for sociologists to conceive of the kinds of nuanced analyses that variationist sociolinguists conduct with linguistic data. There may even be an ingrained bias, in that sociologists may not accept that studies of "*g* dropping," or copula variation, or any other linguistic variable, can tell us anything about the social world. But, as I will discuss, variationist sociolinguistics has shown that language does, in fact, work in concert with other social structures. In my experience, sociologists are often surprised (and intrigued) to learn how regularly even subtle linguistic features are patterned and stratified—though they may still question how sociolinguistic findings can contribute to sociological knowledge.

Conducting linguistic analyses from a variationist perspective requires training in theory and methods that may be less immediately accessible to sociologists (see Labov 1966:

7), which thus may be a factor keeping most sociologists who are interested in language attuned primarily to vocabulary, content analysis, or discourse/conversational analysis. The clear though difficult solution to overcoming this interdisciplinary gap in understanding language seems to lie in furthering work between sociologists, discourse analysts, linguistic anthropologists, and variationist sociolinguists. Sociologists have a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding the complexity of possibilities in the analysis of linguistic data. Sociolinguists and sociologists, however, both share an interest in the social as well as common disciplinary roots in a body of social theory that is predicated on practice and social action (see chapter 2). Most importantly, as I argue throughout this dissertation, the fact that linguistic practice is a primary mechanism in the dynamic construction of social locations and social relations motivates sociologists and sociolinguists to jointly investigate how to relate empirical linguistic data to, and integrate these data with, other objects of sociological inquiry. I now turn to the sociolinguistic perspective on language in society.

1.4 Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Language in Society

In the 1960s, the emergent knowledge that stigmatized varieties of English spoken by socially disfavored groups are rule-governed and patterned systems was a major factor that led to the development of the new field of sociolinguistics (Shuy 2003). This issue arose in conjunction with a concern for social inequality, which is a shared interest of the field of sociology. Many sociolinguists who focused on social dialect variation in the U.S. were motivated to solve language-related social problems, namely the educational inequalities facing the underclass, whose language patterns are often stigmatized in the educational system. Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999:125) state:

> [D]ialect prejudice remains one of the most resistant and insidious of all prejudices in our society. Public discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and social class differences is no longer acceptable; yet discrimination on the basis of dialect is still quite tolerable, even though many of the differences that serve as the basis for exclusion correlate with regional, class, and ethnic variables. People who speak stigmatized dialects … continue to be rejected on the basis of their speech even when their dialects have nothing to do with their performance of job-related tasks and general competence.

As the field of sociolinguistics developed, sociolinguists addressed these concerns while also investigating how linguistic variables patterned internally (by linguistic factors) and externally (by social factors). Prior to the mid-1960s, no body of literature had attempted to correlate language variation with social factors (previous work in dialectology had primarily, though not exclusively, investigated how language varies by geographic region; see, e.g., Kurath 1949).

To conceptualize how the study of sociolinguistic variation has emerged over time, sociolinguist Penelope Eckert has delineated three waves of analytic practice (2005: 1). The waves are not strictly ordered historically. Rather, each contributed to the formation of the others, theoretically and methodologically. The first wave examined the relationship between linguistic variation and major demographic categories within large populations in the urban centers of America. The second wave adopted a more ethnographic approach concerned with analyzing social structures in localized context. The third wave initiated a focus on how structures are locally articulated, with more attention to individual style.

The so-called "first wave" began with Labov (1966) and Wolfram (1969), who studied the language of white New Yorkers and African Americans in Detroit, respectively. Their method was to isolate a large, geographically defined speech community and then conduct broad surveys to uncover its class-, gender-, age-, and ethnically-stratified dialects. These studies were successful in that:

[they] established a regular and replicable pattern of socioeconomic stratification of variables, in which the use of non-standard, and geographically and ethnically distinctive variants, correlates inversely with socioeconomic status. These studies also showed a regular stylistic stratification of variables at all levels in the socioeconomic hierarchy, with the use of non-standard and distinctively regional variants correlating inversely with formality of style. (Eckert 2005: 2)

In this regard, early sociolinguists began moving away from the methods of their

interdisciplinary progenitors—anthropology as well as sociology (Shuy 2003: 13-14):

It became clear early on, for example, that language data are quite different from conventional sociological data. A sociologist could interview subjects concerning voting or purchasing patterns, daily activities, attitudes or values and still remain uncertain about the accuracy or truthfulness of their responses. It is relatively easy to stretch the truth about how many times one brushes one's teeth or exactly who one voted for but it is much more difficult for humans to consciously change or modify the consonants or vowels they use as they produce coherent ideas in their speech. This relative stability of language used in natural contexts makes a small sample of language more useful to researchers than would be an equally small sample of the type of self-report data found in other social science research.

This transition away from interdisciplinary methods also contributed to the divergence of the

closer relationship that sociolinguistics once had with sociology and anthropology and

hindered future collaboration among social scientists from these fields.

1.4.1   Variationist Sociolinguistic Research

This section provides an overview of the development of variationist sociolinguistics,

proceeding with a discussion of each "wave" of research and following with critiques. The

first wave of variationist sociolinguistic research began with Labov's (1966) study of New

York City. In this first systematic investigation of an urban speech community, Labov

analyzed the distribution of regional and vernacular language features. (The relatively

undifferentiated upper-middle-class variety is commonly referred to as the *standard*, and the

locally differentiated working-class variety is commonly referred to as the *vernacular*.

Whereas the vernacular identifies and signals local membership and loyalty, the standard is associated with institutions that set global prestige standards for society at large. See Eckert 2003: 99 for discussion.) In Labov's study, for the first time a sociolinguist had obtained a large sample of speakers from a population, collected interviews with them, and elicited a wide range of data to confirm specific hypotheses (Feagin 2002: 27).

Labov began by obtaining a sample population of 988 speakers in concert with a sociological survey (the Mobilization for Youth, or MFY, survey) that was being conducted with residents of the Lower East Side. One of 40 interviewers asked pre-coded and open-ended questions to obtain demographic and other information from speakers, such as attitudes toward their neighborhood and their social aspirations (Labov 1966: 104). Labov then pared down the sample of 988 informants to 195 individuals: adult, native English speakers of the Lower East Side who had lived in the area for at least two years. He and two other fieldworkers then collected one-on-one tape-recorded interviews with 122 of these 195 informants (Labov 1966: 115-6).

While Labov included some reading tasks designed to elicit a range of more formal speech styles (Feagin 2002: 29), he used a set of questions to elicit as much free conversation as possible. Since that time, the one-on-one, tape-recorded conversational interview that Labov used in his 1966 study has become the classic method of variationist sociolinguistic research (Labov 1972b, 1984; Wolfram and Fasold 1974). From the conversational speech these interviews yield, sociolinguists are able to extract, cull, and analyze data on the variable patterning of linguistic features—not only by individual speakers, but by groups of speakers across a particular speech community. Feagin (2002: 23, 26) explains:

> The linguistic variable, a concept originating with Labov (1963, 1966), is a linguistic entity which varies according to social parameters (age, sex, social class, ethnicity),

stylistic parameters (casual, careful, formal), and/or linguistic parameters (segmental, suprasegmental). Usually the social and stylistic variation will be coordinated in some way, so that the casual speech of an accountant will be similar to the formal speech of a plumber—though that remains to be seen in the course of the investigation. … [From tape-recorded conversational data, various] occurrences as well as non-occurrences of the variable can be identified and accounted for. In this way statistical manipulations of the data can show whether the occurrence of a variable is happenstance or patterned, and, if patterned, to what degree in contrast to the occurrence in the speech of others of varying social characteristics—age, sex, social class, ethnicity. This, then, is the primary method of quantitative sociolinguistics.

In addition to interviews, which provided data for the analysis of sociolinguistic variables, Labov also surveyed speakers about their reactions to the speech of other New Yorkers and about their perceptions of their own usage of certain variables. Labov thereby elicited speakers' evaluations of specific linguistic variables as stigmatized or prestigious.

Labov's data were impressive in scope, and they revealed strikingly regular patterns of distribution for key sociolinguistic variables along several social and stylistic dimensions. Before detailing the results of his analyses, it is relevant to review what Labov meant by social stratification—one of the key independent variables he correlated with linguistic variation. In the preface of his 1966 work, The *Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Labov argues that if the dialect of individual New York City speakers is studied in the larger context of the speech community, it can be seen "as an element in a highly systematic structure of social and stylistic stratification" (vii). In other words, Labov claims that social structures systematically shape linguistic variation.

Labov's data seem to fit his hypothesis that language varies systematically by social structures, most notably social class. In his 1966 study, a respondent was assigned to a social class grouping based on his/her score on a socioeconomic index constructed as part of the MFY survey. The index accounted for the subject's years of education, the occupation of his/her family breadwinner, and his/her family income. For nearly all the variables Labov

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studied, individuals who were deemed to have high "social status" typically used the most "prestigious" and the least stigmatized linguistic forms.

One example was the patterning of the reduction of the suffix *-ing* to *-in* (often colloquially called "*g* dropping," as in *speakin* for *speaking* or *runnin* for *running*). Labov discovered that not all Lower East Side speakers reduced *-ing* at the same rates or in the same contexts. Rather, the distribution of the variable showed distinct patterning along two axes: social class and speaking style. First, lower class speakers reduced *-ing* to *-in* at much higher rates than working class speakers, who reduced more than lower middle class speakers, who reduced more than upper middle class speakers. Furthermore, this class-based pattern held even by speech style (register): within each class-based group, speakers reduced *-ing* to the stigmatized variant *-in* most often in casual conversation and least often when they were speaking formally (i.e., when reading word lists or set passages). Similar class-based patterns surfaced for each of the other (mostly phonological) variables Labov studied. Upper middle class speakers tended to pronounce their *r*'s in words like *car*, rather than drop them, as in the nonstandard pronunciation, *cah*. So for example, an upper middle class speaker might say "I'm driv*ing* the ca*r*" much more often than a lower class speaker, who would probably use *-in* (*drivin*) and exhibit postvocalic *r*-lessness (*cah*) much more frequently.

There were a few exceptions to these overarching patterns. For the variable /th/, with the stigmatized variant being anything other than the interdental fricative pronunciation, as in *tink* for *think*, speakers in the middle ranges of the lower socioeconomic class occasionally exhibited a change in the expected pattern of vernacularity. Sometimes, despite what would have been expected by their social class position, they produced the standard (nonstigmatized or prestigious) form. Moreover, in more formal styles, the lower middle class used a higher

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percentage of standard forms than the higher social classes. (This was particularly the case for *r*-lessness, as found by Labov in his ingenious "fourth floor" New York department store study.[3]) Labov explained these "crossover effects" as the self-correction that lower classes tended to engage in because they are the most "linguistically insecure." In this regard, Labov's explanation for the exception just as for the rule is predicated on a connection between speakers' class location, social/self consciousness, and language variation.

Labov's explanation carries several implications for how linguistic variables should be viewed in relation to social structures. First, his claim suggests that linguistic variables may be viewed as carriers of prestige or stigma—and, taking it a step further, that linguistic variables can be seen as indices of a category such as social class. Indeed, Labov did appear to find distinct and principled patterns of distribution of sociolinguistic variables by social class. A second major implication of Labov (1966) is that members of a speech community (in this case, the Lower East Side) hold consensual views on the relative prestige of sociolinguistic variables. Lower East Side speakers' attitudes toward several sociolinguistic variables did seem to provide evidence for the claim that these New Yorkers held uniform linguistic evaluations. But are notions of prestige and stigma always self-evident, widely shared, rarely questioned, and relatively constant across a speech community? And if this were the case, then why would so many members of a particular speech community choose to use stigmatized linguistic variants so often?

The third and most obvious implication of Labov (1966) is that he locates social meaning along the socioeconomic continuum. Eckert (2003: 100) explains that in Labov's study, the social meanings of standard and vernacular are presumed to derive from the class hierarchy and are further presumed to be embedded in each speaker's language development

and lifelong usage strategies. This leads to the fourth and most fundamental assumption of Labov's and other first wave studies: correlations between linguistic variables and social categories are able to be uncovered, which assumes that these variables represent meaningful analytic constructs in the first place.

Regardless of the critiques of Labov's, Wolfram's, and other first-wave researchers' work, these studies established that linguistic variation does not merely reflect the social world, but constitutes it as well. As described earlier, this perspective is often identified as lacking in other social science disciplines, such as sociology. First-wave sociolinguistic research offered a related insight into the relationship between language and society beyond those already posited by sociologists: with these first wave studies, language had been clearly identified as an interactional device that was also integral to the construction of individual and group-level identities. This perspective was further developed and refined as variationist sociolinguists moved into the second and third waves of research.

In the second wave, sociolinguists began to question some of the underlying assumptions of Labov's work—both the 1966 study and his later (1972c) study of African American Vernacular English in Philadelphia—and, by proxy, work by other first-wave sociolinguists. Specifically questioned were the exceptions to the "rules" that Labov had uncovered—such as the fact that the lower middle classes occasionally produced standard forms at a higher rate than the higher social classes. Was Labov right that these "crossover effects" are due to linguistic insecurity? Or could this conclusion be spurious, in that the variation attributed to class was obscuring other social processes affecting the sociolinguistic phenomena? These considerations sparked more general questions too. Are the social meanings of standard and vernacular variants located within the class continuum? Should we

view speakers' locations in the broader class system per se as being responsible for their language variation? Or might variation be better explained not by attributing it to reified conceptualizations of social structures but rather to local, context-bound realizations of them?

With an increasing dissatisfaction with first-wave studies, sociolinguists turned toward a more ethnographic approach concerned with analyzing social structures in localized context. This approach came to characterize the "second wave," but it had in fact been used by Labov in his first study of Martha's Vineyard (1963). On the island, community life was becoming increasingly influenced by tourism, and Labov found that orientation toward traditional island culture was a social factor that affected sound change in his sample of speakers. Accordingly, Labov concluded that language change could not be understood without relation to the social life of the community. In this regard, he saw language use as interrelated with and shaped by speakers' social positioning toward locally salient factors that are simultaneously affected by broader societal forces, such as economics.

Second-wave studies that continued the tradition begun by Labov (1963) thus reclaimed the notion that local meaning is relevant and argued for re-conceptualizing the broad demographic categories that were the focus of the first wave. To do so, they sought to uncover the relationship between linguistic variation and locally meaningful, participant-designed categories (Eckert 2005: 5). With regard to social class, for example, these studies investigated "how class correlations on the ground are not simply the fallout of education, occupation and income, but are about concerns that connect to these locally" (Eckert 2005: 15). Several well-known variationist studies that exemplify the second-wave's focus are Nichols (1983), Rickford (1986), Milroy (1987), and Eckert (1989).

Nichols (1983) examined language variation among 16 lower-class black women and men in rural, coastal South Carolina. Her study revealed that even in a small community, gender and class affect linguistic behavior differently across segments of the population— and sometimes not at all in the ways that sociolinguists might predict, based on patterns from first-wave studies. Although Nichols found that some of the women informants used more standard English forms than the men, her data did not show all the women informants to be less vernacular than the men, across the board. Instead, she found that the older women informants actually were the most vernacular, using more than twice as many nonstandard Gullah features as either the younger women or all of the men. Nichols explained these differential language choices by pointing to structural effects. First, the younger women's lives were structured by their educational and job opportunities. All of them were educated and working in white-collar jobs (such as teaching, where standard English fluency is necessary). Moreover, these jobs also tended to isolate them from members of their home speech community and therefore expose them to more contact with others who did not speak the local dialect. As for the men (of all ages), although they worked in blue-collar jobs with vernacular-speaking co-workers, they also traveled more and consequently had wider communication networks than their women peers—the same older women who were more likely than any other social group to use older vernacular forms.

Nichols's study made several major contributions. First, she revealed that objective measures of social class may have little meaning in some communities. As Schilling-Estes (2002) discusses, just as the variable of gender was seen as a biological "given" in these studies, the variable of class was usually imposed upon informants by researchers, according to presumably objective measures such as the Duncan Socioeconomic Index. Furthermore,

both class and gender types were thought to have uniform effects on individual speech patterns. For this reason, researchers were intent on uncovering the "general principles" governing the interface of language and society. This bias, however, led them to sometimes ignore how gender, class, and other social factors might be operating to affect language differently in different communities (Schilling-Estes 2002: 123). Thus, if a sociolinguist had wanted to study the same community that Nichols studied by applying a broad label of "lower class" to its speakers and looking for correlates in language variation, she or he would have found few patterns. Only by looking at educational attainment, job opportunities, and social networks—i.e., social capital (Bourdieu 1986, Lin 2001)—could the mechanisms that explained local language variation be uncovered. Nichols attributed her success in this Gullah community to the use of long-term participant observation, which allowed her to inductively learn about the social networks and social divisions in her community.

Nichols' work also showed that gender can be just as important a factor in language variation as social class or ethnicity, it does not have universal effects on linguistic behavior, and it interacts with other social factors. In first wave studies, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 192) explain, effects of gender on language variation were often conceptualized as being effects of social class. This tendency is clearly an artifact of the conclusion drawn in Labov (1966: 214-5), that social class and ethnicity have a greater effect on language variation than gender. Based on data from his research, Labov had noticed that the language of the men and women in his sample seemed to pattern according to social class. The middle class women generally used more standard forms than any other group of women or men. But another, seemingly contradictory pattern was that all the women in his study showed greater stylistic variation in their language than the men: although the women in every social

class showed higher usage levels for prestigious forms in formal styles than their male cohorts, they used more stigmatized forms in casual styles as well.

To account for these paradoxical findings—namely, that although middle class women tend to be the most linguistically conservative, women in general are both more innovative and more conservative than men—Labov posited three principles based on an intersection of gender and social class: 1) In general, women are more standard than men; 2) In change from above [i.e., conscious change, from the level of social awareness], women favor incoming prestigious forms more than men; and 3) In change from below [i.e., unconscious change, not driven by social factors and below the level of social awareness], women are most often innovators.

As Schilling-Estes explains (2002: 124-5), principles 1 and 2 suggest that women are "linguistically insecure," that they desire to adopt the standards of correctness of the social class groups that are higher than their own. Although it was much more difficult to attribute principle 3 to women's greater sensitivity to social and linguistic prestige, Labov (later) rationalized this statement by theorizing that women's greater role in child rearing than men leads them to respond more to local prestige norms and therefore adopt locally innovative features more often (1990: 219-20). In his most recent tome, Labov calls the fact that women can be more and less linguistically conservative than men the "gender paradox": Women conform more closely than men to sociolinguistic norms that are overtly prescribed, but conform less than men when they are not [as in the case of innovative forms that have not yet been socially evaluated by wider society] (2001: 293).

Although later studies would question Labov's findings, other large-scale variationist studies conducted by Labov's contemporaries seemed to confirm them. For example,

Wolfram (1969) analyzed data from 728 interviews of more than an hour each with 48 African Americans from the general urban population in Detroit and found that for eight different linguistic variables, all of the black women used more standard forms than the black men. For example, the middle-class black women tended to use more often the standard [th] sound at the ends of words ending in "th" (as in *with*) instead of [f] or [t] (as in *wit* or *wif*). The women also produced more postvocalic *r*'s than the men (e.g., *four* instead of *fou'*), and they used less multiple negation (e.g., *I didn't tell you anything* rather than *I didn't tell you nothing*). It did seem plausible that "linguistically insecure" middle class black women were attempting to speak more standardly, out of sensitivity toward the social and linguistic prestige associated with standard English. However, not all the black women behaved the same way. Similarly to Labov (1966), Wolfram found the middle-class black women used non-stigmatized features much more than either the upper class or lower class black women. Like Labov's "gender paradox," those findings raised questions that remained unanswered until Nichols (1983) investigated the factors that mediate black women's language.

Nichols' findings were the first to explain why women show both greater conservatism and innovation than men. As Schilling-Estes (2002: 125) summarizes, Nichols' findings that the younger women in her sample were the most standard of all the speakers, whereas the older women were the most vernacular, showed that women appear to be at once both more and less conservative simply because they use a wider range of variants—both innovative and standard forms. Moreover, when women do speak more standardly, it is probably due to a range of structural factors (e.g., educational or job opportunities that affect women's social networks) and not necessarily just women's "linguistic insecurity."

Nichols also criticized the general lack of attention to community language-use norms in sociolinguistic research. The use of a given feature may represent conservative linguistic behavior within one social group but innovative behavior within another—for example, it would be absurd to presume that *r*-lessness among rural Southern black women and the *r*-lessness in the language of upper-crust men from the Brahmin caste in Boston are equal in social prestige. Nichols rightly pointed out that contextual factors must be taken into account if sex differences in language use are to be characterized accurately. Relatedly, she also called for a "more adequate sociology of women" (which seems to refer to a feminist sociology that integrates the standpoint of women of color) that would enable sociolinguists to understand the linguistic behavior of women as a reflection of their peripheral status within their communities (1998: 61).

Another important sociolinguistic second wave work was Rickford's (1986) study of men and women speakers on a Guyanese sugar plantation. His study reconceptualized class relations using a more conflict-based model, in contrast to the functional/consensual models of class that had been used in first-wave studies (see also Winford 1984). Rickford found no singular notion of prestige in this speech community, and his informants did not value standard English forms across the board. Rather, people who valued local practices valued the vernacular—i.e., they chose to use creole—to manifest solidarity with their class and to express their connections to the local place.

Similarly, Milroy (1987) found that the more concentrated speakers' social networks were in their neighborhood-based community, the closer they accommodated to its linguistic norms. Rickford and Milroy showed that a community may have its own norms for local prestige and that speakers have some amount of agency in choosing to pattern toward or

away from them. (Trudgill's 1988 work also drew much the same conclusion. He highlighted the role of covert prestige—or the status associated with the use of a nonstandard variety, which conveys authenticity and group solidarity—in language change.) These second wave studies clearly questioned Labov's (1966) implication that speakers orient predictably and en masse toward widely shared and relatively constant notions of prestige and stigma.

Eckert's (1989, 2000) study of two contrasting social groups, the Jocks and the Burnouts, in a suburban Detroit high school also implicated local class-related values in social organization and in language variation. In this school, the Jocks oriented themselves toward middle-class notions of educational and occupational status, whereas the Burnouts created an oppositional, working-class culture. Based on her ethnographic work, Eckert observed that these contrasting group cultures were marked by everything from the adolescents' choices in clothing styles and hairstyles to their vowel productions and negation patterns. In other words, the linguistic and other social practices of these two groups—which differed by gender as well—reflected the Jocks' and Burnouts' contrasting orientations to their local institutions of school and work (both in terms of their specific high school and the Detroit educational system).

Beyond the local, Eckert argued that the ways that the Jocks and the Burnouts construct class and gender also signal general social processes at work, via their orientations to the broader social structures of class and gender (and, although she does not discuss it at length, to race as well). Importantly, Eckert's study, like others of the second wave, were not mired in the local. Rather, their analyses connected localized patterns to broader instantiations. As a result, they helped sociolinguists reconceptualize structures such as class

and also gender, as well as previously unproblematized key sociolinguistic concepts, including standard and vernacular, prestige and stigma.

Building upon findings from the first and second waves, the third wave of variation studies views linguistic variation as a "resource for the construction of social meaning" (Eckert 2005: 1).[4] This research questions the idea of speech communities as being homogeneous entities in which individual speakers are indicative of broader social types. In essence, the call is to bring people (rather than analytic categories) to the study of language variation. Third wave studies also question the formerly dominant perspective that language variants function as identity markers of the groups that use the forms most often (Eckert 2005). Variables are no longer viewed as merely reflecting membership in social categories. They are instead seen as being fluid and as functioning together to index qualities and stances, which in turn construct the social categories they have been believed to index (Eckert 2003: 113, 115; cf. Ochs 1992). One major benefit of this approach (in contrast to assumptions of first-wave studies as well as to those of formalist, Chomskian linguistic paradigms, to which first-wave studies are antithetical) is that it can account for why people maintain affiliations with local language varieties when the standard is widely available.

Eckert (2005: 16) sees the primary strength of the third wave as being its concern with connecting the local to the structural, often through the use of a community of practice (CofP) approach. Though I will continue to use her terminology, I point out that the third wave might more accurately be conceptualized as an extension of the second wave, which was similarly concerned with the connections between the local and the structural. As a tracing of the theoretical roots of the CofP approach to structuration theory in chapter 2 shows, the CofP framework may be a more concrete theoretical and methodological

approach that refines, rather than substantially differs from, those that second-wave researchers such as Nichols (1983), Rickford (1986), and Eckert (1989) originally took.

Nowhere in sociolinguistics have third wave studies been as salient as in the subfield of language and gender. Developing along with third wave feminist theory, feminist sociolinguistics moved away from notions of gender as a binary variable to investigate the co-constructed nature of talk. More specifically, these sociolinguists analyzed the role of gender in language production and interpretation (Mills 2003). For example, Hall's (1995) study of phone sex workers' verbal performances of hyperfemininity reveals how gender, race, and ethnicity are constructed in interaction, through local practices. At the same time, these local practices are constrained by the dominant gender order, which sets the parameters for which linguistic resources are considered indices of "femininity" (cf. Ochs 1992).

In the 1980s, the subfield of language and gender exploded onto the sociolinguistic scene and prompted a proliferation of literature. Since that time, however, language and gender research has paid only scattered attention to the language of girls and women of color, from various class or regional backgrounds. This pattern seems to have been instantiated early on in the field, as none of the first-wave studies specifically examined black women's language, although several of them examined only the language of black men. And those that did include black informants of both genders in their samples analyzed the speech patterns of the black women in comparison to the language of their male cohorts, without discussing them in their own right. This exclusion of studies of black women's language may seem like a simple omission—except that black men's language had been found to have unique linguistic properties, and language and gender studies had revealed marked differences in the speech of white women and men. The gap in the literature is even more

salient, given the fact that a survey of published sociolinguistic research from 1965 through 1993 showed that five times as many publications studied African American Vernacular English as any other ethnic or regional dialect (Schneider 1996: 3).

Despite the proliferation of literature on African American English, sociolinguistic research still suffers from a gap in studies of its class-based variation. Wolfram's (1969) Detroit study remains the only variationist study that has systematically treated social class in a black community. Most recent variationist studies continue to ignore the long-standing African American bourgeoisie and how this group has developed its own linguistic standard, which differs phonologically but not grammatically from the white standard (Eckert 2003: 101-2; but see, for example, Linnes 1998). In addition, few sociolinguistic studies have raely investigated language variation among black speakers who might "objectively" be considered to belong to one class. In one example, Dayton (1996) questioned what social class meant in the community she studied. Whereas the black Philadelphia speakers she studied might be broadly classified as urban working-class, locally meaningful distinctions centered on social mobility and education, explaining more of the linguistic variation by gender in her sample than an objective measure of social class per se. It thus remains imperative for sociolinguists to analyze how a host of contextual factors (e.g., regional location, social networks, isolation, et cetera, in addition to the typical variables of age, ethnicity, class, gender) shape gender-based language differences, particularly within and among black speech communities.

1.4.2 Refining Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Language in Society

Following the work of researchers in language and gender, most sociolinguists have become familiar with constructivist views on gender and race. However, sociolinguists still

seem to remain unsure about their ability to accurately "classify" speakers by social class and

are looking for an objectively operationalized social class variable to use in their analyses.

Although some sociolinguists have considered how class is instantiated locally, most still

appear to expect that individuals in a speech community will pattern according to objective

parameters into neatly stratified groups of class-based types. Eckert (2003: 116) notes:

> Perhaps because [structures] are conceived of as global categories, they are treated as
> disconnected, with little attention paid to the connections that facilitate the flow of
> influence among them. … [T]o understand the social function of variation and the
> spread of linguistic change, we need to know more about the connections—to know
> what happens at the boundaries of places and categories.

I argue that the lack of a nuanced theoretical understanding of social structures, particularly

with regard to making interconnections between and among them, constrains sociolinguists'

ability to conduct accurate analyses of how social variables correlate with linguistic

variables. The question of whether sociolinguists' understandings of social structures are

theoretically and methodologically sound is rooted in the attested tenuous relationship

between sociolinguistics and social theory.

The debate over "where sociolinguistics 'fits in' with the main currents of social

theory and how it might become more substantively engaged in social theory" has pervaded

the consciousness of the discipline since its inception (Coupland 2001a: 2).   But a critical

look at this debate across the various subfields of sociolinguistics finds considerable

disparity. For example, in the recent collection *Sociolinguistics and Social Theory*

(Coupland, Sarangi, and Candlin 2001), the overwhelming majority of contributors specialize

in discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and interactional sociolinguistics; and only one

contributor (Meyerhoff 2001) presents data from a variationist perspective (though a few

others refer to variationism in passing). Such omissions leave the impression that variationist

sociolinguists do not concern themselves with social theory, or perhaps that variationist

sociolinguistics itself, with its emphasis on quantitative analysis of language variation, is not

as well suited for interfacing with social theory as other linguistic subfields, such as

discourse analysis or conversation analysis (see Rampton 1992 for this suggestion).

Such assumptions, however, are antithetical to variationist sociolinguistics, which has

been concerned with the mutually constitutive roles of the social and the linguistic. If

variationist sociolinguistics has been left out of the debate about how to integrate the study of

language into social theory, it is not because variationists do not care about social theory or

because variationism is atheoretical. Even if variationist sociolinguistics is concerned with a

level of linguistic analysis that is not as readily accessible to non-linguists as lexical,

sentential, and discourse data may be, these constraints should not preclude its involvement

in the broader framework of social theory.

At the same time, for sociolinguists to conduct analyses of the relationship between

language and society in theoretically and methodologically nuanced ways requires a

renovation of their ideas regarding the hurdle of social class. While sociolinguists appear to

have a good deal of "sociological insecurity" concerning their understandings of social

structures in general, social class remains the category toward which sociolinguists feel the

most unease—arguably for good reason, as sociologists frequently engage in theoretical

debates over whether class is the most fundamental yet most abstract of all social structures

(see discussion in chapter 2). As Ash (2002: 419) notes:

> Researchers interested in linguistic variation and change have been wrestling with the
> problems of defining and implementing the notion of social class as long as they have
> been studying the social embedding of language. Regrettably, there is as yet very
> little contact between sociolinguists and sociologists, nor has there been systematic
> study of social class itself within the field of sociolinguistics, and the use of the

variable of social class is still quite mechanical and naïve in the hands of many researchers.

Originally, first wave variationists used sociological measures of class to be credible sociolinguists, and many calls since then have encouraged more nuanced considerations of this construct. Since his (1986) "The Need for New Approaches to Social Class Analysis in Sociolinguistics," Rickford has made this recommendation. As he recently stated, "[T]o adequately account for the quantitative distributions by social class that we observe in local surveys of language use, we need to turn to sociological and anthropological models of social stratification and life mode, but these are quite unfamiliar to the average sociolinguist" (2001: 220). Ash (2002: 402) concurs:

> Social class is a central concept in sociolinguistic research…. It is ironic, then, that social class is often defined in an ad hoc way in studies of linguistic variation and change, and linguists do not frequently take advantage of the findings of disciplines that make it their business to examine social class, particularly sociology, to inform their work. Still, social class is uniformly included as a variable in sociolinguistic studies, and individuals are placed in a social hierarchy despite the lack of a consensus as to what concrete, quantifiable independent variables contribute to determining social class. To add to the irony, … [social class] regularly produces valuable insights into the nature of linguistic variation and change. Thus, this variable is universally used and extremely productive, although linguists can lay little claim to understanding it.

Though Ash overstates the extent to which social class is included as a variable in sociolinguistic studies, she points out the disparity between linguists' understanding that language varies by class and their insecurity over operationalizing class and measuring its correlation with language variation. In a related vein, Eckert (2003: 116) has called for more research on class in particular and for sociolinguists to enrich their understanding of the social more generally:

> My recommendations for needed research in the study of social variation are rather sweeping, ranging from filling out the big picture to rooting around in day-to-day interactions. Survey studies can give us a general map of the linguistic landscape, but

they cannot provide us with the meanings that inhabit that landscape or the linguistic practices that constitute it. At the same time, ethnographic studies cannot transcend the local unless they have a broader structure to orient to. It is important, therefore, that we focus on developing an integrated model of variation.

From these calls for action, the sense is not that sociolinguists are criticizing themselves for being unfamiliar with the notion of class as power per se (cf. Ash 2002), but rather that they are insecure about their ability to accurately "classify" speakers by an objectively operationalized social class variable. For those with a more constructivist approach, this fixation is problematic, because it implies that sociolinguists still see social class as a group-level category, that they define individuals as types in relation to broad social categories, and that they analyze speakers' language as tokens of social types. By association, it also implies that sociolinguists similarly conduct analyses by race, gender, and other social constructs. Even if more accurate, sociologically-approved parameters for determining speakers' social class are indeed what sociolinguists are (still) searching for, it may not be easy to find answers. For one, Rickford's suggestion that sociolinguists look to sociology for measures of class seems a bit too generous. Given Acker's and other feminist sociologists' critiques of class as it has been traditionally operationalized (see chapter 2 for more detail), and given the lack of sociological studies that have measured class in new and more nuanced ways, it does not appear that some sociologists have a clear concept of social class to impart to sociolinguists. Thus, it may be most fruitful for sociologists and sociolinguists to work together in reconceptualizing class.

Second, difficulty with the concept of social class per se is not what is preventing sociolinguists from conducting sociologically-informed analyses of language variation. The difficulty instead seems to lie in the problematic expectation that individuals in a speech community will pattern neatly, objectively, and typically in a class-based hierarchy. Notions

of objectivity endemic to the methods of first wave studies do not lend themselves well to the constructivist views that sociolinguists, for the most part, have otherwise already adopted. Sociolinguists have become very familiar with the constructivist and interactional views of gender, due to the work of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992a, b), Hall (1995), Mendoza-Denton (1996), and many others. Some sociolinguists have also begun to consider how ethnolinguistic groups are constructed (Bucholtz 1999c) and where multiracial speakers fit within what has largely been a dichotomous, black/white conceptualization of race in the field (Mallinson 2004, Schilling-Estes 2004). As has been noted, however, constructivist-type views of class have been given considerably less sociolinguistic attention.

Some sociolinguists have considered how class is instantiated locally—for example, Nichols 1983; Rickford 1986; Eckert 1989, 2000; and Wolfram and Kendall 2005. Fewer sociolinguistic studies, however, analyze and interpret local class- and status-related patterns in relation to the broader class structure. Just as Acker (1999) cautions intersectionality theorists to interpret class-based practices with an emphasis on extralocal relations that shape them (see chapter 2), Gal (1987) calls for sociolinguists to focus on local as well as institutional instantiations of power and social class. Gal (1987: 637) notes that whereas anthropologists have contributed to current research on the political economy by focusing on the symbolic aspects of power, evidence for such practices has rarely come from sociolinguistics—despite the fact that expressions of and challenges to power relationships in everyday talk have long been a central focus of sociolinguistic research (Hill 1985; Woolard 1985, 1987). As Gal states, "Patterns of choice among linguistic variants can be interpreted to reveal aspects of speakers' 'consciousness': how they respond symbolically to class relations within the state, and how they understand their historic position and identify within

regional economic systems structured around dependency and unequal development" (1987:

637). Gal's work on discourse-level analyses of codeswitching could easily extend to

variationist sociolinguistic research. But the strongest interpretation would see these social

structures as acting in interaction with each other, along with patterns of choice among

linguistic variations, as will be proposed in subsequent chapters.

1.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I began by discussing the language and society interface from a

sociological perspective. In sociology, language is recognized for its role in establishing

social distinctions and creating status displays, thereby also reproducing inequality. But

sociologists lack a recognition of language as a fundamental interactional mechanism that

operates on individual and structural levels as well—which should be of interest, given the

fact that the interactional domain is a crucial site for the reproduction of social structures.

The impetus is thus for sociologists to move from seeing language as merely referential to

seeing it as meaningful action and a vehicle for a gamut of social or stylistic functions. To

do so requires that sociologists include language in their notion of what sociological data

looks like. Although linguistic structure is infinitely more complex than sociologists may

realize, the payoff is that linguistic variation is also reflective and constitutive of larger social

processes in more nuanced ways than sociologists might consider. With this refined

approach, sociologists' views would more closely align with variationist sociolinguists'

views on language and their methods for studying it.

Sociolinguists, on the other hand, suffer from a limited conceptual view of social

structures, particularly social class. This disconnect limits sociolinguists' ability to connect

broad categories to the local distinctions that they find emergent in local field studies. As Eckert (2003: 108) also notes, it hinders an understanding of the social function of variation and the spread of linguistic change, which is a key concern of the field. A more nuanced social theoretical perspective would especially enhance sociolinguists' conceptualizations of social class and status and allow for a better analysis of the social distinctions that emerge in sociolinguistic field studies.

Incorporating these refinements, both sociolinguists and sociologists can achieve a complementary and mutually beneficial perspective on the role of language in society. I expound on my conceptualization of such an integrated theoretical approach in chapter 2 by formulating an interdisciplinary framework that draws on structuration and intersectionality theories from sociology and community of practice theory as it has developed recently within variationist sociolinguistics. In this perspective, social actors use language not merely for communicative effect but as symbolic vehicles, in concert with other social practices, in ways that shape and are also defined by intersecting and powerful social structures.

LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY IN INTEGRATED THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

"It is peculiarly important that linguists, who are often accused, and accused justly, of failure to look beyond the pretty patterns of their subject matter, should become aware of what their science may mean for the interpretation of human conduct in general."
Edward Sapir (1929: 77)

2.1 The Scope of Chapter 2

In chapter 2, I propose an integrated theoretical framework that grounds the study of language in society in complementary sociological and sociolinguistic perspectives. The framework incorporates structuration theory and intersectionality theory from sociology, and community of practice theory as it has developed within variationist sociolinguistics. I discuss each of these theories in turn, detailing the assumptions behind each theory, its scope, and its criticisms. I then argue for the incorporation of each theory into an integrative framework that draws on the strengths of each. I contend that this integrated framework has both the depth and the breadth to account for the nature of language variation by multilevel social factors, and this approach theoretically grounds my field study. By framing variationist sociolinguistic research with two bodies of current social theory, it also bridges the disciplines of sociology and sociolinguistics in a way that offers viable avenues for further interdisciplinary research.

2.2 The Relevance of Sociological Theory to the Study of Language in Society

As the review of sociological literature in chapter 1 has shown, language as a marker of cultural capital may be differentially refracted through many prisms: race, class, and gender as well as other personal and family ideologies, family and peer group socialization, region, rurality/urbanity, institutional setting, et cetera. As such, language works in tandem with individual, interactional, and structural factors. Access to cultural capital, which is socially conditioned, shapes language practices that are developed. As such, language in concert with social factors can often be either the key or the locked door that allows or constrains access to status, elite culture, or institutional power. A body of social theory intended to capture these mutually constitutive relationships must acknowledge the role of language as a social structure while emphasizing the intersecting nature of all structures as they shape patterns of social life. Intersectionality theory and structuration theory entail this perspective. They emerge as complementary not only in their views of social structures but also in their accordance with the community of practice framework that has gained currency in variationist sociolinguistics.

2.2.1 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the work of multicultural and black feminists (Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; Davis 1983; King 1988; Collins 1990, 2000; Crenshaw 1991; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996). Collins' (1990, 2000) Black Feminist Theory quickly came to the forefront of this body of work and brought increased attention to the intersectionality approach (Chafetz 1997, Browne and Misra 2003). Collins (1999: 263) describes intersectionality theory as a:

construct … [that] references two types of relationships: the interconnectedness of ideas and the social structures in which they occur, and the intersecting hierarchies of gender, race, economic class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Viewing gender within the logic of intersectionality redefines it as a constellation of ideas and social practices that are historically situated within and that mutually construct multiple systems of oppression.

Intersectionality theorists are concerned with race, class, and gender (and, less frequently, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and ability; see Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; Collins 1999; Weber 2001; Lorde 2004) and the relation of the individual to them. First, they see that social structures are constructed and heterogeneous (cf., e.g., Lorber 1994, Acker 1999). They also argue that people are located in relation to powerful structures that intersect to form interlocking systems of race, class, and gender (et cetera). Ultimately, these intersecting structures constitute a matrix of domination that reproduces and maintains hierarchy and inequality (Collins 2000). One implication of this view is that locating individuals in an intersecting social system demands a nuanced understanding of material conditions and power dynamics that influence the individual's reality. Further, because they argue that reality cannot be understood one-dimensionally, intersectionality theorists strive not to search for universal processes generating race, class, and gender but rather to examine contextually-bound variations in the processes that construct these structures.

Third, intersectionality theory acknowledges how structures work together to affect identities. As people identify with multiple social groups unique, non-additive consequences for individual and group experience are produced (King 1988). Race, class, and gender are not discrete analytic categories that can simply be added together or measured for their separate contributions in explaining social outcomes (West and Fenstermaker 1995); such conceptualizations promote variable-based conceptions of causality (cf. critiques of first-wave variationist studies from sociolinguistics as discussed in chapter 1). Rather, effects of

identity categories are multiplicative, producing contextualized experiences of oppression and privilege for all individuals and groups, not just women of color (King 1988, Crenshaw 1991, Frankenberg 1993, West and Fenstermaker 1995, Collins 2000, Weber 2001).

Thus, according to intersectionality theory, structure and individual are connected. People are viewed as being located within structures that are inherently rooted in power disparities, just as structural relations shape the inequalities of individual experience. As Acker (1999: 51-2) summarizes, "Using everyday experience as the starting point of investigation does not mean that the sociologist attends only to what is visible in the local and everyday place. On the contrary, the idea is that the place for beginning investigation inevitably must move beyond that into 'extralocal' relations that shape the local." This inclusion of structure and standpoint, she says, leads to a "view of class, gender, and race (and ethnicity, nationality, and so on) as complexly interrelated at a multiplicity of sites within particular historical developments."

By noting that social reality and axes of social inequality are not to be understood one-dimensionally but rather locally and extralocally, with an intersectional lens, these theorists also argue against reductionism—the idea of one material as fundamental in understanding social stratification (cf., e.g., early Marxian theory's focus on economic factors). Instead, intersectionality theorists argue that looking at variation in forms of inequality is necessary to develop contextually specific analyses of individuals, groups, and structures. In particular, we must take into account historical specificity when theorizing intersectionality so that various permutations of oppressions are not automatically deemed to be either hierarchically ranked or equivalent, since some axes become more or less important accordingly. For example, black women not only experience racism and sexism but also the

"double burden" of both racism and sexism—a subordinate status that carries with it unique experiences of discrimination (St. Jean and Feagin 1997).

Many qualitative and quantitative studies have employed an intersectional approach to explore, at multiple levels of analysis, how structures in different contexts work together to shape people's lives. Collins (2000), for example, discusses cultural stereotypes unique to black women, such as the asexualized Mammy and the welfare queen. Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) found that employers depict young black men from the city as lazy and dangerous but cast black women as single mothers; Browne and Kennelly (1999) found similar results. Cortina (2001) measured workplace sexual harassment for Latinas by adapting a questionnaire developed primarily to assess white women's experiences. By adding questions about "sexual racism," she captured key differences in Latinas' interpretations of particular questionnaire items to those by white women respondents. Similarly, Romero (1992) focused on Chicana domestic workers and highlights how employers draw on ideologies of race, class, and gender to justify exploiting these women. And Frankenberg (1993) argued that intersectionality shapes the lives of white women just as it does women of color, concluding that whiteness and masculinity/femininity coproduce each other in ways affected by the histories of colonialism, racism, and capitalism.

By guiding researchers to ask questions that center on context and variation rather than separable and discrete membership categories, the intersectionality perspective allows for a broader examination of not only majority group members but also those of previously understudied groups. As differences between and within groups are explored, new research questions and theories may be formed, as prior assumptions are questioned. (Similar critiques of first-wave variationists have been put forward by sociolinguists. For example,

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Bucholtz (1999a: 203-7) notes that typical studies of speech communities entail studying

central members of the community over those on the margins, a lack of attention to

individuals, a static view of identity, and a valorization of researchers' interpretations over

those of participants.)

Does this mean, then, that intersectionality theory requires researchers to examine all

social locations simultaneously? Is this degree of complexity daunting and impractical?

Stewart and McDermott (2004: 537) acknowledge but are not hindered by these questions.

> We believe that in fact intersectionality requires us to think about many different
> kinds of social locations and identities that might intersect relevantly for the behavior
> or experience we are studying. But we can and must make choices about which
> locations and identities may be particularly relevant and/or particularly understudied.
> In some cases we can make a reasonable judgment that a social location is irrelevant,
> because it seems logically to be so, and we have empirical evidence that groups based
> on that location do not differ on the relevant dimension…. We hope that as
> researchers adopt a perspective informed by intersectionality they will rely more on
> multiple, especially qualitative, methods. Adopting intersectionality as a research
> perspective may lead us to more inclusive methodological choices.

Inclusive methodological choices are one goal of this dissertation research. Both sociologists

(e.g., Risman 1998, 2004) and sociolinguists (e.g., Eckert 2000) have noted that triangulating

methods may best capture the nuances of social realities, and both fields may see greater

future integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. While a thorough discussion of

the benefits of mixed methods in social science is beyond the scope of this work, brief

arguments to that effect will be made in this and future chapters.

2.2.2 Addressing Social Class in Critiques of Intersectionality Theory

Despite the rhetoric of "race, class, and gender" that has come to characterize the

intersectionality approach, the criticism has been made that this literature most often focuses

on two of these social categories—race and gender—to the point that there is a gap in the

intersectionality literature with regard to class.[5] In contrast to the near-exclusion of social

class from intersectionality studies stands work by global Marxist feminists, most notably

Angela Davis (1998a). Davis (1998a) strongly argues that not only do patriarchy, capitalism,

and white supremacy operate together in the world, but patriarchy and white supremacy are

predicated on capitalism. Similarly, the activist writer bell hooks (1984, 1996, 2000) asserts

that there will be no feminist revolution without an understanding of the interlocking system

of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

This line of reasoning is predicated on a view of class as a different kind of

systematic inequality than gender and race—i.e., that class is the "fundamental inequality."

If so, the argument follows, other forms of inequality and oppression (e.g., those based on

race and gender) would disappear without class and capitalism, since ideologies cannot be

sustained without a material basis. Sociologists including Cox (1948), Noel (1968),

Bonacich (1972), Fields (1982), and Bonilla-Silva (2001) have variously articulated this

position. Similarly, other sociologists have posited that race, racism, and racial prejudice

emerged from the class dynamics of capitalism.[6]

When conceptualizing class, Cox (1948) contends that a distinction must be made

between "political class" and "social class."[7] Political class refers to the polarization of

society in a Marxian sense, into those who own the means of production (bourgeoisie) and

those who must sell their labor power in order to live (proletariat). These groups' objective

economic interests differ, and Marx contends that they will eventually locate themselves on

opposite sides of a revolutionary struggle. Social class, Cox states, refers to an intersecting

hierarchy comprised of political power, possession of wealth, and social credibility—

otherwise known as status. People and groups then engage in competitive struggle, based on

status distinctions. In this regard, groups of people—even if they do not differ directly by socioeconomic status—may come to distinguish themselves as status groups in the Weberian sense, based on lifestyle and presentation distinctions.

These concepts of political class and social class are related, in the sense that political power, which maintains stratification, undergirds social class (status). As Della Fave (2001) points out, people in certain social locations are especially able to present themselves as impressive, with credibility and status. By virtue of their status and the hierarchies they dominate, these people are able to control others' access to jobs, resources, and honors, and to set the standard for ideas and beliefs, habits, and speech patterns (see also chapter 1's discussion of Bourdieu on distinction). In this regard, social status relates to power. Individuals and groups exercise power when they draw upon the symbols, practices, statuses, and privileges that are part of cultural resources and social structures (Swidler 1986). The groups that exercise this power occupy the higher tiers of social hierarchies and enjoy high status, whereas those at the bottom are subordinated and controlled. Class, status, and political power also intersect with gender and race, in the control of resources and the ability to exclude (Davis 1998a).

Based on Cox's argument, a workable conceptualization of class thus comprises the relationship between both political and social class. In this relationship, stratification is supported by political power, which gives credence to the status distinctions that are created by groups in accordance with their place in the stratification hierarchy. Taking this definition of class, an analysis of how political power supports status distinctions as they are locally articulated, in concert with race and gender, becomes possible—in much the way that feminist sociologist Joan Acker (1990, 1999) advocates.

Acker (1990, 1999) agrees that that class-related norms and display processes are created and instantiated in daily practice. She thus contends that sociologists should be able to observe and measure class-related instantiations of inequality by paying attention to class-related social divisions, just as we do to race and gender divisions. We can observe how these divisions are reinforced by symbols and images, how class display processes are gendered and raced, and how class norms are created and change over time. This outlook coincides with Cox's distinctions of political class and social class, with social class referring to status as it is rooted in the system of stratification. This perspective is one that would redirect intersectionality theorists' views toward social class. It would also relate to sociological research in the cultural capital literature. Finally, this perspective would solve many sociolinguists' problems, since they (as noted in chapter 1) find it difficult to isolate differences in patterns of linguistic variables based on the relation to the means of production. Rather, it makes more sense for sociolinguists to focus on the competitive hierarchy and status (social class, in Cox's sense) as the mechanism that determines difference in linguistic practice. I discuss these points further below.

2.2.3 Structuration Theory

Just as intersectionality theorists view social structures as being rooted in power dynamics and as intersecting on multiple levels, structuration theory views structures as inherently social, with potential for agentive struggle to lead to social change. As set forth in Giddens (1984), structuration theory comprises several interrelated key concepts. The term *structuration* concerns how social action produces and reproduces social systems (26, 131), examples of which include communities, families, cities, and face-to-face encounters. More

specific than the notion of system is the social structure, which is enacted via power/ domination, communication/ signification, and sanctioning/legitimation (Giddens 1979: 82). All three dimensions are involved in any social action, combined as agents draw on or employ these structures as rules and resources in specific interactions (Stones 2005: 17-8).

Giddens further defines how structures are built and reinforced by consistent patterns of social practices—namely, procedural rules (e.g., rules for conversational turn-taking), moral rules, material resources (e.g., the means of production in a society), and resources of authority. In focusing on social practices, Giddens shows that structures do not just exist abstractly but are produced, reproduced, and routinized over time in practice. As such, structures may be changed if individuals or groups change or adapt their conduct; hence, Giddens advocates the study of routine day-to-day life as integral to an analysis of the reproduction of institutionalized practices.

In this regard, Giddens aims to reconcile the agency of the human actor with social structure by proposing the study of social action as the essential domain of social science. Actors internalize aspects of institutions and thus engage in practices that are shaped by these structural determinations; at the same time, actors create and modify structures by participating in social practices. By viewing actors as constantly monitoring, adjusting, and readjusting their social performances in their daily routine, and in so doing actively reproducing social structures, Giddens asserts that agency and structure are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. Because actor and structure are so interdependent, structures both constrain and enable individuals. This notion of the *duality of structure* is a core concept of structuration theory (Giddens 1979: 5, 1984: 25):

> [I]n the very process of acting agents draw on social structures that have entered into their understandings of, *inter alia*, socially legitimate and illegitimate actions,

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distributions of power and potential sanctions. They draw on their knowledge of social structures as they produce the social practices whose purpose is to realise their variously motivated wants and desires. … Agents have structures within them. Equally, the structures—the perceived configurations of legitimate and illegitimate actions, conventionally accepted meanings, and distributions of economic and authoritative power—are seen both to have agents within them and to be the product of agents. (Stones 2005: 21)

Via this model, Giddens bridges the gap between structure and agency: a structure consists not only of individuals who act within given contexts and under certain constraints of knowledgeability, but also of behavioral rules that get reproduced in social interaction. Because human actors can change structures (at the level of structural properties, 1984: xxi), human action is essentially transformational. In seeing social change as emerging from the contextualized relationship between agent and structure, Giddens shows that with disruption in the routine (whether as a result of purposive action or unintentional consequences) comes the possibility for change—from the local level to the structural realm.

Of course, actors are not always consciously aware of their agency or of the structural constraints on their actions as they go about routine daily life. To capture this idea that people's daily actions may both unwittingly and knowingly reproduce social institutions, Giddens conceives of a three-tiered model of agency. First, discursive consciousness consists of verbally articulated justifications for and understandings of our actions. Second, practical consciousness entails cultural knowledge that is not easily expressed but that is necessary for actors to understand and follow when operating in social situations. Finally, unconscious motivations indirectly guide people's actions and beliefs. The level of practical consciousness is the crux of this model, since it is the realm in which our conscious actions (as shaped by cultural rules, norms, and sanctions) are connected to both unconscious motivations and also social structures.

Though Giddens considers the cultural knowledge held in the practical consciousness to be non-linguistic knowledge, it seems possible that his notion of cultural knowledge might entail routinized linguistic knowledge/behavior. For example, chapter 1 discusses how language use (not verbal justifications alone) is a subtle yet key marker of cultural capital. Moreover, sociolinguistic research has made clear that linguistic performance may be both overt (e.g., accounts) as well as covert.[8] As Giddens notes, the level of practical consciousness is key to understanding why actors choose their acts. In the same way, by viewing language behavior as situated at the practical as well as the discursive level of consciousness, we move beyond seeing language as merely referential to seeing it as also being a social and stylistic vehicle that constructs and is constructed by coexisting individual identities, group level processes, and structural inequalities.

Although structuration theory has been criticized for being too abstract (Stones 2005: 7), Giddens uses a linguistic metaphor to develop the notion of the "duality of structure." Language is a social structure: an organized field of human practice and social relations that can be understood on interrelated individual, collective, and structural levels. As Giddens (1979: 77-8) notes, "[W]hen I utter a grammatical English sentence in a casual conversation, I contribute to the reproduction of the English language as a whole. This is an unintended consequence of my speaking the sentence, but one that is bound indirectly to the recursiveness of the duality of structure." For example, when we speak, we must conform to procedural rules (e.g., of turn-taking, syntax, etc.) so that others may understand us. In turn, we reinforce these same rules and norms when we speak by them. We may also change these rules, since language evolves in our everyday usage, over time. In viewing language as a structure, Giddens adds to previous, traditional views on language (Stones 2005: 15-6):

[W]hereas structuralists and post-structuralists—from Saussure through Barthes and Derrida—were said to have emphasised the importance of language systems over other determinants of social life and practices, and interpretivists and ordinary language philosophers—from philosophers such as Winch and Austin, to phenomenologists, symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists—to have emphasised hermeneutics, shared understandings, and/or ordinary language over all else, Giddens wanted to combine their emphases with an equal emphasis on the institutional, material, and power dimensions of social life.

At the same time, language has the potential to be constraining in ways more stringent than form or procedural rules alone. For example, ideologies that are built into our social institutions constrain not only how individuals must speak in order to be understood, but more importantly, how people must speak if they are to be accorded the same privilege that those who speak the valued dialect already enjoy. Even systematic changes that individuals make to the structure with respect to dialect differences may be discounted by those whose best interests lie in perpetuating standard English. In these and other ways, extralinguistic factors construct sociolinguistic boundaries, which have less to do with language differences *per se* than with sociopolitical or ideological factors.[9]

2.2.4 Addressing Agency in Critiques of Structuration Theory

One major critique of structuration theory is that it makes several unsupported assumptions about agency. Referring to an actor's capability to change a state of affairs or intervene in the world (1984: 14), Giddens asserts that structures may be changed when actors knowledgeably and purposively go beyond routine to change or adapt their conduct; and all humans have some measure of this agency. But Giddens underspecifies the conditions under which people become aware of possibility for structural change. His conceptualizations of power, agency, and the duality of structure become more problematic when considering that structural constraints, particularly institutionalized concentrations of

power, may be stronger in the limitations they place on actors than his theory implies. Power disparities differentially allocate people's abilities to change social structures, but the duality of structure optimistically implies an even balance. Also, structuration theory may put too much faith in human agency for effecting social change. Most people have little motivation to break with routine (e.g., gender conventions) and act counter to system constraints, because the tremendous weight of routinization in their lives often leads to a state of near inertia. As a result, individual mobilizing for change is unlikely or slow to come about.

Other objections to structuration theory center on Giddens' lack of specific criteria for conceptualizing group-level processes. For example, how does communication by group members put structures into action? And what are the criteria for pinpointing how group structures change and evolve over time via group interaction? Although as Stones (2005: 3-6) notes, Giddens objects to these critiques, structuration theory remains limited in these regards. Structuration theory thus may need other frameworks to help concretize the study of social relations and social practices.

2.2.5 Community of Practice Theory

The community of practice theory or framework, as its name suggests, fundamentally centers on social practice. According to Wenger (1998: 76), the community of practice consists of a loosely defined group of people who are mutually engaged in a particular task and who have "a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time." A community of practice may be a friendship group, quilting group, sports team, devotional group, et cetera. As individuals engage in shared social practice within CsofP, their actions, including common ways of speaking, shape and are shaped by their social identities. Wenger

(1998) specifies three criteria (all or some of which may overlap) for the identification and classification of a community of practice: mutual engagement of members, a jointly negotiated enterprise, and a shared repertoire.

Communities of practice may be large or small, and members may belong to many different CsofP. Within each, some individuals may be core members, whereas others may play only more peripheral roles. Communities of practice may even nest within one another, or may overlap (as in the case of the church ladies and the porch sitters, discussed in chapter 4. Some critiques are levied against the CofP framework based on the reasoning that communities of practice may not constitute discrete groups and thus may be difficult to employ as units of analysis; see below).

In addition to considering interactions among the participants being studied, the CofP framework makes connections with broader ideologies. Every individual is seen as being a member of many social groups as well as a member of society, which impacts individuals and groups alike, via ideologies and socialization mechanisms. To summarize:

> [P]articipation in social practice—subjective as well as objective—suggests a very explicit focus on the person, but as person-in-the-world, as member of a sociocultural community. This focus in turn promotes a view of knowing as activity by specific people in specific circumstances. … Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. (Lave and Wenger 1991: 52-3)

Thus, specific social, including linguistic, practices index local meanings within the community of practice, which is a site for understanding connections between these practices and broader social structures (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992a, b; 1998). These structures are created, enacted, and challenged over time by agents according to the social constraints

that are relevant to us and our perceptions of what is appropriate within our CsofP (though members may not all share assumptions about what is acceptable; Bucholtz 1999b). At the same time, broad social ideologies and collective representations endemic to social structures (and reinforced in interaction) affect the perceptions and experiences of individual agents. Finally, the effects of these structures are not isolable or separable; rather, they interact in their influence on group and individual identity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 191).

A focus on how linguistic and other practices are negotiated by agents, in interaction, in the face of structural constraints makes the CofP framework (originally developed in education theory) accessible to sociolinguists. For example, Lave and Wenger (1991: 105) specify that "learning how to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants." These and other overt references to language may explain why sociolinguists have gravitated to CofP theory as they have to other practice theories, such as Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1977a, b); see also Bucholtz and Hall (2004: 377-8). But even more so than Bourdieu's practice theory, CofP theory may be amenable to sociolinguists because of its focus on objective criteria for membership in a CofP and the ability to take the CofP as a unit of analysis instead of individual language users within a pre-defined speech community (Bucholtz 1999a, Meyerhoff 2002: 527). In contrast, habitus is a looser concept that may be less easily operationalized and thus less applicable to being used in sociolinguistic (particularly variationist) research.

CofP theory also has several benefits over the social network studies popular during the second wave of variationist research. These studies have typically designated inclusion in or exclusion from networks based on externally salient criteria, such as work cohort or

socioeconomic status—criteria that may not accurately reflect and may even overlook the deliberate social choices that individuals make when defining themselves. In the CofP framework, however, people are aware of what is necessary to be a member of their CsofP, and they can participate in them to varying degrees (Meyerhoff 2002: 533). Moreover, social networks are seen as being observable realizations of people's shared sense of affiliation and their interactions within their various communities of practice—rather than as a series of "links" based on shared roles with others as employees, friends, et cetera (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999). These foci on local salience, subjective experience, and negotiation of personal identity allow for a view of people as dynamically belonging to social groups, rather than being classified as members of objective categories.

Perhaps the best-known study that uses the community of practice framework is Eckert's (1989, 2000) study of the Jocks and the Burnouts, discussed in chapter 1. Eckert (2005) locates her work as both a second-wave and a third-wave variationist study. She links local categories to broader demographics within the Detroit high school as a speech community (characteristic of the second wave), while also analyzing the Jocks and the Burnouts as CsofP (characteristic of the third wave). I view this overlap as evidence for the theoretical connections between the second wave and the third wave. Both studies depend on qualitative methods to uncover local meanings with regard to broader categories, and both see variables as symbolic resources that create composite social identities. Particularly in CofP studies, third wave research might just as easily be seen as an extension of the second wave's emphasis on connecting the local to the structural—with a specific interactional-level, constructivist focus. This position is easily supported when we consider the roots of CofP theory in practice theory and its connections to structuration theory, discussed below.

2.2.6 Critiques of Community of Practice Theory

Some researchers have criticized CofP theory, as well as ethnographic research in general, for a narrowness in scope that may limit researchers from making broader claims about the social and about the place of language in interaction with it. For example, Dubois and Horvath (1999) have noted that work by Eckert (1989) focuses on how variation works at the level of small groups; their implicit criticism that it fails to provide concrete evidence for connections between linguistic practices made on an interactional level and more macro social structures. Other critics also feel that a shortcoming of the CofP framework is that it can lead to results that cannot be applied outside of the community of practice. For example, Mills (2003: 197) argues:

> Perhaps what needs to be added to the notion of the community of practice is a wider notion of the social and an awareness of the pressure that institutions can exert on communities and individuals. [Otherwise], it is difficult to move beyond the community of practice and explain why certain values and forms of behaviour are globally valued more than others. …to be aware that institutions … also exert pressure on individuals and suggest possible persuasive positions for them to adopt.

A second critique of CofP studies is that they have primarily centered on how language variation contributes to the formation of gendered and raced social styles (e.g., Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1995, 1998; Bucholtz 1999c, 2001; Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999). Only to a limited extent has class been theorized as interacting with other social identities in CofP work (see similar critiques of intersectionality studies above). Eckert's (1989, 2000) main reason for introducing community of practice construct into sociolinguistics was to refine conceptualizations of social class (as was Milroy's intent in her 1987 research on social networks), and Eckert's work does analyze the Jocks and the Burnouts with relation to the class structure. Despite her attention to class, however, the gap remains in sociolinguistics, particularly in third-wave variationist studies. Bucholtz (personal

communication) explains a few reasons behind the dearth of CofP studies that adequately

address social class. For one, the CofP framework has not taken hold in Britain, where social

class is more clearly marked and where research on social class has a stronger tradition.

Similarly, the CofP framework has not had much of an impact in variationist

sociolinguistics—having primarily been used in qualitative analyses so far (e.g., in work by

discourse analysts, narrative analysts, conversation analysts, and linguistic anthropologists,

including Mendoza-Denton 1996, Hicks 2005, and Bucholtz forthcoming).

Finally, CofP theory faces similar critiques to those levied against intersectionality

theory (e.g., is its scope impractical to capture in empirical research?). For one, the nature of

the construct is fluid and overlapping. If speakers can belong to and participate in a variety

of CsofP, how can researchers deal with the multiplicity of CsofP in an analytical way—e.g.,

how might we measure the relative weight and contribution of different CsofP to a speaker's

linguistic repertoire (Wolfram, personal communication)? Similar to Stewart and

McDermott's (2004: 537) response to comparable critiques of intersectionality theory, the

answer may lie in the use of mixed methods in sociolinguistic research. For example, mixed

methods are often used in the CofP paradigm. Qualitative methods can be used to identify

CsofP that are relevant to individuals or groups. Once identified, CsofP are easily

operationalized as units of analysis and may be included as variables in variationist research

(see chapter 4) in ways that entail much richer, more nuanced information. They accordingly

may go beyond traditional demographic variables or social categories in holding explanatory

power relevant to the local community situation. Future research should also be concerned

with these questions; some answers may lie in refined conceptualizations of networks (see,

for example, Dodsworth 2005).

2.3 Integrating Structuration, Intersectionality, and Community of Practice Theories

I have argued for the utility of applying intersectionality, structuration, and community of practice theories to the study of language in society. Now I move beyond discrete considerations to argue that despite the complementary nature of all three of the theories, none alone is suitable for understanding the role of language in society. Rather, the theories hold most potential when considered together in an integrative framework, as the strengths of each individual theory can fill some of the gaps noted for the others. With the perspectives of structuration, intersectionality, and community of practice theories, language is most strongly theorized as being a multilevel structure that manifests itself locally, patterns according to interactions between and among social locations and varies with and by interacting social structures within the broader power dynamics of social space.

First, the three theories are complementary in their views of social structures. Intersectionality, structuration, and CofP theories conceive of structures as interacting, socially constructed, and mutually constituted on multiple levels of analysis. The strength of structuration theory lies in its elegant and nuanced explanation of how social structures interact on multiple levels and how social action is crucial in this process. The strength of intersectionality theory is that it goes further to centralize the complexity of interacting structures and problematize how they are fused in an interlocking power system. Still, intersectionality theory's conceptualization of the matrix of domination and the idea that individual standpoints are rooted in structural locations is not far afield of Giddens' assertion that agents internalize aspects of structures, which are contextualized in space and time.

Structuration and intersectionality theories' foci on the duality of structure and on structures as rooted in inequality are ones that CofP studies (as well as variationist studies in

general) would do well to incorporate. As has been noted, CofP (and variationist) studies have tended to be limited in their structural interpretations. The CofP framework does share notions of the intersecting, mutually constitutive nature of social structures (Eckert 2000), but it centralizes the individual and interactional domains. The failure to consider the largest level in CofP studies is an easy omission that seems to be more a flaw in application of the theory than a weakness in the theory itself.

To refocus on the structural level, sociolinguists might benefit from revisiting key concepts from structuration and intersectionality theories. Giddens asserts that language, class, and other structures are enabling and constraining and discursively and recursively constituted in everyday social practices. Intersectionality theorists assert that structures are rooted in power dynamics and are actively co-constructed in interaction. Bearing these views in mind clarifies that the CofP approach is predicated on views of social structures that not only allow for but expect language to pattern according to interactions between and among them. If CofP studies established structural connections more overtly, it would also obviate the critique that results cannot be applied outside of the community of practice.

The CofP framework may also tend to not fully consider the structural level because the typical method for sociolinguistic analysis seems to be for the researcher to start from linguistic variables or forms in use and then try to generalize to the structures of race, class, or gender. A different strategy might be to proceed from the point of view of examining structures as patterns of interaction, and then consider how linguistic variables constitute or challenge the structures already identified. These views are close to those found in Gal (1987). She argues that patterns of choice among linguistic variants are interpreted to reveal

aspects of speakers' negotiation between individual agency, group dynamics, and larger class (and other structural) relations.

Second, both intersectionality and structuration theories share the weakness of not paying specific attention to language as an integral mechanism in the reproduction of inequality. Whereas intersectionality theory does not address language directly, it holds that multiple variables create social structures, much as variationists see multiple linguistic variables as constructing social identities. As a review of the sociological literature (chapter 1) has revealed, language is a key mechanism in inequality. More overtly establishing it as such (whether from within a CofP perspective or otherwise) might facilitate for sociologists this deeper understanding of how language use supports social inequalities—which requires a more nuanced understanding of the role of context in analyses of the social world, which also entails expanding notions about what constitutes data to include the linguistic (see also Franzosi 1998: 550).

Structuration theory goes further than intersectionality theory with regard to language, in that it specifically names it as a social structure. In this regard, its view mirrors that of sociolinguistics, which sees that language permeates social institutions, individual standpoints, and patterns of group interaction. Although structuration theory may underestimate the constraining power of all structures, including language, its focus on social practice shows clear similarities to the CofP framework.[10] That both theories see linguistic practices as being the outcome and the constituents of social interaction builds a commonality of perspective between sociologists and sociolinguists. Pursuing these connections could give sociologists and sociolinguists a shared, tangible mechanism to study alongside other markers that create social structures, including class. In this regard, language

can be centralized as a primary multilevel linking concept (Acker 1999) that can mediate between general and concrete expressions of structures.

Finally, intersectionality, structuration, and CofP theories are similar in the centrality they give to social action (the interactional level). Community of practice theory, like structuration theory, conceives of group members as interacting according to particular rules, which they negotiate within constraints imposed by larger structures. Unlike structuration theory, however, the CofP framework concretely focuses on the interactional level. It defines the unit of analysis, sets criteria for what qualitative evidence "counts" as shared social practice, focuses on how members negotiate CofP boundaries and how communication puts structures into action (though these connections may not always be fully realized in research). With regard to social class, given recent calls for sociologists to pay more attention to the interactional level (Lorber 1994; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Risman 1998, 2004; Acker 1999; Collins 2000), reconceptualizations of social class are likely to center on how this structure is constituted, as Acker (1999) suggests, via active practices. The CofP framework, which centers on group action, could thus emerge as a particularly viable multilevel, practice-based approach to analyzing social space. This perspective is particularly relevant to scholars of intersectionality and inequality.

2.4 Chapter Summary

I have argued that intersectionality, structuration, and community of practice theories may be integrated in a study of language in society that is accessible and amenable to sociologists and sociolinguists. The theories share complementary perspectives on agents and structures; the centrality of social action; a focus on conducting contextualized analyses

and viewing social structures as interactive and mutually constitutive on individual and interactional levels; and views of structures as rooted in power dynamics (though CofP theory has been the weakest of the three in this regard).

Understanding intersectionality and structuration theories would enrich sociolinguists' knowledge about social structures and would enable variationist research to "[develop] an integrated model of variation" (Eckert 2003: 116) that more intricately analyzes social and linguistic dynamics in multilayered social space. This perspective is important, since intersectionality between social structures has historical implications that affect linguistic practice (e.g., the formation of the racialized capitalist system that allowed racist discourse and our standard language ideology to develop; Bonfiglio 2002).

At the same time, sociologists can benefit from more systematically examining the role of language in processes of inequality. If class is seen as a social structure constituted by daily practices like language, then language can be seen as a viable mechanism for the reproduction of not only race and gender, but also class. Given sociological interest in the interactional domain as being a crucial site for the reproduction of social structures, it seems imperative that sociologists recognize language as a fundamental interactional mechanism that operates on individual and structural levels as well.

I now turn to chapter 3, in which I contextualize the setting of Texana, North Carolina. Chapter 3 provides a backdrop to the focus of chapter 4: the comparison of two communities of practice of women in Texana. In both chapters, I centralize the interactional domain, in order to explore how context-bound social locations not only reflect and construct individual- and group-level social relations in the form of families, status groups, etc., but also fit into the broader power dynamics of social space.

CHAPTER 3

THE SETTING: TEXANA, NORTH CAROLINA

"yet still feeling complete and proud to say/

that some of the bluegrass is black"

Frank X Walker (2000), "Affrilachia"

3.1 The Scope of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the setting of this field study: Texana, North Carolina. I begin by detailing the methods I followed in observing and conducting interviews in this setting. I then describe Texana, focusing first on the heritage of its people, including their unique situation as black residents in a predominantly white region. I describe the social geography of the Texana community and then review Texana's early history through integration, drawing upon factual materials and on shared memories of residents. I then discuss social class and family structure in Texana, with some attention to the past and more to present-day patterns. I then focus on the youngest generation of residents and conclude by discussing the attachment to place generally shared by members of the Texana community.

3.2 Portraying Texana

In the American imaginary, the region known as Appalachia is typically envisaged as a rustic, poverty-stricken place where hardened families live by old-fashioned values. These families are isolated in multiple ways: geographically, culturally, socially, even

psychologically. In contrast to the backwards, white, "hillbilly" society is the stereotype of life in the black community, a culture seen as the uncomfortable exaggeration of a vibrant and diverse modern America. Both cultural myths find common ground in their locations on the margins. As constructed polar opposites on the American cultural continuum, Appalachian and African American cultures alike are marked as deviant and nonstandard in attitudes, habits, speech, and style. In this chapter, I describe the setting of Texana, North Carolina, a small community that represents the intersection of black and Appalachian cultures. I describe this setting in a way that has been shaped by ethnographic accounts of life in other Appalachian (e.g., Stewart 1996, Bettie 2003) and African American (e.g., MacLeod 1987) communities.

A setting is a named context in which phenomena occur that might be studied from any number of angles (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 41). As such, any portrayal of the people encountered and stories told in a particular setting involves a process of representation (cf. Stewart 1996). The process of representing Texana begins with my investigation of it as a field site for possible dissertation research. In my master's thesis, I explored the intersection of linguistic and social identities in the tiny multiethnic community of Beech Bottom, North Carolina (Mallinson 2002). I wanted to explore similar issues in a larger black Appalachian community. In searching for a location for my study, I came across a description of Texana on a website that described a small grant awarded to its residents for a "history quilt" project. I was intrigued by the prospect of what the crossroads of regional and ethnic identity might look like in this place—the largest black community in Western North Carolina[11]—particularly with regard to language. I began to look for ways to establish contacts who could assist me in gaining entrance into this community.

One of my early contacts, who shared my interests in Appalachian speech, was Becky Childs, then a doctoral student in linguistics at the University of Georgia. In early May 2002, we began a collaboration to learn about Texana. She and I contacted David Brose, a folklorist at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, located 10 miles from Texana. We arranged to visit David Brose in May 2002, and during that visit, he introduced us to Emily and Michelle, two women from Texana who worked at the school.[12] We explained that we were helping conduct a project sponsored by NC State to find out what life was like in different communities across North Carolina.[13] We recorded our first of several interviews with Emily and Michelle there. We then took their recommendation to call Gail Ann, an older woman in the community who they said knew a lot about Texana, and we visited her the next day. These three women became our key informants, along with Zora, Emily's sister-in-law and Gail Ann's close friend.

We made 19 research visits to the Texana area between May 2002 and June 2005. Three of the trips were in 2002, three in 2003, six in 2004, and seven in 2005. Each trip generally lasted a weekend. During the summers or on breaks from school we were occasionally able to stay four or five days. During other, busier times we took a few trips that were only a day or two long. We spent roughly between 50 and 60 total days and evenings in Texana. During these visits, we relaxed with community members in their homes, or conducted interviews. In total, we collected 40 interviews with 49 total community members, men, women, and children of various ages. Half of the interviews lasted around 45 minutes to an hour, and half lasted more than one and a half hours.[14]

Given our interest in obtaining informal, conversational speech data for linguistic analysis, our primary method of data collection was conducting interviews. All interviews

were recorded on Maxell XLII high-bias chromium oxide tapes, using either Marantz PMD-430 stereo cassette field recorders or a Sony TCM-5000 EV professional portable field recorder, and we used either a Sony ECM-55B lavaliere condenser microphone or a Shure VP 64A omni-directional hand-held microphone. No speakers protested being recorded or having lavaliere microphones attached to their clothing. Some residents even asked to be interviewed. For example, after we recorded his mother, father, and sister, Roger asked us when we were going to talk to him, while jokingly explaining that he could give us the best information because he was the "mayor" of Texana.

We chose a casual, unstructured interview style in which we engaged in non-directive interviewing, allowing interviewees to talk at length on their own terms. Non-directive interviewing minimizes the influence of the researcher and facilitates the open expression of the informant's perspective on the world (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 129). We also wanted interview conditions to facilitate naturally occurring conversation because of the "observer's paradox" (Labov 1972b), or the idea that an interviewer's presence can affect the type and style of speech data obtained.[15] Thus, in interviews with less forthright individuals or those we were meeting for the first time, we tended to ask broad, open-ended, non-controversial questions about daily life, history, recent events in the community, or the speaker's family and friends and allowed the interview to progress at its own pace. After establishing rapport, we raised more sensitive topics about racism or about dynamics of residents' alliances and conflicts.

To facilitate obtaining casual interviews, our comportment as fieldworkers was also casual. We always took the same car to the field site, a silver Honda Accord, so that residents could recognize us driving along the road, see who we were visiting, and know

where we were in case they wanted to come talk to us. We always dressed casually in jeans, t-shirts or plain long-sleeved shirts, and tennis shoes, wearing minimal jewelry and makeup, with our hair often pulled back in ponytails. We carried nothing except a small, soft black case containing our recording equipment, consent forms, and pens and pencils. We also behaved casually during interviews. We sat on couches or on the floor, and we played with informants' children and grandchildren. To avoid alarming our respondents, who would have been suspicious about why they were being asked to sign an unfamiliar consent form, we first obtained each speaker's verbal consent to the interview on tape. After the interview was completed, when trust and rapport had been established, we asked them to formally sign our project consent form.

Another important aspect to our casual self-presentation involved information we did not bring up about ourselves. Some of the teenagers occasionally asked if we had boyfriends, but most residents did not ask about our personal lives. Similarly, we never raised topics about our personal relationships, religious beliefs, or educational attainment. We also did not mention our ages unless asked, but the fact that we looked young undoubtedly helped us build rapport with younger people. We were often referred to as "you girls" or "them two white girls," which suggests how our identities were intersectionally perceived with regard to race, gender, and age.[16] Our gender was helpful in aligning us with women in the community, who not only gave us access to their activities and social networks (see chapter 4), but also often helped us secure interviews with the men in their lives.

Although we did not formally schedule interviews, we typically visited older residents in the mornings, school-aged children in the afternoons, and working adults in the evenings. We became comfortable enough with our key informants (Emily, Michelle, Zora,

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Gail Ann) to drop by their homes unannounced. Each time we were in Texana, we made

sure to visit these women. Our familiarity fostered their informal 'sponsorship' of us, and

the women helped us gain access to their social networks. Zora, for example, arranged

interviews for us with her large immediate family, the former Texana church pastor, and her

cousin Tim, who otherwise was hard to reach. Gail Ann scheduled a time for us to talk to her

husband, went with us to interview friends, and arranged for us to interview the members of

her devotional group. Emily and Michelle introduced us to their extended families, including

their children, who gave us crucial information on identities of Texana adolescents. Being

able to say that one of these women sent us—or better yet, having them call ahead, arrange a

time to drop by, or vouch for us by accompanying us to the interviews—was a priceless foot

in the door that provided access to key data. Our familiarity with these women also proved

important for understanding social categories, both the one they identified (the church ladies)

and the one we identified (the porch sitters). These categories are discussed in chapter 4.

The sociolinguistic perspective necessarily entails situating linguistic data within the

context of the community. What people say, as well as how they talk, is crucial, as language

is used to give accounts, explain and evaluate events in the social world, and categorize other

people. Such information is particularly instructive when talk reveals misalignment in

values, rules or expectations (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 126). Our mostly

spontaneous, informal conversations with speakers allowed us to observe their behaviors and

styles in comfortable settings, such as living rooms, kitchens, or front porches. By leaving

the recorder running for long periods of time, speakers would relax and often forget they

were being "observed." In this way, we were often able to record and observe phone calls,

interactions with other visitors who stopped by, interactions with other family members, et

cetera. As Geertz (1973: 10, 17) notes, human behavior is symbolic action that articulates cultural forms. Throughout our fieldwork, we observed clothes, gestures, and habits that conveyed messages about speakers' statuses, group membership, and attitudes that became particularly important in our understanding of the two women's groups (chapter 4).

Other opportunities for observation arose when we interacted with residents without equipment in hand. We often gave teenagers rides downtown or took them out to eat, and played with younger children at the community center. On two occasions we attended ball games with families—a baseball game at the park, and a basketball game at Murphy High School. We were also invited by Zora to Thanksgiving dinner at her house but were prevented from going due to a snowstorm. When away from the community, we kept in touch with Gail Ann and Zora by email and telephone, and with a group of Texana teenagers by instant messenger. Through their IM conversations with us and also their personal away messages we were able to interact with the teenagers and follow the events of their lives, learning about everything from the recent football game, to their dates, to information about their racial identities (Childs and Mallinson forthcoming).

One event that allowed further observation and participation was our involvement in a Texana oral history project. With Zora as co-project director and Randy and Gail Ann on the advisory board, we applied for funding from the North Carolina Humanities Council. We received about $10,000 to create a small book about the history of Texana and an accompanying CD of residents' narratives about past and present life in the community, told in their own voices. That project shed light on the commitment that Zora and Gail Ann shared to community service, history, and genealogy (see chapter 4).

The major components of our research strategy—interviews, interacting and observing outside of interview settings with residents, and participation in the oral history project—are characteristic of the qualitative research technique of naturalistic inquiry. Less in depth than long-term participant observation, naturalistic inquiry still entails attending to individuals' spontaneous behavior in their natural setting with the aim to keep interference by the researcher to a minimum (Erlandson et al. 1993). While we did not take systematic field notes,[17] I maintained "jottings," occasional observational notes, about our interactions with residents, including styles of dress, habits, kinship, et cetera. I compiled these jottings and expanded on them while reviewing transcripts from interviews. I then personally coded interview transcripts for important themes and factual information. Finally, I drew on my memories, those of my colleague, and our tacit knowledge from doing fieldwork to recontextualize the interviews and my notes, in order to write a fuller account of life in the Texana community.

The remaining sections of this chapter describe Texana's history and people. Representative quotations collected during interviews are interspersed throughout. Quotes are transcribed according to the following conventions. Italicized lines indicate fieldworker's speech. I do not differentiate myself from my colleague, for ease of reading the quotes. Italicized pseudonyms identify individual speakers in a joint or group interview situation. Dashes indicate interruption, and capital letters mark emphatic speech. Periods indicate an utterance that ends with falling final intonation, whereas question marks indicate an utterance that ends with rising final intonation. Phrases or words in brackets are used to indicate, in general, clarifying information: they are used around pseudonyms when actual names were spoken in a quote, they mark uncertain transcribed material, and, on a few occasions, they

add supplementary and/or clarifying detail to the transcribed speech. Double parentheses enclose laughter or other affective responses, and single parentheses enclose a pseudonym at the end of a quote when the speaker is not otherwise identified. Any material I deemed extraneous and chose to omit from the transcribed portions is marked by an ellipsis. Other than these additions, the transcribed discourse is unedited and is intended to represent as closely as possible what was actually said by each speaker.

3.3 Heritage

Details about Texana are few and far between, documented in only some locally published books that give the history of Cherokee County (Williams 1984, Satterwhite 1995) or trace unusual North Carolina place names (Cox 2000). A paperback book self-published in 1981 by members of Texana's Mount Zion Missionary Baptist church documents the history of the church and gives a short account of the community. In all the publications, the most consistently documented part of the Texana story is how the community got its name. Texana was named for a young black woman named Texana McClelland (sometimes spelled McLelland), who moved with her family to the area in the late 1800s. She had arrived by 1870 (Williams 1984: 114), though some residents believe she may have arrived as early as the 1850s. Texana was the daughter of Isaac and Lucy McClelland. Her real name was Texas, but her father called her Texana. She founded the black outpost community, and it still remains the largest black Appalachian community located in the predominantly white Western North Carolina area.

Fred, a former minister who is now in his sixties, explained how Texana McClelland founded the community following the Civil War:

Right after the Civil War and everything, the slaves were freed. Texana McClelland was the first inhabitant on this mountain. And she bought a lot of land. And the fact that she bought a lot of land, the family ended up buying a lot of land. And my mother lived in the first house in Texana. And that's the first house on the lefthand side as you come up this mountain. It's a, what it is is a log cabin, a huge log cabin. But now it's been overlaid with modern material. And that we would naturally call the family home. And Texana, understand when she came here, had to live in a little, a little shack. She built a little tiny shack when she first came up, you know. No water, no lights. Other, other folks came. And Texana came up from my grandmother's side of the family. That's how all, all them got to be. And they're very long livers, I tell you. My grandmother's father was 111, my grandmother just about 100, wasn't she? And I had a brother in his late nineties, and her sister in her late nineties, so they were all long livers. I don't know what they did, but evidently they were doing something right. … But she was a slave. I believe she came off Harshaw Farm, they used to have slaves there.

With her being a slave, how was she able to buy land?

By saving her money, by working.

So she just saved it up working for a job and bought it for herself?

Well it took her a while, I'm assuming, buying her first piece. She bought the initial part of the land. Now where the land really came from was my grandfather's father. This guy had a tremendous amount of land all around, I mean, on top of this mountain and below. He had so much across Joe Brown Highway over here, he had a sawmill.

Historical records document the presence of African Americans as slaves in and around Western North Carolina and Appalachia, though these areas had the fewest slaves in the South. According to Inscoe (1996: 156), in 1850 slaves constituted roughly 10 percent of the population in 10 western North Carolina counties (including Cherokee County). At that time, the free black population numbered roughly only 100 people, and by 1860, that number had dwindled to around 40, as many free blacks left the area. Childs (2005: 17) notes that effects of the early slave situation in Cherokee County can still be seen in common Texana surnames, including Sudderth and Allen, which were those of major slave owners in Cherokee County. Karen's grandfather was enslaved as a boy, and she stated that even children "were made to work and they were treated like worse than you treat an animal of some kind, that I know."

Zora also remarked on the tendency of slaves to take the surnames of their owners as well as the difficulty of tracing back one's genealogical history to the days of slavery:

> We don't know, my grandfather came from somewhere toward Charlotte, out in that way. And he came, he came as a slave boy… and you know, he took up this man's [his master's] name. And, you know, we tried to research and can't, where he might have come from. See, you know, it was just hard, now, they was just kept. I did a lot of research at the courthouse, and they counted how many servants you had, you know. They broke it down into boys, girls, you know, men, women. And when they died, you know, one man died, or something like that. But they were not any names.

Rachel Anne similarly had trouble tracing her genealogy; as she put it, "It's not hard, it's just, can't get nowhere." Although she knew that her grandfather on her mother's side came from Stokes County, near present-day Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the only record of him that she could find is on his son's (Rachel Anne's uncle's) birth certificate. Rachel Anne wrote to the Stokes County courthouse asking for records about her grandfather and also checked census records, but no accurate information is available as she only knows her grandfather's first name. Given that "they didn't keep records of black people," she said, no record exists of her grandfather's original surname. He took the last name of the man he worked for when he first moved to Texana at age 15.

Despite not being able to accurately detail their genealogy, residents are clear as to the ethnic diversity of their heritage. To the casual observer, the Texana community seems to be populated by African Americans (and a few young whites, see below). But closer examination reveals a more complex situation. Many Texana residents are descendants of African, Cherokee, Ulster Scots-Irish, and Irish-European ancestors—which is the case for many black Appalachians, particularly those whose ancestors were slaves (Dunaway 2003). Texana's diverse history is not formally recognized, however. Although any individual might unofficially "claim" Cherokee heritage, applying for membership to the Cherokee

nation entails a strict process. According to Gibson-Roles (2004), an applicant wishing to enroll with the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians must meet three criteria: be a direct lineal descendant of someone on the 1924 Baker Roll, possess at least 1/16 degree Eastern Cherokee blood, and apply for enrollment either within three years of the date of birth or within one year following the 18th birthday. The 1924 Baker Roll is an official list of 3,146 names compiled and approved by United States Agent Fred A. Baker, pursuant to an act of Congress on June 4, 1924; it is considered to be the official base roll of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina (Blankenship 1998).

According to Texana residents, individuals with black and Native American ancestry suffered prejudice as well as small group, direct, and indirect institutionalized discrimination at the hands of the Cherokee and the U.S. government. First, those with one-quarter black ancestry or more were deemed ineligible to be put on the original Baker Roll—regardless of whether they had 1/16 (or more) Eastern Cherokee "blood." Second, families with black ancestors who lived on the reservation at the time the Roll was created were forced off the reservation. Third, some individuals with black ancestry who managed to have their names added to the original roll later learned the records had mysteriously burned in a fire. In other words, no matter if Texana residents today can prove their Cherokee ancestry, and despite having written letters to the U.S. government in protest, they are ineligible for Cherokee membership by virtue of having been excluded from the original Baker Roll. As a result, they are ineligible for federal funds, subsidies, and social services otherwise available to Native Americans—services that, ironically, were first implemented to address the lingering effects of past discrimination.

The following stories relay Texanans' bitter memories over this mistreatment. No historical books or Cherokee web sites of which I am aware have mentioned, much less acknowledged, those memories. Fred recalled:

> My grandfather's side are blacks and Indians. See, now, I'm talking about the people that originally came.
> *To Texana?*
> Yeah. I don't remember any of them on the Indian roll. And I don't believe it was because they were stupid Indians. That the people who were in charge of the rolls kept them off. The Indians, I found out later on, are also prejudiced people. And they referred to blacks as 'clouds.' You'd come down the street, this is what the older ones tell me, they see you coming, they would refer to you as a cloud, like a cloud going by. … In the family, this was never really talked about much, their Indian heritage. … They have a letter as of right now that was written to the president of the United States, a copy of the letter, asking why were they asked to be removed off of the reservation?

Margaret was born on the Cherokee Indian reservation. She remembers it fondly as a place where "we had all the privileges of the hospital and medicine and all that stuff, and school… anything we wanted from the bakery, we got it. It was free, everything was free." But when she was a child, she and her family were expelled from the reservation because even though her father was Cherokee, her mother was part Irish, Indian, white—and black. In Margaret's case, her black ancestry traces back to her great-grandmother, who was a former slave, freed when her son (Margaret's grandfather) was 12 years old. The boy's father was Kaiasaki Little John,[18] who was the brother of the then-Chief Flying Squirrel. After Margaret grew up, she married a black man from Asheville, and they moved into Texana. Margaret and her daughter, Joan, remain close, and they share indignation at Margaret's family having been kicked off the reservation, having their family name added to the roll but later erased, and having lost their rights to Native American land and other benefits.

Margaret: Well, I guess we got put off the reservation because my fore parents, my great-grandmother was a slave and they was fighting the slaves. Slave blood—that's the reason all of my people got put off the Indian reservation.

Joan: And our land was taken away from us. …The Cherokee people learned that my great-great-grandmother had been a slave, so they opposed to my great-great-grandfather having the land and they all had the land, and they all had the services you know all enjoyed the services. And they began fighting and I haven't, we have a letter, a copy of a letter that great-great-grandfather wrote to the president about the land, that he wasn't trying to take the land, I don't want anything that doesn't belong to me…. But then they passed a law anybody that had an ounce or half an ounce of a fourth of a ounce of black that they took their names off the books. During that time, because so many people that even around here they got a lot of Indian really in them. But some of them went back, you know… But yet still, I don't think is fair if you are Caucasian, white, and if you got 1/16th.

Margaret: I could have got that money they appropriating now if I'd ask for it but I didn't want to. My cousin asked for it, she went and seen about it, but they told her they was giving it to the younger people.

Joan: It's very political… the fewer times that they have to split the money, [the more] somebody gets, so if somebody. And to get your name, you have to be on the roll. Well, we have a copy of the roll and mother's family is on the roll, but then they, when this fight went on that grandfather lost the land, they took the name off. So when, so when you go back, you have to get approval from so many people who's on the council, so it's a political thing.

And you spent probably more time on the reservation than those people getting the money did.

Margaret: That's right, that's right.

Joan: And with 1/16, there's a lot of people around here that get it.

Zora added perspective on current relations between blacks and the Cherokee:

Cherokee doesn't even recognize a black person. They're very prejudiced.
And still today they are?
TODAY they are, more prejudiced, yeah.
Is it because of the money issues?
I think it's because of the money thing, yeah. 'Cause they'll allow a white person on the roll with no questions asked, but there's not a black person on it. I can't remember when they had a fire and supposedly all the books were burned, where the, it could show where black people, the races were, and all that got destroyed.
And it was kind of suspicious?
Uh-huh. Just happened to get those records, you know. …I don't even think they were getting money then, they were just getting a lot of free services, services and stuff, like medical. Being on the roll meant you could get free medical, free dental. Some places you didn't have to pay taxes. Like the housing and that kind of stuff. And that was even before they did the thing in Cherokee, the casinos.
So that's like where most of the prejudice comes from?

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Oh yeah, yeah. I've heard people say things about black people working over at the casinos, the, how they were talked to by some of the Native Americans, or things that were said or something.

Today, as a result of their mixed ancestry and the history that has embittered many families, Texanans have had to grapple with issues of ethnic identity and the fact that their heritage is often more diverse than the term "African American" denotes. In fact, many residents feel that checkboxes for racial or ethnic categories, such as those found on the U.S. Census, are insufficient to categorize their heritage. As a result, most Texanans self-identify as "black," a term they prefer since it is a designation based on the color of their skin rather than on any single racial or ethnic identity. As Zora explained in two different interviews:

> I call myself black because that's the color of my skin. Most everyone here is so mixed with black, white, and Indian blood. We aren't really one thing. So that's why I call myself black, it's the color of my skin and it describes me.

> My grandfather's mother was Indian. And we have white and Indian. And I know [Ray] has Indian [his father was born on the Cherokee reservation]. So it's, you know, there's not. You know, I find the term African American offensive to me, because there's not any true African Americans here. You know, or Native American, or white. You know, it's just so much stuff mixed in that you can't find a true African American. Unless they just came from Africa on the ship yesterday, there's not any. The melting pot, you know, we got it. ((laughter))

Similarly, the choice to call themselves black is, for some residents, a choice *not* to call themselves Indian. When asked if she still identifies as being Cherokee, Margaret said, "If somebody asked, tell 'em I'm black, you know." Joan added to her mother's statement, "Our race is a welcoming race… So, I don't say that I'm Cherokee because the Cherokee people don't want me. … So it's good to be Afro-American because we take in everybody and we don't do all this blood testing." For these residents, and as Zora's statements also imply, "black" is a term they prefer not only because they view it as being more inclusive and representative of their mixed heritage, but also because they see it as a way to reject

further involving themselves in the politics of naming—which is understandable, given their past experiences with such embittered and politicized battles.

Texanans who call themselves black may also be following a general pattern of ethnic identification that differs in part by region. In Sigelman, Tuch, and Martin's (2005) study, respondents overall preferred "black" and "African American" equally. Non-Southerners, however, were slightly more likely to favor "African American," as were respondents who reside in large cities. Respondents who had attended schools where *either* whites or blacks dominated numerically were less likely to prefer "African American" than respondents who had attended more racially balanced schools. And respondents who scored higher on a "racial identification" scale were more likely to prefer "African American" as well. Finally, as Sigelman et al. (2005: 436) explain, the combination of these factors is particularly strong:

> [I]t is important to bear in mind that the joint impact of age, community size, region, early-life racial composition in school, and racial identification was considerably greater than the impact of any of these factors alone. For example, consider a black woman who was 24 years old, lived in a city outside the South, and attended a grammar school that was half black and half white. For her, the predicted probability of favoring "African American" rather than "black" would be .758. By contrast, for a black woman who was 50 years old, lived in a noncity setting in the South, and had attended all black schools, the predicted probability of favoring "African American" rather than "black" would be only .34—obviously a very sizeable difference.

These factors obviously relate to a setting like Texana, which is a small, Southern community with high numerical dominance by whites in local schools, jobs, et cetera. It is thus no surprise that Texanans generally appear to favor the term "black." Unfortunately, however, because Texana is not an incorporated town, the U.S. Census does not provide data on the racial or ethnic self-identification of its residents. Even if it did, these data would not be useful, since individual responses to Census questions about racial or ethnic self-identification are collapsed into one "black/African American" category. Further

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complicating the issue is the fact that definitions of ethnic identity are shifting among younger generations. Although only about 2.4 percent of Americans identified as multiracial on the 2000 U.S. Census, census data may not capture emergent patterns of racial classification and self-identification—particularly for adolescents who are "being raised in a society that increasingly espouses the virtues of diversity and that has made real efforts to stress the legitimacy of multiracial identity" (Harris and Sim 2002: 624). Racial and ethnic self-identification should thus be monitored in Texana and other black communities.

Despite how residents choose to self-identify, however, they still face the historic reality of race relations within the American South that is fundamentally based on a black-white dichotomy (Davis 1991). In some cases, Texanans' own conceptions of their race or ethnicity are usurped by outsider or institutional definitions—particularly for youngest children who are likely to be of mixed ethnicity (who are discussed more later). Maggie Lou and Rachel Anne described some of these situations:

> *Kids of mixed race, do they get picked on?*
> Maggie Lou: You know what? They don't have them as mixed [on school records]. If their mother's white, they'll sign them in as white, as white kids. They don't ask. If the mother's black, then they'll register them as black.
> *So whatever color your mom has is what you—?*
> Rachel Anne: They register you as.
> *But the little kids in school, when you see a child that [is mixed]? Do those kids have problems ever, adjusting, maybe, who I—?*
> Rachel Anne: I know some of them do, 'cause, I know when they were talking about that at school, so-and-so would come home and ask me for the first time, what color am I? You know, she's black, or she's white, you know, what color am I? She was kind of light… she wasn't dark. She wasn't really white, she wasn't white white, but she was so lightskinned…. But she wanted to know what color she was. But they had her as being white 'cause the mother sent her to school. It's whatever the mother was that signed them up. And I don't think that's right. I think they should have a choice, you know, or say mixed or something like that. But that wasn't even on there. …
> *It's not an option.*

According to Nagel (1994:156), broad racial classification based on the "one drop rule" is still a common situation in the United States. She writes, "While blacks may make intra-racial distinctions based on ancestry or skin tone, the power of race as a socially defining status in U.S. society makes these internal differences rather unimportant in interracial settings in comparison to the fundamental black/white color boundary."[19]

3.4 Social Geography

As noted in the previous section, Texana is a historically black community. Currently, it has a population of about 150 residents. Most of these residents are black, and about 10 are white. All the whites who live in Texana are either partnered with black residents or are children of whites who moved into the Texana community to live with a black partner. No specific population records exist for Texana since it is not an incorporated town. Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, 231 blacks/African Americans lived in Cherokee County, comprising just 1.6% of its total population. This number counts residents of Texana proper, as well as other blacks who live in the same census tract.

Located in the Great Smoky Mountain region of North Carolina, Texana sits on the side of a mountain (referred to colloquially as the "hill") about a mile from the town of Murphy, the seat of Cherokee County. Cherokee County, in which both Texana and Murphy are located, is the state's westernmost county and borders Georgia and Tennessee. Murphy is a predominantly white town, though a few black residents live there in government housing and elsewhere downtown. Other small white communities also exist near Texana. Interactions with these whites are sometimes tense, particularly when the whites drive through Texana and cause trouble. Some of these interactions are described later as well.

The roughly three-mile long Texana Road is the only road winding up the mountain and through the community. Branching off Joe Brown Highway at the bottom of the mountain—near a small Texaco gas station that some locals call "the Texanaco" because of its proximity to the community—Texana Road connects once again to Joe Brown Highway at the top of Texana hill. Texana Road was paved in the mid-1950s. Since that time increasing traffic (particularly by locals who use Texana Road as a "cut-through" rather than going around the slightly longer loop made by Joe Brown Highway) and the speed of cars along the road has been a major concern for adults in the community, as it endangers children playing in their front yards and adults walking down the hill.

The earliest Texana residents originally settled high and close to Texana Road, as it is more difficult to build houses further back in the brush or along steeper sides of the hill. The few larger, brick houses in the community are at the top of the road, near the church. Further down the hill are smaller wood homes and manufactured homes or trailers. A few short streets, less than a half mile long, branch off Texana Road. These streets are either roughly paved or laid with gravel, and a few residents' homes are also nestled back along these pathways. Many of the earliest houses in Texana are still standing. Thus, many houses are the same ones in which residents' parents, grandparents, and other ancestors once lived; even houses that have been renovated often remain on the same land owned by a family for generations. For this reason, also, many residents live in close proximity to several generations of their family members. Zora, for example, lives in a house where her mother once lived and on the same land that her grandmother owned. Her brother and his family live two doors down, and her daughter Yolanda lives next door in the small house that her great-grandparents built.

Whether larger houses or smaller trailers, most homes in Texana have wooden porches or decks that residents have built themselves. Driving down Texana Road, one finds many residents sitting out on their porches, watching the cars. Friendly waves are often exchanged between Texana folks and passersby whose cars or trucks they recognize. Otherwise, the sight of an unfamiliar vehicle traveling along Texana Road—particularly with a driver who does not wave or otherwise acknowledge residents passed along the way— raises speculation as to whose car or truck that might be, who the driver is, where they are coming from, and where they are going.

The location of the community on the side of the mountain has had its benefits for Texana residents. The older residents mention that (before the days of cable) they had excellent television reception. As Joan said, "A big thing was, as you know, it's on a hill. When TV came to Murphy, it was very poor, but up here, reception was very good, so people did come up to Texana to watch television with people because the reception was good." Now, they have better cell phone reception than Murphy. As Gail Ann noted, even the "Fedex guy" comes up to Texana to make his calls.

One downside to living on the mountain, however, has been isolation from downtown life, goods, and services. According to Gail Ann, at one time a bus service regularly made a stop on Texana Road, but it was discontinued. In the past, it was also more common to walk downtown, but the increased traffic along Texana Road and Joe Brown Highway makes the walk much less safe than in the days of horse and buggy or even of fewer cars and slower speeds. Many residents who do not own cars must walk the several miles down Texana Road and into downtown Murphy, either for their jobs or just to go to the gas station/ convenience store at the bottom of the hill. Occasionally, if they are on their way to work or

if they have the time, Texana residents with cars will pick up residents who are walking

down the hill and give them a ride into town.

3.5 Early History

When Texana was first settled, one of the initial projects undertaken was building the

community church. The First Baptist Church in Texana was built of logs. As the church's

(1981) paperback book about the community attests, the logs for the first community church

were hewn by the women who had moved into the settlement. In 1881, residents tore down

the old church and built Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which stands today (Satterwhite 1995:

129). After it was settled, Texana was the largest black community in the area but not the

only one. According to residents, one smaller black community, Knotley, also once existed.

All that remains today of Knotley is a small black cemetery. Another small community

called "On the Branch" is now a street in downtown Murphy that does not have any black

residents. Harshaw Farm was also a site of a former black community and contains a larger

slave cemetery; now it is a golf course. Williams (1984: 29) states that the Harshaws were

one of only three families in Cherokee County that owned more than a couple of slaves. At

one time, they owned 43. Williams' book does not document the existence of a slave

cemetery at Harshaw Farm, however. It also does not mention the other, smaller black

communities that once existed and devotes just a page and a half to the Texana community.

Residents state that these smaller communities had churches, including an Episcopal

and a Methodist church, and Knotley even had a three-room red schoolhouse. But Texana

remained the largest community primarily because it was the location of the largest black

school as well as the Baptist church, which had the largest congregation of all the black

churches in the area. Eventually, the other smaller communities dispersed. As Gail Ann put it, "They was few people, and but like I said, there used to be a lot of people, more people than now. But when they took their families and left, the families went away, they married and had families, you know." Debbie also suggested, however, that some black families were actually expelled from communities like Knotley ("They wanted that land so they moved us over here"), but she neither elaborates on who wanted the land (the implication is whites) or how they forced blacks out of the communities.

Classes were first held for black children in the original Texana church. When the new church was built, residents also built a one-room schoolhouse where the community building now stands. This school had one teacher, and classes were held three months out of the year. Black teachers came from outside Texana. They lived there during the months school was in session and did not move to Texana permanently. In the 1920s, a red two- or three-room school building was built that included a kitchen (Satterwhite 1995: 129). At this school, children could only take classes until the 7th grade, at which time they either continued their education outside Texana or found work.

Pursuing further education was expensive, because children had to be sent away to school. Still, some families managed to make the sacrifice. Karen's husband went to King's Mountain to finish high school; he then won a scholarship to play football at a historically black college where he stayed for a short time before having to enlist in the service. Other boys also went to high school, a few went to college or seminary, and several enlisted in the military. Some girls, including Gail Ann (born around 1930), went to a private boarding school for black girls in Asheville. Betty sent her daughter to this high school and hinted at the financial burden she shouldered to give her daughter this educational opportunity.

Now when she went to school there, did the state give you any money?
I think they gave me a little bit. I don't know how much it was. It was, shoot, I don't know, it was in the teens.
Not much.
Uh-uh, uh-uh. But she didn't work while she was in school. We just … did what we could for her, you know. Got her through high school. It was several of them went to Allen.

Black children had to leave home to pursue a high school education because until 1958, Cherokee County did not have a high school for blacks. For one year prior to integration (fom 1957 to 1958), Cherokee County paid $13 per month to assist with the educational expenses of those families who sent their children away to school (Satterwhite 1995). Joan, who attended a similar boarding school for black girls in Hickory, recognized the inequality in having to be sent away by bus: "You ever heard of busing? … Well, we were bussed all the way to Hickory and Asheville!" The school cost $25 per month per pupil—which means that state funds covered only about half of the monthly expense for black families to educate their children. Some families, including Joan's, state that they never even received the legally promised $13 per month. Joan was still able to attend the private girls' school, however, because she lived with a teacher in Hickory who wanted a domestic to assist her family with housework and childcare duties. In return, the teacher provided Joan with free lodging and some pocket money.

Texana was self-sufficient for many years after it was founded. Until about the 1950s, Texana had many of its own small businesses. Fred remembered his grandmother telling how Texana once had two small general stores as well as a male resident who "did bodies," i.e., embalmed deceased residents. Fred's family also owned a shoe shop in Texana, and he said it was "probably the only shoe shop in town, for a while." The shoe shop owner was also Gail Ann's uncle. She nostalgically recalled Texana's self-sufficiency in light of

the fact that Texana no longer has any autonomous businesses. Now, residents go downtown

into Murphy for goods and services. She said:

> Texana had their own laundry, they had policemen, black policemen. Texana had the
> only shoemaker. They had, back then, you know, things were segregated, I don't
> know how they did it. They had their own land, they did all the embalming of the
> dead. Texana, and see, I remember this, the only shoe shop was my uncle's. He was
> in town, then he moved. He made leather sandals. Everybody from downtown, they
> just started coming over here. They had two grocery stores over here, the
> community. So really we have gone backwards to a certain extent instead of forward.
> Well, they had back then midwives, 'cause a lot of the women didn't go in to have
> their babies. They had midwives. Two doors up, the building that's been torn down,
> which was my uncle's. Oh they had the only floor finisher. He worked all around,
> you know, different counties, and go in and finish people's floors. They had
> carpenters, they had bricklayers, I mean, they had—and it was not that so much even
> that they went to school for this all the time. It was just, they just learned themselves.
> It was skills. But they had all of this, things like that, but we don't, they don't have it
> anymore. ... They had what they called, like we had a café. It was like a night spot,
> but they served food, you know. And my uncle up here, they had his store, you
> know, they served food, hot dogs, and then sometimes on Sunday, they'd serve, you
> know, you could buy a whole meal. But there was certain things now you did have to
> go downtown and buy, but [most of] it was here.

For men who were not entrepreneurs like the cobbler, jobs were scarcer and less

desirable. William, born in the 1920s, remembers that men his father's age would only get

paid about a dollar a day for their labor, which included farming, ditch digging, and working

in the nearby tannery. Many men moved North to work in the steel mills, mostly in Ohio.

As Joan recalled, typically only black families in Western North Carolina moved North to

find work, since "white families years ago went to Gastonia, Charlotte, because of the mills,

the knitting mills." As black people moved North, they hoped it would be "better," in terms

of job opportunities and race relations. Yet, Randy, Gail Ann, Joan, and other residents

reported that upon moving North many folks found that racism was as prevalent, perhaps just

more camouflaged, subtle, or less overt than in the South.[20]

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Although some men in the early community were entrepreneurs, no residents told stories of women in the early community who owned businesses. There was the opportunity for contracted domestic service, however. Fred's grandmother "took in washing when they didn't have washing machines." She kept three washtubs and a rinse tub at the spring near her house and carried cold water from the spring to her house. There, she would heat the water in a big pot and then take it back to the spring where it would be dipped out from the pot into the tubs. She would then wash the clothes by hand using washboards, iron the clothes, and even deliver the clothes back to the customers. Fred did not specify the race of the families whose clothes his grandmother washed; however, other women in the community talked about doing domestic work for whites.

In addition to working for pay, early Texana residents worked the land. Betty, in her eighties, remembered that because they grew and preserved food, families hardly ever had to go to the store except for staples like flour and sugar. Most families raised their own gardens, kept fruit trees, picked berries, hunted animals, and owned cows, horses, mules, chickens, and hogs. Both men and women fished, often from a nearby lake that contained bass, trout, pike, and other fish. Karen, now in her eighties, said she and her husband:

> would clean [the fish], scrape it and scales and he'd cut it open, take the inside out and cut the head off and I'd wash it, salt and pepper it, roll it in, most of the time, I'd roll mine in corn meal, and then in hot oil and it'd be delicious. And a lot of times we'd come back with so many, we'd give them away.

All these foods lasted throughout the year—particularly because women were skilled in canning. Milly, in her late sixties, said her mother canned corn, squash, tomatoes, fruit, ribs, backbones, sausage, and even fish. Early women residents also knew how to gather greens from the woods. Zora said her grandmother could find food this way.

When greens went out of season, she would—honest to God I believe there was some times we ate weeds and grass. But it was good! She would go find something. You would see them, her sister and her neighbor would call her. And they'd get their little bags together and their knives, and there wouldn't be any greens anywhere. But they would come back with a mess, they called it a mess, and it was a mess of something. ((laughter)) It was! Blue thistle, dandelion, narrow-leaved dock, Indian turnips, a little bit of this and a little bit of that. I think we're lucky to still be here! ((laughter))

Sharing food was a common theme that emerged in interviews with older community women. Rachel, Zelda Marie, and Maggie Lou, sisters in their mid-50s, remembered the practice they called "a sharing thing." According to them,

Somebody'd kill a hog, everybody in the community got some of it. Somebody killed chickens, everybody got chickens. Gardens, you got, give everybody a mess of you know, corn, green beans, whatever. Green beans, corn, greens, whatever they had in the garden, cucumbers, squash. They had, you know, it was just a sharing thing.

Zora confirmed, "When somebody killed a pig it was shared throughout the community. … When they made hominy that was a group thing. And canning and all that stuff. But a lot of stuff was shared." Similarly, Milly's grandmother cooked extra food every night, often cornbread, so that any late-night visitors who happened to stop by could eat. She said,

I was taught by my grandmother, we never turned no one away. If anyone come by and they were hungry, we fed them. My mother would always cook enough where like if it's six in the family, she'd cook enough for seven or eight, where if anybody came by hungry, feed them. That's just the way we were raised up. If anyone comes by and don't have a place to stay, give them a bed to sleep in.

Many older women also nostalgically recalled how food was good and plentiful, despite scarce money and resources. As Jean and Gail Ann recounted in a joint interview, "times were very hard"—"right, we were poor but didn't realize it." Gail Ann added,

One hog back then, I don't know how it stretched! You'd go through the neighborhood. Your parents would stand there when your father would cut it up. They'd get everybody a little bit and we would take it… but you'd give everybody some of it. Like I said, I don't know how one hog would go so far.

Older women also fondly recalled how their mothers and grandmothers would keep their big family dinner table set and full of food, at all times. Every Sunday, food would be cooked and laid out on the table. Every night that week, the mother would cover the food on the table with a tablecloth, so that at any time of day or night if anyone wanted to eat, they only had to "roll back" the cloth. Gail Ann and Jean said that "food didn't spoil like it does now" to explain how, without refrigerators (only ice boxes or springs), food set out on Sunday could last until Saturday. Part of the abundance of food stemmed from the fact that "nothing was wasted." Zora explained that when she was growing up, most foods were made—even those that are now processed, such as soda—and all parts of animals were used in cooking.

> *I heard that like a soda used to be called a dope?*
> A dope. That's what my grandfather did, he made dopes! And a cookie used to be called a big wheel, didn't it, a big wheel. What was that, a big RC? Belly gushers, or belly washers, or something like that. Chitlins and pig feet and pigs' knuckles and what's that one, oxtails? Pigs' knuckles and pig snout. Tongue. Ear. Kidney, yeah. You ate everything. My granddaddy used to say you ate the pig from the rooter to the tooter! ((laughter)) Nothing in the pig was wasted.

Finally, daily chores were a facet of early resident life and stood out in the memories of many current older and middle-aged residents. Quilting was both a creative pursuit and work for women like Anne, who made bedding and also sewed clothes for their families. Quilts and crafts were also sometimes sold. Rachel recalled that families were bigger when she grew up, yet houses were smaller. Most houses had a "big room" with three or four beds for children. There was no running water until the 1960s. Cold water for cooking or baths had to be carried from a spring in a hollow at the foot of the mountain and heated over a wood stove. Springs were also used to keep butter and milk, as well as for collecting ice. In the winter, residents would cut ice out of the river in blocks, store it in a cave on the side of Fain Mountain, and cover it in sawdust; the ice would last until summer.

3.6 Integration

Fred said that, for the most part, living in Texana has had its "good points." Although he had to do hard work as a child, he was able to work to earn money and still have time to do sports and play with friends; there was even a black Boy Scout Troop. Fred stated,

> I enjoyed that time in my life. We had one of the best baseball teams around. I think we might have won the city championship one year, I'm talking about before integration. The black and white kids got along great. You would not have thought there was such a thing as segregation because we played together. And we got to get to know each other personally, so, it was not a bad time.

Randy also claimed, "I didn't know any prejudice when I was growing up. Even before we integrated school, which I think came in 1964 when those big orange school buses came around the Joe Brown Highway."

A few older residents were purported to unreservedly support segregation; for example, Zora said of her grandfather, "He didn't want us to integrate … I guess how he grew up, you stayed with your own." Two older women, Gail Ann and Joan, specified the main benefit they felt segregation conferred: the good education and the strict morals enforced by the strong black women teachers at the girls' schools in Asheville and Hickory and at the Texana school. In the following quote, Jean discussed her respect for the black woman, originally from Texas, who taught at the Texana school when Jean was a girl.

> I am so glad that I went to a segregated school … because it was small and the teachers were ah, high-standing people. 'Cause years back, you didn't let people in your community that weren't, they would run people out of the community. And they had to had be [moral] character. Some of the things that go on now with teachers, then they would have been, yeah, people in general. This girl got up in church other Sunday and was talking about when they, the policeman came and escorted her stepmother out of the home. Because you just didn't live with kids, no, and shack? Not in the community. Cohabitation wasn't in the community. But anyway, the teachers taught, you had, they taught etiquette, they taught how to eat, how to prepare meals, sit down, have drinks, ah, all of the many social things, the social things that we maybe never had in your home, but she knew of it. (Joan)

As noted earlier, Cherokee County did not have a high school for black residents as late as 1958. In September 1965, the Texana school and Murphy schools were integrated: young black students were sent to Murphy Elementary School, and high school aged students went to Murphy High School. According to Satterwhite's (1995: 129) *A Pictorial History of Cherokee County*, "The integration of students and faculty went smoothly without incident or hard feelings." The memories of Texana residents themselves may suggest differing perceptions, however. In the past, black students had been encouraged by black teachers. But after integration, some Texana residents say, white teachers held lowered expectations for them, which contributed to black students' lowered aspirations for themselves. This type of hypothesis is borne out in several sociological and social psychological studies (e.g., Lovaglia et al. 1998, Roscigno 1998, Ridgeway and Erickson 2000). Zora explained the process that she believes took place in Texana:

> We had three rooms, our schoolhouse was a three-room. But we did more in that place, I mean. There were shows, you did talent shows, you had to memorize stuff. You know, there was just a lot of, you sang, you had dances. Just, you were busy. … [At the Texana school] you learned, you really learned. You know, when you got out, you knew, you knew something. And I think a lot of the people that went to school in Texana and went off, a lot of them went on to college. I know a lot of the men did. It might've been seminary school or something like that, but they went. … I really think that going to school in Texana we had opportunities. I think when we integrated, I think that hurt us worse than anything, really. 'Cause we got lost. You know, we got lost in the shuffle, what, kind of fell between the cracks. 'Cause here we were made to do things, and there we wasn't expected to know HOW to do it.

In a similar vein, Monica was adamant that prejudice had shaped what she was taught (i.e., the curriculum) in the Murphy schools. In her thirties, Monica began writing articles during black history month for *The Cherokee Scout*, the local Murphy newspaper, as a way to educate locals (white and black) about black heritage. She explained,

> Then all of a sudden I decide that I'm black and I appreciate being black. And I didn't know nothing about black history 'til I went to Atlanta, to school, they didn't

teach it here. And then I started getting me interested in black history. So I would, every February, the month of February would be dedicated to me for black history. And I just started writing black history articles, every week for the month of February. So I started getting a little love from them from that, a little under the hand, you know, salary salary, they did that for me. And they appreciated it because the sales went up, every February, the sales went up. 'Cause black people definitely interested, I want to see what [Monica] wrote. And then the white people wanting to read and say, hey, I didn't know that nigger had that much sense! Or, did the black man really invent the traffic light? I wanna see that. You know, so, they started being more interested.

Other residents expressed their resentment over more salient outcomes of racial

segregation: social isolation and exclusion. Karen remembered that "while we can go

anywhere in town to eat that you want to and stores, there was a time that couldn't. To eat,

you had to go in the back door and get it and take it on out with you." Both Emily and

Debbie, born in the 1950s, remembered the separate balcony area at the one movie theater in

Murphy, where blacks had to stand to watch films. They also remembered that black

children were not allowed to go swimming in the downtown swimming pool. Even after

integration, black children had to shower before swimming. Emily recalled,

> We could not go swimming over there to the swimming pool. Then after we got to
> going to school and stuff, they FINALLY let us go into the pool, but for only one
> reason: we had to shower before we got into the water.
> *Really?*
> Yes, we sure did, I'll never forget. We did, we had to shower before we could jump
> into the pool. The white kids was already in the pool, swimming their ASS off! We
> had to shower every time. If you come out of the pool, and bought a snack or
> something like that, you had to shower to go back into the pool.
> *REALLY?*
> You know, that's just then or whatever. We didn't really care, I guess 'cause we
> were young, didn't know no better, or you know, kids just wanting to swim. So we
> didn't really care. That's what it is. We didn't care as long as we got to swim. So
> that's what, I remember that too.

Many residents say that since integration, however, race relations with local whites

living in Murphy and the surrounding small white communities have improved. The Texana

residents cite several reasons: white folks expressing prejudice and racism less overtly

(which implies that they see covert racism as an improvement over flagrant racial conflict); more blacks moving into white areas; more whites moving into Texana; and the increased prevalence of interracial relationships. The increase of interracial relationships in Texana is described later in this chapter. The trend toward interracial relationships is also increasing in the U.S. in general (Romano 2003).

Betty said that relations with whites in the Murphy area used to be "bad," but now they are "better." According to Rachel Anne, race relations with whites had improved to their current state by the mid 1970s:

> There was still some that, you know, was prejudice, [and then] there was some that, you know, treat us like we was the same as they were. But then like I said, you had this little crowd that was, you know, blacks are the niggers or you know. Blacks would call them honkeys or crackers. You know, just bickering back and forth like that. But by the time I graduated, it done got better.

Emily also said, "It's changed a lot, it took a while though. I tell you, it did. Now it don't faze me, I guess people done realized it's nothing they can do now. Use to, they could do a little something, whatever. But now I guess they figure it's nothing they can do [to stop interracial relationships]." Similarly, Karen stated, "They's some few whites that live over in this community and they get along with no, you know, trouble or anything. I'ma say they get along pretty good, the blacks and whites."

This is not to imply that residents believe they no longer face prejudice from local whites. Maggie Lou and her sister Rachel Anne, for example, worried about the young Texanans' experiences at school—in particular, about the apparent lack of commitment by school officials to prevent the white kids from harassing and threatening the black kids.

> *Maggie Lou:* Our kids go through a lot. 'Cause over here, they're prejudiced.
> *Rachel Anne:* Yeah, they got a lot of prejudice in this school over here.
> *Maggie Lou:* We've had meetings and stuff before. And they won't do anything about it. [They came] to school with rebel flags said we're gonna get ready to hang

some kids. You know, nobody wouldn't do nothing about that. It's okay, it's just those BLACK persons I gotta worry about. [That's what] I get from them. Our kids sometime live in danger.   And nobody knows it. It's them white guys, mainly. They call them [rebel men]. They got rebel flags and all, and they flew rebel flags in the parking lot at the school. And instead of doing something about it, he goes in and say, clean this up before somebody see it. But the kids had already seen it.
Do you think they're angry or upset because they're dating white girls, are they just prejudiced people?
Maggie Lou: I think that's it. Some of them I'd say—
Rachel Anne: Some of them are prejudiced, period. A lot of it is because these black guys are not only dating white girls but they're going with Indians, and. A lot of time you can pull up down here and won't be no blacks no where. They'll be white girls and Mexicans.

These quotes bring to light an apparent contradiction between older residents' perspectives on life in the Texana community and those of teenagers. In the previous quotes, adult residents from Texana overwhelmingly assert that race relations have gotten "better" since they were growing up, yet adolescents are still facing racial threats, hearing epithets, and fearing for their safety. Thus, if the situation between whites and blacks in the Texana area is "better" now, then the logical implication is that the racial situation between whites and blacks must have been unbearable in previous generations. To be sure, a few of the young adults and middle-aged folks did tell poignant stories about the discrimination they faced (for example, Roger's story about his school principal and Emily's story about black children having to shower before swimming).

The question thus remains, did the older residents actually experience little to no black-white racial conflict? Or if they did, perhaps they did not perceive it as conflict or did not perceive the magnitude of it? I find both explanations unlikely. Rather, my speculation is that older residents talk less about black-white conflict for several reasons. One reason is that older residents may be sensitive to norms that might constrain them somewhat from talking about racial conflict with two white, young interviewers; this hypothesis is plausible.

Another explanation I propose stems from the fact that oldest residents did express considerable outrage to us about the discrimination they faced at the hands of local Native Americans and the U.S. government in general. They may have seen these conflicts as more debilitating than smaller-scale direct racial confrontations with local whites and thus were more likely to talk about them in interviews. Finally, as discussed later, a third possibility is that Texana's youngest residents are less inhibited about talking about prejudice and racism, particularly to young fieldworkers.

3.7 Social Class

When examining the typical indicators of class that have been used in social science research—place of residence, educational status, and income/occupational status—a picture emerges to suggest that class and status in modern Texana were shaped by the community's early historical context. As in the days when early residents settled high on Texana Road, material wealth and status still correlates spatially. The largest homes (those made of wood as well as the only ones made of brick) stand at the top of the hill, near the church. Smaller homes (made of wood or painted cinderblock) and manufactured homes or trailers are located near the middle and bottom of the hill. At the very bottom of the hill, where Texana Road begins, are tiny, cinderblock apartments.

These apartments have government-subsidized rent.[21] Two rows of interconnected apartments stand perpendicular and face a roughly paved parking lot, with only a few spots occupied by older cars. We interviewed one young woman and her mother who lived together in one of these apartments. Inside their living room, the overhead light glared off the pale, light-green painted cinderblock walls, and their sparse furnishings consisted of two

worn, seventies-style, brick red, dark yellow, and burnt orange plaid couches, a scuffed brown coffee table, and a small television set in the center of the room. The young woman ate Ramen noodles, smoked a Swisher Sweet cigarette, and chatted over an hour with us while her mother prepared for a doctor's visit. Neither woman was employed or owned a car at the time; they eventually moved away from Texana to live with relatives in Ohio and have not returned to the community.

Recent job opportunities for Texana men and women have been varied and, according to residents, less than abundant. With the exception of the former pastor of the Texana church and one man who worked as a medic in the local hospital, the older and middle-aged men we met all held blue-collar jobs. William was a long haul truck driver many years, a job that often required him to be away from home, as far as the west coast, for weeks at a time. Other older men worked for the state, such as in the forest service and for North Carolina's Department of Transportation, or for contracting companies. A few men made extra money by picking up and delivering ("running and hauling") moonshine (also called "bootleg whiskey"). Some men around the area are said to still make it, but these illegal activities risk run-ins with local law enforcement, as in the past.

Several older and middle-aged men left the community to join the military, such as Randy, Zebe, Tim, and Matthew. Some of these men were married when they left, and they all eventually moved back to Texana. Zora said, "That's what was left, I mean, you went in the service. I had two uncles who stayed in and retired, 'cause there's really nothing to come back here and do." Ray—despite having experienced post-traumatic stress disorder after returning from serving in Vietnam—said he wished he was still in the military because it was "good money"; at that time he made about $90 per month. Ray said the military "was good

then, it's Boy Scouts now." When asked why the military has softened, Ray cited, laughing, "co-ed barracks" and easier training regimens.

Other older and middle-aged men moved to other states to search for better jobs—only to find that opportunities there were scant as well. Tim, for example, spent two years in Vietnam and then went to the Midwest in the late 1960s to work in the steel mills: "'Cause, you know, when I first left there wasn't no jobs, but you know, like a hard labor, like baling hay and cutting wood, and stuff like that. At the time they didn't have the plants and stuff around. So I mostly like went up, you know, to work and stuff." Dislike of the crime and city life he experienced ("I saw more killing in Indiana than I did in Vietnam") brought him back to Texana, but his brother still lives in the Midwest.

Factory work was always common for Texana residents, despite its instability. Gail Ann recounted how, several decades ago, the community lost residents as families moved to Alcoa, Tennessee, to work at the aluminum plant. Recently, several factories near Texana that once employed many residents, male and female, have closed. Perhaps the biggest loss was the Levi's plant that employed 500 to 600 workers but shut down around 1999, costing several residents their jobs. Randy, for example, had worked there for almost 24 years when it closed; now he paints houses for a construction company. Factories that make automobile brakes, airplane parts, and tools remain operational today.[22] Several men from Texana work in these factories. Other men do construction, roof, lay asphalt, work at fast food restaurants, or hold other blue-collar jobs.

Although there is a trend for Texana residents to move away for a time to find work and later return to the community, many former residents who have left have also stayed away. Popular places where former Texanans have moved are Knoxville, Tennessee;

Durham, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and various towns or cities in Virginia and Ohio, such as Dayton. Residents we interviewed did not say whether their relatives or children found better job opportunities in these places, and they also did not comment on whether these individuals were better or worse off for having left the area.

There are a few notable cases of men who have moved away from Texana and are now extremely wealthy. First, Gail Ann's son moved to Atlanta to attend college. After a semester, he dropped out and worked his way into the music business. He is now a top record executive, and his son is a major rap artist and producer. Second, Matthew's son played football at a Division I university and was an acclaimed professional football player; he now works in real estate. Both Gail Ann's and Matthew's sons keep large, multimillion-dollar houses in Western North Carolina. During our fieldwork, we occasionally heard residents criticize these men on several counts. For one, Gail Ann's grandson was criticized for not "claiming" Texana as his hometown, though he spent many years in the community. While it may not be intentional on his part, several residents view his behavior as a direct snub. Presumably, it suggests a rejection of his local roots and identity and implicitly denies credit to the community for helping raise him and contribute to his later success.

More often, the men are criticized for not sharing their money with others. The men do share money with their own families, however. Gail Ann even mentions that she had to tell her son and grandson to stop buying her cars because the additional insurance premiums were too expensive. Instead, the men are criticized for not giving more money to the community. One resident said, for example, of one of the men, "To me, the community gave to him growing up. He grew up in this community you know, [and to] me, you should give back to your community. And you know with him, he just comes back to show what he has."

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Other residents mentioned that one of the men actually has donated money to the community church, the folk school, and the local community college. But the feeling is that the men should give back less sporadically and more directly to Texana—which suggests the strong ideals about willingly sharing resources held in this community (and in black communities in general; see Hill 2005: 36).

With regard to jobs for women from Texana, older women typically worked in education, in social services, or as domestics. Gail Ann and Joan were social workers who now work part-time for the health department, participating in a project to survey and educate men in Cherokee County about the need for annual physicals. Karen worked as a teacher's aide and also served white families as a nanny and babysitter. Betty cleaned for businesses and for white families. In one story, she told how she worked for a white woman for many years and became very close to the woman's daughter. The daughter moved away for a time to Atlanta. After she married, however, she moved back to Murphy to raise a family and asked Betty to come clean for her as well—which she did.

Many Texana women struggled to secure jobs, however. Training and proper credentials were not only hard-won, but they also did not guarantee a good job. Joan, for example, faced so much prejudice and discrimination in her hospital training program in Atlanta that she left. She said, "Oh lord, Atlanta. That's when I found out I was black, Afro-American, was in Atlanta. I never knew what prejudice was." Similarly, Monica tried to break into the traditionally male-dominated field of emergency medical service. She was open and bitter about the fact that even in the 1980s, racism and sexism hindered her chances at employment, despite her education and training. She eventually moved away to live in Ohio and Atlanta, returning occasionally to visit family and children in Texana.

At Tri-County, I was certified, now listen here, as an emergency medical technician. Certified to work on any ambulance in the state of North Carolina.
Did you do it?
No. Even after getting certified. But why I didn't do it, is because I couldn't get a job. And I had problems with that. They only had white males, white males. Then, I'm raising Sam, you know, well, look man, I've got this degree, I'm just as smart as anyone else. And they just had this little quarter, and they'd do like 24 hours. And I could sleep there. They don't have nothing to accommodate a woman. So, you know, I got all this for nothing. So then years later I would still keep getting recertified, now they've hired a woman. So then I'd go back, hey yo, I still got mine, what up. They don't need anybody. And, you know, so then after a while, it started you know, just, that's right, FORGET it. (Monica)

Among the current middle-aged and younger generations of Texana women, working for white families as domestics has decreased, and jobs have shifted toward other types of service work. A few middle-aged and younger Texana women hold office jobs, such as selling insurance in downtown Murphy. Some middle-aged women have also worked at the nearby folk school, as cooks or on the janitorial staff. Other women work in food service, factories, or cleaning jobs. Typically, younger women work these types of jobs only for a few months before moving on to another, similar one.

Other middle-aged and younger women work in health care: Gina used to work in Memphis, Tennessee, as a live-in nanny but moved back to Texana after a few years and now works as a home health care nurse. Zora began working with children in a developmental daycare; she and her daughter Yvonne both currently care for disabled adults. Yvonne explained her job, in which she is paid to sit with a woman of her same age while the woman does work for the brake factory or for Wal-Mart.

I work with the mentally challenged. …It's—I love it—you know, how can you explain it—they uplift you. They are just the best people to be around. … I sit there all day so that a young lady can work. She has, she has anger spells so she can't work without someone being there with her. So I just go up and—
So when she gets angry, what, do you like help calm her down?

Mm hmm, yeah, she's gotten used to me. I've been with her for a year and, you know, all I have to say is …what's wrong, and she'll talk to me. She's like my best friend, I love her to death. ((laughter))

Despite the fact that Yvonne loves her job, money remains a primary concern.[23] While she does not specify how much she gets paid, she often laughingly calls herself "poor." Other times she does not laugh, like when mentioning the expense of daily items, such as diapers, or other nonessential items, such as a trip to Dollywood. Yvonne also implied that money is tight in other ways. In one example, her niece asked if she could play with our microphone. While we were ready to let her look at it, Yvonne responded quickly, "I ain't got no money if she tears it up." Any extra money from her paycheck, Yvonne combines with her boyfriend's extra money to buy toys for her niece or fix up their small house. She hinted at the long process, saying, "We're still in the process of re-doing. Every time we get paid, we do something."

Although some residents have more money, most Texanans appear to have been affected by job insecurity and lack of opportunities for advancement. Yvonne remarked,

> You know, I think everybody's job scared, you know, everything closing and…
> *Yeah, I guess once you get a good job you gotta work hard to hold that?*
> Exactly, to keep it.

Roger also claimed that often "it's your last name that determines what job you get" in the Murphy area. This type of social closure apparently has plagued many Texanans, including Randy's and Gail Ann's daughters.

> It is a known fact my girls had to leave Murphy to find a decent job…. I know even when [my daughter] came back, she even applied at the bank. They told her she was overqualified. But, she, she, I don't care, I need a job, you know, I got a child to raise. There's still a lot of cover-up prejudice that's here.
> *You think that's what it was, they just didn't say it?*
> … I felt that because you were educated…, you know, you might could make me

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look bad. You're not going to tell me what to do. Now that's the way I felt like. …
So many times these jobs, these county jobs and things like that. They know who's
gonna, I guess it's like that everywhere, they know who's gonna get them before they
apply. They've got to run it in the paper. (Gail Ann)

In sum, residents identified lack of opportunities; nepotism, social closure, and

homosocial reproduction; and prejudice as converging to structure Texanans' job

opportunities—hypotheses that mirror results for young black men in Royster's (2003) study.

But evidence from Texana also suggests that the community's young women tend to work

the least stable, least lucrative jobs. Bound and Dresser (1999) found a decline in income

and employment among black women between 1973 to 1991, particularly for college

graduates. These trends also seem to bear out in Texana.

A final debilitating factor is that state-sponsored job incentive programs and grants

overwhelmingly assist the rest of North Carolina more than the state's 23 westernmost

counties (Newsome 2005). If monies from the Job Development Investment Grant, for

example, were "translated" into individual figures using 2004 population estimates, mountain

residents would receive just $4.13 each, whereas residents in the Research Triangle area

would obtain $32.88 each. Closures and layoffs have also hit more than 6,700 industrial

workers in Western North Carolina since January 2003—and, in so doing, debilitated a job

sector that "typically provides higher-wage jobs in a region where housing costs are the

highest in the state and wages are among the lowest." The combination of these gender-,

race-, and region-specific factors, which are also structured by job sector, likely contribute to

the tight job market facing not only Texanans, but Western North Carolinians in general.

3.8 Family

According to Hacker (1992: 79):

Black families today still maintain deep and durable ties, often maintaining firmer roots than white households do. Yearly reunions are common, with relatives from all over the country returning to the setting they still regard as home. Black family members are also more willing to care for one another's children, sharing what they have. Still, the fact is that extended families can no longer take on these obligations in the ways they once did. For one thing, urban apartments are not as capacious as rural homesteads. In many cases, also, relatives have new burdens of their own.

Similar patterns are found in Texana, past and present. At the time fieldwork was conducted, eight women and one man that we knew of were raising, had raised, or had legally adopted children who were biologically their nephews, nieces, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. Zora pointed out,

In the cities you see a lot of kids in the system, for foster care, and all that stuff. That doesn't happen here, no. And it's always been, years ago, if families, a parent or something died, then the extended family stepped in or the community helped to raise that child. But we've never, you know, that's another thing about Texana. You see a lot of, in big cities, people are on welfare, AFDC, that's not how it is here either, there's been just a few families. And I don't think a lot of people realize that, I think they think, they look at a black community and just automatically think everybody's getting disability or AFDC or food stamps, and that's not. Now there's a few families that probably do get food stamps, but as far as living off the system, [no].

Family solidarity is strong among Texana households, which is likely in part due to their proximity to kinfolk. Many aspects of family life in Texana can be gleaned from discussions throughout this dissertation and are therefore not relayed here. One unique trend in family life in Texana that deserves in-depth mention, however, is that of interracial families. At the time fieldwork was conducted, almost all the young adults who were living in Texana dated, lived with, or were married to partners who they identify as being white. As noted earlier, only around 10 white partners and white children live in Texana in interracial

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families. In the early stages of our fieldwork, there was one young adult black couple in Texana, but they separated two years later.

Residents say that one reason interracial relationships are widely accepted in Texana is because residents appreciate their own diverse ethnic heritage. At the same time, they also say, closely interconnected family ties cause young Texanans to look elsewhere for partners—and local folks who live outside of Texana are generally white. From residents, we learned that in 1990, there were only seven black students (out of about 500) at Murphy High School; in 1994, only five; and in 1999, only three. Thus, the demographic profile of Western North Carolina (Murphy in particular) heavily structures the extent to which dating or marrying a partner of one's same race is available to Texana young people. Since patterns of dating and marriage typically center on social networks formed in high school or in college, unless young Texanans move outside the area, their networks tend not to involve other young African Americans.

Yet, despite these factors that would promote interracial relationships, they have been prevalent only among younger generations. To some degree, older residents had blended families and pursued interracial relationships; for example, Randy says his grandmother's sister (presumably a half- or step-sister) was white and they would go visit her together in "the white neighborhood" downtown. But a few older Texanans, as noted earlier, also ideologically supported segregation. Now, however, residents say that the community is fully tolerant of interracial relationships, and we heard no evidence to the contrary during our fieldwork. As Zora said, "It's not even, I don't think even noticeable now. It's just part of everyday life, you know. ((laughter)) It's just, nothing's ever said or anything anymore. I haven't heard anything." Yvonne also added an interesting twist to this perspective, to

explain why she feels that kinship extends beyond racial lines. She said, "My boyfriend is white, and well [Claire's] boyfriend is half, [Tanya's] boyfriend is white, so you know it's accepted. ... And to me if you look down deep enough, you know everybody's kin in one way or the other, black or white."

The strongest deterrent, past and present, seems to be white prejudice against miscegenation. It has always been strong, and Texanans frequently talk about their experiences in dealing with local whites. Darren, in his late twenties, told about a white high school girlfriend whose parents kicked her out of their house for dating him.

> I really cared about her, and her dad and mom put her out. … Her dad was a guidance counselor at [a community college]. And I left school, told the teacher, you know, what was going on, that [she]'d got kicked out of the house and how it was affecting me, making me feel bad. And I said, it's because of me, so I'm gonna go confront the monster, you know. So the daddy, which I thought was part of the problem, but it was really more the mom. So anyway I went to him and I said, man, you know, I know you don't like me. And he said, now, it ain't that I don't like you, I just don't think it's right. He said, I'm not prejudice or nothing, I just don't think it's right.
> *But that's what it is then.*
> Exactly. He said, I've helped people from that hill, you know, get on to college and stuff, you know, and I want to help you too. You know, just, give me a bunch of crap. He shook my hand, you know, said it takes a bunch of a man to come up there and confront him, you know, I wasn't gonna go jump on him or nothing like that, but just let him know, man, I love your daughter, you know? It might be puppy love or whatever, but I mean, I wouldn't hurt her? I wouldn't, you know, try and get her pregnant and leave?

Yvonne and Roger also discussed the strong antipathy to interracial dating they remember encountering during their adolescence, while noting its wane in recent years.

> *Roger:* It was our age group that had the racist problems. Now at school you see a lot of mixed relationships. Back when we was going to school, they didn't want us at the high school. …Well, the teachers would talk to you.
> *Yvonne:* Yeah, like when I come through, they would say it wasn't appropriate. You know, we could hang out and stuff, but dating, no…
> *Roger:* … Now they [Texana male teenagers] call them, the white girls. We used to call them and their parents would hang up the phone, or talk shit, tell us not to call back. But now they can call and talk, their parents come pick them up, everything.
> *Yvonne:* Yeah. It's changed a lot.

Only one resident we interviewed, Randy, explicitly stated that he "does not see color" in the context of interracial relationships (in reference to the fact that his daughter is married to a white man). Rather, most residents—as noted throughout this chapter—openly and frequently talk about race. Once, we even heard two black residents play with the construct of race by joking with Sean, one of the few whites who live in Texana. Sean, Yvonne's white partner, frequently hangs out and drinks beer with Yvonne and her brothers near the community building. The first night we accompanied them, we did not know that Sean and Yvonne lived together. We asked Sean where he lived, and the following joking repartee between Sean, Yvonne, and her brothers ensued:

> *Now where do you live?*
> *Sean:* With her. I don't usually admit that, but. ((laughter))
> *Yvonne:* Part time. When I let him.
> *Michael:* We done told him, it's a long run back to Tennessee. ((laughter))
> *Sean*: Naw, I was born there, that's all. I lived there five damn years and I got out!
> *Michael:* See we got that limb right there stretched out for him! ((hearty laughter, with brother))
> *Sean:* Now I'm bout to kick yall's asses. I got more [?] than you. ((feigned muttering)) A damn cross get burned in a yard tonight. [pause] See, they call me the Grand Wizard. See, 'cause. Matter of fact, her daddy, a couple of years ago, we was up here, we was over there under that persimmon tree. And we was drinking, you know, having a good time on Sunday. And some guy come up from Savannah, Georgia. Wanted to meet everybody. He come up here to preach or something. Her daddy told him I was the Grand Wizard. And he, he, he believed him! He went back to church. He said, I can't believe how good y'all get along with the Klan down here! ((laughter from everyone))
> *Yvonne:* ((rolling eyes)) I never been so embarrassed in my life.

While teasing and joking among blacks and whites in Texana might serve to (covertly or overtly) remind all parties of the racism blacks faced in past and present, the general atmosphere in Texana is racially inclusive, and a few residents made broad statements to this effect. Randy says that patterns of interracial dating in present-day Texana are "wide open" and unlikely to change soon. About interracial relationships, Zora said, "I think that's God's

way of fixing racism. ((laughter)) 'Cause all races now are, you know, kind of getting

mixed." Debbie similarly claimed, "We claim everybody in Texana. Everybody kin."

Yvonne echoes in her interview, "This is just one big family. You know, other than the ones

that were, like, brought in. But you know, Texana is just—everybody's kin." Yvonne's

statement ("other than the ones that were, like, brought in") gives a hint, however, to the

ways in which Texanans' welcoming sentiment may be more qualified than they purport.

Claiming everybody in actual or fictive kinship seems to be reserved only for those people

who have displayed long-term attachment to the community. Outsiders who move into

Texana are seen by some to be interlopers at best, and dangerous and suspicious characters at

worst (see chapter 4).

3.9 The Youngest Generation

The youngest generation in Texana, those under the age of 18 and still living at home

with family, faces unique opportunities and constraints relative to previous generations. Like

earlier generations, there are very few blacks living in Western North Carolina (and, at any

given time, relatively few young people living in Texana at all). Donna, who was born in the

early 1990s, is one of few children her age in Texana and one of only two black children in

her grade at school. She gave a hint of the tenuous status of her interracial friendships with

the other white children:

> But mostly in my class, mostly white people. There only—I'm only—there's two
> people in my class that black. It's me and [name].
> *Wow, that's it? That's not many at all. Is that sorta weird?*
> Yeah. But they're kinda friends with me though.

In their free time, Texana teenagers and pre-teens like to play sports, see movies, and

go roller skating in downtown Murphy—especially on "ladies' night" (Tuesdays) when

entrance and skate rental is free. At the skating rink, many young people interact with each other in a dating-type scenario, and in many of our interviews the Texana teens told about the hookups, breakups, and betrayals that happen at the skating rink—often with young whites. David and Chris, who were around 16 when we interviewed them and were just beginning to date, said they face the most antipathy toward interracial dating from the parents of the white girls they like. As David put it, "The [white] girls, they don't care but their parents do." To maneuver around parents' prejudices, one strategy the Texana male teenagers, in particular, employ is to date white girls without the girls' parents' knowledge—and often, their family members, friends, and the rest of the Texana community are fully aware of the relationship. For example, Debbie's nephew has been dating his white girlfriend for two years without her parents' knowledge. When we asked why the girl did not tell her parents about the relationship, Debbie replied, "She [the girlfriend] probably don't want to hear the hassle, and I don't much blame her."

My colleague and I experienced a small taste of this prejudice. After one interview with David and Chris, we treated the teens to dinner at a Chinese buffet in Murphy and then walked over to Kerr Drug in the same strip mall to buy some batteries for our equipment. Walking into the store, we passed a white man who appeared to be in his late 50's. As we walked by, the man glared at the four of us—two young white women and two young black men—presumably thinking we were interracial couples. We might have missed the incident, but Chris immediately told us inside the store to look at the man again on our way out, to see him stare at us. When we passed the man again, we glanced at him and noticed his piercing stare. Chris asked me in a low voice as we walked away, "Did you see it? They look at us. 'Cause like black and white together and stuff." He then added, in a louder voice,

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Better not say nothing to ME!
Yeah, I was waiting for him to say something.
Oh, they won't say nothing, they'll just stare at you and scare you. It don't scare me.
Unless it's a crowd of 'em! ((laughter))

Particularly in the last year, David said, prejudice against black boys dating white girls has gotten worse, because of a case in which a local white teenage girl claimed four black teenagers from Texana raped her at a party and/or aided in the crime by holding the door to the bedroom where she was being raped. The claimant's accusations were eventually found to be false and the Texana teenagers were acquitted. The only person arrested was a 21 year old Puerto Rican man from Murphy, who was sentenced to 10 years and jailed for providing alcohol and ecstasy to the claimant and alcohol to other minors at the party. The claimant moved out of town soon after the case was concluded.

But the lingering effect of the case, regardless of the black youths' acquittal, was a spotlight on interracial sex that ignited local whites' prejudice against black youth and interracial relationships, while raising the indignation of Texana adults. Several residents commented on the rape case during interviews. Emily recalled, for example, that she saw the claimant's mother at a ball game shortly after the trial had ended:

> I seen her mama and daddy about a month ago at a ball game. Her mom spoke to me, hey [Emily], how are you? But during that trial and stuff, hell, she hated every black person she seen. 'Cause I think she thought those black boys had messed with her or whatever. Everybody thought that 'cause that's what first went out, you know. Those boys' names hit the street like nobody's business.

Randy also commented that, as a result of the case, Texana boys need to be more careful of their actions—and that their parents need to keep a closer watch on their children.

The trend toward interracial relationships within Texana has provided for unique family contexts for some of the community's adolescents. While Texana residents consider the trend to be a positive one, the fact that white or mixed partners most often move into

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Texana, rather than the black partners moving outside the community (which may happen more in other areas), signals lingering opposition to interracial relationships by neighboring whites. One emblematic example is found in the story of Heather, who moved into Texana at age two, when her white mother married a black man from the community. Heather's blended family of black, white, and biracial siblings and stepsiblings is emblematic of the emergent wave of bi- and multi-racial families in Texana. Currently, Heather and her older sister are the only white teenagers living in Texana.

Young Texanans (even Heather, who is white) recognize their marked status as members of a black community, in a predominantly white region. The fact that Heather identifies with Texana often causes tension with her white peers, who find it puzzling if not offensive that she takes "sides" with a black community. She recalled,

> Like down at the park … there was a bunch of black people, and all the rednecks were making fun of them and stuff, and I was on the black people's side. And they was like, why you over there? Because.
> *This is where you're from, this is your town. Is that what you think, like, this is?*
> Where I live. I've known them almost all my life.

Another part of Texana teens' racial awareness as "others" comes from stories they have heard in the past (e.g., about how whites used to go "coon hunting" for black people) as well as the prejudice and racism they have faced themselves. Heather, Andrea, and Chris recounted story after story to us about prejudice they face from classmates at school. Andrea and Heather told us, "There's still racists in schools," and they talked about classmates who were "prejudiced." Heather further stated that kids get these ideas from their parents (i.e., that white racist sentiment is transferred intergenerationally).

In one story, a male high school teen used "the *n*-word," which Andrea stated "caused a lot of drama." Because of the racial slur, a fight broke out in the hallway, in which Chris's

cousin punched and broke the nose of the white teen who had used the racial slur. According to Heather, David and Chris were egging on the fight, saying "get him, get him." As a result, the school authorities "got 'em for aiding and abetting" and the charges may land the young men in court. At the same time, white classmates are not the only ones that have ethnic slurs available at their disposal: in their joint interview, Heather and Andrea both called local racist whites "crackers." Similarly, Texana teens also use the word *nigga* to refer to fellow black teenagers. David and Chris stated they often say, "What's up my niggas," to greet each other. Chris referred to himself as *nigga* in instant messenger (IM) conversations and in away messages, and even Heather used the term (Childs and Mallinson forthcoming).

Heather, Chris, and Andrea also used ethnic labels when they talk about living "near the rednecks" and how the "rednecks ride through here [Texana] with big redneck flags out. And the other day, they were shooting. They took, they took off when [Chris] got onto them." Chris further noted, "Rednecks don't come to parties in Texana." In this regard, the teens' use of *redneck* specifically to mark white racist outsiders differs from the use of *redneck* by some Texana residents just one generation older. For example, Roger called himself a "hillbilly," and his white girlfriend called him "the biggest redneck in Texana." Roger also said "I'm redneck," answering negatively to an interview question of whether he uses popular black slang. The term *redneck* was also used by Yvonne to refer to men of her age who enjoy hunting and similar activities. For these residents, *redneck* thus appears to be used to indicate being "country" which in turn indexes an insider status as being a member of Texana as well as of broader Appalachian culture. In contrast, younger Texanans appear exclusively to apply the term in derogating racist whites.

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It is apparent that the Texana teens have the vocabulary, insight, and confidence to openly discuss race relations as well as the prejudice and racism they often face. My speculation is that they may have been the most open in divulging incisive views about white-black tensions in the area because they were the most comfortable with us—whether because they were less inhibited in general, or because we were closer in age to them. The sharply attuned racial consciousness of the youngest Texana residents is also seen subtly in their language choices. Childs and Mallinson (forthcoming) reveal that these adolescents mark their "othered" ethnic identity through ethnically marked vocabulary. Despite widespread perception that they sound "white"—or, perhaps because of it—Texana teenagers frequently employ black slang terms (such as *one*, *holla*, and *aight*) that they pick up from popular black culture or from older friends and family members who reside in more urban communities. When the teens pick up and use these slang terms (particularly in IM conversations), they use language to indicate their connection to the cultural capital associated with the young African American marketplace.

In some regards, the situation of the Texana teenagers resembles Anderson's (1991) concept of the "imagined community." His work focused on imagined political communities, like nations, but the theoretical concept appears to also have some utility when considering the feelings of kinship and cooperative spirit that arise among members of diasporic communities, including black enclaves in the United States. More generally, however, the strategies employed by the black youth of Texana may be a type of "cultural work." As symbolic ethnicity theorists suggest, ethnic groups may employ cultural symbols to carve out ethnic distinctions, even under conditions in which these identities may have little "real" consequence for their everyday lives (Lacy 2004).

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Although their life chances will no doubt also be structured by the racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and social closure that previous generations faced, younger male Texanans have potentially the most extensive opportunities available to them. They tend to hold high educational and career aspirations, and many of them obtain sports scholarships. Chris, who has made good grades throughout high school, twice proudly showed us a scrapbook he made that contains report cards, class pictures, newspaper clippings, and other records of his achievements. He and David plan to go to college and hope to play sports, like former residents of Texana. Other young men also attend nearby colleges and universities and often return to visit family, friends, and girlfriends on the weekends. It is unknown whether they will eventually return to Texana to live and raise their own families as previous generations have done.

At the same time, this generation of young women and girls in Texana appears to fare less well. Most of them have not gone to college. Instead, many work in factories or fast food restaurants and often are raising children. Several pre-teen girls, such as Donna and Andrea, say they want to go to college and aspire to jobs as nurses and accountants. It remains to be seen whether they fulfill these aspirations since, in general, it appears that young Texana men are finding greater success than the young women. These findings suggest some interaction between age cohort and gender with respect to educational and occupational achievement among young Texanans.

3.10 Attachment to Place

Texanans of all generations share an attachment to place and view the community as a haven. As Gina put it, "I can always come home if I can't go anyplace else." Those few

former Texana residents who left and do not explicitly acknowledge their roots are seen by residents as rejecting the community. Residents who have stayed or returned express deep ties to Western North Carolina as a region, as well as to Texana (and the Murphy area) specifically. Even Margaret and Joan, who openly talked about the terrible treatment and prejudice they faced, say they would be happy to call themselves Appalachians. According to Joan, if someone asked her whether she would identify as Appalachian, "I'd say I was, yeah, since that's what they designated the area and I'm proud of the area." Despite the fact that her ancestors only ended up in Texana by virtue of being expelled from the Cherokee reservation—"[even though] I didn't have much to do with getting here 66 years ago"—she says she would not change where she lives.

Similar sentiments are expressed by other older residents. Ray "guaranteed" that there is "no place on earth" like the Murphy/Texana area. William concurred,

> It's hard to beat, for a small town. … People, they treat you decent. You get along, we don't have no problem at all so. But I got friends that I just about growed up with and I been around them so much. We just get along so real good you know. …Years ago I might've tried somewhere else but I don't know, you get hooked in here, you get along real good.

Other older residents also expressed that Texana is a good place to raise a family. As Randy put it, for example, "I think [Texana]'s a good place. If you're not looking for a lot of excitements and you don't mind living by old fashioned morals, there's not really a whole lot of trouble for [young people] to get into."

To outsiders, the sentiments expressed in these quotations from residents may seem to contradict the racist experiences many of them have had throughout their lives. Yet, for the Texana residents, an attachment to place seems, inexplicably or not, to override intermittent experiences of racial conflict. One reason may be that, for residents, anxiety over the

prospect of leaving their close-knit, rural, black community is often coupled with fears of the "too fast" city life. When we asked Roger, who said he had "hung out" in cities before, if he would ever want to move there, he replied, "Hmm. Probably not… I guess the, the [life's] too fast, the city's too fast. For me." Yvonne, who did move away to attend a historically black university for a semester, moved back because the "city life" was "too fast" for her, too crowded, and she missed home and family. Even Donna, who is not yet a teenager, said she "probably" wants to move back to Texana after college: "All my cousins and my granny and my aunts, everybody that I love. Everybody that I love mostly lives here." In this regard, Donna shares sentiments with previous generations of residents who left the community, only later to return.

Whereas the phenomenon of out-migration plagues many rural communities, particularly African American communities in the Black Belt region, the opposite is true in Texana. While residents might move away for a time, particularly when they are young, to attend college or explore job opportunities, they often return to Texana to rejoin their family and friends or to raise their families (as in the case of Ray, Tim, Randy, Joan, Gina, Yvonne, and others). One trend, however, is that upon moving back to Texana, many of these residents are unable to find jobs that are appropriate for their level of education or training. In particular, the church ladies are very vocal against this trend (see chapter 4). Residents themselves only vaguely mention that moving back to Texana may have hurt their chances for social mobility, tending to focus less on their choice to return than on the actual lack of job opportunities in the area (discussed above).

The trend for residents to move away for a time and then return is not new to the community. Karen's husband learned the field of medicine while serving in the army. After

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he left the service and moved back to Texana to raise a family, he was hired by the local hospital and ended up contributing his expertise—although he had never received a formal medical degree—by working with doctors there for several years. As Karen said, "He should have been a doctor himself 'cause he knew it all, and I tried to get him to go on and do it but. …I think it just kind of left him, he didn't want to be a doctor no more. When he come back, there wasn't much work to do, you know, around here." Thus, out-migration and job stagnation for black returnees have been and still are structured by race and gender. At the same time, rural communities like Texana benefit from the human and social capital—the job training, values, leadership, wider social networks, et cetera—that residents develop while residing in other, often more urban communities. The development of such capital may be tied to the development and maintenance of vibrant communities, by allowing them to grow and progress (Flora and Flora 1993).

We interviewed Monica, who had moved away to Dayton, Ohio, during one of her trips back to Texana to visit friends and family. At first, she found Dayton's fast pace to be frightening. "After the first two or three months up there, I was thinking, man I better get from here! ((laughter)) These folks are treacherous …too much game, it's a trick in just about everything they doing. …I'm just like, damn, this is much [even] for strong-willed me!" She recounted how she assimilated by learning street smarts:

> Now, it's a year later, and so, sometimes my cousin and I go to the hood, that's what we call, we go to the hood. I live downtown where it's real, real nice, saditty people. And that's how they see me. But when I want to be gangstress, I go to the west side. You know what I'm saying? When I got to be the thug over there. …And so after a year, I finally established myself that way. …
> *When you first moved from here… did people think you were country? …*
> No, I stayed me. But they, where you from, Mississippi? Alabama? You know, stuff like that. And I says, why, you know, stop making fun of way I talk, you know, stuff like that. So it was obvious. And I think that's another reason why they zeroed in on me to take advantage, too, because I'm not from here, I'm easy prey, easy

target. But I ain't easy prey, I ain't easy target, so you better think about that one, you know. …The minute I sense something that's not exactly right, I'm, you know, it's time for me to make a exit. …You know, I'm a cat, I land on my feet, you know!

Despite her assimilation to city life and her self-professed hardened attitudes and behaviors,

Monica still values returning to her home community. She explains,

> For the past 10 years, I've always had a prayer ritual. Every time I come in to North Carolina, 'Welcome to North Carolina,' I bow my head and I pray. 'Thank you dear Lord, you're so sweet. You always look after me. You take care of me during all this old stuff, stuff, stuff, STUFF. You brought me home, cross the line, one more time. Thank you.' And then, you know, I been doing that for 10 years. Every time they say welcome to North Carolina, I send up my prayer. And then once I get here, I'm thankful and I mean that. But once I get here, where the liquor at, where the party at! ((laughter))

Monica now lives in Atlanta, finding the Southern urban center to be a balance between what

she finds to be the fast-paced Ohio city and the slow-paced life she once knew in Texana.

CHAPTER 4

THE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: SOCIAL PRACTICES

"[T]o study speech without reference to the society which uses it is to exclude the possibility

of finding social explanations for the structures that are used."

R.A. Hudson (1996: 3)

4.1 The Scope of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth account of the culture of the two women's groups that

are the focus of this study: the church ladies and the porch sitters. I begin by explaining how

my colleague and I identified the women's groups, as well as how we observed and

interviewed them. I then focus on the church ladies, detailing my observations about their

self-presentation, family structure, and social class. I discuss four themes that emerged in the

qualitative data specific to the church ladies: their views on morals, standards, and

responsibility; their participation in community social action; their views on urbanites as

outsiders; and their intersecting ideologies about race, class, gender, and language.

I then focus on the porch sitters, with observations about their self-presentation,

family structure, and social class as for the church ladies. Three themes emerged in the

qualitative data specific to the porch sitters: their patterns in social interaction; their attitudes

toward community life; and their views on "rednecks" as outsiders. By describing the church

ladies and the porch sitters, I allow for some comparison between the groups while analyzing

the themes that emerged as being relevant to each group in its own right. At the end of the

chapter, I discuss how, in a setting where traditional definitions of social class is not a useful

analytic tool, qualitative differences between the church ladies and the porch sitters establish the groups not only as discrete communities of practice, but as status groups as well.

4.2 Identifying Local Groups: The Communities of Practice

One of the strengths of naturalistic research is that it provides a means to recognize and develop an understanding of locally meaningful categories. Social scientists have noted that these types of qualitative methods, which are frequently used in smaller-scale, community research, can be employed when asking different types of research questions than those that might be answered when using traditional survey methods (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; see also chapter 1). As Lippi-Green (1989: 213) maintains, "it is possible to account for variation in speech communities—particularly small or rural ones—on the basis of social and cultural factors once the relevant community structures have been identified."

In this research, the use of qualitative methods (including conducting interviews and engaging in naturalistic observation, as detailed in chapter 3) was crucial in that it allowed for a nuanced analysis of social, including linguistic, processes in the Texana community. By becoming familiar with the setting during fieldwork and by collecting primary data from residents, I was able to identify relevant issues with more precision and uncover locally grounded categories for analysis. This investment in the community played a key role in the process of developing my research questions (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 33, 37). The community-specific cultural information that most shaped an understanding of local social categories within the Texana community was coming to view two groups of women as constituting "communities of practice."[24] Ultimately, the selection of speakers for this dissertation was dictated by the social configuration of these two groups of women in

Texana, since correctly identifying the women in these groups and understanding their social and linguistic practices depended on interpreting data gathered during fieldwork.

The decision to examine two communities of practice in Texana was made during the first stages of fieldwork, when my colleague and I began to notice social divisions among several women. In July 2002, Gail Ann invited us to attend an evening meeting at the Texana church, where she and other women gather weekly to discuss devotional readings and catch up on local events. In this way, we met the core members of the group we came to call the "church ladies."

At nearly the same time, my colleague and I noticed the habits of another group of women in Texana who constituted a regularly interacting friendship group. In June 2002, we were invited by Michelle and Emily—the first two women we had met in Texana—to join one of their evening visits on the porch of Melissa's trailer. The interactions of the "porch sitters" are exclusively informal; they generally show up at the trailer when they get off work and talk, laugh, tell stories, gossip, and monitor the goings-on in Texana for a few hours until they decide to go home. The porch sitters' group ideology is focused on being casual, informal, and unreserved, which is reflected in their social and linguistic habits.

Once we had identified these two groups as being potential communities of practice, we observed them more closely. After we had gathered information regarding the "joint enterprise" that these women regularly undertook—namely, conducting and participating in the weekly devotion group for the church ladies, and participating in near-nightly visits and gossip sessions for the porch sitters—we felt confident in considering these women communities of practice, based on Wenger's (1998) criteria (see chapter 2). We observed and interviewed these women more closely and frequently and compared the two group's

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social interaction and language patterns. In this chapter I examine the social practices and individual and group ideologies of the communities of practice and their members. These social differences as well as their different speech practices (chapter 5) consitute identity work and boundary work that create and mirror social differences among the women, while also constructing and differentiating their locally contextualized experiences of racial/ethnic, gender, and class status.

The interviews with the church ladies and the porch sitters were conducted along similar parameters as those with other Texana residents, described in chapter 3. One difference is the frequency with which, and the variety of configurations, locations, and contexts in which, these women were interviewed. First, both communities of practice were interviewed once as a group. Both of these interviews took place at the group's usual place of interaction: for the church ladies, at the devotional meeting; for the porch sitters, on the porch of the trailer. In addition to the group interviews, each member was recorded either in a solo interview, a dyad, or a triad interview. Some members—Emily, Gina, and Gail Ann (who was recorded on seven different occasions)—were interviewed in every possible combination (solo, dyad, triad, and community of practice).

During the solo, dyad, and triad interviews, locales varied. They included the homes of the women (while they were visiting one another), front porches and patios, and the kitchens while the women were preparing meals. Each interview lasted 45 to 90 minutes, depending upon the situation. On average, the interviews yielded about 3 to 6 hours of conversation with each of the eight women who are the foci of chapters 4 and 5.

4.3 The Church Ladies

The church ladies consist of four women: Gail Ann, Zora, Joan, and Gina. During the most concentrated period of field visits in Texana (2002-2004), the group met Wenger's (1998: 76) criteria of having members who are engaged in a jointly negotiated enterprise and who have accumulated a shared repertoire of resources (see chapter 2). Gail Ann was one of the founders of the women's devotional group, which had been meeting at the Texana church for around five years, at the time we first learned about the group.

Communities of practice are not always static, however. In 2004, unhappiness over leadership in the Texana church prompted the church ladies to leave the church, thus ending their participation in the weekly devotional group. Zora asserted that the split happened because the congregation was "trying to have the church of what's happening now," though she did not elaborate on the trends with which she disagreed. Several women from the original devotional group kept attending the Texana church. Concerning those women, Zora implied that their continued membership was primarily out of force of habit and tradition:

> Well they don't have anywhere else to go. They've always been grounded in the church. …That's just their life, they don't understand anything else. …You understand, you know, there's other ways of doing things that you know should be done. … We wanted to see our church grow, you know, improve. You know, your church, it's like your house, you want to see it beautified, and, you know, things happening in it. And [the pastor] didn't want that.

In a sense, the church schism and the church ladies' departure confirmed the church ladies as a community of practice. By leaving as a group, the church ladies underscored their shared ideologies and differentiated themselves from other women who attend the Texana church. The church ladies then began attending a church in Hayesville, nearly 20 miles away. After a year, Zora and her mother started attending a church over an hour away where Fred, the former Texana pastor, preaches every other week. They go there because, Zora said, "I like

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hearing him," but her willingness to travel so far to attend a church with a familiar preacher highlights her preference for local tradition.

The social fallout of the church schism has not been limited to women of the church. Rather, it has had consequences throughout the community. Since 2004, Zora lamented, the split has led to people fighting, family members no longer talking, friendships ending:

> I think [the feud] affects whole Texana, whether they went to church or not. You know, people are taking sides, they are making, you know, remarks and things that they don't know. It affect children, it's even the children it's affected.

As a result of the schism, it has also been more difficult for the church ladies to participate in functions such as Vacation Bible School, since they no longer agree with the other church members. The feud emphasizes the significance of local politics (in the form of alliances, alignments and realignments) in a small community. The situation in Texana echoes other research done on small communities, such as that by Watkins (1997), who critiques the trope of the tight knit, supportive rural village by pointing out that the community is just as capable of building differences and marginalizing those who are different as it is at building unity.

In chapters 4 and 5, data were primarily gathered from interviews with the church sitters while they were still members of the church. Also included, however, are two interviews with Gail Ann and one with Zora after the split, which were invaluable in that they shed light onto the schism and its after-effects.

4.3.1 Self-Presentation

In the summer of 2002, we were invited by Gail Ann to attend the weekly devotional group for women that took place in the early evenings in Texana church's fellowship hall. The group met in a small bare room with a long folding table set up in the center, surrounded

by metal folding chairs. Gail Ann, Milly, Margaret Anne, Joan, and Gina were all seated around the table, and they had just finished their devotional reading and discussion. Although Gail Ann said that the group has had as many as 21 women attend, these five women were "regulars." As we sat down at one end of the table, Gina went over the new devotional book they would be starting at the next week's meeting. After this discussion, we interviewed the women for about an hour until it started to storm.

After our group interview with the church ladies, we were able to set up interviews with these women individually and in dyads. As noted in chapter 3, Gail Ann had helped set up the group interview, which presumably took social clout on her part, and three of our other interviews with the church ladies took place at her house. The other members noticeably treated Gail Ann as a central figure: in one interview, for example, Gina referred to her as "Mrs. [surname]." Whether for our benefit or for Gail Ann's, the clear message was that Gail Ann is an honored, core member of the church ladies. In addition to the use of honorifics, the church ladies also occasionally used each other's double (first and middle) names—a particularly Southern habit. Of the church ladies, only Zora uses a type of nickname by occasionally referring to herself tongue-in-cheek as "The Z." Her relatives (though not the other church ladies) occasionally refer to her as "Zorie." The general lack of nicknames plus the occasional use double names and honorifics is thus a marker of the church ladies' relative formality.

In the same vein, the church ladies' demeanor and style were also relatively formal. At no time did we ever see Gail Ann dressed in anything but a dress or skirt, whether we dropped in on her or scheduled an interview with her. Typically, Gail Ann wore a t-shirt and a jumper or a long skirt, with cloth bedroom shoes or red flip-flops. Occasionally, when

doing chores, she would wear a housedress. Similarly, Joan wore attire that would fall into a "business casual" category—dress pants or skirts, blouses, and flats or plain, canvas tennis shoes. Zora often wore t-shirts and slacks or nice sweatpants and flip-flops or canvas tennis shoes, and Gina, who we frequently saw after she left work, typically wore her bright green scrubs and white walking sneakers. Though the women did not appear to wear any or much makeup, they did wear some jewelry (rings, earrings, necklaces) and, when wearing flip-flops, had their toenails painted a cherry or dark red.

Hairstyle was a salient feature of the church ladies. For black women, Jacobs-Huey (2001, in press) explains that hairstyles may reflect personal and cultural ideologies. Prior to the Black Power Movement, natural hair was often found to be culturally unacceptable— whether by other blacks who viewed it as evidence of a lack of grooming or polish or by mainstream society that viewed it as defiant in the face of Eurocentric beauty ideals. In 1970, Angela Davis' large Afro hair style became emblematic of her revolutionary, black-power persona and counterculture celebrity status. None of the church ladies, however, had ethnic hairstyles like weaves or long braids, and none of their hair fell past the nape of their necks. Gail Ann's hair was typically pulled back in a French braid or combed straight back from her head; when doing chores, she kept it in a headwrap or bandanna. Joan's and Gina's hair typically was worn in small, close-cropped curls, while Zora's was relaxed and wavy, often dyed a coppery bronze or blonde, with short bangs.

Another characteristic that marked the church ladies is that they are noticeably lighter-complected than many other Texana residents. Gail Ann discussed a time in her life when her lighter skin garnered her "prejudice" from other black girls at the boarding school she attended in Asheville. As she put it, "It was a colored thing."

I first noticed it when I went to Asheville, she was a friend of mine, but my next door neighbor. That's why I said this is prejudice if it's in the blacks. She said, oh, you can be a majorette. And I said why. She said because you got real long hair and you're not black. And it was a colored thing because I think all of that dated back from slavery. If you were like, during slavery [inaudible], as my daughter says, clear skin, if you were like Ms. [Margaret Anne]'s [near-white] coloring, you would be put in the house, but you all know that. And the darker darker ones would be out in the field or in the kitchen somewhere. Course, master was sleeping with those other ones, but that just so much of that just carries on. And I think as of today, so many people I guess are still bitter to whiter skin. You know, but ugh, that's what she was telling me. I didn't want to be a majorette. You know, but that was the first thing she said and I said, well [name], you know, you should be a majorette, you like it. But they didn't, you had to have long hair, you had to not be black. (Gail Ann)

Other researchers have similarly noted that, due to the social hierarchies imposed by whites during slavery, lighter skin was internalized within the black community at large as a class marker (Landry 1987, Harris 1989, Graham 1999, Gans 2005). The other church ladies did not talk about their lighter skin as directly as Gail Ann, but all of the women indirectly referenced it by mentioning (at least once) that they had white or Indian ancestry (see also chapter 3). For example, Gina spelled out that the fact her great-grandmother was white means that she is one-eighth white. As will be discussed, the church ladies are also interested in genealogy. At the same time, however, the church ladies do not reject their black heritage. As previously noted, Joan, Gail Ann, and Zora state outright that they prefer being called "black."[25] They also participate in and help lead black heritage events, and in their houses they have art and figurines that celebrate the black experience. It would thus be a misinterpretation to assume that in talking about their lighter skin color or in discussing their mixed heritage the church ladies wish to deny being black.

Just as the church ladies monitor their frontstage behaviors and project conservative personae, they also police their offstage behaviors. For example, the women occasionally

hid, apologized for, or covered up undesirable habits, such as smoking. Once, when we had been at Gail Ann's house for several hours, she left us sitting inside in her living room with her husband and excused herself to the porch to smoke, explaining apologetically, "Girls, I smoke." She proceeded to sit on her screened in porch, out of sight but not out of range, and smoke while continuing to participate in the conversation. In another example, in the middle of one interview with Zora and her husband, Ray tapped out a cigarette for himself and asked her, "Want a smoke?" Zora quickly replied, "No," and went on as if he had never brought it up. As the church ladies' behavior reveals, certain social habits such as smoking carry social significance and are integral in the construction of individual and group identities.[26]

Behaviors that the church ladies hide, as well as those that they highlight, such as their attitudes toward domestic work, point toward these women's underlying personal and group ideologies. Gail Ann, for example, invariably apologized for her appearance and for the state of her house, which never appeared to be in disarray, cluttered, or dirty in the least. Much of her discourse centered on the uncleanliness of pets: she said, "They all right. But I think a animal's place is really outside." She told us she "can't stand" cat hair and told an anecdote about a friend who was always "covered" in hair from her own cat. However, Gail Ann owns two dogs that shed, so she vacuums frequently.

> *Gail Ann:* It keeps me vacuuming with [the dogs]. That's why the vacuum cleaner, [my son] gets on me, [he] gets all over me. Mama, put your vacuum cleaner up. And uh I said well I'll leave it sitting there, and uh.
> *Gina:* I leave mine in the hallway. I don't hardly ever put mine away.
> *Gail Ann:* I vacuum just about, I haven't vacuumed today, but I vacuum EVERY day.

Similarly, on one occasion when we were interviewing her husband, Gail Ann interrupted to say, "I bet y'all think I'm filthy, but this is that dog's feet. I just looked down and I said, 'cause I put this shirt on clean this morning, I said that's where [that came from]!"

Needless to say, we had not noticed any dirt on her clothes and still did not notice any, even after she had called our attention to it. Finally, another time when Gina was around, she and Gail Ann engaged in repartee in which Gina undercut her own housekeeping ability, while Gail Ann proclaimed to be far behind on hers due to laziness—which Gina agreed was unusual for her. Note also that the women took turns using each other's names in the conversation, which adds formality to the exchange.[27]

> *Gail Ann:* Excuse my house today, I haven't done one thing.
> *Gina:* What's wrong with it? You bet you wouldn't [believe] mine, when you see [how bad it is].
> *Gail Ann:* Uh. 'Cause I got straight out the bed, and all morning, and I went back to bed, went back to sleep.
> *Gina:* You went back to sleep?
> *Gail Ann:* And I thought I was getting up then at eight o'clock? But it was nine thirty.
> *Gina:* I can't imagine you staying in bed that long, [Gail Ann].
> *Gail Ann:* I can't either, [Gina].
> *Gina:* That's unusual for you.

As this section has revealed, the church ladies construct and present their status. Through the clothes they wear, the hairstyles they prefer, the behaviors they highlight and hide, and the ideologies they espouse, the church ladies create a lifestyle and a presentation that centers on distinctions related to physical as well as cultural capital.

4.3.2 Family and Social Class

The church ladies come from longstanding Texana families. Three of the women's families have been in Texana since the time that slaves were brought into the area, and the fourth church lady's family has lived in Texana for several generations. Three of the women live in Texana, in relatively spacious brick or wood houses; the other lives with her mother in a house in downtown Murphy. Two of the church ladies are married, one is divorced, and one never married, though she was once engaged.

The church ladies have worked in the state's Forest Service office, for the Department of Social Services, for Head Start, and with the developmentally disabled. These jobs do not require advanced degrees (one of the women has a nursing certificate, but the other women have no formal training beyond high school). Yet they are steady, white-collar jobs that center on service, care work, and education. At one point, Gail Ann told us that her husband, a truck driver, asked her to be his work partner and come on the road with him. However, she declined because it was not the type of work she felt she was fit for. "He wanted me, he said [Gail Ann], he said, well I'll do the backing for you… and I know he probably would have done most of the driving. But I am a WOMAN. And I just did not think that was a woman's job, you know."

In addition to working full-time (currently or before retirement), the church ladies were often cooking when we dropped by. Gail Ann always had something on the stove, and Zora was often cooking chicken or pork chops. Although Zora occasionally picked up food from McDonald's for her grandchildren, none of the church ladies were seen eating fast food nor did they talk about eating it—except Gina, who talked about having to give up fast food while on her new heart-healthy diet. In general, however, the church ladies valued cooking. In an exchange with her husband, Zora resisted being told that she cooks less for her family, because she works.

> *People probably cook less nowadays?*
> *Zora:* Well, or fast food, or something like that.
> *Ray:* Yeah, you cook a lot less.
> *Zora:* No I don't.
> *Ray:* Yeah, you do.
> *Zora:* I don't. I work. ((laughter from both))

Gina's economic situation is much less stable than that of the other church ladies for two reasons. First, she is the only one of group currently raising a child (as a single parent, to

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boot). Second, she is the only church lady who does not appear to have always held white-collar jobs (or at least, she is the only one who talked about holding such jobs). Gina held various jobs, at Hardees, as a nanny, in medical records, in life insurance sales, in a nursing home, and currently as a home health care worker. She has worked this job for over 10 years, and, she said, "I'll probably be there til, 'course, retirement's not in my future, but anyw—, I don't see that in my plans anywhere, but anyway."

As Gina's quote implies, her financial situation is not solid. A single mother, Gina struggles financially. She and her son often talk about how much items cost, and during one interview, her son mentioned that he dislikes the older model car his mother drives because it has no tape deck or CD player, only a radio. Gina's situation exemplifies the idea that subjectivities related to status are locally as well as materially constructed. Regardless of the amount of her paycheck, Gina maintains a status in the community via church involvement and through association with the other church ladies. In other words, Gina still works to maintain and build cultural capital for herself and her son, regardless of how tenuous her physical capital might be.

In contrast to Gina, Gail Ann's family, as has been noted, is very well-off. Three of Gail Ann's children work in the music industry, and they are wealthy. Clearly Gail Ann is proud of her children; she gets to travel sometimes with her daughter and son to shows in Atlanta, and they ride in stretch limos. She even mentioned on occasion that when she visits her son's office, his employees greet her by saying, "Here come the matriarch." Gail Ann is also proud of her grandchildren who have attended college and hold high career aspirations (including her grandson, the renowned music executive and artist). But Gail Ann rarely mentions her oldest son, who is drug-addicted and has been in and out of jail. She never

showed us any pictures of him and only mentioned him twice, in passing. The topics of

conversation the church ladies bring up, as well as those they do not, reveal what personal

facts they are willing to make public.

Part of the reason Gail Ann does not talk about her oldest son is undoubtedly because

he does not fit the mold of the successful, well-socialized child. Other evidence also

suggests that middle-class socialization strategies are highly valued by the church ladies

(regardless of their actual financial status, as in Gina's case). Research has found that social

class strongly impacts child socialization strategies in families, both white and black (e.g.,

Kohn 1963, Lareau 2002). Middle-class parents are much more likely to engage in

"concerted cultivation," a strategy that favors reasoning and negotiating with the child over

physical discipline, investing in structured leisure time, and fostering intellectual growth and

talent. Working-class families instead are concerned primarily with providing children with

basic necessities; with these needs met, children are expected to develop naturally. In black

families, Hill (2005: 15) finds those of higher class status generally adhere to behaviors

sanctioned by the dominant culture (i.e., white, middle-class norms). Middle-class black

women, in particular, work to pass on cultural values, particularly "respectability," while

maintaining black cultural traditions and history (Hill 2005: 15, 76).

One of the church ladies' strongest emphases in their socialization of children is

manners. They believe that parents and community members should teach children manners,

and they celebrate well-mannered children. For example, Gail Ann reported that Gina's son

is extremely well behaved. "I was thinking about manners. [Gina's son] is the most

mannerable child of this community. … And because I know even [my son], he'll still say,

he comes to my house, Mom can I have a soda? Kids now, other people children come to

your house?" Gina concurred that many of her son's friends are not well behaved or

mannerly. "[One kid] just walked in the house, went straight, I thought where are you going,

went straight to my refrigerator, got him a soda out, and went on out the door! ((laughter))

And I thought, did I just now see what I just saw?" Just as the church ladies believe that

morals and standards, as well as church attendance, are on the decline in the Texana

community, they also believe manners are on their way out among youth. In much the same

way that the church ladies implicate a lack of parental discipline and peer pressure as leading

children astray morally, they charge that parents only halfheartedly take part in their

children's upbringing.

The church ladies also believe that manners are instilled—or should be instilled—not

only at home, but at school. Gail Ann and Joan were adamant that the schooling they

received at the local Texana school and at their boarding school for girls was crucial in

teaching them to behave mannerly and morally upright. Gail Ann said,

> And then as far as our teaching and learning, I never will forget. I had a teacher, she
> was a Texas lady, you know, they say everything's bigger in Texas ((laughter)) [She]
> was from Texas. She taught, she would always say, girls have got to be lady like.
> She taught us how to cross our legs, we could not chew chewing gum. And she, you
> know, just those things that we were taught. And she taught like home ec, cooking,
> and plus your other subjects. So we got a little bit of…
> *You got everything.*
> Everything, mm-hmm. … We did with our home ec we got cooking and sewing—I
> hated sewing, but I learned. … We'd start out every morning with devotion at school.
> That was before they let one lady take prayer out of school. [Our teacher would]
> always say, I want you to grow up to be so refined, don't be uncouth, you know. It
> was things like that. And of course, there was no dating and anything like that 'cause
> they kept you separated.

Thus, in addition to home economics, Gail Ann said her teacher also taught girls to be refined

and ladylike—lessons that Gail Ann took with her into adulthood.

The church ladies also view education as a means for young people to make something of themselves. Zora said the big push for education in her family came from her grandmother; similarly, she said, "When my kids got 18, I expected them to go someplace, I wanted them to go someplace else, you know, you deserve your life and you now, there's places and people for people, that's what they're there for." It was not uncommon to hear the church ladies say that they encourage young people to stay away from home and find a job that uses their skills and educational experience. As a result, the church ladies were often upset by young, college educated community members who moved back to Texana after completing college degrees, because many were unemployed or under-employed. The church ladies said that the young people are too educated for factory and food service work, but they are unable to acquire a more professional job because of a general lack of jobs in the area as well as prejudice and discrimination. These observations seem to be borne out in the data reported in chapter 3.

Although the church ladies recognized problems like employment discrimination, they also revealed an attachment to the idea that personal betterment can overcome, at least to a degree, these social obstacles and barriers. Zora and Gail Ann, for example, despaired about the fact that many Texana young people—young women in particular—have skills and degrees that are under-utilized. The church ladies said that either the young people should move out of Texana to use their degrees or move back and use their education to "make a difference" and be a role model for other black youth. Zora explained,

> *We heard from [Gail Ann] that a lot of people would go off to college and then they'd*
> *come back here—*
> And do nothing, yeah, do nothing.
> *Y'all are probably sad about that.*
> Yeah.
> *Why do they do that?*

I don't know, I have no idea. I know five women right now who have degrees teaching or whatever, and they've never used it, never, and they're not that old, but I think that two, three of them were like probably late 30s.
You think it's just that they love this community and they want to stay here?
Well, yeah, you can love the community and come back, but you know!
All that time in school.
Yeah, they don't use it, I don't know why they don't use it. [You spend all that] money and, yeah, yeah. I mean, and not settle for a plant job. Now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that, but if you got a degree, then not only can you make the money, but you can make a DIFFerence. And I think that's what a lot of our young kids see, that's what they have to look up to now. You know, so we got to make a change somehow, to get them if they do go off to college, and want to come back, do something with it.
Right. How do you think you can get them to start using it?
Hopefully through this history thing. And just being a good role model.

Gail Ann also said that although Texana may be a fine place for married people with families, it is not the best place for well-educated singles (women in particular).

There's nothing here for young people, you know, I—I can see to stay here but there's nothing to do, no social life. … So I just don't tell the young people to come back—come back to visit us, come back and love us, but never forget it. … But you know what, I don't know, but we have some very talented people here in this community. We have some, and you would not think it, I don't know why they don't believe. So many of our girls like 30, and you know something, they're college graduates. They sure are. But they come back and there's nothing to do.
Yeah but its kind of good for the community, for them to come back too, right?
I don't know. I don't really know, 'cause sometimes when you come back you have nothing to do, you have no social life to a certain extent. It's all right if you get, if you married, you got your family, the schools are good here and things like that, that's all right, but if you're single.

In sum, the church ladies adhere to middle-class norms in arguing that what is good for kids and good for families is good for the Texana community. They evince a particular nostalgia for the Texana youth—particularly the young women—to meet a middle-class ideal of enjoying an extended adolescence, achieving higher education, and getting married and starting a family, all in appropriately timed life stages. This plan, however, is easily disrupted by the convergence of several social factors—a general lack of opportunities for marriage (specifically in Texana, which is small and has close kinship ties); a weak job

market and/or a gendered opportunity structure; nepotism, social closure, and homosocial reproduction; and prejudice and racism—all of which the Texana young people face.

4.3.3 Morals, Standards, and Responsibility

As described in chapter 3, the Texana church has been a longstanding community institution. According to its self-published book, the church has about 100 congregants (though Gail Ann estimates that membership has declined since the schism in 2004). Ever since the first women settlers hewed its beams, women have regularly served in the church (though never as pastor), and the church ladies continued this tradition. Until the split, the women regularly attended church services on Sundays and the women's weekly devotional group; Zora led Vacation Bible School during the summers and worked with the children's choir; and Zora, Gail Ann, and Gina sang in the adult choir. The women also serve as prayer partners for each other and conduct daily devotionals on their own. It is also little surprise that Joan and Gina are strong church women, since their fathers held prominent roles in the Texana church as deacon and former pastor, respectively.

Due to their reverence for the church as a social institution, the church ladies highly value church as being a cornerstone of Texana. Joan talked about how church used to be the community social hub as well as a welcome escape from work.

> On weekend, you were happy to go to church and Sunday school because you got to see the friends that you didn't see, if it was summer, you weren't in school together, so it was very glad. And you didn't have to work while you were in church, so we were all glad to go, no one ever asked me if I wanted to go to church. I don't remember anyone [asking us], but we were glad to go.

Gina and Joan, in the group interview with the church ladies, reiterated the point of view that church was requisite during their childhood.

> *Joan:* Didn't nobody ever ask you if I wanted to go to church.
> *Gina:* Thank you!
> *Joan:* I didn't know it was an option.
> *Gina:* It wasn't. …You're gonna be here for Sunday School, you're gonna be here for church, you're gonna be here for the training in the afternoon, then you're gonna stay over for night service. And that was just it.

The church ladies also said that church was a guiding principle in shaping their own moral lives and those of their peers. Even when the life lessons were hard to accept, they followed the guidance of their church and elders.

> *Gail Ann:* You didn't hear of girls getting pregnant in school.
> *Joan:* No, you didn't, 'cause when you were in school, the girls over here and the boys over there.
> *Gail Ann:* They kept you separated from each other.
> *Joan:* Yes they did, they said birds of a feather flock together….
> *Gail Ann:* I know my best friend, and my daddy [said], she's a wild girl, you cannot. And I loved that girl, we grew up together, I wasn't. After she got teenager, daddy said she was wild and I couldn't associate with her. That about killed me. No. I could hardly speak to her. …
> *Joan:* But now, I think of things now that I was taught then that carried on and I think it goes that I'm thankful for that time, I'm thankful I went through those times, I'm thankful that I learned those things because otherwise I wouldn't have known them. And those were things that have enriched me.

> Nowadays, the church ladies claim, these standards have largely been lost. Zora

bemoaned the peer pressure that kids face, in contrast to what she experienced.

> I didn't have to deal with drugs, sex, ah, people taking advantage of you. Like I said, we knew it happened, but we never saw it and it wasn't permitted. If you got caught you got your butt whipped, you know. And then there's teenage pregnancy. I remember if a girl got pregnant and wasn't married then she was banished, basically, from the other girls.
> *Wow, are people any more forgiving than that now?*
> Oh, its just open, it don't matter now, it's just a way of life.
> *People just have a baby and whatever?*
> Whatever and then go get another one. It can be not the same dad, I mean four or five kids and they don't all have the same father. (Zora)

Due to their views of church as a fundamental social institution that can rebuild the moral standards that are being lost in the Texana community, the church ladies said they

actively try to recruit new members to church, whether folks in the community or new black residents in the Murphy/Texana area. As Gail Ann said, "There will be new blacks. And I'll say, 'Haven't seen YOU before.' ((laughter)) And then I'll invite them to church." The other aspect of shoring up church membership entails retaining members. Regarding declining church attendance, the church ladies frequently implicate young people in Texana and are affronted that they do not participate in church life as the church ladies think they should. Gina, Joan, and Gail Ann agreed that declining church attendance among Texana youth is because the children make the choice not to attend. As Gail Ann said,

> People are pulling away from church.
> *Really?*
> Yes. I feel like my pastor says the church is growing but I think, you know—you see more standing on the streets than you do in church sometimes, you know.
> *Yeah, do you think it's the young people doing that, or?*
> It's the young people and the a lot of the elderly people, uh, the few that we have left up here, they don't go to church. 'Cause just that little few of us that are, just say, you can depend on that's going to be at church all the time.

Though Gail Ann's explanation is vague, other church ladies more overtly expressed their belief that lackadaisical parents should be more responsible for their children's behavioral choices. Joan implied that children are not mature enough to make their own decision to come to church, so parents should enforce church attendance for them.

> *Why do you think children don't come to church anymore?*
> My opinion is too many choices. Children get too many choices. I see them making at two years old, wearing, eating, things that they're not mature enough to make decisions about. And it carries on out.

Gina also posited that there are too many other, more enticing options for children nowadays than going to church. In the past, she said, there used to be 100 children at Vacation Bible School in the Texana church; now, they are lucky if children stay the week. She explained, "When it comes Friday night, [the kids say] we BOOKIN.' And there wasn't one parent

there." (Last year, no Vacation Bible School was even held, since Zora was not there to lead it, due to the split in the church.) In contrast to the church ladies' explanations for why young people stopped going to church, however, is the view put forward by Randy. Though he is also a die-hard church member, directing the youth choir, playing the piano during church, and serving in other capacities, he did not fault young people's inherent values as the reason for their low church attendance. Rather, he explained simply, "Some just got into other things and lose interest."

In addition to being instrumental in supporting the day-to-day workings of the local church, being a Christian is a salient aspect of the church ladies' personal identities. For one, they frequently talk about their religious beliefs, let other people know about them, and perhaps even assume others share their beliefs. For example, Zora to date has sent my colleague and me six emails, four of which were religiously-oriented: two (the same email sent twice) related to God "always being there" even if you cannot see him, the third related to God's victory over Satan, and the fourth was a chain email that asked for prayers for a woman struggling against breast cancer.[28]

The church ladies also frequently attributed religious interpretations to everyday events. In one interview Gail Ann brought up the February 2003 Rhode Island nightclub fires that had killed several people: "I heard on the radio… they have so far, what was it 92 people got killed? … And people don't believe me, I said, the Lord is trying to tell America something." Similarly, when describing how her nephew was being recruited to return to Murphy High School to be their new football coach, Gail Ann added, "You know as the scripture says, a prophet is without honor in his own hometown, you know." Finally, as previously discussed in chapter 3, when discussing black-white relationships, Zora said, "I

think that's God's way of fixing racism." She laughed and then said, "'Cause all races now are, you know, kind of getting mixed."

In a final but particularly salient example, Gina told the story of how the Holy Spirit settled her mind about going into surgery after her heart attack, despite the fact that her doctor was unsure about the risk factors.

> He said, ehhhhhh, this is going against everything I believe in. And I said look Dr. [surname], I said, let me tell you. I said, I don't know if you're a Christian or not. I said, but let me tell you something that happened to me in the emergency room. When Dr. [surname] and Dr. [surname] told me I had a heart attack, and I was going to have leave here and go to Asheville, I started to cry. I did not think of myself.
> *Right, you thought of your child.*
> I thought, what's gonna happen to my baby. And I mean, you know, crocodile tears was just streaming and [Gail Ann] was there holding my hand and she was petting me on the shoulder. And all of the sudden, the Holy Spirit said to me, stop crying. You will be taken care of. We have got you, you will be fine. ((snaps fingers)) The tears stopped. After that I could have, I could have cared less, really and truly what happened. 'Cause I knew, I'm fine, I'm all right. I told h— I said, look, I said me and the Lord fixed this up in the emergency room in Murphy. So I said, you do what you have to do, because I've already done what the Lord has required me to do. And everything's fine. It went just fine.

Outside of church-related activities, the church ladies socialize frequently and attribute their cohesiveness to their shared religious ideology. Gail Ann, for example, said Gina and Joan are her closest friends—even though Gina is younger—because they are all Christians.

> Now, we're a lot older than [Gina].
> *Yeah, but age is just one of those things, it's just a number, right?*
> Right, and there are a lot of other women her age who are around. But they exclude her. It might be because she's Christian. Not to say the other women aren't. But maybe it's because she's Christian.

In another interview, Gina called Gail Ann her "mentor and best friend" and mentioned that Gail Ann gave her social support when Gina's parents died.

Thus, Christianity plays a salient role in the church ladies' personal identities, their relationships with others, and their dependable service to the church. Whereas the porch

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sitters position themselves fairly neutrally toward the church as an institution, the church ladies center their personal and group identities on it as such. Once, in talking about the schism that prompted the church ladies to leave the Texana church, Zora expressed bitterness that they had once done so much work for the church. As she said succinctly, "We were the workers, the tithers." Her assessment certainly seems to be apt.

4.3.4 Community Social Action

According to Hill (2005: 30), community work and activism in the areas of health, education, housing, and economic development have been widely documented as ways black women have worked to strengthen their families and communities and achieve racial uplift. Collins (2000) specifies that black women have engaged in both institutional- and individual-level activism. On an institutional level, black women have engaged in collective organizing and large-scale political action. On the individual level, they foster autonomy, self-valuation, self-definition, and self-reliance, particularly among children, in whose lives black women may be mothers, church leaders, or teachers. All of these strategies, Collins suggests, give African Americans the education and confidence to resist oppression. In this research, the church ladies exemplify Collins' and Hill's descriptions of black women activists; at the same time, they illustrate the fact that leadership in the black community has traditionally emerged from within the institution of the local church (Frazier 1974). Whether leading community organizations or endorsing the strategy of personal empowerment, the church ladies strive to strengthen Texana as a black community.

Of the church ladies, Zora has been most instrumental in leading activist groups. First, she was one of a few community members who founded a local group with the mission

to "revitalize, energize, educate, and prepare" Texana community members. Although the group also sponsors multicultural and gospel events in the community, their biggest recent project entailed conducting a summer-long "history quilt" project, for which they received a small grant. The project entailed videotaping interviews between younger residents and older residents,[29] collecting old photographs important to the history of blacks in western North Carolina, and sewing them onto the quilt. The quilt now hangs in the Texana community building. According to Zora, the quilt project was initiated to encourage young Texana residents to embrace their community and ethnic heritage.

> *So, y'all are really into your heritage here with the quilt and all?*
> Getting back to it. It's not always been that way either so that's something, that's what the whole project was about was trying to get back, 'cause kids what we found out was a lot of the kids knew they were related but didn't know how, didn't know that maybe they shared a great-grandmother or great-grandparent or something like that.

Similarly, Zora is a member of a small community development organization led by black women, predominantly from Cherokee and Graham counties. The group focuses on fostering community solidarity and promoting awareness of ethnic diversity in Western North Carolina by sponsoring mentoring programs, holding an annual multicultural women's development conference, and conducting a storytelling project that has on its website the goal of promoting "nonviolent principles." Furthermore, Zora was the resident who suggested that we conduct the oral history project (described in chapter 3), and she became its sponsor. When we asked her by email what she saw as the overarching goal of the project, Zora replied that she sees it as integral to community solidarity:

> It's very important to some of us that our future generations know how we came about, the pride, love, and family values that were once a big part of this community.... and also to know that we don't always have to go to the history books to find 'Blacks' that contributed to the cause or that did great things... [N]o matter how small, [these things] can be found in your backyard.

Like Zora, other church ladies have participated in community social action. Gail Ann and Joan, for example, are active in a diabetes awareness program. As part of this project, the women travel around the Cherokee County area and survey men to obtain data on their health, while also educating them about the dangers of diabetes and to provide free diabetes testing. On a smaller scale, a few of the church ladies have also participated in an (unsuccessful) campaign to install a fence around the one community building to keep folks from drinking there in the evenings after work.

Many of the church ladies also participate in church-sponsored activities designed to uplift the Texana community and preserve its heritage. For example, members of the church sponsor church-led trips to Atlanta to visit the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the church ladies have participated in helping host an annual MLK breakfast at the community center, which is open to Texana residents and residents from neighboring white communities. The church ladies were instrumental in leading the youth choir, Vacation Bible School, and other church-related programs. Moreover, they tied their interest in genealogy to community activism by implementing and promoting heritage day at the Texana church, which is held during homecoming weekend. On homecoming Sunday, Gail Ann and other older residents read the biography of Texana McClelland as well as other passages from the self-published book about the Texana church, recounting stories of early life in the community. The church ladies said these practices are vital if Texana's history is to be kept from dying out (though the church ladies may no longer participate in these activities, following the church schism).

> *So are the younger people into their heritage or more the older people?*
> The older people. Younger people—
> *Why is that?*
> I think truthfully I think integration did away with that. Because of—then there was so much when the children left. (Gail Ann)

I think the older people are disappointed in Texana right now with the way it's going, because it's really, really, we're losing it.
Really? That's sad. So you're trying to do this history project? To get it back?
Yeah, to get it back, to make them have something to be proud of. Because it's not it's like they're not proud of it right now, you know. And it's always been, you know, the black community, ever since I can remember, has always been a proud community, you know. …Pretty much, they were self sufficient and all that's gone. (Zora)

As Zora summed up, "I think just getting, trying to get back to the basics and you know, I think that's what our black community need to go, we need to go back to the basics." Getting back to basics seems to tie into the policing of community morals and standards and a wariness of outsider-driven change. Discussions in these sections reveal that the church ladies believe these social problems can be solved by increasing Texana young people's morals and standards, pride in themselves, and pride in their black heritage, and by encouraging them to develop an ethic of personal responsibility.

4.3.5 Urbanites as Outsiders

The church ladies' general attitude toward change in the community can best be described as wary, circumspect, and vigilant. As previously noted, the women said it is important to know everybody who lives in Texana, especially one's neighbors, but they also said this community solidarity has been lost to an extent due to the increasing presence of outsiders in Texana. Outsiders do not only bring different perspectives and less cohesive kinship networks, however. The church ladies also contended that outsiders bring with them the habits of the "city life"—in particular, drug use. These factors, the church ladies said, are contributing to community breakdown and that reversing the trend is imperative, if Texana is to fend off further degeneration.

The church ladies' view of outsiders is encapsulated in the following quote by Zora, who discusses both the decline of Texana as a close-knit community as well as the anonymity brought about with blacks increasingly moving into the Murphy area. As she explained, she dislikes not knowing who these new families are, and she dislikes the fact that these new families do not seem to bother to get to know her.

> *Do you think, you all seem to have a really close-knit community. Do you think that's part of being related, or what else do you think keeps you close as a community?*
> Ahhh, I think we're not as close as we once was. But I think being related, um, and I want to say some of it is heritage that's not forgotten yet, you know, it's expected.
> *Is it hard for like an outsider to come in and live in Texana?*
> No, and that's the scary part, it's very easy. …And we've been noticing there's a lot of black families living in Murphy now. We don't know where they come from. Now you go downtown to Wal-Mart, and that's what I said about the city life is so different? 'Cause they come from the city and, you know, when I, when I see somebody in the store black, I automatically greet 'em. And they don't. So that kind of is different.

In a subsequent interview with Zora, we probed more deeply about her feelings toward outsiders. She identified outsiders as being a different type of person from the typical Texana resident, even if both parties are black. As she claimed, "What trouble we're having now is a lot of people that's come in. It's not necessarily people that grew up here." The reason for the trouble is because outsiders, she posited, are less sociable and may be even more dangerous in that they are more likely to deal drugs.

> *What about the new people moving in here? Are they, do they fit in really well with people in Texana, or is it sorta?*
> It's a different, it's a different, type. And they not, I don't think they've really moved in, have they? We got two or three that's moved in, young people? But the, a lot of the people that's moved in, we don't even know they're here. You know, you see them out in the store, they don't associate with people in Texana or anything like that. Um, you see them in Wal-Mart or in the grocery store or the post office, and you wonder, hmm, I wonder who that is! ((laughter)) You know. Or you see a strange child in school 'cause you know everybody over here. And it's just, we don't know where they are. But the few that's moved in over here have been young, and it's been like drugs and, you know, bringing that kind of thing in. …They're in and out all the time, you know that's what they're doing.

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When we asked where these outsiders are moving into Texana from, the place the church ladies most often identified was Atlanta, Georgia (which they also called the "city" more generally). Again, even though Texana residents have racial status in common with many Atlanta residents, most residents said they see a fundamental difference between themselves and city folk, in mentality as well as in attested personality traits, morals, and standards. The church ladies take this perspective further, however. In the following excerpt, Zora established a rural/urban dichotomy that she used to identify residents who she views as being positive members of the community and those who are not. Zora said,

> I don't go to Atlanta. The only time I go to Atlanta is if, when I have to work or something like that. It's not a place where—((laughter)). We go to Marietta, you know, the outskirts, but not, yeah. … Not downtown in Atlanta, but Gainesville, Marietta, round in through there, yeah. … I don't think we really had anything in common with people in the city or with their way of thinking. You know, it's a fast pace. Ahh, to me I feel like people who come from far aways, it's like somebody's out to get you, you know, that's just me. …
> *Have y'all noticed any differences between your community and other black communities?*
> Oh yeah, yeah. Ahm, the friendliness, they're not as friendly as we are, they're not ah, um, what's the word I'm looking for. …Ah, it's so different. I know I've gone to Georgia because I sing in the choir, and I hate going to Georgia because people are so cold. Yeah. It's not a friendly— to me, they're not a friendly community at all.

When discussing crime in the Texana community, the alleged perpetrators are almost always, according to the church ladies, either the outsiders themselves or Texanans who have succumbed to the temptations brought into the community by outsiders. The church ladies perceive these activities as threatening the social cohesion of the small rural community that they perceive to have existed in the past. When they were growing up, Gail Ann and Joan said, things were different.

> *Gail Ann:* There was never, you know, you never know about the drugs and all that. There might have been drugs back then, but you just didn't hear about it.
> *Joan:* I don't believe there was.

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Gail Ann: The only thing you hear of was just like whiskey, home brew, stuff like that, but not drugs. … Anything'd take the hair off my tongue, but ahh, I have drank it, you know, girls wanting to be women, you know. We'd drink it or something and but we, as people used to say, you'd have to cut it with water.

Thus, in the past, the church ladies said, only rebellious or a few isolated teens would experiment with drugs or alcohol, and they would grow out of it. Today, Gail Ann said, the only alcoholic beverage she likes to drink is homemade grape wine, and she says her husband does not drink either and never has (though in the past he had run moonshine). Gail Ann's avowals (reminiscent of her discourse about her standards of cleanliness) seem part of her general portrayal of herself as being a woman of high moral standards.

Zora similarly lamented the current status of drug and alcohol use among young Texana residents, who, she claimed, are ruining their lives through addiction and through a weakened work ethic, since earning easy money by selling drugs leads to the expectation of an "easy life." She explained,

With the younger people coming up, I'm afraid its gonna change, because they see it's easy money or the drug money or whatever.
Are drugs becoming a problem here?
Oh yes, yeah, and that's outside influence coming in, you know, Georgia, Tennessee, and they're coming up to bring, basically, when you see a car from Georgia, that's what they're doing.
Gosh, really? And the police don't?
You call and tell 'em, and it don't do any good, so.
What about crime, is there any crime at all?
Very. I think we had somebody break in on somebody last year, we don't have a real crime scene, you know, heavy crime. There's never been, you know, people been gotten shot, you know, killed, but that's been years ago, it's not like it's happening now. And it wasn't, I think they just got drunk and shot at each other or something like that. It wasn't something stupid, it wasn't, like, drivebys or anything like that. … But we've had some [crime], ah, I don't know who they were, I've heard that they, ah, threats made on some of the guys, over some drug deal gone bad or something like that. And that's been a couple of years ago. I haven't heard of that lately.
Well, I guess all you can do is raise the young—?
Yeah but it, they see the money, they think it's an easy life and that's what you do, and that's what makes you cool and that's acceptable. And yeah, they don't see that, the other side of it.

As can be seen from this passage, the church ladies react toward drug use or hearsay about drug use among members of the community in several ways: by speculating that outsiders may have had a role in facilitating drug culture in Texana, by expecting young people to do the right thing, and by speaking out against young people engaging in drug-related behaviors. However, the extent to which the church ladies communicate their views directly to young Texanans (or whether they talk about them only amongst themselves) is unknown. With regard to adults, Zora and Gail Ann each commented that they wished the men in Texana would not hang out and drink as much as they did. It should also be pointed out that none of the church ladies ever criticized adults who were drug users or abusers, whereas the porch sitters did, albeit with little censure. This omission may be due to tact and/or embarrassment on the church ladies' part, since Gail Ann's son is a drug abuser.

Finally, the term "outsider" was used by Zora to refer specifically to the pastor of the Texana church, whose leadership practices the church ladies questioned. Zora was incensed that this man, who originally came from Georgia (thus an "outsider"), was tearing apart their community church. In our last interview with her, Zora seethed,

> I don't know how they can let an outsider come in like that and tear up a community. You know, FAMILIES. That was the whole thing with me, how do you let somebody that's on the outside, that doesn't even associate with you or know anything about being here, 17 years and may, or not know your name, come in and tear it apart?

In her adamancy about the centrality of families and the peripheral status of outsiders, Zora is the church lady who professes the strongest aversion to those intruders who, in her view, are trying to infiltrate and fragment the Texana community.

Perhaps in partial response to their wariness of outsiders, the church ladies frequently discuss the local order of people in the Texana community. Keeping tabs on which people are insiders and which people are outsiders often manifests itself in "placing" people by

names and lineage—what Stewart (1996) calls a "reading of relations," in which lines of connections are created and delineated. Because the church ladies are members of longstanding Texana families, their discourse underscores their pride in their heritage and a focus on whose surnames are "old names." As Gail Ann recalled,

> *Where are the like, sorta big families around here with the big family names that have been in Texana for—?*
> [Andersons], that's one big family; [Crawfords], that's another big family; the [Sanders], that's another big family, they came in here, though I remember that they came in here, I think from Tate, Georgia. But it's the [Andersons] that started I guess and just continued to go … [Margaret Anne's] mother married a [Sanders]. Now [Margaret Anne's husband]—let's see now which one is it now, yes—[Margaret Anne's] husband, name is a [Burrows], her husband really came to here up from Georgia, they moved in here so that's why she's a [Burrows]. But the [Crawfords], the [Andersons], are old names.

Not surprisingly, the church ladies are interested in genealogy. Zora researched the origin of her grandfather, and Gail Ann mentioned she has been trying to get her children and her younger cousin to work on their family tree. Gail Ann showed us Bibles in which family histories were kept and let us borrow the book about the Texana church, as well as old photographs for the oral history project. When Zora found out that we were interested in learning more about Texana's history, she set up an interview for us with Fred, who she said knew the most details. The church ladies also revere older Texana residents and establish older age as a status that engenders respect in the community. In June of 2003, for example, they sponsored a day to honor Margaret Ann, the oldest Texana resident at the time, and the celebration was featured in the local paper. Gail Ann also frequently regretted that some of the older folks, who could have told us more about Texana history, had passed away. In sum, in establishing themselves as both guarding against outsiders as well as the guardians of community history and tradition, the church ladies reinforce their local status as longstanding members of Texana.

4.3.6 Intersecting Ideologies: Race, Class, Gender, and Language

As described throughout this chapter, the church ladies project a particular sensible and feminine style, espouse moralistic ideologies, and engage in status displays that center their personal and group identities on being good, middle class black women. In addition, their litany of who is right and wrong (with regard to the church schism, with regard to outsiders, with regard to parenting strategies, and with regard to the Texana youth) draws a line between what the church ladies believe is best for the community and the ways of everyone else—the rest of the church, the rest of the town, the city, outsiders, et cetera.

In addition to their self-presentation and the ideologies they espouse, the church ladies also use language to demarcate themselves and others. The church ladies are actively concerned with standard speech, both in their ideological support of this social construction (as this section details) and in their personal practice of it (as will be explicated in chapter 5). Their standard language ideologies are connected to and reinforce the ideologies about race, class, and gender that the church ladies support.

One of the ways the church ladies exhibit their adherence to a standard language ideology is by defining a good woman in part by how she talks. For one, the church ladies connect speaking well to acting well. In one interview with Zora and her husband, the conversation moved to the topic of boxing and the brutality of Mike Tyson. In contrast, Zora brought up the image of the renowned woman boxer, Leila Ali. "And she's a lady, she's really a lady, you know? When you see her on talk shows and stuff? She really carries herself well and she speaks well you know." Zora clearly values Ali's comportment and speaking style. Even in the face of Ali's participation in a violent and often brutal sport, Zora still views her as being traditionally feminine, or "ladylike," and therefore estimable.

A second connection that the church ladies make is that a good woman does not curse (see also Lakoff 1975). Although expletive use will be discussed more in chapter 5, it bears mentioning here that only once did we hear a church lady use a curse word (*damn*) on her own accord (the only other times the church ladies used expletives were in quoting others). In this situation, Gail Ann was reporting to us how she had been talking to Gina about some behavior problems her son was having.

> And I said, [Gina], now I'm going to say some things you might not want to hear. And I said— pardon my French, [Joan] always says, there goes Mother [Gail Ann], speaking French—but I don't give a damn [whispered, laughing].

This quote by Gail Ann bears close examination, as it yields rich insight into her ideological connections. First, Gail Ann whispered and laughed quietly when she said "I don't give a damn," and, moreover, had her hand to her face and slightly over her mouth. She also used the euphemism "pardon my French" to distance herself from the use of expletives, as if curse words are foreign to her. Finally, Joan's reported speech reveals an ideological connection between Gail Ann's status as a woman and mother and her unwillingness to curse frequently, directly, or without euphemism.

In addition to finding expletive use to be objectionable, the church ladies express distaste for slang and "city talk," which appears to include Appalachian and African American English features. Once, when we asked Zora if she ever heard any of the older words mountain folks used to use (i.e., Appalachian lexical items), Zora replied, "My grandmother, she didn't allow us to use words, you know, we had to say the proper word growing up around her. So with her we didn't hear a lot of it [Appalachian dialect]." Again, a connection is made between being an older woman (e.g., Zora's grandmother and "Mother" Gail Ann) and having the responsibility of policing language.

In much the same ways that the church ladies say a decline in morals and standards has led to a weakening of the Texana community, making it more vulnerable to drugs and infiltration by outsiders, so too do they blame outsiders for bringing the "slang" being increasingly used by the Texana young people. Zora explained:

Yeah, city talk, slang, we don't use a lot of slang.
Are the younger kids doing that?
Yeah, or trying! With the people coming in it's getting different people cause with drugs and all that there's lots of people coming from Atlanta and Gainesville, it's [a run] now, and ah, I guess they are picking up a lot. And my grandmother, we had to use the correct English, she wouldn't permit us to use slang or anything like that so. …I think it's this generation, right now, the 20-21 and under and stuff like that. And I think it has to do a lot with the rap music too, they pick up on a lot of that stuff.

Zora is right that rap music and a connection to other folks in urban areas has contributed to the use of ethnically marked slang items among Texana adolescents (Childs and Mallinson forthcoming). But her value judgment marks this inevitable process of language change as being a negative one. Not only does she establishes "slang" in opposition to the "correct English" her grandmother enforced, but she tacitly connects the use of "slang" to drug use.

Gail Ann similarly described the urban style of African American English spoken in Atlanta, though her assessment of the dialect was less negative than Zora's.

I don't pay any attention to the way people from Atlanta [talk], but the black children sometime have changed their talk. … I'll tell you a joke on [my grandson]. When [he] first went to Atlanta, he talked just like he did, but when he get with his, what they call them, homebuddies, or homeboys, or whatever you call it, he would change it. And in school he would talk one way, and when he get with them it would, would be, go to the STO [store], and you know, damn this, and you know. I think they still want their own dialect or whatever you want to call it and I still I think it's still there.

On the one hand, Gail Ann pointed out the utility of code-switching, the process by which speakers can participate in more formal speech styles but switch to a more peer- or context-appropriate style when in their own settings. On the other hand, she was still relatively dismissive in basically casting black language patterns as "slang," correlating the dialect

feature of *r*-loss with expletive use ("go to the STO, you know, damn this, and you know")

and discounting black youths' terms of address as "whatever you call it."

In a later interview, Zora was more adamant in stigmatizing dialect variation. She

also noticed *r*-loss (*doh* for *door*), as well as irregular plural use (*foots*). Her overarching

impression was that these features are not only noticeable but also "embarrassing." She said,

> I know the people from Georgia, I can tell a big difference in the things that they say
> that we don't.
> *What do they say?*
> … Ah, its right there and I can't think of it. Door, they say doh, you know they don't
> fill out a word, you know, they'll drop something and just go and, foots, you know,
> instead of feet, they'll say foots. This is kind of embarrassing! … And then you hear
> 'em talk and you think, oh my gosh. It is very different.

It is not surprising that, given the church ladies' investment in education from their own

childhoods into adulthood, they subscribe to a standard language ideology. As discussed, the

church ladies value higher education and despair when the Texana young adults return to the

community and do not put to use the higher degrees they worked to obtain. Perhaps as a

result, they engage in community social action that has education as a primary goal, and they

assert that education is a primary and important tool for Texana youth to achieve personal

betterment. These ideas are further discussed in chapter 6.

The church ladies' promotion of standard language is not benign; as Bourdieu (1991)

and others have noted, institutions of power lie behind approved, routinized behavior and

normative cultural meanings. As Kroskrity (2004: 502-3) explains, any group's ideas of:

> what is "true," "morally good," or "aesthetically pleasing" about language and
> discourse are grounded in social experience and often demonstrably tied to political-
> economic interests. … The proclaimed superiority of Standard English rests not on its
> structural properties or its communicative efficiency but rather on its association with
> the political-economic influence of affluent social classes who benefit from a social
> stratification which consolidates and continues their privileged position.

In other words, in this country, "in a situation in which there is no official prescribed language… there still remains a powerful class-conscious notion of acceptability and unacceptability, of locutionary standardness and nonstandardness" (Bonfiglio 2002: 13).

In the case of the church ladies, this connection is expressed as the women correlate good language with approved versions of femininity and racial identity: in so doing, the church ladies equate group-level language differences to differences in social status. This social status is indicated by one's speaking style, and without the approved speaking style, one cannot have status or be "classy." The fact that the church ladies have internalized this class-language hierarchy and the ideologies that surround it is particularly insidious and ironic, given the fact that prescriptivists have historically attributed the "degeneration" of the English language over time to (among other race- and class-related factors) the polluting influence of women (Bonfiglio 2002).

In sum, the church ladies connect their gender and class norms with their approved speaking norms as well as norms of religiosity (see also Hill 2005: 160). These observations fit with other research that has deemed class status in black communities as being largely behavioral (Hill 2005: 158; see also Skeggs 1997 with regard to British working class white women). Locally meaningful status markers, for the church ladies, include acting well (going to church, serving in the community, keeping a clean house, dressing neatly) and talking well. In this regard, the church ladies distinguish themselves by their lifestyle and presentation and form a status group, in the Weberian sense that is similar to Cox's (1949) notion of social class. Their role in the competitive hierarchy also determines and is reflected in their linguistic practice, as described in chapter 5.

The ways in which the church ladies establish their status are also connected to Cox's conceptualization of political power: by connecting the language they use and value to their race, class, gender, and religious status, the church ladies legitimate, privilege, and promote the interests of themselves and people like them. The church ladies' constructions of local meanings that draw on broader ideologies of race, class, gender, language, and religion reveal the particular ways that status, power, and ideological formation are entwined for this group. The next section details the porch sitters, whose habits and ideologies contrast many of those of the church ladies.

4.4 The Porch Sitters

The porch sitters community of practice consists of four women—Emily, Michelle, Debbie, and Melissa. During the most concentrated period of fieldwork in Texana (2002-2004), the porch sitters met Wenger's (1998: 76) criteria of having members who are mutually engaged in a jointly negotiated enterprise and who have accumulated a shared repertoire of resources (see chapter 2). In other words, their social practices and group ideologies established them as a cohesive community of practice. The porch sitters, consisting of these four women, had been gathering together on the porch since Michelle and Emily started working together (see below), and few other women ever joined their visits. Once, Michelle's daughter stopped by the trailer on her way to pick up her children, and once a neighbor girl about 15 years old walked over to say hello and chat about the rape case (see chapter 3). These two visitors did not sit down on the porch but rather remained standing, and their short visits lasted less than half an hour.

At the same time, much like the church ladies, the porch sitters underwent a sudden change in early 2004 when Michelle passed away from cancer. Though she was being treated and had been doing better the last time we had seen her, the disease apparently worsened and she succumbed quickly. No one informed us, and the next time we were in Texana, we asked Emily how Michelle was doing. In her characteristically straightforward way, Emily replied, "[Michelle]'s DEAD." Emily did not seem offended and told us about Michelle's death. After that time, however, we did not talk about Michelle further, nor did the other women raise the topic of conversation. Since Michelle's death, the dynamics of the porch sitters changed. Now, Emily says, the three remaining women only gather once a week, usually on Sunday afternoons and not always on the porch. The community of practice has dissolved, as the women are no longer mutually engaged in the joint enterprise under which the community of practice formed. This evolution makes sense, as Michelle was the woman to whom the others were connected, as sister, sister-in-law, and colleague.

In chapters 4 and 5, data are primarily from interviews collected from the porch sitters while Michelle was alive, as well as two conducted with Melissa and Emily about six months after her death. Analyses are primarily based upon the porch sitters with Michelle included, not only because she was part of the CofP when the majority of the fieldwork was conducted, but also because she was perhaps the most dynamic member of the group.

4.4.1 Self-Presentation

In our first interview with the porch sitters as a group, we joined them on their usual turf—the small deck of a single-wide trailer in the early evening, around six o'clock. The trailer sits halfway up Texana hill, close to the road. Although it has no front yard but rather

a gravel driveway/parking area, wide grassy areas that are peppered with big wheels, bicycles, and other children's toys extend around the side of the house to a small backyard. We parked far on the side of the gravel driveway, in case any of the three other older-model cars parked there needed to drive in or out while we were there.

As we walked up the few steps to the porch, we greeted Michelle and Melissa, who were sitting in white, stackable plastic garden chairs. Becky and I sat down facing them on the floor of the unsealed and unstained pine deck. Next to me on the deck stood a large gray plastic trash can, the 44 gallon size that is generally used outdoors, and it was full of pizza boxes, soda cans, and fast food bags. The only other items on the deck were a few children's toys and a plastic long-handled broom with worn bristles leaning up against the corner of the railing. A few children's toys were scattered below around the driveway area as well.

The trailer belongs to Melissa. For a time we thought it belonged to Michelle, because she was there so often. In the interview, however, Michelle explained that she lives in the government housing across town in Murphy. Michelle didn't let distance keep her from driving over to regularly socialize in Texana proper, however. As she said, "I come over here and party though." She later added:

> *So you pretty much recognize everybody's cars who drives through here?*
> Yeah, that's why I like to come over here at my sister house and sit on the porch.
> *To see everybody and see where they go?*
> Right, 'cause if I go home. 'Cause I live at [apartment complex] and it's mostly all old people that lives over there and they stay in the house. You know, I know them and I talk to them, but, you know, you don't see nothing going ON over there. So I gotta come over here and be nosy. ((laughter)) [Emily] didn't tell you? ((laughter)) I got to be nosy. I can't take it. I can't take it. I go home around nine. Well, when I don't have to get up and go to work, so I guess it will be around ten when I decide to go home.

These dynamics typify the social interactions of the porch sitters, who gather most often after work in the early evenings. Melissa currently does not work. Both Michelle and Emily

finished work around three o'clock at the folk school and typically headed over to Melissa's around five or six. During our group interview with the porch sitters, we first joined Melissa and Michelle, and Emily arrived about a half-hour later. Debbie showed up last, as it was getting dark outside, just having left her work shift. Around nine or ten, they dispersed and returned to their homes, which (except for Michelle) are only a minute's walk away. This time frame for the porch sitters' visits was typical, depending on when the women had to work the next day.

The atmosphere at these women's gatherings was overwhelmingly casual. In addition to their location—the modest deck with its sparse plastic furniture, toys, and trash can—the porch sitters present themselves as laid-back individuals and project an informal style that we tried to mimic in our own demeanors. The porch sitters never wore dresses or skirts during our visits to Texana. Their typical clothing style is t-shirts (such as the slightly worn, plain white t-shirts, that Emily, Michelle, and Melissa often wore) or sweatshirts, and either shorts, sweatpants (usually black, gray, or white), or black windpants. Outdoors the women tended to wear flip-flops or black slide sports sandals, sometimes with white athletic socks. Indoors, Emily often went barefoot. The women rarely wore jewelry, and when they did, it was simple (a plain gold wedding band, a simple gold cross necklace).

In slight contrast to their otherwise casual or spartan style, however, three of the four porch sitters wore more elaborate hairstyles in keeping with current fashion. During the initial interview with the porch sitters, Melissa, Emily and Michelle had their hair plaited into corn rows that extended down into braids (shorter ones that ended at the nape of her neck for Michelle and longer braids that extended past her shoulders for Emily). At other times, Michelle's hair was short and straightened, combed back away from her face, or twisted into

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a clip. Emily also occasionally wore longer micro braids—a style that features many small, delicate braids, takes about seven to nine hours to complete, and may last for several months. She could braid hair as well; one afternoon when we dropped by her house, she was braiding her son's hair into cornrows that ended in small collar-length braids. Finally, we never saw Debbie wear braids; rather, she kept a short, natural, Jeri-curl hairstyle that was popular in the 1970s and 1980s. The types of hairstyles that are more favored by the porch sitters— braids and Jeri-curl—are typically not available to white women. As Jacobs-Huey (2001, in press) suggests, African American women's use of more traditional or natural black hairstyles may be seen as challenging and resisting Eurocentric standards of beauty.

One final point regarding the porch sitters' self presentation contrasts that of the church ladies. Unlike the church ladies, who use double names and honorifics when referring to each other, the porch sitters all use family nicknames for each other—nicknames such as "Ladybug" and "Puff." These nicknames lend a feeling of informality and also familiarity to their interactions with each other that is qualitatively different from typical interactions among the church ladies.

4.4.2 Family and Social Class

The four porch sitters comprise a near-kinship group at the same time they comprise a social group. Melissa, Debbie, and Michelle are all sisters, and they share several points of connection to Emily. All of the sisters are cousins to Emily; Debbie, Melissa, and Emily live within a few yards of each other; and both Emily and Michelle worked together at the folk school. Michelle was a second cousin to Emily's husband, and moreover, she was also married to Emily's brother—which makes Michelle, Emily, and Emily's husband "double

kin," as Texana residents would say. So, with the many interconnected kinship ties among these four women, why consider the porch sitters to be a friendship group rather than a kinship group—or even a work-related group (for Michelle and Emily), or a group of neighbors (for Emily, Debbie, and Melissa)?

Though it would be possible to classify the porch sitters as a kinship group (cf. Hazen 2002), such an analysis would, in this case, be limited. For one, in the Texana community, many women are related, even "double kin," to each other. For example, Gina said there are only about three families in Texana to which she is not related, and among the church ladies, Gina, Gail Ann, and Zora are all first or second cousins. All of the porch sitters are also cousins to Zora. Moreover, kinship does not necessitate social interaction; that is, just because three of the porch sitters are sisters does not mean they would naturally pass time together. As the story of the church ladies revealed, schisms in the community can tear families apart; thus, families are not impenetrable social groups. For example, Debbie, Michelle, and Melissa do not hang out with their other two sisters, one of whom lives in Texana and the other in Murphy. Similarly, Zora and Emily are sisters-in-law who live next door to each other, yet they have vastly different social circles.

The porch sitters' *choice* to engage in regular, sustained social interaction with each other—rather than their positions as kin, neighbors, or workmates—seems to be the source of their group identity and shared linguistic norms, rather than kinship or work relationships. At the same time, this classification does provide an excellent example of the fact that communities of practice (which can include families) can overlap and may not be discrete groups. Similar issues concerning the CofP construct were raised in chapter 2 and will be revisited in chapter 6.

The porch sitters came from humble origins. As Michelle put it, "our parents were poor"; she also commented on a few occasions "we ain't got no money," referring to the porch sitters. Melissa, Michelle, and Debbie's parents were from Texana. Their father built the small house they grew up in, which they later tore down and replaced with Melissa's trailer. Emily moved to Texana from northern Georgia (about an hour from Texana) when she was five years old. Her family first lived in the housing projects at the bottom of Texana Road before moving further into the community. The women now live in single-wide trailers, except Michelle, who lives in the apartments across town.

At the time of most of our field research, Michelle, Debbie, and Emily worked, while Melissa, who is older, received government assistance. Michelle, Debbie, and Emily all currently work or previously worked in the food service industry. Michelle and Emily, as noted, both worked together at the John C. Campbell Folk School about 10 miles away from Texana. Their job entailed working with other staff to cook and serve three meals a day to the predominantly retired, often wealthy, and almost always white, guests at the folk school. Michelle had learned about a job opening at the folk school from Emily, who had worked there first. Previously, Michelle had worked at Pizza Hut for 11 years, and she initially started working at the folk school part time in addition to her food service job. She stated, "I needed an extra job because I had got a car. And I needed an extra job. I had been working at Pizza Hut, I worked there for 11 years and I worked it back and forth up through there. So I had to let one of them go 'cause it was wearing me out." At that point, Michelle quit working at Pizza Hut and started at the folk school full time. Until the time of Michelle's death, the women carpooled to work together, and Emily continues to work there today.

Debbie currently works at a tool-making plant and has held this job for 11 years; prior to that job, she worked at McDonald's for 10 years. Debbie was the only woman in our interviews to express personal dissatisfaction with her occupational attainment, which she attributes to the lack of a post-high school degree. With a college degree, she explained, she might not have had to work in the jobs she has held.

> *So, what'd you do after you finished high school?*
> I went to Tri-County [Community College] for a while. I told [Tara], I wish I'd kept going. I wouldn't be working at where I'm working now, but no, I quit.
> *So you went [there]?*
> Yes, I went to Tri-County for a long time, and I wish I'd kept going. Mm-hmm.
> *Then what'd you do after you got done at Tri-County, where'd you start working?*
> McDonalds. Ten years there, and 11 up there where I'm at now.
> *Wow, you're a dedicated person.*
> I ain't found nothing else.
> *But still you're dedicated, most people hop around from—*
> Oh no, I can't do that. I don't believe I could start over.
> *It's hard to learn something all over.*
> Yes, mm-hmm. Very hard.

Work in food service and plants is labor that has been found by sociologists to typically be the most alienating labor (low autonomy, low creativity, low pride, low job satisfaction), the labor with the lowest consent from workers (low cooperation, low extra effort, low extra time), and the labor that offers the least possibilities for resistance (low possibility for strikes, work avoidance, or conflict with supervisors) (Crowley 2006). Moreover, rural black women in particular are increasingly doing the brunt of this type of labor, as they, more than other populations, move out of low-skill blue collar work into service occupations (Gibbs, Kusmin, and Cromartie 2005).

All of the porch sitters are raising families in the Texana community. One is married, one is divorced, and two have never been married. Three of them have children, and two have raised a child of one of their siblings. All of the women are invested in the activities of

their children and of their nieces and nephews, particularly with regard to sports. They often

travel to watch high school and college games; as Debbie put it, she doesn't care about

having to travel, because "I got to go and watch the football." During one of our trips to

Texana, we attended a high school basketball game in which Emily's son was playing and sat

with her husband. The porch sitters' pride as mothers and aunts shone through whenever

they talked about the children's accomplishments.

Despite the support they gave their children, the porch sitters claimed to like the

freedom they acquired or expect to acquire from children leaving home. They also stated

that they wanted their children to have freedom and independence. Michelle, for example,

laughingly stated that she hoped her son didn't come back home often after leaving for

college. She said, "It's my time, my time. He's done done his. He done got on mama

nerves enough. But yeah, he done good." She also said that if her son became a famous

athlete, she wanted him to be independent:

> He told me one time if he move away you know to play ball, college, professional
> ball, he told me I was moving with him, I told him, no, I'm not! I told him, just build
> me a house right up here and you can go on and do your business. ((laughter)) I stay
> here, you can live by yourself. I said, don't you get tired of seeing Mama! ((laughter))

The porch sitters take their roles as mothers and aunts seriously, and, within their

means, they provide for their families with the best they can. For example, although Emily

expressed mock outrage to David and to us at the rising cost of his high school yearbook—

now $50—she bought it for him anyway. The porch sitters' children have their own cars,

and many of the young men are attending or are planning to attend college. The porch sitters

also support their daughters and nieces monetarily as necessary, by providing free childcare;

by buying toys, clothes, and food; and by letting them and their children move back in with

them for a time to gain financial stability.

The descriptions of the porch sitters' families reveal closely knit family ties and considerable success among their children, particularly the young men. In fact, the porch sitters believe that their children and nephews/nieces are more behaved than they were themselves. In the past, Debbie explains, children were parented by the whole community, which meant there were more adults to find out who misbehaved:

> I tell ya, if we was at somebody's else's house and we done something wrong, that parent had the right to whup us. And then if we come home and told on 'em, we got another from our own parents. We got two, so it didn't matter. If you didn't straighten up and want them two whuppings, you might as well be quiet.

Although children used to receive extra surveillance and discipline, Michelle did not say kids today have degenerated morally. Rather, as she said of herself, her sisters, and Emily, "We were just as bad. ((laughter)). That's why I am glad my kids isn't turning out so bad."

Michelle said that, as a girl, she frequently got punished for acting out.

> *Michelle:* I useta get beatings all the time… 'Cause I was mean and run away and everything else. Call myself running away. I called myself running away. I guess I was 13, maybe 14, right? And I called myself running away. … I run down there [to where the old schoolhouse was], and I called myself running away, and I run down there. ((laughter)) That's as far as I got.[30]
> *That's wasn't too far.*
> *Michelle:* No, because I got to thinking, now, what's out there in that WORLD. I don't want to go out there. So yeah, so yeah….
> *Melissa:* Uh huh, yeah. Her and my other brother…, they all tried to run away.
> *Michelle:* They called us the black sheep of the family. I don't care.

The porch sitters also allowed their children a freedom within established boundaries.

Michelle told us how she took her son to Atlanta get a tattoo.

> We went there because [Jason's girlfriend] went to get her belly button pierced and he wanted a tattoo. See, he wasn't old enough to get a tattoo on his own, so I went with him. When we got down there, they wouldn't let us do it because we was from out of town and there is a law down there that you can't do that.
> *Wow, I didn't know that.*
> So he told me, Mama when I am turning 18 I am getting mine and that's what he done. When he turned 18 he got a praying hand. You know, like that on his arm right here. … It looks good. It's a praying hand and it looks good.

About her son's church activities, from attending church regularly to volunteering to go sing Christmas carols, Michelle said, "As long as it keep him out of trouble, I don't mind. As long as it keep him out of trouble. [And] so far it have helped. I have had no trouble, you know. Nothing in the paper about him where he's been locked up and stuff."

Emily also agreed that Texana kids nowadays pretty much stay out of trouble, typically just going to the movies, ball games, and skating at the local rink. She and her husband generally allow their son to go and do as he pleases—from having his own car, to being allowed to date freely, to having his own computer and TV in his room. Despite the leeway they give him, however, his parents make their rules clear to their son, David. On one visit, Emily told us that David was "on punishment" because two girls came by their house at 2:00 a.m. one night. She told us the whole story in front of him, and although he was grounded for breaking the house rules, he didn't seem resentful. In fact, Emily and David seem to share a close bond. She seems to stay well informed about the goings-on in his life without being pushy or nosy, and he reciprocates by being reservedly affectionate, often joining her to sit side-by-side to watch TV.

The porch sitters are as loving toward their grandchildren as their children, though they are not the strictest authority figures. Both Emily and her husband dote on their toddler grandchildren, and they say "there's something special" about grandchildren. Melissa is similarly devoted to young children. In one interview, when several nieces and nephews were arriving home from school, she asked them how they did in school and if they did their ABC's. She has been accused, though, of being a laissez-faire disciplinarian. She once recounted how she laughed when her niece's son cursed.

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[One time] he said "Damn you, Mama."
Now where'd he hear that from?
I don't know where he—
He had to hear it from somewhere.
I know. It shocked me and I had to laugh, 'cause he looked at me and I started
laughing, and I had to laugh.
Well he knows it's funny too.
And I did… That boy is something else.

Despite close-knit family ties with their children and grandchildren, nieces and

nephews, the porch sitters hold distinctly different attitudes toward investigating family

history and writing genealogies than do the church ladies. None of the porch sitters ever

brought out Bibles with family trees or any genealogy books (if they had them). Debbie did

once bring up the idea of genealogy, but it was to explain that her lack of family history

research is motivated less by lack of interest than by avoidance. She said:

> Everybody kin, that's what we tell, everybody kin. We may not be kin to them, but
> we say we kin to them. …
> *Probably if you go back far enough, they probably are.*
> They probably are, yep. That's why I say I don't want to do my family tree.
> *You don't?*
> Nope. I may be kin to people I don't want to be kin to. … [Like] they say we kin to
> some white people. … And we may be. That's why I said I don't want to trace my
> family tree. … 'Cause then you come out being related to someone you don't like, or
> you don't want to be.

4.4.3 Social Interaction

Partying came up frequently as a topic of conversation with the porch sitters. The

women profess to like parties, and Zora once mentioned that Debbie, Michelle, and Melissa

"like to party." By "party," the porch sitters seem to mean the social activity of hanging out

with folks who are drinking alcohol. None of the four porch sitters smoke (although one

used to), and they do not do drugs, but they enjoy drinking and sometimes joke about it. For

example, during our interview with the porch sitters, Michelle and Melissa drank out of small

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white mugs that presumably held coffee. But at one point when Melissa went inside the trailer, Michelle laughingly whispered that Melissa had whiskey in her mug, which is why she was getting up so frequently to refill it.

Michelle also talked about wanting to attend the annual party that Gail Ann's wealthy son and grandson hold at their estate in Murphy. According to Gail Ann, each year the men thank their employees by bringing them up from Atlanta for a weekend gathering in the country. Michelle said, however, that to attend the party you have to not only be invited and have a ticket, but also pay a fee. As a result, she wanted to crash it:

> You ought to see their mansion. I have never been out there but her son has got a big old house… But, you know, they keep it locked up when they are away. They keep the gate locked and stuff.
> *Yeah*.
> Yeah, they have parties and stuff. But you have to pay. Don't you have to have a ticket or something? But it don't matter, next time they have something, I am crashing it. My brother is going to take me. I want to see what they do out there. ((laughter)) Yeah, 'cause my brother works for them, you know, when they have stuff like that. …He's out there with them now, at that place now. And when they have something like this they invite him.
> *Oh wow. Just go with your brother.*
> That's what I'm saying, but he don't tell us. He won't tell us. They probably tell him he can invite somebody, but he don't tell us, so he probably go by himself. … Last year I offered to take him in my car, and he still went with [Gail Ann's son].

Most of the porch sitters' talk about partying centered on the many gatherings that took place directly across the street, over at Tim's house. Tim's house is clearly a party house, despite being perennially under construction. It has several artistic features, such as a small pool with goldfish and a fountain, and the leisure accommodations of a downstairs bar, pool table, and a soda vending machine kept outside in the driveway. Usually middle-aged men and sometimes also women hang out at Tim's during the days and evenings, occasionally helping with the construction of the house but more often drinking and chatting. Beyond these informal interactions, Tim also hosts more formal parties. Most famous is his

annual Fourth of July cookout and party, open to the community, which even a few of the older folks and younger children attend.

In general, Melissa's elevated porch provides an excellent vantage point to observe the interactions that take place across the street at Tim's. In one interview, Emily pointed out, "We set here and we can see fine, we ain't got to go up there [to Tim's], we KNOW what's going on," to which Michelle replied, "Yeah, but it about time for that bush over there to get down, 'cause I can't SEE over top, through it!" The reason for needing a clear pathway to see across the street, Michelle explained, is because something gossip-worthy inevitably happens at Tim's on weekends.

> *So what other gossip is going on in Texana?*
> I don't really know yet. Don't worry, the weekend's coming, some will get started. ((laughter))
> *Are the weekends when the new gossip happens?*
> It gets started, yeah! ((laughter))
> *Will there be a lot of people at [Tim's]?*
> Yeah…. You know, if everybody acting right, it's a good place to go.

Sometimes, Michelle even slept on Melissa's couch on the weekends, so that she didn't miss any of what might be going on across the street or in the community.

At the same time, however, the porch sitters dislike parties that are too rough for their taste. As Debbie said, "We used to have good parties" over at Tim's, but they party there less now than they did in the past. When we asked whether the parties were fun, she replied, "They all right… back then when you party, you party. But now they want to, when they get drunk or high, they want to act the fool." Michelle concurred,

> They don't know how to get along, they just fight all the time.
> *Really? Who fights with who?*
> Women, men, you know, they just crazy.
> *Do they fight about women?*
> Yeah, and women fight about men, yeah. Some of 'em fight about somebody done whupped somebody else's ass. You know, it just on and on. ((laughter))

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It just never stops up there? All day and all night?
Well, not all day and all night. You know, they get along sometimes, sometimes up there they get along. You know, they have a real good time sometime.
I bet they do. It looks like a good party place.
It is, it is, but crowded.
Do they ever keep you up at night?
No, 'cause I live across town! ((laughter))

When not visiting with the other women on the porch, Debbie said she typically has a

lot of folks hanging out at her own house too.

It's always something. Somebody will say, if I go get something, somebody will say, what time you get off, and I say, there's always somebody at my house. There's always somebody here… It's always somebody here.
That's nice though, I guess though if you want a break from everything, it's not.
It's always, I tell 'em it's always somebody at my house. And I go to work and this girl say, was you having a party at your house, and I say no, it was a bunch of cars there, and I said you know people stay at my house.

Similarly, the porch sitters often pass time with other family members, friends, and children

inside Melissa's trailer. Once, we stopped by on a Sunday afternoon and ended up staying

while Debbie, Michelle, and two of their brothers ate snack foods and played cards. In the

midst of playing a hand, Michelle stopped to rhetorically ask why someone would want to

get up early on Sunday and spend time in a church service that lasts late into the afternoon,

rather than sleeping in and playing cards. These observations suggest that the porch sitters

find intrinsic enjoyment in all their casual get-togethers, not just those that are centered on

drinking. They value time interacting and visiting, gossiping and sharing insider knowledge

about the community and its residents, and building a support system for each other. These

activities extend far beyond "partying" per se.

Moreover, the porch sitters frequently described the deleterious effects of too much

partying. Just as they do not appreciate being at parties that have gotten out of hand, they

also frankly tell stories about people whose lives have been ruined by drugs and alcohol

abuse. Michelle noted the deleterious effects of alcohol on her marriage. She talked about

seeing first-hand the changes that alcohol brought about in her ex-husband's personality and

how she finally "gave up."

> I was married to him for about 23, 24 years. And so I just, I just gave up. I just gave
> up. He's nerve wracking. Especially when he get drunk, but when he's sober you do
> not know he is around. But when he's drunk, god. So I had enough of it….

Michelle also recounted how drugs and alcohol were the downfall of Gail Ann's

oldest son, whom Gail Ann and her husband almost never mention. We first learned of his

existence when we happened to talk about Gail Ann's "son" (singular) and Michelle

corrected us by saying that in fact, Gail Ann had two sons—which otherwise probably would

have remained unbeknownst to us for some time. Michelle explained,

> That's a story there. … He beat up his family.
> *No, are you serious?*
> Yeah, he beat up his parents. They think he broke his dad ankle.
> *My god, that's bad.*
> Yeah. It's just where he's on that crack and all that stuff. That's what it is. I'm older
> than he is, and he look like he in his sixties. He's crazy, been on them hard drugs and
> stuff. He don't look right. He look like he in his sixties and I am older than he is. He
> may be a year behind me or so, or that.
> *So he was on drugs and went there and went all crazy on them? How are you gonna
> beat up your mom and dad.*
> Yeah. You don't realize at the time.

The lack of value judgment passed by Michelle is interesting; she did not proclaim the son to

have bad morals, nor did she implicate the parents for how they raised their son. On those

matters, if any of the women had any opinions, they kept them to themselves.

Moreover, the porch sitters did not connect their ideas about values to religious

morals, though they did mention church or Christianity at times in their interviews. Debbie,

for example, talked about how their mother had taken them to church when they were

younger. Another time, in talking about race relations, she stated:

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See they, they, to me and like I told [Tyson], they getting it all wrong, 'cause it don't say black and white can't mix in the Bible. 'Cause if you find that then I want them to show me that, so, we don't know, Adam and Eve might have been black and dated some white person, you know, we don't know.

For a time, Emily and her husband had started going to the Texana church. Other members noticed—Karen, for one, said she was "real proud" of Emily for going. But Emily eventually stopped going because she felt the church was not welcoming to the men from Texana. Michelle said she goes to church whenever her kids invite her. When we asked if she attended her son's church or the Texana church, however, she replied matter-of-factly, "I don't go to none," and then joked, "I go to sleep!" As these comments confirm, church attendance is not a habit for the porch sitters.

4.4.4 Community Life

As suggested in the previous two sections, the porch sitters do not sugarcoat descriptions about other people's or their own life experiences. Michelle discussed her divorce, Debbie lamented her poor educational choices, and Melissa admitted that she spoils her grandson. Similarly, the women were open in discussing crimes in and around the community, including their own early dalliance in petty crime. Melissa and Michelle, for example, remembered that Michelle used to steal cookies from the Texana store when she was a girl, until she got caught:

Melissa: You could get drinks for a nickel. … You could get cookies for a dime.
Michelle: Yep. But I didn't buy mine. I stole mine until I got caught and got a beating. ((laughter)) Mr. Arthur turned his back and I had a cookie in my hand and out the door. ((laughter)) Til mama caught me and that was it. … She beat my ass. She beat my ass.
Melissa: That's where [her nephew] got his when he was little. [Michelle] was stealing and he got some of that chewing gum.
Michelle: They always blame me for everything. ((laughter))

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Similarly, during one of our first interviews, Emily recalled that she, Monica, Melissa, and several other friends broke into the house of an older woman they disliked in Texana and stole some money and a camera. Though the woman suspected the girls, particularly Monica (who said herself that she technically didn't participate in the robbery, since she was the one on lookout), she was uncertain. But then, Emily explained that the stolen camera gave them away. "We come on out the door with the money and the camera and we went on up to our house…. We was in there dividing up that money, happy and everything, and the next day her aunt come…" The aunt had noticed the camera, confronted the girls, returned the camera to the woman, and asked the police to talk sternly to the girls about breaking and entering. The worst consequence apparently came when their mothers found out about the crime. Michelle explained,

> Yeah, her mama beat them. I thought I got a beating though, but her mama beat them. …But we deserved it though, we deserved every bit. Around here, our family, if we went to visit my mama's sister and got in trouble, she would beat us, and then when they would bring us back up here, our parents would beat us. ((laughter)) We got double beatings, that is what we got when we were growing up. Double beating.

The porch sitters' narratives about crime in Texana typically centered on how there was little of it in the community. Some of their stories about other people's crimes even had a lighthearted tone, like the ones they told about themselves. When describing why she thinks Texana is a good place to live, Michelle said, "It ain't much crime or nothing, but it is getting kinda bad, but not as bad as in the city and stuff, you know. That's why come I like it here." When we followed up with the question, *So no crime really around here?*, she replied, "Oh maybe every once in a while. Like that guy that got robbed last year." What followed, to our delight and to Michelle's, was her account of the crime and its punch line,

"and they pistol whipped his ass!"   This interview marked the third time we had heard the

story, but we baited Michelle to tell it again.

> *So no crime really around here?*
> Oh maybe every once in a while. Like the guy that got robbed up the road.
> *He lives right over there?*
> No, not that house right there, the next one over.
> *And what happened to him?* ((laughter))
> They pistol whipped his ass! ((laughter)) That's what they done. ((laughter))
> *You shouldn't laugh at that, but it is so funny.*
> They did, they did. [To Melissa:] That's what we told them today when they were
> talking with us. We told them "they pistol whipped his ass." ((laughter))
> *Man, that's bad getting pistol whipped in your own house!*
> Yeah, they pistol whipped his ass! ((laughter))

Similarly, when Michelle described the plight of Gail Ann's son, she did not judge

the man for his drug making, using, and selling habits. She then put a lighthearted spin on

the unsensationalized narrative by reporting that once, when the man and his girlfriend were

high on drugs, the girlfriend ran over him with his car. Her prediction is that "she'll get

down there and run over him again," although "he don't feel it 'cause he be so much on that

crack. Both of them be on the heavy drugs and I guess he don't feel it." Michelle concluded

matter-of-factly, "I told you, you cannot hurt a crazy person." Thus, unlike the church ladies,

Michelle did not generalize from accounts of individual drug use to claim broader patterns of

community degeneration. Rather, she seemed to view a person's drug abuse as being a

personal problem when it got out of hand. At the same time, however, their experiences

were still fair game as fodder for community-wide gossip.

Similar in style were the ways that the porch sitters, both individually and as a group,

discussed the rape case (discussed in chapter 3). The rape case was never mentioned by any

of the church ladies, but it came up twice in conversation with the porch sitters. In our group

interview with them, Michelle mentioned that because she had off work the next day, she

might go to court to watch the proceedings. When Emily, Michelle, and Debbie discussed the events of the case, their discussions were largely non-evaluative, using phrases such as "in my understanding" and "I believe" rather than making broad claims. The women also avoided placing blame; Emily mentioned that the young woman was taking ecstasy and didn't know what she was doing, while Debbie concurred that "everybody take that drug wrong." When Emily discussed the case in her individual interview, she summed up her interpretation of the events,

> Well, I hate that it happened, but you shouldn't never go nowhere and get that drunk or get that out of it, not to know, not to be respond or whatever, responsive. … [Her friend] shouldn't had let her, she could've stopped her. But then again, they said both of them was drunk. I can't understand why this other one got raped or whatever, but the other one didn't. I think she should've stayed in that other room or whatever unless, I don't know.

Emily's use of "I think," "I don't know," and "whatever" mitigated her opinion that the victim should have been more careful, and she counters her own assessments by noting that if the young women were drunk, their judgment was compromised. As this and the other examples reveal, the porch sitters' accounts of crimes typically centered on individual anecdotes, and the women rarely judged the people involved. Unlike the church ladies, the porch sitters also rarely made broad claims about crime in Texana, and they did not implicate outsiders in any perceived increase in crime trends.

The porch sitters also did not participate in community social action, although Emily mentioned that she had played a community activist role in the past. Several years ago, she, her sister Monica, and another woman started a project to clean up the Texana community building, which took over a year to complete. When Monica moved away, however, control of the community building was given over to another woman who had hardly helped out at

all with the building's restoration. When recounting this story, the bitterness in Emily's voice was palpable. Emily then said that she currently tries to show up to some of the weekend events held at the community building, such as the occasional yard sales, but she typically has to work.

4.4.5 Rednecks as Outsiders

Similar to the church ladies, the porch sitters appreciate Texana for being a good place to live and do not want to move out of the community. But whereas the church ladies are concerned with outsiders moving into and debilitating Texana's morals and community solidarity, the porch sitters talk most not about problems with outsider blacks or whites, but about problems with local whites. Moreover, the porch sitters distinguish between local whites in general and the "rednecks" or "crackers" who are most antagonistic toward Texanans. According to the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (Cassidy and Hall 2002), a *redneck* is a "poor, White, rural Southerner—used with a very wide range of connotations, but now [especially] applied as a [derogatory] term for a White person perceived as ignorant, narrow-minded, boorish, or racist." Hartigan (2003: 96) further theorizes that the label *redneck* (along with "white trash" and "hillbilly") is particularly used by whites to brand those who, in a sense, are class traitors who disrupt the idea of whites as being a homogeneous middle- (or upper-) class racial group.

Quotes from the porch sitters exemplify the fact that the term *redneck* indexes a specific type. According to Michelle, the people in Texana "get along good now" with local whites, "until the rednecks come up here" from a tiny all-white community near Texana. She said bluntly, "That's a no black man land" where a "bunch of rednecks" work all week and

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then on the weekends get drunk, drive around town, and harass blacks for fun. Debbie

concurred that "you don't go to" that particular community: "Ohh, no no no. Keep the

windows up. … Some parts [of the town], you better not go." Emily implicated residents

from the same small community for "cutting through" on Texana Road to avoid the loop of

Joe Brown Highway, "flying" through the community. She said it will probably take a child

getting hit and killed for anyone to take notice, as state troopers never seem to ticket anyone

speeding on Texana Road.

Debbie also said that whereas she has white friends, the racist whites—particularly

the ones who "live in the woods"—sometimes cause trouble.

> I'd tell ya what I'd call them, but I ain't gonna tell ya.
> *Why, what do you call them.*
> Them that lives in the woods, them backwoods ones, I ain't gonna tell ya … [Tyson]
> gets on to me about saying stuff like that.
> *Now I want to know.*
> Them backwood crackers. Them that don't come out but once a month.
> *Once, yeah, exactly. And they get everything they need for the whole month?*
> The whole month… Then they go to school, all of it, with the other ones. That's what
> you have to do now is just laugh at them. … It makes them mad… yeah. That's just
> like when they went to town. I guess this happened way back in the summer, they's
> in town with a lot of their white friends just riding around and guys older than they
> are called them the nigger word, the, nigger. And so they started chasing them and
> the cops stopped them and told them what was going on, and they told the cops, and
> the cops said, we'll get them 'cause we're getting tired of hearing them say that.
> That's about time somebody taking up for us.

In their discourse the porch sitters clearly mark rednecks as being different from most whites

(namely, local whites in general or whites they know personally). Moreover, they establish

rednecks as being associated with ignorance, backwardness, and low class status. Note here

that the porch sitters' use of the term *redneck* parallels the way that the youngest generation

of children in Texana use the term to refer pejoratively to racist whites (as discussed in

chapter 3). Both the porch sitters and the youngest Texana residents are also some of the

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most open members of the community in discussing race-related problems and conflicts with local whites. In clear contrast, neither the term *redneck* nor any of its equivalents were used by the church ladies in their interviews, and the church ladies were also much more reticent when discussing racial tensions with whites.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The church ladies and the porch sitters are comprised of middle aged and older, rural black Appalachian women. All the women are in some way connected to each other via kinship ties, and the women generally work or have worked in blue- and white-collar jobs in the service sector. A focus solely on these objective similarities, however, would obscure subtler distinctions in social practices and ideologies. As has been described throughout this chapter, two groups of women, the church ladies and the porch sitters, do not distinguish themselves directly in terms of occupation or wealth, and only to an extent on the bases of education and income. On continuous scales of socioeconomic status, the church ladies and porch sitters would fall relatively close to one another. Yet, qualitative differences between the groups clearly divide the women into discrete groups.

The church ladies display a religiously-sanctioned femininity that is centered on the church and family, values traditionalism and history, and regards education and ambition highly. The church ladies acknowledge their black heritage by means of symbols in their homes, genealogical research, and connections to the church and other organizations that celebrate the black experience while striving for racial uplift. They are concerned about professionalism and propriety both in personal appearance as well as language, they esteem their own responsibility and dependability, they work to enforce morals and standards, and

they police these norms in the broader community as well. In keeping with a more endocentric focus on insiders and a network of community relations, the women also are wary of outsiders' value systems, are suspicious of outsider-driven community change, and question the motives of those who infiltrate local space.

The porch sitters, in contrast, value the casualness and informal regularity of their interactions with friends and family, investing less energy into the maintenance of their family's historical records and more time in the daily maintenance of their family ties. These women are less judgmental when others' behaviors conflict with institutional or traditional norms and constraints, and similarly they do not hold themselves to these values and ideologies. For the porch sitters, ethnic heritage is manifested through personal style rather than institutional involvement. Similarly, they are less willing to tirelessly participate in community social action via organized activities or committee work, particularly when the hierarchy of the pecking order gets in the way of actual service. Imbued with a less isolationist, less judgmental perspective, the porch sitters' individual and group-level practices and ideologies reveal that they are not immediately suspicious of outsiders' intentions in Texana, nor do they try to avoid, stigmatize, or inhibit the influence of urban areas and urban culture on their way of life or their family. Thus, the two groups of women perform different versions of femininity that are integrally linked to their class and racial/ethnic performances, which are also regionally situated and community specific.

As discussed in this chapter, questions could be raised about whether to call these groups communities of practice, status groups, kinship groups, or whether these groups are simply artifacts of a researcher's interpretation. By examining the myriad of social practices and ideologies that are used symbolically and overtly, however, the qualitative differences

between the groups clearly emerge. A holistic picture considers the various forms of

material as well as symbolic capital, the symbols, and the ideologies that the two groups use

to create and display status. For the church ladies, their identity work and boundary work

create social divisions that are predicated on lifestyle distinctions. They draw upon these

lifestyle distinctions to establish criteria for group membership (e.g., "proper" speech,

morals, traditions, et cetera), to secure their position in the social hierarchy, and to create

individual and group identities based on their status. In contrast, the porch sitters did not

hold the church ladies' same status-related ideologies. For example, they talked about

"correct" or "incorrect" uses of language (instead, they exhibited many vernacular speech

features; see chapter 5). By virtue of their race, class, gender, and language ideologies and

their lower-status lifestyle, the porch sitters occupy a lower tier on the social hierarchy,

despite many objective similarities with the church ladies on other dimensions.

Differences between the women with regard to status in the Weberian sense, or social

class in Cox's (1949) sense, also account for the women's group-differentiated speech

genres, as described in chapter 5. Not only do prospects for mobility or residence determine

linguistic practice, but location in the competitive social hierarchy matters as well. In this

regard, language is seen as one of the many social mechanisms at play as groups display

status and create social distinctions and divisions.

CHAPTER 5

THE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: LINGUISTIC PRACTICES

"Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language."

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987: 59)

5.1 The Scope of Chapter 5

Just as the church ladies' social practices and ideologies contrast with those of the

porch sitters, as described in chapter 4, so also are the women's intersecting gendered, raced,

and classed identities evident in their group-differentiated speech genres. In this chapter, I

reveal how the church ladies and porch sitters employ different rates of diagnostic linguistic

variables in ways that parallel the social meanings they construct through their talk and habits

more generally. I quantitatively analyze six linguistic structures and then describe the

patterning in three other structures in the church ladies' and porch sitters' speech. I then

relate these patterns in language use to their intersecting race/class/gender identities. At the

end of the chapter, I provide a chart of the positive and negative practices—both social and

linguistic—that the church ladies and porch sitters use to construct their individual and

group-level identities.

In this regard, I view language is a multivalent medium though which the church

ladies and the porch sitters project their group identity, create solidarity, and establish/mark

their status within the social order of the Texana community. For the church ladies, the

linguistic patterns in their talk will be shown to achieve and mirror their positive orientation

toward standardness, traditional community life, the institution of education, and middle-

class versions of status and femininity. In contrast, the language of the porch sitters will be shown to represent and perform informality and a relaxed lifestyle, as well as a greater tolerance toward and acceptance of urban norms and influence.

As noted at the end of chapter 4, these differences have implications, in that the church ladies' lifestyle distinctions establish criteria for membership in a high-status group. By belonging to this group, and marking their status differences, the church ladies secure their position in the social hierarchy. In contrast, a lower-status lifestyle relegates the porch sitters to a lower tier on the social hierarchy. These differences in lifestyle, then, have "real" implications in the local community of Texana as well as in the broader social world, despite the fact that the two groups share objective similarities with each other on multiple dimensions. In this interpretation, dialect differences between these groups of women in Texana are explained not simply as the "fallout" from abstract structures (cf. Eckert 2005: 15), but as an essential part of locally meaningful categories that remain connected to broader structures. As such, language is as much a determinant of social situation as it is conditioned by it (see Coupland 2001b: 189).

5.2 Quantitative Comparison of Church Ladies' and Porch Sitters' Speech

As detailed in chapter 1, sociolinguistics focuses on how linguistic features pattern linguistically and socially. Since an individual's speech is assumed to be most authentic and vernacular in natural contexts, the primary method in variationist sociolinguistics entails extracting, culling, and analyzing data drawn from tape-recorded conversational interviews. In conversational settings, the relative stability of language—along with most people's relative inattention to the subtleties of language variation, particularly in their own speech—

makes even a relatively small sample of language data amenable to statistical analysis by both internal (linguistic) and external (social) factors.

This chapter covers the distribution of nine structures in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters. I begin with a quantitative analysis of the patterning of six sociolinguistic variables, listed with examples in Table 1. For each of these variables, I tabulate a rate of usage based on a ratio that divides actual occurrences of the variable by all of its potential occurrences. These methods of data extraction are typical in variationist sociolinguistic research. To analyze patterns in these tokens (that is, each occurrence or non-occurrence of the selected linguistic structures), I utilize Goldvarb 2001 (Robinson, Lawrence, and Tagliamonte 2001).

Table 1. Six Sociolinguistic Variables Quantitatively Analyzed

Variable	Example
plural verbal –s	The people that *goes* there
3rd singular -s absence	She *like* to eat
copula absence with *is* and *are*	*She nice*, *They nice*
past tense *be* leveling	We *was* running, We *wasn't* home
prevocalic syllable-coda consonant cluster reduction	*bes' one* for *best one*, *wes' end* for *west end*
post-vocalic *r* loss	*brotha* for *brother*, *cah* for *car*

An application for multivariate analysis that was developed specifically for use in variationist sociolinguistics, Goldvarb 2001 assesses the relative contributions of identified factor groups to the overall model of variation for a particular variable. Factor groups may include independent linguistic constraints, such as morphological status of a consonant

cluster, or external social constraints, such as ethnic group membership. If a factor group is determined to be statistically significant, its different categories are given weighted values that range from 0 to 1. In a binomial analysis, values greater than .50 indicate that the category under consideration has a favoring effect on the occurrence of the dependent variable, while values less than .50 indicate a disfavoring effect. In other words, the higher the weight assigned to a given category, the stronger its effect on the incidence of the dependent variable. Consider, for example, a researcher who wanted to assess whether blacks or whites and males or females were more or less likely to use 3rd singular -*s* absence. Using Goldvarb 2001 to conduct a multivariate analysis, the researcher would assess whether the factor groups of "race" and "gender" are significant. Suppose that gender was not found to be significant, but race was. The researcher would then examine the factor weights given to the categories of "black" and "white" to reveal whether those categories favored or disfavored the occurrence of 3rd singular -*s* absence.

One important point is that Goldvarb 2001 assumes the independence of factor groups; as such, the statistical package may be more appropriately used to analyze the contribution of linguistic than social constraints (though there are some exceptions). However, combining potentially interactive social variables into a single factor group (for example, combining ethnicity and age into a single factor ethnicity/age group rather than treating them as separate factor groups) can often be used to tease out interactive social effects indirectly (Young and Bayley 1996). Similarly, in this analysis, I use the factor group "community of practice," with the different categories being "church ladies" and "porch sitters"—rather than separately coding categories for "ethnicity," "gender," "age," "class status," "religious affiliation," "orientation toward traditional values," et cetera, in an attempt

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to capture the intersecting values that are central to the church ladies' and porch sitters' group habits and ideologies (as described in chapter 4).

The six linguistic features that I analyze quantitatively in this chapter are all well-documented regionally or socially stratified variables of American English (Hall 1942, Rickford 1999, Bailey 2001, Cukor-Avila 2001, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). Some of the features, such as plural verbal -*s*, are associated with Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian 1976; Christian, Wolfram, and Dube 1988; Montgomery 1989). Others, such as 3rd singular -*s* absence, are associated with African American English (Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis 1968; Wolfram 1969; Fasold 1972; Bailey and Thomas 1998; Rickford 1999). Still others, like past tense *be* leveling (Cukor-Avila 2001), have been found to be associated with both varieties. The comparison of those features that are attributed to region and ethnicity, or both, should illuminate how the speech of the Texana women may or may not align with regional versus ethnic dialect norms. The range of variables selected for analysis is deliberately inclusive of both types of structures in order to assess dialect alignment for the two groups of Texana women.

In addition, in the second half of the chapter, I qualitatively describe the patterning of three other variables—the use of habitual *be* (as in, *Those dogs be barking all the time*), the use of hypercorrection (e.g., *This gift is from my brother and I*), and expletive use (cursing)—for the eight women, and I also discuss a few other miscellaneous features noticed in their speech.[31] The three primary variables I describe in this section have been noted to vary by gender, race, and social class, in particular. As Ochs (1992) explains, the relation between linguistic form and social meaning is not a simple or straightforward mapping; rather, linguistic forms may index a variety of social meanings that in turn constitute gender

positionings as well as those of class, race, region, etc. In this manner, linguistic symbols come to be favored by different social groups in nuanced ways (Eckert 1991, Fought 2002: 139). By considering sociolinguistic data in light of the women's relevant social practices, we see how patterns in their use of linguistic resources reflect their social identities.

5.3 Morphosyntactic Variables

In this section, I analyze four morphosyntactic variables: plural verbal -*s* (also called 3rd plural -*s* attachment), 3rd singular -*s* absence, copula absence with *is* and *are*, and past tense *be* leveling (also called leveling to *was* and *wasn't*).

5.3.1 Plural Verbal -s

The verbal concord pattern in which -*s* is marked on a verb with a plural subject, as in *The dogs barks* or *Some of them walks now*, has been documented as a feature of American English varieties that were influenced by the Ulster Scots/Scots Irish and other settlers from Northern England. These varieties include Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian 1976, Christian et al. 1988, Montgomery 1989), as well as some varieties located outside this dialect region (Hazen 1996, 2000; Wolfram and Thomas 2002, José 2005). By contrast, plural verbal -*s* is not a feature usually associated with subject-verb concord in African American English; see, for example, Labov et al. (1968), Fasold and Wolfram (1970), Fasold (1972), and Rickford (1999)—although Montgomery and Fuller (1996) and Montgomery, Fuller, and DeMarse (1993) have documented its use in some earlier writing samples by African Americans.

To assess differences in the rates of plural verbal -*s* between the church ladies and the porch sitters, I provide numbers and percentages of their use of the feature in Table 2. As

indicated, when a Chi-square test was conducted to assess potential differences in incidence of plural verbal -*s* between the church ladies and the porch sitters, there was no significant difference for the groups (χ^2 = 3.51; df = 1; p = .066).

Table 2. Plural Verbal -*s* by Community of Practice

Community of Practice	Attached/Total	Percent
Church Ladies	20/100	20.00
Porch Sitters	8/81	9.88

On the one hand, it may seem surprising that the church ladies, who are concerned about standard language and espouse standard language ideologies, use a nonstandard feature like plural verbal -*s* at all. Yet in the case of plural verbal -*s*, which is a feature characteristic of Appalachian English, it is plausible that the church ladies—who are invested in standardness but who are also invested in maintaining tradition and local ties—do not resist using this feature, or do not conceive of it as being nonstandard.

In addition to this comparison by community of practice, I also examine plural verbal -*s* in terms of two main independent linguistic variables that have been shown to constrain its incidence: subject type and proximity of the subject to the verb. Following other studies (e.g., Christian et al. 1988; Hazen 1996, 2000), I distinguish between noun phrases (e.g., *The dogs barks*), collective nouns (e.g., *People talks*), and pronouns (e.g., *They talks*). Considering the proximity constraint requires distinguishing between verbs that are immediately adjacent to the subject, as in *The dogs barks*, and those that are not adjacent to the subject due to a heavy noun phrase (e.g., *The dogs in the trucks barks*) or clausal complement (e.g., *The dogs that barks are hungry*).

The point should be raised that other studies have examined the occurrence of plural verbal -*s* with quantitative NP subjects (e.g., *One hundred tons*), "heavy" subjects (e.g., *The sale and manufacture of liquor*), or cases in which the subject is a relative pronoun that has a plural antecedent (e.g., *Two railroads that comes up from Corydon*); see José 2005 for a summary and these examples. In this study, however, cases of quantitative NP's are classified as "regular" NP's. Those tokens I coded as "distant proximity" predominantly have a "heavy" NP subject or a relative pronoun subject with a plural antecedent. In these instances, the subject is removed from the verb, whether because of a conjoined NP or a relative pronoun, for example. In this regard, some of the categories I have used both collapse and overlap with those used by other scholars. I also did not count any cases of plural verbal -*s* with negative verbs or with *be* verbs (all cases with *was* or *were* are counted in the analysis of past tense *be* leveling).

To consider the linguistic constraints on plural verbal -*s*, I collapsed data from the church ladies and the porch sitters into one data set. Reasons for combining their speech data are twofold. First, there is little theoretical reason to expect the church ladies and porch sitters to follow differently ordered internal linguistic constraints for this feature. Second, the instances of this feature are skewed: the porch sitters had relatively few tokens altogether, whereas Gail Ann contributed the majority of the church ladies' tokens.[32] Any attempt to derive patterns in plural verbal -*s* use by community of practice would only mirror these differences in token count. Thus, I analyze linguistic constraints on plural verbal -*s* from the eight Texana women as a group.

Table 3 provides the results of a multivariate analysis conducted using Goldvarb 2001. As the input probability reveals, the overall probability that -*s* attachment will occur is

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just 5.1%—an expected finding, as this feature is relatively rare and perhaps receding in

Appalachian English (Mallinson and Wolfram 2002).

Table 3. Multivariate Analysis of Plural Verbal -*s* for Church Ladies and Porch Sitters

Factor Group	Factor Weight		
Proximity			
Adjacent	.434		
Non-adjacent	.775		
Subject Type			
Noun phrase	.882		
Collective	.957		
Pronoun	.239		
		Input probability	.051
		Log likelihood	-43.138
		Significance of run	.010**

* *p*≤.05 ** *p*≤.01 ****p*≤.001

The significant *p* value of the analysis reveals that the two factors (subject type and

proximity) have a statistically significant effect on the occurrence of the dependent variable

(plural verbal -*s*). Although both the subject type constraint and the proximity constraint are

statistically significant, an assessment of the relative strength of each statistically significant

effect by considering factor weights within each factor group reveals that the subject type

constraint is weighted more strongly than the proximity constraint. These factor weights of

above .50 that are assigned by the multivariate analysis further reveal that the occurrence of

the dependent variable is favored with collective subjects, with noun phrase subjects, and in

non-adjacent subjects (assuming my system for coding non-adjacent subjects, as explained above). These findings parallel those found for whites in Mallinson and Wolfram's (2002) study (note that the findings for African Americans in that study showed minor differences in the subject type and adjacency constraints, but they were likely due to the limited number of tokens in the corpus).

Viewed broadly, these data on plural verbal -*s* suggest that these Texana women, despite membership in community of practice, are sensitive to regional vernacular dialect norms. In sum, the church ladies and porch sitters use this characteristically Appalachian morphosyntactic feature at rates that are not significantly different from each other.

5.3.2 Third Singular -s Absence

A second dimension of subject-verb concord is the optional attachment of -*s* to 3rd singular verbs, as in the sentence *The dog bark* (for the standard form, *The dog barks*). This feature is a well documented characteristic of African American English and has been attested to relate in a broader pattern of -*s* deletion that includes both the verbal -*s* marker as well as the possessive marker (Mufwene 1998). Baugh (1983) offers a functional explanation that attributes -*s* deletion to the fact that information on plurality, possession, and verbal agreement can typically be gleaned from context and other cues (that is, -*s* does not add content to the sentence and thus is more prone to deletion). Walker (2001) notes other grammatical and prosodic constraints that may influence verbal -*s* marking as well.

Unlike its prevalence in African American English, third singular -*s* absence surfaces rarely in Appalachian English and, when it does, is typically restricted to lexical items such as the verbs *seem* and *don't* (Wolfram and Fasold 1974, Wolfram and Christian 1976,

Christian et al. 1988, Mallinson and Wolfram 2002). Accordingly, this analysis excludes the

use of *don't* for *doesn't*, since this third person singular form is lexicalized and idiomatic.

Thus, in the black community of Texana, the question remains as to whether its speakers

accommodate more toward the Appalachian English pattern (that is, showing low levels of

3rd singular *-s* absence) or toward the African American English pattern (that is, showing

high levels of 3rd singular *-s* absence).

Table 4 gives figures for the use of 3rd singular *-s* absence in the speech of the church

ladies and the porch sitters. As indicated in Table 4, the church ladies have an extremely low

rate for 3rd singular *-s* absence (less than five percent), whereas the porch sitters exhibit this

feature at the higher rate of approximately 50 percent. To test the differences in incidence of

3rd singular *-s* absence for the church ladies and the porch sitters, a Chi-square test was

conducted. The test showed a significant difference between the results yielded from a

tabulation of the two groups' use of 3rd singular *-s* absence ($\chi^2 = 71.67$; $df = 1$; $p<.001$).

Table 4. Third Singular *-s* Absence by Community of Practice

Community of Practice	Absent/Total	Percent
Church Ladies	6/129	4.65
Porch Sitters	84/167	50.30

The data from the porch sitters, who are more vernacular than the church ladies with

respect to this feature, match more closely data from Wolfram and Thomas's (2002) study of

African Americans in Hyde County, North Carolina. In their sample, speakers used the

feature of 3rd singular *-s* absence from 43 to 59%. In contrast, the church ladies use this

African American English feature at rates much lower than the Hyde County speakers or

even the middle or oldest generations of black speakers in Beech Bottom (Mallinson and

Wolfram 2002). In fact, the church ladies are more comparable with the youngest speaker in

Beech Bottom, who had no incidence of third -*s* absence at all. Thus within the community

of Texana, we see a wide range of possibilities for which speakers may show variation with

regard to this feature. Whereas the porch sitters accommodate more to the typical African

American realization of 3rd singular -*s* absence, the church ladies hardly use this feature at

all, at levels more similar to what is generally found in Appalachian communities.

5.3.3 Copula Absence

In the study of African American English, the analysis of the copula structure has

received tremendous attention, both in terms of its marked absence in this ethnic dialect and

in terms of the linguistic constraints that affect its conditioning (see Labov 1969; Wolfram

1969; Fasold 1972; Baugh 1980, 1983; Rickford 1997, 1998, 1999 for a summary). High

levels of *is* and/or *are* absence—that is, the absence of copula and auxiliary for contractible

forms of *is* and *are*, as in *She nice* for *She's nice* or *They running* for *They're running*—have

been found by Labov (1969), Wolfram (1969), Fasold (1972), and Baugh (1983) for African

American speakers in New York City, Detroit, Washington DC, and Los Angeles,

respectively. As such, copula absence (particularly with *is*) has been amply documented as a

structural trait of African American English.

Unlike African American English varieties, copula absence is only found to a limited

extent in white Southern rural vernacular varieties (Wolfram 1974, Feagin 1979, Wolfram

and Thomas 2002). Furthermore, in cases where it does occur, the absence tends to be with

the *are* copula rather than with *is*. Similarly, in Appalachian English, copula absence is also

rare, particularly in white communities (Wolfram and Christian (1976: 40-4), and it is much

rarer for *is* than *are*. For example, whereas Mallinson and Wolfram (2002) found

considerable *are* copula absence in the multiethnic Appalachian community of Beech Bottom

(average of 68.7% for all generations), rates of *is* absence were considerably lower (3.7%).

Although different procedures may be used in tabulating the incidence of copula

absence (see Rickford, Ball, Blake, Jackson, and Martin 1991), in this analysis the general

procedure entailed tabulating tokens of deleted forms of *is* and *are* out of the total number of

contracted forms (e.g., *She's nice*), contractible full forms (e.g., *She is nice*), and deleted

forms (e.g., *She nice*) forms. Criteria for "don't count" cases of copula absence or presence

are based on Blake's (1997) guidelines, which disregard cases of first person singular *am*;

negatives; past tense cases; questions; existential *there*; *it's*, *that's*, and *what's* constructions;

clause-final position; emphatic stress; and cases that preceded an identical phonetic

environment ([r] for *are* and sibilant for *is*).

Table 5. Copula Absence with *are* and *is* by Community of Practice

Community of Practice	Absent/Total	Percent Absent
Church Ladies		
are	24/99	24.24
is	1/193	.52
Porch Sitters		
are	64/76	84.21
is	59/171	50.30

Table 5 gives figures for *is* and *are* copula absence by community of practice. As

indicated, the church ladies have much lower rate of copula absence with both *are* and *is* than

the porch sitters do. Chi-square tests confirmed significant differences between the results

yielded from a tabulation of the two groups' use of *are* copula absence ($\chi^2 = 61.85$; df = 1; $p<.001$) and *is* copula absence ($\chi^2 = 76.07$; df = 1; $p<.001$). Similar findings are elaborated in the multivariate analysis given in Table 6.

Linguistic constraints on copula absence typically include the form of the copula (full, contracted, or deleted), the subject (noun phrase versus pronoun), and the type of predicate complement (predicate nominative, predicate adjective, locative, verb-*ing*, *gonna*) (see Labov 1969, Baugh 1983, Rickford 1997). Due to limited tokens for the full range of cross-product permutations in terms of these factor groups, I restrict the division of complement structural types in only two categories, combining verb-*ing* and *gonna* into one category and the predicate nominative, adjective, and locative into another. In essence, this decision distinguishes the copula and auxiliary functions of *is* and *are*.

To analyze the effects of different internal linguistic constraints on the use of copula absence, data on the copula from both the church ladies and the porch sitters were compiled into one data set. Again, this choice is due to the fact that the church ladies had relatively few instances of this feature and because little theoretical reason exists to believe that the church ladies and porch sitters might follow differently ordered internal linguistic constraints for this feature. Considering data on copula absence in the speech of the church ladies and porch sitters together as a group, Table 6 gives the results of multivariate analysis conducted using Goldvarb 2001. As the input probability reveals, the overall probability that copula absence will occur is 15.2%. This finding is expected, given that the raw figures from Table 5 indicate a lower proportion of absent to contracted or full variants of the copula. The multivariate analysis included four factor groups—community of practice (church ladies versus porch sitters), subject type (noun phrase versus pronoun), copula type (*is* versus *are*),

and following grammatical environment (adjective/locative/noun phrase versus verb-*ing*/
gonna). A step-up-step-down binomial analysis revealed that community of practice, copula
type, and following grammatical environment had significant effects on copula absence.

Table 6. Multivariate Analysis of Copula Absence for Church Ladies and Porch Sitters

Factor Group	Factor Weight		
Community of practice			
Church ladies	.188		
Porch sitters	.847		
Copula type			
is	.308		
are	.854		
Following environment			
Adj/nom/locative	.407		
-*ing*/*gonna*	.716		
		Input probability	.152
		Log likelihood	-186.648
		Significance of run	.000*

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$

       Within the factor group of community of practice, the weighted value of above .50 for
porch sitters (.847) indicates that the occurrence of the dependent variable is favored for this
group and disfavored for the church ladies. Within the factor group of copula type, the
weighted value of above .50 for porch sitters indicates that the occurrence of the dependent
variable is favored for *are* and disfavored for *is*. Finally, within the factor group of following
environment, the weighted value of above .50 for porch sitters indicates that the occurrence

of the dependent variable is favored for following environments that are verb-*ing* or *gonna*, and disfavored for those that are adjectives, noun phrases, or locatives. Both of these findings—that copula absence is favored with *are* and with verb-*ing* and *gonna*—are expected, given previous studies of this feature.

An assessment of the relative strength of each statistically significant factor group by considering weights within each factor group reveals that the most strongly weighted factor group is community of practice, followed by copula type, followed by following grammatical environment. Broadly speaking, this analysis reveals that the church ladies and the porch sitters are significantly different from each other in their rates of copula absence. Moreover, this effect is strong and outweighs the contributions of internal linguistic constraints in the overall model of variation for this feature. This finding suggests that the porch sitters are more sensitive to African American dialect norms than the church ladies are.

5.3.4 Past Tense *be* Leveling

Due to the irregularity of person-number concord in the past tense of English, the verb *be* is highly vulnerable to leveling with plural subjects, and the process is thus very common in vernacular varieties (Chambers 1995: 243, Tagliamonte and Smith 1999, Schreier 2001, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). Past tense *be* leveling is both a feature of African American Vernacular English (Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram and Fasold 1974, Weldon 1994) and a feature of Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian 1976, Feagin 1979, Mallinson and Wolfram 2002), with both dialects leveling to *was* (as opposed to *weren't*; see, for example, Britain 2002).

Table 7 gives the raw figures and percentages for past tense *be* leveling in positive

contexts (e.g., *we was*) and negative contexts (e.g., *we wasn't*) by community of practice. As

shown, the porch sitters exceed the church ladies in rates of leveling to *was* and *wasn't*, and

Chi-square test results confirmed significant differences (χ^2 = 38.81; df = 1; *p*<.001 for

leveling to *was*, and χ^2 = 6.09; df = 1; *p*=.024 for leveling to *wasn't*). At approximately 88%

was leveling, the porch sitters generally parallel the rates for this feature found in other

studies of Appalachian English (around 91% in Wolfram and Christian 1976, around 77% in

Christian et al. 1988, and around 90% in Mallinson and Wolfram 2002). These data suggest

that speakers of vernacular varieties of Appalachian English are maintaining and perhaps

even increasing rates of *was* leveling over time.

Table 7. Leveling to *was* and *wasn't* by Community of Practice

Community of Practice	Nonstandard/Total	Percent
Church Ladies		
Positive (*was*)	29/86	33.72
Negative (*wasn't*)	11/18	61.11
Porch Sitters		
Positive (*was*)	48/55	87.27
Negative (*wasn't*)	12/12	100.00

In terms of linguistic constraints on past tense *be* leveling, prior studies of past *be*

leveling have shown that the feature can be sensitive to polarity (positive versus negative)

and subject type (Tagliamonte and Smith 1999). To analyze the effects of different internal

linguistic constraints on past tense *be* leveling, data from both the church ladies and the porch

sitters were compiled into one data set, since the church ladies had relatively few instances of

this feature and since little theoretical reason exists to believe that the church ladies and porch sitters might follow differently ordered internal linguistic constraints for this feature. Table 8 provides the results of a multivariate analysis using Goldvarb 2001. As the input probability reveals, the overall probability that *was/wasn't* leveling will occur is 58.8%—an expected finding, given the prevalence of this feature in Appalachian English.

A step-up-step-down binomial analysis revealed that only one of the two factor groups—polarity, but not subject type—has a statistically significant effect on the occurrence of past tense *be* leveling (*p*=.046). Within the factor group of polarity, the occurrence of the dependent variable is favored with negative polarity, as shown by its factor weight of above .50. As noted, however, subject type as a factor group was not significant.[33] Some dialects show subject constraints for *was* leveling (Tagliamonte and Smith 1999) in that speakers favor leveling with noun phrase subjects (e.g., *The dogs was there*) over pronoun subjects (e.g., *They was there*), but the data from the Texana women does not show this constraint.[34]

Table 8. Multivariate Analysis of Leveling to *was* and *wasn't* for Church Ladies and Porch Sitters

Factor Group	Factor Weight		
Polarity			
Positive	.461		
Negative	.668		
		Input probability	.588
		Log likelihood	-114.041
		Significance of run	.046*

* *p*≤.05 ** *p*≤.01 ***p*≤.001

As the analysis of past tense *be* leveling reveals, both the church ladies and the porch sitters use this vernacular feature. However, the porch sitters level to *was* and *wasn't* significantly more, and leveling to *wasn't* is favored overall. In sum, since leveling to *was* and *wasn't* is a general vernacular structure, the results indicate that the porch sitters are generally more nonstandard than the church ladies. Moreover, as previous analyses of third singular -*s* absence and copula absence revealed, the porch sitters align markedly more than the church ladies toward norms of African American English.

5.4 Consonantal Variables

Two consonantal variables are analyzed in this section: postvocalic *r*-lessness and prevocalic syllable-coda consonant cluster reduction.

5.4.1 Postvocalic *r*-lessness

The first consonantal variable, postvocalic *r*-lessness—as in *motha* for *mother* or *cah* for *car*—plays a dual role as a marker of regional and ethnic dialect norms. On the one hand, *r*-fulness is indicative of Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian 1976). On the other hand, *r*-lessness, particularly in postvocalic positions, is often characteristic of African American English (Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram 1969, Bailey and Thomas 1998). In this section, postvocalic *r* is analyzed in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters in three representative environments: in an unstressed syllable as in 'mothe*r*,' as coda of a stressed syllable as in 'ca*r*,' and as a component of a rhotacized vowel serving as a stressed nucleus as in 'hu*r*t.' Each instance of potential postvocalic *r*-lessness was classified impressionistically as present or absent.[35]

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Table 9 gives the raw figures and percentages for postvocalic *r* presence and absence in the three phonological contexts. The church ladies' and porch sitters' rates of postvocalic *r*-lessness appear similar, and Chi-square tests confirmed no significant differences in the two groups' *r*-lessness in unstressed ($\chi^2 = 1.067$; df = 1; *p*=.314), stressed ($\chi^2 = 1.075$; df = 1; *p*=.333), and nuclear ($\chi^2 = .95$; df = 1; *p*=.999) environments. Since no significant differences were determined to exist between the *r* productions of the church ladies and the porch sitters, a multivariate analysis was not run, as a "community of practice" factor group would not have been significant, and the only remaining factor group would have been the internal constraint of syllable status.

Table 9. Postvocalic *r* by Community of Practice

Community of Practice	Absent/Total	Percent
Church Ladies		
Unstressed	15/145	10.34
Stressed	11/242	4.55
Nuclear	1/10	10.00
Porch Sitters		
Unstressed	11/157	7.01
Stressed	6/220	2.73
Nuclear	0/9	0.00

As figures in Table 9 suggest, overall levels of *r*-lessness among these Texana women are quite low—under around 10% in all contexts. Furthermore, these speakers' *r*-lessness is generally limited to unstressed syllables, where it is the least salient perceptually. Since such

high levels of rhoticity (i.e., low levels of *r*-lessness) are atypical of speakers of African American English, these data justify the impression that both the church ladies and the porch sitters accommodate to the regional dialect pattern for this feature—a pattern similar to the one Childs and Mallinson (2004) found for Texana in general.

5.3.1 Prevocalic Syllable-Coda Consonant Cluster Reduction

The reduction of clusters of syllable-coda stops that share the feature of voicing (e.g. *west, cold, find, act,* et cetera, but not *jump, want, think*, et cetera) is the second consonantal variable analyzed in this chapter. A number of linguistic factors constrain consonant cluster reduction, including the morphological status of the cluster, the preceding and following phonetic environments, and the prosodic status of the syllable in which the cluster occurs. The relative frequency of cluster reduction has also been linked to social variables such as social status, race/ethnicity, and style. With regard to race/ethnicity, consonant cluster reduction is a particularly diagnostic variable when it occurs in prevocalic environments such as *wes' end* for *west end* and *fin' out* for *find out*. In fact, none of the myriad of studies of syllable coda consonant cluster reduction has found significant ethnolinguistic differences in prepausal or preconsonantal positions (Wolfram, personal communication).

Varieties of African American English are known for having extensive prevocalic cluster reduction (as in, *The mis' is heavy* for *The mist is heavy*) or bimorphemic (*He miss' another one* for *He missed another one*) (Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram 1969; Fasold 1972; Guy 1980; Wolfram, Childs, and Torbert 2000). In contrast, white vernacular varieties, including Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian 1976), typically have no, or only trace amounts of, prevocalic consonant cluster reduction. Mallinson and Wolfram's (2002)

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study considered competing ethnic (African American) and regional (Appalachian) norms for this feature and found that ethnicity was a significant predictor of prevocalic consonant cluster reduction—despite the fact that few ethnolinguistic differences otherwise separated the speech of Beech Bottom residents from that of local cohort whites.

Table 10 provides the percentages and raw figures for the church ladies' and porch sitters' rates of prevocalic cluster reduction, by morphological status of the consonant cluster. Also provided are percentages of prevocalic cluster reduction (adapted from Wolfram et al. 2000) in white Appalachian working class speech and black Southern working class speech, for comparison to the cluster reduction patterns for the Texana women. As can be seen in the chart, the church ladies and porch sitters fall relatively between Southern black speakers and white Appalachian speakers in their rates of monomorphemic cluster reduction. With regard to bimorphemic clusters, the church ladies and porch sitters show rates of reduction that are much more comparable to those of white Appalachians than those of Southern blacks. These data in particular suggest that the Texana women's prevocalic cluster reduction is influenced by local (Appalachian) dialect norms, rather than general Southern norms.

Table 10. Prevocalic Cluster Reduction by Community of Practice Compared to Other Relevant Speaker Groups

Speakers	Monomorphemic Clusters		Bimorphemic Clusters	
	Reduced/Total	(%)	Reduced/Total	(%)
Church Ladies	10/49	20.41	1/44	2.27
Porch Sitters	12/41	29.27	4/63	6.35
Black Southern WC speech		72.00		36.00
White Appalachian WC speech		17.00		5.00

In order to assess potential differences in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters with regard to rates of consonant cluster reduction, this analysis focuses solely on the prevocalic phonetic environment since this type of reduction is the most diagnostic. Prevocalic consonant clusters are also distinguished in terms of the cluster's morphological status as monomorphemic (e.g., *mist*) or bimorphemic (e.g., *missed*). In this multivariate analysis, these two internal factors are the only ones included. For a more in-depth analysis of consonant cluster reduction, Childs and Mallinson (2004) give an overview of the distribution of this feature in the Texana community as a whole, while a myriad of studies discuss other linguistic and social effects that may systematically affect variability in cluster reduction as well (see, for example, Fasold 1972, Guy 1980, Wolfram et al. 2000).

In the multivariate analysis of prevocalic consonant cluster reduction in the speech of these eight Texana women, the two factor groups were considered: community of practice and morphological status of the consonant cluster. Unlike some of the other variables analyzed in this chapter (such as plural verbal -*s* and past tense *be* leveling), enough tokens of prevocalic cluster reduction were obtained for both the church ladies and the porch sitters to enable them to be included as a separate factor group in the multivariate analysis. Thus, the analysis is able to reveal whether community of practice is a significant factor group alongside the internal constraint of morphological status of the cluster and assess the relative strength of each factor group in contributing to the overall model of variation for this feature.

Considering data on prevocalic consonant cluster reduction from the church ladies and porch sitters together as a group, Table 11 gives the results of multivariate analysis conducted using Goldvarb 2001. As the input probability reveals, the overall probability that prevocalic cluster presence will occur in general is 89.8%—in other words, prevocalic cluster

reduction is only predicted to occur 10.2% of the time. This finding is expected, given that prevocalic cluster reduction is rarer than reduction of clusters in prepausal or preconsonantal environments, and given that the raw figures from the church ladies and porch sitters in Table 10 show low numbers for this feature in general.

Table 11. Multivariate Analysis of Prevocalic Syllable-Coda Consonant Cluster Reduction for Church Ladies and Porch Sitters

Factor Group	Factor Weight		
Morphological Type			
Monomorphemic	.278		
Bimorphemic	.691		
		Input probability	.898
		Log likelihood	-67.217
		Significance of run	.000***

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$

The multivariate analysis included two factor groups—community of practice and morphological status of the consonant cluster (monomorphemic versus bimorphemic). A step-up-step-down binomial analysis revealed that only one of the two factor groups—the morphological type of the cluster, but not community of practice—has a statistically significant effect on the occurrence of prevocalic cluster retention ($p=.000$). Within the factor group of morphological status, the weighted value of above .50 for bimorphemic status (.691) indicates that the occurrence of the dependent variable is favored with bimorphemic clusters. Thus, broadly speaking, this analysis reveals that the church ladies and the porch sitters are not significantly different from each other in their rates of prevocalic cluster

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retention or reduction. When prevocalic clusters are reduced, however, this occurrence is favored in bimorphemic clusters (e.g., reducing *missed* to *miss'* is predicted to occur more often than reducing *mist* to *mis'*). This finding is expected, given previous studies of cluster reduction, including Wolfram (1991), who points out the significance of the morphological status of the final consonant cluster in predicting rates of its phonological reduction.

5.5 Summary of Morphosyntactic, Syntactic, and Consonantal Variables

Figure 1 graphically summarizes findings from the quantitative analysis of four morphosyntactic variables (plural verbal -*s*, 3rd singular -*s* absence, copula absence with *is* and *are*, and past tense *be* leveling) in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters, while Figure 2 presents similar figures for the two consonantal variables (postvocalic *r*-lessness and prevocalic consonant cluster reduction). In both figures, asterisks are placed next to feature names where relevant to indicate the respective level of significance obtained for each feature in Chi square tests (*=.05, **=.01, *=.001).
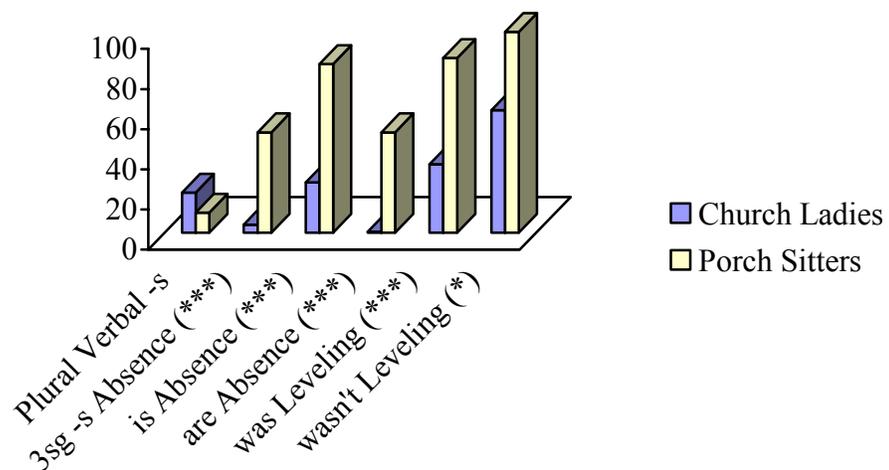

Figure 1. Percent Nonstandard Morphosyntactic Feature, by Community of Practice
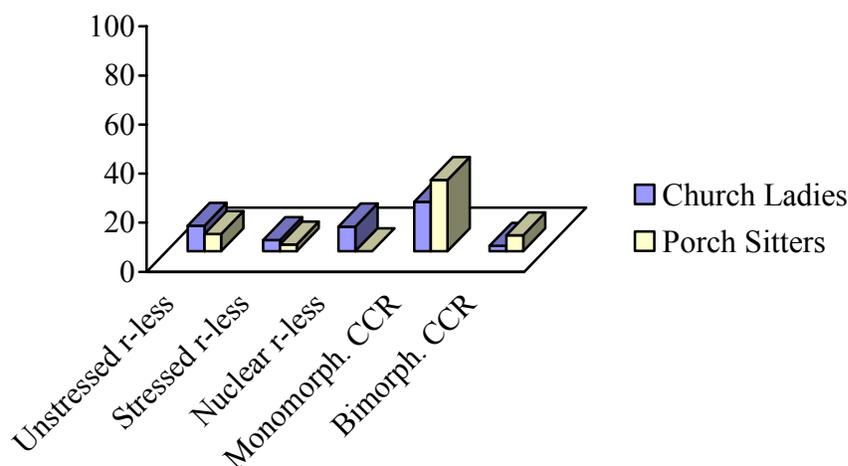
Figure 2. Percent Nonstandard Consonantal Feature, by Community of Practice

To reiterate the findings, all the morphosyntactic features were found to be significantly different in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters—except for plural verbal -*s*. Reasons why this feature may not have shown difference are the rarity of the feature in everyday conversation and a lack of a large corpus of tokens for assessing variation. Another reason to potentially account for this feature's similarity by community of practice is the fact that the feature is an Appalachian English feature—one that the church ladies, who are invested in local folkways and traditions—might not resist strenuously, do not perceive as being nonstandard, or perhaps do not even notice.

Otherwise, the church ladies use significantly less of the other three morphosyntactic features—third singular -*s* absence, *is* and *are* copula absence, and leveling to *was* and *wasn't*. These findings are expected for two reasons. First, since the church ladies are resistant to outsider and urban influence, it is not surprising that they resist using the canonical African American English features of third singular -*s* absence and copula absence (particularly *is*). Second, since the church ladies are invested in standardness of speech and

habit and in the institution of education, it is not surprising that they eschew leveling to *was* and *wasn't* at higher rates than the porch sitters. Thus, the analysis of the morphosyntactic features reveals that the speech of the porch sitters is significantly more nonstandard and also more aligned toward norms of African American English than that of the church ladies.

With regard to the consonantal variables, the data on prevocalic consonant cluster reduction from the two groups of Texana women suggest a similar pattern to that found for postvocalic *r*-lessness: namely, that these consonantal features in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters do not differ significantly. In fact, these data suggest that these Texana women are maintaining a baseline level of phonology regardless of community of practice. This is an important finding, because it suggests a different status of morphosyntax and phonology for these Texana speakers. As Wolfram (1969: 204) points out, grammatical variables generally show sharp stratification, while phonological variables show gradient stratification. A similar pattern is evident in the speech of the church ladies and the porch sitters, whose use of all but one of the morphosyntactic variables differ sharply, but whose consonantal productions are similar.

For example, the case of the porch sitters use *is* copula absence and 3rd singular *-s* absence significantly more than the church ladies, but in contrast, the two groups of women show comparable rates of African American phonological features (*r*-lessness and prevocalic consonant cluster reduction). These data thus show that it is possible for speakers to align toward locally based phonological norms while at the same time accommodate to external morphosyntactic norms. This finding parallels Wolfram and Thomas (2002), who show evidence of persistent levels for certain regional phonetic variables in Hyde County, North

Carolina—even in the face of some of the same speakers' movement toward more urban norms for the morphosyntactic variables that are characteristic of African American English.

At the same time that the church ladies and porch sitters show similar incidence of the two consonantal variables and significantly differ in their morphosyntactic productions, the women also differ in their vowel productions. Childs' (2005) acoustic analysis found that the church ladies have significantly more fronted productions of the vowels /u/, /o/, and /ʊ/, as well as a more glide-reduced production of /ai/—patterns indicative of local Appalachian vowel productions—than the porch sitters.

5.6 Qualitative Comparison of Church Ladies' and Porch Sitters' Speech

In the first text to explore the notion of language and gender, Lakoff (1975) set forth a description of women's speech. In examining language used by women, some of the features of women's speech Lakoff identified include the use of "empty" adjectives (e.g., *lovely*); hypercorrect and/or superstandard grammar (e.g., *This gift is from your father and I*, and *It was I who answered the telephone*, respectively)—a feature that signals both an awareness of speaking "properly" as well as an aversion to talking "roughly"; the absence of the use of off-color or indelicate expressions and the frequent use of euphemism; the absence of telling and even "getting" jokes; and the absence of cursing or only the use of weak expletives, such as *fudge*. Lakoff identified these and other features as working not only to cast women's speech as powerless, but to cast women as powerless as well. In sum, Lakoff argued that men's and women's different ways of speaking reflect and reinforce gender inequality.

Since 1975, sociolinguists have found both support and non-support for Lakoff's hypotheses (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003 for a summary). Primarily, her work was

roundly criticized as presenting a homogenized view of women's language. Questions

concerning who uses "women's language," do only women use it, what kind of women, and

when do they use it, were just a few of those raised about Lakoff's study, which provided no

empirical data to support its claims. In response, some research has found that speakers in

subordinate positions or asymmetric power exchanges may draw on the linguistic resources

that comprise Lakoff's so-called "women's language," regardless of their gender (O'Barr and

Atkins 1980). Speakers who desire to present themselves as heterosexual women may also

draw upon the resources of so-called "women's language" to present themselves as this kind

of speaker—even if they are not women or heterosexual (Hall 1995).

The general conclusion from language and gender studies in the wake of Lakoff's

influential work is thus that linguistic variables are resources used by speakers to position

themselves in gendered (and racial, classed, sexual, et cetera) ways. In other words, our talk

indirectly indexes gender (and race, class, sexuality, et cetera) as linguistic acts and resources

come to be associated with speaking like a man or a woman (and therefore may show

different frequencies in use across the two social categories; Ochs 1992). Thus the empirical

question has moved away from asking "how do men and women talk differently" to instead

determining what linguistic resources are favored and disfavored when speakers present

themselves as certain kinds of women and men.

With this premise in mind, research has determined that certain kinds of women do

play a prominent societal role in the maintenance of language practices that are deemed

"standard" and "proper." As Lakoff (2004: 115) explains, in the newly annotated revised

version of *Language and Woman's Place*, "In some cultures women—as mothers and

schoolteachers—get the role of guardian of linguistic authority and keeper of the prescriptive

grammar. … Under these forces, women are forces for linguistic conservatism." For example, when one of Johnstone and Bean's (1997) respondents was asked whether she would know a Southern woman if she met one, she replied, "I- I've got a picture of one: someone who doesn't cuss ((laughter)); uh, someone who's not a union leader ((laughter)); uh, someone who uh, is in the background and does social events and is interested in those kind of things." For this speaker, being a "Southern woman" was indexed by linguistic features that rejected cursing and favored cooperation. Again, language ideologies are seen to intertwine with those of race, class, and gender.

But in other cases, women reject speaking standard English. Some women who generally align their language practices with standard English may, in some contexts, speak less standardly than they would otherwise. Some women may speak less standardly than other women in general, and some women may speak less standardly than men. As Lakoff (2004: 115) also explains,

> Women may be ahead of the curve, using nonstandard forms that are not fully accepted in middle-class society when they have less education and are less literate than men. Since education and literacy are powerful forces in favor of the standard language, those who do not have them are more apt to use nonstandard forms—which sometimes become the standard forms of the future.

Thus, nonstandard language by women can occur for a variety of reasons. Recall Nichols' (1983) structural explanation that older black women in an island community spoke less standardly then men because of constrained access to mainland job opportunities. As Lakoff explains, education and literacy can also play a role. From these findings, the general conclusion can be drawn that women are *both* grammatical innovators and conservatives. As Lakoff (2004: 115) concludes, "Although the two positions seem antithetical, they really

represent two sides of the same coin. Both arise when some groups are excluded from serious or valuable business."

Unfortunately, studies of how, when, and what kinds of women speak nonstandardly are less common than sociolinguistic studies of the language practices of women who tend to speak most standardly most often—namely, white, middle class women. As Henley (1995) and Morgan (2004a) have noted, the general sociolinguistic focus on white middle-class women as the promulgators of standard language has relegated studies of the language of working-class women and women of color to the margins. Accordingly, sociolinguistic studies often implicitly or explicitly cast the language practices of working-class women and women of color as being illustrative of a "unique, marginal, or special case, rather than as one among many examples of language use" (Morgan 2004a: 254). Even worse, racial biases have led to stereotyped characterizations of women of color who speak nonstandardly that are predicated on controlling images of black women as dominant, subversive, and emasculating (Morgan 2002: 85).

In this following section, I describe the church ladies' and porch sitters' use of expletives (cursing), hypercorrection, habitual *be*, and miscellaneous dialect features. As noted, cursing has been stereotyped as a "masculine" feature not present in "women's language," whereas hypercorrection is thought to index femininity. The other features are markers of regional and ethnic language norms. My analysis of the use or non-use of these linguistic variables is not intended to cast either group's speech as being more "feminine" or "masculine," or more "white" or "black," respectively. Rather, my intent is to add more detail to the rich picture of linguistic variation that exists for these eight Texana speakers. In

so doing, I further outline the range of linguistic possibilities that exist among even a small cohort of rural, black, middle aged and older women.

5.6.1 Expletive Use (Cursing)

As Mills (2003: 149) notes, representations of working-class people tend to stress the directness and loudness of their language and emphasize the degree of swearing that is used. While this section focuses on differences in the use of expletives by the two communities of practice, it is as important to underscore the lack of cursing by the church ladies as much as its prevalence among the porch sitters. In this section, I describe not only the extent to which the church ladies and porch sitters curse, but the conditions under which they use expletives, and how these language practices relate to their ideologies about race, class, and gender.

When considering what linguistic resources are favored and disfavored in the church ladies' and the porch sitters' self-presentation, expletive use is salient. As noted earlier, Lakoff (1975) proclaimed cursing to be one of the main linguistic features that women overwhelmingly avoid in their language. Not only do women generally eschew the use of expletives, Lakoff says, but the expletives they do use tend to be "weak." Thus, for example, women are hypothesized to strenuously avoid words like *god, damn*, and *shit* and/or to opt for weaker forms, like *gosh*, *darn*, or *shoot*. Actual linguistic evidence, however, on women's use of expletives is mixed: women in general may indeed "watch their language," but only to an extent. Precht (2002), based on a corpus study of conversation recorded in 1995, found that men said *shit* more than women, and women said *gosh* more than men, but there were no significant differences in men's and women's use of *damn* or *god*. Similarly, gender differences may also intersect with age in ways that are diminishing with younger

generations. (See Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003 for a summary of these and other

findings on gender and expletive use.)

Among the church ladies and the porch sitters, the church ladies overwhelmingly

avoided the use of expletives in their recorded conversations. In no cases did the church

ladies curse spontaneously. In only one instance did a church lady self-report that she had

cursed; this example was also reported in chapter 4. Gail Ann said,

> And I said, [Gina], now I'm going to say some things you might now want to hear.
> And I said— pardon my French, [Joan] always says, there goes Mother [Gail Ann],
> speaking French—but I don't give a damn [whispered, laughing].

As noted in chapter 4, when Gail Ann used this expletive (*damn*) she whispered the word,

laughingly, holding her hand to her face and slightly over her mouth. In equating *damn* to

"French" and asking for pardon, Gail Ann distanced herself from the use of expletives and

marked them as being foreign to her. Gail Ann's behavior may, in part, be influenced by our

presence as young, white, female outsiders; perhaps she does not want to set a "bad example"

by cursing in front of us. At the same time, Gail Ann remarked that Joan, another church

lady, also commented on Mother Gail Ann's use of "French," which suggests an ideological

connection between Gail Ann's status as a woman and mother and her unwillingness to curse

frequently, directly, or without euphemism.

The only other times the church ladies cursed were when they were quoting other

speakers. Even then, the church ladies often whispered the expletives. For example, in one

interview, Gina told a story about when she met a doctor who looked surprisingly like her

deceased father. Upon seeing the doctor for the first time, Gina reported, she was so shocked

by his resemblance to her dead father that she couldn't speak. In response to her

speechlessness, Gina reported that the doctor laughingly said, "Well, I knew I was awfully

damn ugly but I didn't think I was that ugly! I'll be damned!" When Gina reported the

doctor's joke to us, however, she dropped her voice to a whisper when she came to the word

damn and *damned*—but she spoke the rest of both sentences at a normal volume. Similarly,

in another story, Gina recounted how a friend of hers "cursed out" a (different) doctor for

being insensitive to his patient. Gina reported that her friend said to the doctor, "You get the

hell, she said, get your little stuff, she said, you get the hell out of this office and don't you

ever come back." When Gina said this part of the conversation, she used a voice so low that

the sound could barely be heard on tape—even though Gina was wearing a lavaliere

microphone attached to her shirt. In both of these examples, Gina used a quiet voice to mark

the fact that expletives—even such commonly used expletives as *damn* and *hell*—are a

dispreferred feature in her speech.

The only other expletive used by a church lady was when Gail Ann quoted the speech

of her grandson, the rap mogul. This example was also reported in chapter 4.

> I don't pay any attention to the way people from Atlanta [talk], but the black children
> sometime have changed their talk. … I'll tell you a joke on [my grandson]. When
> [he] first went to Atlanta, he talked just like he did, but when he get with his, what
> they call them, homebuddies, or homeboys, or whatever you call it, he would change
> it. And in school he would talk one way, and when he get with them it would, would
> be, go to the STO [store], and you know, damn this, and you know. I think they still
> want their own dialect or whatever you want to call it and I still I think it's still there.

As noted in chapter 4, Gail Ann equated the urban style of African American English spoken

in Atlanta with the use of expletives. Although Gail Ann did not lower her voice when

quoting her grandson's use of the word *damn*, she did dismissively evaluate it as being part

of "slang" that younger, urban black men use. Implicit is the assessment that neither curse

words nor slang is (or should be) part of the linguistic repertoire of older, rural, black women

like Gail Ann and her friends.

In contrast to the church ladies, the porch sitters only quoted other speakers' use of expletives twice. In one example, Emily reported that one of the young men being investigated for his involvement in the infamous local rape case (see chapters 3 and 4) called the young woman accuser a "bitch." In another example, also mentioned in chapter 4, Melissa laughingly reported that her three-year old grandson had said, "Damn you, mama"— quite unlike the whispered expletives used by the church ladies.

In spontaneous conversation, Debbie was the only porch sitter who did not curse during our interview with her individually or on the porch (but she was also the last woman to join that conversation, having been at work). In total, Emily, Melissa, and Michelle used 15 expletives during our individual and group interviews with them. The most frequently used expletive by far was *ass*. As noted in chapter 4, Michelle told the story of a man and thugs who "pistol whipped his ass"; she repeated this phrase four times in the group interview on the porch. In other examples, Melissa and Michelle said a few times that their parents beat their ass; Michelle said, "We'll pass his ass on [up the road]"; and Emily recalled that black children had to shower first, when "white kids was already in the pool, swimming they ASS off." Note, again, the contrast between Emily's emphatic use of this expletive and the church ladies' whispered expletives.

In addition to *ass* (eight instances, one by Emily, one by Melissa, six by Michelle)), the porch sitters also used the expletives *shit* (two instances, both by Michelle), *damn* (two instances, both by Melissa), *hell* (one instance, by Michelle), and even *puss* ('vagina') (one instance, by Emily). None of these expletives were ever said quietly. The use of *puss*, for example, was met with an uproar of laughter, since Emily's use of the term was a joke that

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played on the nickname of one of their friends while also making fun of her for being sexually "generous," as Emily put it.

In another example, in the group interview with the porch sitters, Melissa dropped and broke her coffee mug. She exploded with a loud, "Damn!" but then laughingly and quickly followed up with "I mean, durn!"—a repair that seemed to be an attempt not to curse in front of us (the white outsiders). Yet, when all the other porch sitters immediately laughed at "durn," implying that the use of weak expletives was clearly not Melissa's typical style (or perhaps that she didn't need to repair her use of expletives in front of us), she laughed again and repeated, "Damn!" Melissa's use of cursing, followed by a repair, then a return to her original word reveals that the use of expletives is conscious in the minds of the porch sitters, just as in the minds of the church ladies. It is not that the porch sitters do not "know" any weak expletives. Rather, they prefer to use strong expletives and do not feel constrained enough by societal mores to avoid using them around others. In the instance when Melissa halfheartedly tried to repair her cursing, the other women implicitly censored the attempt as being an inauthentic display of decorum, at odds with the typical conversational norms of their group.

The porch sitters' use of cursing fits with their general embrace of casual habits and casual speech, as detailed in chapter 4 and in the first half of chapter 5. In contrast, the church ladies' avoidance and stigmatization of cursing is an integral part of how they construct themselves as women who orient themselves both in their speech and in their other habits toward propriety, religious norms of morality, middle-class notions of feminine decorum, and educational standards. In this regard, the church ladies and the porch sitters signify they are creditable members of their respective communities of practice in different

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ways and signal that they have learned the identity code and culture that is valued by their group. The porch sitters' use of expletives may even be sociolinguistic evidence of how these women resist cultural, including linguistic, domination (Woolard 1985, 1987; Gal 1987; these points are discussed further in chapter 6).

5.6.2 Hypercorrection

Hypercorrection, according to Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006), is the linguistic phenomenon whereby a speaker extends a language form beyond its regular linguistic boundaries when she or he feels a need to use extremely standard or "correct" forms. Many examples of hypercorrection highlight speakers' overextension of prescriptive grammatical rules. For example, in the sentence, *The boss threatened to fire James and I*, the speaker has presumably overextended the rule that prescribes the use of the nominal personal pronouns in subject position and is using the nominal pronoun (*I*) in a structural location where the objective case pronoun (*me*) is actually the prescriptive form. In other words, some speakers may be so concerned with getting their grammar to be (prescriptively) "right" than they often get it (prescriptively) "wrong." Speakers can also hypercorrect phonologically, as Labov's (1966) description of New York City women's use of postvocalic *r*. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006: 272-3) explain some of his conclusions about hypercorrection and social class.

> Labov maintained that lower middle-class and upper working-class speakers are more prone to hypercorrection than members of other socioeconomic classes because, in his view, they are more concerned with raising their socioeconomic status than members of other class groups. … Because of their concern with achieving the next higher level of status, speakers in lower middle-class groups attempt to talk like members of upper middle-class groups. In their attempts, they sometimes go too far and end up utilizing prestige features at a greater rate, or stigmatized features at a lower rate, than those they are trying to emulate. This is particularly likely to occur in formal styles… [and] with features currently undergoing language change….

In addition to class, there may also be a connection with gender. Labov (1966, 1972a) and Lakoff (1975) posit that hypercorrection is characteristic of women's speech, since women are theorized to be strive more than men to use prescriptively correct and even hypercorrect forms. (Note, however, that these assumptions have been questioned, as explained in this chapter and in chapter 1). More recently, Coates (1993: 66-86) also deems hypercorrect language to be more characteristic of women than of men and cites working class men as being the most vernacular. Morgan (2004a: 257) also points out cultural differences in the use of hypercorrection. She contends that while hypercorrection can occur across cultures, genders, and classes, among black women it functions as a "hyper-middle-class, stereotypical women's speech." In the same vein, other sociolinguists have found that a range of variation may exist within "women" as a broad category (Nichols 1983), as well as within small cohorts of speakers and in very small communities (Wolfram and Beckett 2000, Mallinson and Wolfram 2002).

Among church ladies and porch sitters, only one speaker hypercorrected. While a discussion of just two instances of hypercorrection for one speaker might seem to stretch the limits of empirical analysis, I argue that knowing the context of the hypercorrection makes a case that warrants the two tokens some attention. In both cases, the use of hypercorrection was by Gina, the church lady whose economic situation is far less stable than the rest of her group. Gina is the only church lady currently raising a child (as a single parent, moreover). She is the only church lady to have talked about holding blue-collar jobs, how much items cost, what items she cannot afford, and how doubtful she is that she will be able to retire one day. As explained in chapter 4, Gina's situation exemplifies the idea that class subjectivities are locally as well as materially constructed. Although her economic situation might be

objectively described as working class, she works to maintain her status as a church lady through church involvement and association with the other church ladies—that is, through cultural rather than physical capital.

Moreover, Gina builds cultural capital through her use of the standard language practices that exemplify the linguistic habits of the church ladies in general. Like the rest of the church ladies, Gina uses low levels of all nonstandard dialect features (particularly those characteristic of African American English) and she avoids cursing. And on two occasions, she hypercorrects: once, Gina describes a strange event that happened to her as being "so ironical" (as opposed to the prescriptively standard form, *so ironic*). On another occasion, she describes how a woman she knew "fixed breakfast for she and her husband" (as opposed to the prescriptively standard form, *for her and her husband*).[36] I would also argue that these two instances of hypercorrection are further evidence that Gina constructs a linguistic persona for herself that is centered on being a proper woman and a standard speaker.

It may seem like an extrapolation to argue a point based on two examples of a linguistic feature from one speaker. But the fact that no other church ladies (or porch sitters) hypercorrected in the many hours of conversational interviews collected from them is further tacit evidence to suggest that Gina, in particular, strives to achieve a "hyper-middle-class, stereotypical women's speech" (Morgan 2004a: 257). The argument that Gina hypercorrects as a means of constructing cultural and linguistic capital for herself seems particularly plausible when considered alongside facts about Gina's tenuous economic situation and when considered alongside an understanding of the value that the church ladies—Gina's peer group—place on cultural, social, and physical capital in general.

5.6.3 Habitual be

Habitual (also called invariant) *be* is another canonical feature of African American English—and one that is also frequently stigmatized and mocked in parodies of the dialect (Ronkin and Karn 1999). Standard English has no way of distinguishing habituality for the verb *be*, but rather marks habituality with the present tense form of the copula (*is* or *are*) plus a word like *usually*, *typically*, *often*, or *regularly*. In contrast, African American English has developed the grammaticalized feature that linguists have called "habitual *be*" because of its ability to convey the aspect of habituality. Thus, for example, whereas a standard English speaker might say, *The students typically miss class when the bus runs late*, a speaker of African American English might instead use the habitual *be* form, as in, *The students be missing class when the bus be running late* (or, alternatively, *when the bus run late*).

In this regard, habitual *be* cannot logically (grammatically, linguists would say) be used with durative markers like *right now* or *at the moment*. Thus, in African American English, to say **He be working right now* would be ungrammatical, because the habituality indexed by *be* would contradict the present temporal marker *right now*. Similarly, habitual *be* is not used in strictly past tense situations. Wolfram (1969: 183) cautions, for example, against perceiving elided contracted forms of *will* and *would* as representing instances of habitual *be*. For example, *He be in the office momentarily* does not mean "He is habitually in the office momentarily" (which would not make sense), but rather is a case in which the future copula has been deleted (i.e., *He will be in the office momentarily*).

Many studies have investigated the social distribution and the linguistic constraints surrounding the use of habitual *be* (e.g., Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram 1969, Fasold 1972, Baugh 1983, Bailey and Maynor 1987, Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994, Green 2002, Alim

2003) as well as alternative forms of habitual *be* (such as equative *be*; see Alim 2003 for a summary of debates concerning this feature as well as some evidence for it). Such an investigation is not undertaken here, due to low token count, as well as the constraints prohibiting habitual *be* from being quantified as with other linguistic features that are typically analyzed from a variationist approach (Wolfram 1969). Rather, in this section, I describe the non-use of habitual *be* by the church ladies and simultaneously give evidence of its use among the porch sitters.

On the one hand, it may not seem surprising that the church ladies had zero instances of habitual *be* from the hours of conversational data collected from them. Perhaps the church ladies do use this feature in other contexts; for example, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) found a high use of habitual *be* for one young black woman when she was interviewed by another black woman acquaintance/friend. Yet, there are two pieces of contradictory evidence. For one, by the end of our fieldwork in Texana, we were relatively familiar with all of the members of the communities of practice and had recorded many conversational interviews with all the women. Gail Ann, for example, has no instances of habitual *be* in approximately seven hours of conversation and in many more hours of observation. Second, Zora, whom we interviewed in three different contexts for well over an hour each time and interacted with extensively outside of interview situations, uses no habitual *be* at all—even though her mother uses this feature extensively.

The non-use of habitual *be* by the church ladies seems to mirror the way that these women also avoid the use of swearing. Attributing the church ladies' non-use of this canonical black speech feature to their potential views of habitual *be* as being connected to the "slang" that characterizes urban black speech is a mere speculation, but one that seems to

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be tacitly supported by the standard language ideologies that the church ladies espoused in chapter 4. The fact that Zora's mother and other, churchgoing women of similar ages use this feature suggests that the church ladies' non-use of habitual *be* signals more of an active resistance to the use of this feature on their part, rather than any accidental or unintentional omission. Future research might find interesting results if the church ladies were presented with the opportunity to evaluate the language of speakers who frequently use habitual *be* and other nonstandard and/or canonically black linguistic structures in their conversation.

In contrast to the church ladies, the porch sitters used habitual *be* eight times during our interviews with them. Debbie was the only porch sitter who did not use habitual *be* during either of our interviews at which she was present, but as noted earlier, she also was interviewed less than the other women. Thus, the time frame within which she might have used habitual *be* and other more infrequently occurring linguistic features is much shorter. Of the remaining porch sitters, Emily had four instances of habitual *be*, Melissa had one, and Michelle had three. Some of these instances include *When I be here through the day, I be listening to the radio* (Emily), *There all over them woods they be hunting* (Melissa), and *Town be full on Friday and Saturday nights* (Michelle). Emily even used one instance of what appears to be a past habitual *be*, in the phrase, *Whenever she did be in school*.

5.6.4 Miscellaneous Features

The porch sitters were also frequent users of a few other miscellaneous features characteristic of Appalachian and/or African American English dialect norms. This section only notes instances of "interesting" features and does not empirically compare any of these features between the church ladies and the porch sitters.

To begin, the church ladies and the porch sitters used the double modal verbs that are prevalent in Appalachian, Southern, and African American English. Debbie, for example, used *may can*, and Emily used *might could*. Other church ladies and porch sitters frequently used double modals throughout their interviews, though I never heard an instance of a triple modal construction. Di Paolo (1986), Ching (1987), Butters (1991), and Mishoe and Montgomery (1994) discuss the multiple modal constructions that have been noted in Appalachian, African American, and general Southern American speech.

Both the church ladies and the porch sitters were also, at times, heard to use the Appalachian and rural Southern English construction *liketa*, as in *It was so cold outside, I liketa died*. This structure has often been called "counterfactual *liketa*" but may be more accurately described as "avertive *liketa*," since the term is used to express that an action was narrowly averted. However, in one example from the Texana data, Debbie uses *liketa* in an instance that is not avertive. During the group interview with the porch sitters, Debbie participated in talking about the infamous local rape case, in which the young woman accuser purportedly was given alcohol and drugs by a few young men at a party and then allegedly raped by them (see chapter 3). When discussing the young woman's predicament, Debbie proclaimed, "The drugs saved her life. It was the alcohol that liketa killed her!" In this instance, Debbie appears to be using *liketa* in a literal rather than avertive sense: the young woman's situation was quite dire and she was actually near death from alcohol poisoning. Wolfram (personal communication) has suggested that the non-avertive use of *liketa* may represent the original form and may be a relic form that has been preserved in isolated dialect areas such as those where Appalachian English is still spoken.

One point of interest is that two porch sitters (and no other church ladies or porch

sitters) used the NP$_i$ CALL NP$_i$ V-ING construction that is used by AAE speakers but rarely,

if ever, used by other speakers (Wolfram 1994, Green 2002). Both instances of this structure

were mentioned in chapter 4 and are elaborated here. In one example, Michelle explained

how she "ran away" from home but got no further than halfway down Texana Road:

> I useta get beatings all the time… 'Cause I was mean and run away and everything
> else. Call myself running away. I called myself running away. I guess I was 13,
> maybe 14, right? And I called myself running away. … I run down there [to where
> the old schoolhouse was], and I called myself running away and I run down there.
> ((laughter)) That's as far as I got.

As this example clearly exemplifies, the "*call -self*" construction is used to describe a

situation in which, in the opinion of others, an attempt made to do something is not meeting

typical standards (Wolfram 1994, Green 2002). To use Green's (2002: 21) example for

clarification, if an AAE speaker said *He call hisself cooking*, the speaker would mean, "He

thinks he's cooking, but he's merely playing around in the kitchen. That is, he isn't doing

anything remarkable." Emily's use of the construction expressed a similar meaning. "I

guess he called hisself giving it to [my daughter] for Christmas," expressed doubt that the

present was a suitable Christmas gift, that it would actually be given to her daughter, or both.

In one final example, a porch sitter used a uniquely African American English

feature. When discussing the local rape trial, Emily referred to the young man who was

charged and sentenced to 10 years in jail. Emily reflected, then said while thinking aloud,

"He got sent off, he got 10 years. I don't even think he done much, he might be done done

three by now." The phrase "he might be done done three by now" contains the feature *might*

be done, which marks the modal resultant state in African American English, followed by

done, the past participle of *to do*. In standard English, the phrase would be glossed as *might*

have already done (Green 2002: 47)—that is, the young man might have already completed three of his 10 years in jail, and Emily expresses this meaning via a grammaticalized structure unique to AAE. As these miscellaneous examples reveal, the intersection of African American, Appalachian, and general Southern English norms can result in a rich tapestry of language variation that draws from the unique resources of each dialect.

5.7 Summary of the Church Ladies' and Porch Sitters' Positive and Negative Social and Linguistic Identity Practices

Chapters 4 and 5, when considered together, have underscored the importance of examining communities of practices as sites of conscious social grouping within which members shape and manifest shared social practices and shared linguistic practices. Whereas on the surface, these two groups of women in Texana might appear to share many demographic and social characteristics in common—gender, race, middle/older age, rural background, and community of origin—the ethnographic and linguistic analyses conducted here have revealed considerable differences in the ways the church ladies and the porch sitters position themselves through language, habits, practices, and ideologies to create distinct cultures and identities within their groups. As the CofP framework highlights, individuals living in the same speech community bring distinct micro-level identities to their social interactions in addition to their gendered, raced, aged, and classed social selves (Bucholtz 1999a) that combine in uniquely inflected ways within the community of practice.

To reiterate, it is not just the identities of the individual women who belong to one of these two social groups that "create" the culture of the communities of practice. Consider the case of Gail Ann, a member of the church ladies. Not only is she very mobile, but she is also

connected to urban culture via her son and her grandson, who are highly visible in the world of hip-hop and rap. While it would be very plausible for this woman to orient toward urban norms, be tolerant of urban influence, and have access to an urban identity, instead she chooses to position herself as identifying with local norms, resists outsider/urban influence, and categorizes urban identities as in opposition to her own identity and those of the other church ladies. In other words, the church ladies' community of practice can be seen as setting the parameters for social and linguistic practice, within which Gail Ann (and the other women) operate, and their individual identity contributes to this group identification as well.

In much the same way, Gina's situation also reinforces a view of the community of practice as a site of conscious social grouping in which members help form the group identity and draw from group resources to shape their personal identity. On the one hand, Gina's economic situation might objectively place her in the category of "working class"; for example, her life history and background parallel quite closely with that of Debbie, one of the porch sitters. But while Gina's financial background might position her closer to the porch sitters in an objective sense, Gina resists this similarity. She draws upon other local status markers—including speaking standard/hypercorrect language, attending the local church, and being a longstanding member of the Texana church and community—to differentiate herself from other women in the community. Similarly, the porch sitters' direct and conscious rejection of speaking standardly and going to church index an identity that is socially distinct from to the one the church ladies construct.

To summarize these findings, Table 12 (modeled after Bucholtz 1999a) reviews the social and linguistic practices of the church ladies and the porch sitters. Positive identity practices are those individuals employ to orient themselves toward a favored identity, while

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negative identity practices are those they employ to distance themselves from rejected identities. For example, the church sitters use the positive identity practice of standard language alongside the negative identity practice of rejecting cursing to present an identity that centers on standardness and propriety. Likewise, the porch sitters curse and do not go to church to divest themselves from institutional norms, such as those the church ladies value.

Table 12. Positive and Negative Identity Practices of Church Ladies and Porch Sitters

		Positive Identity Practices	Negative Identity Practices
CHURCH LADIES			
Linguistic			
	Phonological		More fronted productions of AppE vowels (Childs 2005)
	Morphosyn.	Some adherence to regional morphosyntactic forms (plural verbal -*s*)	Avoidance of nonstandard morphosyntactic forms (copula absence, etc.)
	Syntactic	Adherence to standard syntactic forms (even some hypercorrection)	Avoidance of nonstandard syntactic forms (habitual *be*)
	Lexical	Use of honorifics and double first names	Avoidance and stigmatization of slang, dialect, and expletives
Social			
	Personal	More formal clothing and older hairstyles	
		Talk about and frequently engage in housekeeping	
	Group	Attend church	Avoid public smoking
		Attend devotional group	
		Lead in church/community	
		Interest in genealogy	
			Resist outsider/urban influence

Table 12 (continued)

PORCH SITTERS

Phonological		Less fronted productions of AppE vowels (Childs 2005)
Morphosyn.	Adherence to nonstandard morphosyntactic forms (copula absence, etc.)	
Syntactic	Adherence to nonstandard syntactic forms (habitual *be*)	Avoidance of standard, hyper-correct forms
Lexical	Use of expletives, nicknames	Avoidance of honorifics
Social		
Personal	Informal clothing; more elaborate, ethnic, and younger hairstyles	
Group	Attend parties, talk about partying	Do not lead in church or community
		Avoid controlling/judging children and adults
		Stigmatize local racist whites

As the data reveals, linguistic and social differences abound for the church ladies and porch sitters. Both groups of women have differing social orientations that their linguistic repertoire mirrors and reinforces, which allows them to draw upon a variety of social and linguistic symbols as resources for identity construction and negotiation. Alignment along multiple social and linguistic axes ultimately allows for a constellation of factors to be used as vehicles in differentiating as well as creating solidarity and identity among members.

5.8 Future Linguistic Trajectories for The Church Ladies and The Porch Sitters

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999: 186) note that, once launched, communities of practice are not static entities but rather have their own lives and develop their own trajectories. As group members join, leave, enter into different CsofP, or otherwise socially realign and change interaction patterns, the group's linguistic patterns presumably change as well (not in the sense that the group socializes members to speak a certain way, but rather in the sense that the speech that characterizes and thus symbolizes a CofP may have shifted). Childs and Mallinson (2005) examined the church ladies' language patterns following their break from the church, as well as those of the porch sitters after the loss of Michelle.

When comparing the four church ladies to six other women who did not break from the church in 2004, we found no significant differences for the morphosyntactic variables. For the phonological variables, however, the church ladies spoke even more standardly than the rest of the women of the church. This finding fits with church ladies' view of themselves as adhering to norms and standards—even more than other church-going Texana women. It also reinforces the original conceptualization of the church ladies as a CofP: not only are they distinct from the porch sitters, but they are also (subtly) distinct from other women of the Texana church. In contrast, linguistic analysis did not find any significant differences in the speech of the porch sitters, before and after the passing of Michelle.

Although the CofP construct may be useful for monitoring intra- and inter-group social and linguistic change, few studies have investigated how communities of practice stabilize and change, and whether stability or change is the norm or the exception. More research is thus needed to answer those questions and assess patterns found in this study.

LANGUAGE AS A STRUCTURE: CONSTRAINT AND AGENCY, RESISTANCE AND ACTIVISM

"Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited … It is the act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice."
bell hooks (1989: 9)

6.1 The Scope of Chapter 6

In this chapter, I revisit my findings from this dissertation, with regard to the study of African American English and the study of women's language. I also summarize my findings as they relate to the study of language in society broadly, from an integrated sociological and sociolinguistic perspective. I then extend my analysis to consider the duality of the structure of language with regard to the church ladies' use of standard forms and the porch sitters' use of nonstandard forms. I argue that each may be seen as an expression of cultural agency, though vernacular language patterns have been most widely claimed to challenge the hegemony of dominant languages. I conclude with a summary of the dissertation and avenues for future applications.

6.2 Language as a Constraining and Enabling Structure

One of the strengths of structuration theory, which conceives of structures as being both enabling and constraining in their effects on individuals and groups, is that it affords human actors the agency to be able to act in resistance to the system. It does not simply

conceive of socially subordinate or marginalized groups as being wholly constrained and powerless. Giddens' framework might be applied, for example, to examine African Americans' active resistance during the years of slavery. Although most individual slaves had little effect in organizing collectively to overthrow the system, they were still often able to combat their masters with smaller, everyday acts of resistance, such as maintaining kinship ties, stealing food, breaking tools, feigning illness, and running away (see Davis 1998a).

In this sense, Giddens' theory aligns with that of black feminist theorists such as hooks (1984, 1989) and Collins (2000), who emphasize that power is available to even the most constrained agent. Individual black women may not be "typical" activists in the sense of taking part in marches or protests, which are tactics that social science research focuses on (Collins 2000: 202). Yet Collins argues they may nevertheless struggle for social justice through small, everyday acts of resistance. Traditionally, for example, black women have worked to craft independent and oppositional identities, refused to relinquish control over their self-definitions, sustained independent consciousnesses, and conserved and re-created African-influenced cultural production (Collins 2000: 206). These "small acts of resistance" can shape cultural views and bolster self-esteem, individually and as a group. At the same time, however, these acts are generally on a small scale and have little impact on the structural forces that make resistance necessary in the first place.

Language, upon which Giddens models structuration theory, is established as a prime example of the constraining and enabling duality of social structures. Giddens specifically talks about language as a structure in the sense that speakers are generally constrained by the properties of the language they speak (e.g., word order, tense, et cetera). To extend Giddens' view of language as a structure, however, is to consider the constraints of standard language

ideologies (though Giddens did not consider this aspect of language himself). Standard speech is one marker of social status that is used to create social distinctions; standard productions of language are valued, and nonstandard varieties (especially those associated with subordinate social groups) are devalued. These distinctions are drawn not only between whites and blacks (see chapter 1), but also among African Americans, whites, and a myriad of other ethnic, class, and/or regional groups. In this study, for example, the church ladies drew on ideologies about race, class, gender, and language to value their speech, habits, and general lifestyle. In contrast, the lifestyle of the porch sitters, which included their nonstandard speech, did not accord them status.

Given the pervasiveness of language ideologies in our society and their power to constrain people's life chances, a notion that there is an equal balance of the constraining and enabling power of language as a structure would be naïve. The constraining and enabling relationship between language and individuals is not equally enabling and constraining: the ideologies that are built into our social institutions restrict not only how individuals must speak in order to be understood, but more importantly, how people must speak if they are to be accorded privilege and prestige. Despite the fact that dialects change the structure of standard English and exist in opposition to standard language ideologies, dialect differences are still denigrated. Individuals who see it in their best interests to perpetuate the dominant structure of standard English disregard, discount, and silence speech that does not conform. Accordingly, speakers who operate comfortably within the constraints of standard English. Nonstandard speakers may even internalize the subordination of their dialect differences, resulting in linguistic insecurity.

Even though dialects may do little to change the structure of standard English or weaken language ideologies, they are still a means for subordinated groups to resist the colonizing language and assert their agency. Particularly within their own culturally developed "safe spaces," marginalized groups may employ their dialect's powerful symbolic value to signal in-group status and communicate solidarity. This resistance can also enable subordinated groups to develop an alternative understanding of the world and confront social subjugation (Collins 2000). Bucholtz (1996) and, to an extent, Collins (2000) have conceived of nonstandard language use as being everyday acts of linguistic resistance by black women, though neither does so from a structurational perspective. In the following section, I return to the church ladies and the porch sitters to consider how the use and non-use of dialect are different tactics that reflect their cultural agency.

6.2.1 The Church Ladies: Using the Master's Tools

As revealed in chapters 4 and 5, the church ladies hold standard language ideologies and speak standardly. Yet, there remains another side to the women's standard language use that warrants consideration in light of their overall strategy of community social action. As previously discussed, the women subscribe to ideologies that link "good" language to social status, to their religious values, and to approved versions of femininity and racial identity. These women also serve in the church as well as lead community programs that are designed to increase the self-esteem of black youth. Part of the value the church ladies accord to standard English relates to their strategies for leadership. They see standard English as a vehicle for upward mobility and nonstandard English or African American English patterns

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as a hindrance. Their mothers and grandmothers taught them this lesson, it served them well in their own lives, and they hope to pass it on to the youth. As Morgan (2004b: 12) explains,

> [B]y the time they are adults [speakers] know that [African American English] usage may be stigmatized within dominant cultural systems and may be considered deviant and index ignorance. They know the politics of language use and attempt to adjust accordingly.

Understanding the church ladies' intent behind their standard language ideologies gives a sense that the women are well-intentioned, if misinformed.

The practices and ideologies of the church ladies are reminiscent of the two forms of black women's activism that Collins (2000) identifies. First, black women are activists in their struggle for group survival, which includes creating a positive self-concept, an oppositional culture, and a consciousness that lays the foundation for broader movements. Second, they are active in their work to change institutions such as government, schools, the workplace, and the media through organized groups like civil rights organizations, feminist organizations, and boycotts. According to Collins, the first type of activism is a form of identity politics, while the second lends itself to coalition building. The agenda of the church ladies—including their projects with men's health and diabetes education, the local "history quilt," the oral history project, the multicultural women's conference, and others—falls into both these categories.

When viewing the church ladies' stigmatization of dialect features alongside their other habits and ideologies, it becomes clear that using standard English is part of their strategy of general empowerment. Certainly, the church ladies are misinformed as to why standard English is a tool for mobility (it is not, as they believe, because standard English is inherently "better" than dialects, but rather because it is the legitimated language). They do not resist the structure of language by challenging it; rather, they adapt to its norms. Yet they

do so because they believe accommodation is necessary to succeed within the constraints of the broader social system. Thus, even though the church ladies do not actively "resist" the structure of language, in a way they exploit the structure of language by accommodating to its norms and using it as a tool for group survival. The master's tools may never dismantle the master's house, but the church ladies are willing to try to use them to help subordinated groups get ahead.

6.2.2 The Porch Sitters: Talking Back, Resisting Norms

Unlike the church ladies, the porch sitters do not accommodate to standard English norms, do not resist cursing, and do not engage in hypercorrection. In many regards, the porch sitters' speech is similar to other black women's language patterns that have been portrayed as "loud" and unfeminine in contrast to stereotypical "women's language" patterns that have been described as feminine, but also as weak and powerless (Morgan 2004a, Troutman 2004). Another view sees the porch sitters' resistance of standard and/or stereotypically feminine patterns as a vehicle for cultural agency.

Vernacular language patterns have been widely claimed to challenge the hegemony of dominant languages. As Fairclough (1989) argues, the constraints of standard language do not also preclude speakers from being creative and resisting. Woolard (1985) contends that speakers continue to use vernacular forms because they enact values of solidarity, help build in-group consciousness, and resist cultural domination; Giles and Coupland (1991) similarly point out the value of devalued dialects to the groups that speak them. Gal (1987) and Heller (1992) discuss standard language as one of the ways the dominant group maintains power, to which subordinate groups may acquiesce or resist.

With regard to speakers of African American English in particular, Morgan (2004b: 12) contends that the use of general (standard) English "represents hegemony, is considered 'normal' and indexes intelligence, compliance, and so on." In other words, when some language practices are valued over others, the message is thus transmitted that language is political, in the sense that some ideologies, cultures, behaviors, and lifestyles are valued over others. At the same time, when speakers who know that their language is devalued refuse to stop speaking it, they engage in some type of resistance—which is why Morgan (1991) terms African American English a "counterlanguage." Thus, for example, when black women refuse to adhere to standard language patterns, Collins (2000) views it as a means of self-expression, crafting alternative identities, developing group consciousness, and resisting cultural colonization. In resisting the constraints of standard language, and aligning toward language patterns that are African-influenced, black women like the porch sitters may thereby challenge Western structures of knowledge validation, calling into question the content of what passes as truth and the process of arriving at that truth (Collins 2000: 271).

In this perspective, dialect may be seen as a discursive strategy of empowerment—despite the fact that dialect use may not be a traditional venue for social activism. Given the strength of language ideologies, black women who resist accommodating to established norms of standard English are pursuing an anti-assimilation strategy of self-definition, visibility, and collective identity that confronts and challenges white male-dominated spaces (Collins 2000, Davis 2002: 47). The use of nonstandard language can thus play a unifying role as black women come to express themselves as a collective and build group solidarity, which is requisite to black women's empowerment (Collins 2000).

In sum, when individuals and groups use language in interaction, we participate in enacting a structure that is dependent upon our practice of it to exist and perpetuate. The structure also, however, evolves as we subtly make changes to its norms and even disrupt them through our everyday usage. Though it may not be easily done, challenges to the standard English status quo may be accomplished by a subordinated group such as the porch ladies speaking a nonstandard dialect. At the same time, as the church ladies have chosen to do, subordinated groups may also work within the constraints of the structure to also try to make changes of their own. Whatever the strategy, language emerges as a way to index social identity, indicate shared beliefs and values, and promote solidarity. When these norms are nonstandard, they may also serve as an everyday act of resistance to the constraints of the linguistic structures that are continually produced and reproduced.

6.3 Summary of Research Findings

In this dissertation, I examined the linguistic practice of two groups of black women—the church ladies and the porch sitters—in the setting of the black Appalachian community of Texana, North Carolina. I analyzed the social and linguistic practices of these eight women, who are situated as members of the same community but who also present themselves as distinct individuals and groups.

I have shown that expecting language to vary by "key" social parameters cannot be taken for granted. While language does vary by objectively-defined social types, these correlations are not explanatory and may be an epiphenomenon. Not only broad demographic characteristics, but also locally-relevant social factors, separately and in combination with each other, can influence individuals' and group's use of linguistic

variables. Accordingly, a more nuanced view would examine how individuals and groups associate themselves with others along many social parameters and how they correlate with language use. These factors may include educational attainment, income, religious ideology, rural/urban background, gender, age, race, and many more.

Sites of conscious grouping (such as communities of practice) may be particularly important groups to study, as they may reflect unique combinations of these social factors; thus, their members may show unique linguistic patterns. These social groupings can, in some cases, only be uncovered when considerable amount of time is spent in the community or other local settings. In these groups, not every variable patterns in significant ways (such as the phonological variables, or plural verbal -*s*, in this study). Yet other variables may pattern in strikingly different ways, such as copula absence or expletive use, for example, among these Texana women.

Though most previous sociolinguistic studies related linguistic variation to sex, age, and social class, my study speaks to the importance of finding out how the local community is organized socially. Moreover, my research speaks to the importance of considering social structures like race, class, and gender, as being constructed together in interaction. The church ladies and the porch sitters constructed themselves as discrete groups based on a myriad of habits and ideologies that centered on creating differences in cultural capital in ways linked to language, race, and gender, religion, age, and other factors. In this regard, I have shown the construct of "community of practice" to be an efficacious construct for analyzing variation in older age cohorts. Bergvall (1999) questions whether the CofP framework is most applicable to analyzing language variation among adolescents, as in Eckert's (1989, 2000) study of the Jocks and Burnouts, but I have not found the construct to

be limiting in my study in any regard (see Meyerhoff 2002: 528 who similarly disagrees with Bergvall).

A further point that I make, based on the integrated theoretical perspective that I proposed and carried out in this study, is that the church ladies and the porch sitters are not "class-based" communities of practice alone. For one, qualitative evidence from Texana suggests that social class and status are based on more than just income, wealth, educational attainment, or occupation alone. Whereas the two groups differ to an extent based on education and income, status differences in lifestyle and presentation clearly distinguish the church ladies and the porch sitters as discrete groups. The church ladies and the porch sitters draw upon and reinforce these practices and statuses in order to present themselves as certain (and different) kinds of women. Furthermore, the statuses they hold and construct have implications for the power that they wield as groups. The church ladies hold considerable power in and beyond the community, as is shown in their leadership; the fact that they speak standard English; their defense of community tradition; their reputations as bearers of genealogy and history; and even in their power to make a statement by breaking away from the church. In contrast, the porch sitters hold less power in the community and as individuals. They talk self-consciously, using more nonstandard features, about themselves as being poor and as having lower educational and occupational attainment than they would prefer; and their lifestyles reflect these differences. They do not lead in the church or community, and they are viewed in the community as being more of the partiers than as those who preserve tradition or history.

In studying how language varies among women in a black community primarily by status, in intersection with other locally articulated structures, I have dispelled what Wolfram

(2005) describes as "the social stratification myth" in sociolinguistics. This myth states that there is a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and the use of acrolectal or basilectal African American English. Instead, the reality, according to Wolfram, is that there are a host of community, contextual, social, and personal factors that must be taken into account in understanding the construction, implementation, and regulation of vernacular and mainstream norms in the African American community. In other words, socioeconomic status alone does not *predict* how black speakers talk; consider the case of Gina for a prime example. As Ash (2002: 414) asserts, "social factors that can realistically be judged—or better, can positively be demonstrated—to affect linguistic behavior are ones that should be included in a measure of social class." In much the same way, although the church ladies and the porch sitters would lie close together on a continuum of socioeconomic status, qualitative research revealed differences in the women's lives that explain their language patterns in a more nuanced way than measures of SES could account for. More research needs to investigate the intersection of language, class, and status in black communities, among women and men of different ages, religious beliefs, educational levels, et cetera.

In addition to dispelling myths about the correlation between socioeconomic status and language variation in black communities, I have added to the scant body of literature that investigates the language and cultural practices of black women and, specifically, black Appalachian women. I have also resisted reifying differences between the church ladies and the porch sitters and instead have held the goal of exploring both points of similarity and difference within and between them. Though the women comprise different communities of practice, they also share many similarities, such as the strength they attach to kinship and

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family, their commitment to place and affinity for the Texana community, and many of their regional dialect patterns (particularly phonological).

I have also analyzed the habits and language of the church ladies and porch sitters in their own right, rather than in comparison to urban black men or women, or to black men in Texana, or to local white women. In so doing, I have approached my investigation of the social and linguistic practices of black Appalachian women in a way that other sociolinguists and sociologists have advocated (e.g., Collins 2000, Morgan 2002: 71-2, Bucholtz 2003, Hill 2005). Additionally, I have included women of higher and lower status, and women of middle and older age, in my study. This subject pool represents a divergence from most sociolinguistic analyses, which have typically focused on young speakers of lower social classes (Bucholtz 1996: 271). By focusing on two groups of black women, I have also allowed for more nuanced variation of within-gender groups. Mills (2003: 196) attests to this strength of the practice-based approach: it "allow[s] for variations within the categories 'men' and 'women,' and allows for the possibility of contestation and change, while also acknowledging the force of hypothesized stereotyping and assumptions about linguistic community norms."

As Hill (2005: 11) points out, uniform populations rarely reside within categories that lump people together based on demographic variables, and broad categories may mask the diverse experiences of the people in each group. I have found this assertion to be true among these Texana women. Despite objectively sharing many demographic traits, and despite sharing "dense, multiplex ties" (as, arguably, all residents do in the small Texana community), the church ladies and the porch sitters still show considerable heterogeneity in their linguistic behavior. In the past, dense social networks have been proposed as

mechanisms that foster or constrain linguistic variation (Milroy 1987, Trudgill 2002: 709). Yet, I have found in Texana that other parameters better explain the church ladies' and porch sitters' language variation. Their individual and group-level identity formation is neither the "fallout" of external categorization, nor even solely of social networks. Rather, individuals and groups are active and agentive. They engage in social interactions, in local contexts and in a local setting, where they create and negotiate identities and group membership—just as the church ladies and the porch sitters draw on many symbolic markers to establish individual and group-level identities, in ways that are informed by the broader ideologies and structures of race, class, gender, and language.

6.4 Implications for the General Study of Language in Society

In this research, I have focused on language as a structure that operates as a central mechanism in the construction of individual and group social identities, in everyday interaction. In turn, these local individual and group-level practices are related to and are shaped by broader social structures. This approach fits with that of intersectionality theorists, who argue for examining contextually-bound variations in the processes that construct social identity categories, which are shaped by extralocal relations. This approach also fits with structuration theory, which considers language to be a structure that operates on micro, meso, and macro levels. A fusion of these two perspectives sees language an intersecting and multilevel structure. That is, language intersects with race, class, and gender and other social structures broadly and ideologically; at the same time, language is one of the primary vehicles that actors use in everyday interaction, with other social practices, to negotiate statuses as part of their raced, classed, and gendered identities.

In including language in my study, I have made a case for sociologists to consider linguistic variation as a tangible mechanism to include in studies of other social markers that work together to create class, race, and gender. Intersectionality theorists, for example, have strongly advocated analyzing how social locations are articulated in historical, spatial, and temporal context, and they also give primacy to data that speaks to the unique experiences and standpoints of individuals and groups (particularly those who are marginalized). In this dissertation research, I have considered linguistic and social data in tandem as evidence for intersectionality and structuration. If we expect individuals and groups to experience their positions within the social system in uniquely contextualized ways, it is not much of a conceptual leap to expect that individuals and groups who have unique social experiences might develop or employ unique language patterns in relation to their social context. The reverse should then also be true. In this regard, language is an outcome that sociologists and sociolinguists can jointly study. Some research has begun to investigate language from this interdisciplinary perspective (see, for example, Dodsworth and Mallinson 2006, Dodsworth and Dandaneau in preparation) though more work remains to be done.

Paying closer attention, in theoretical, methodological, and empirical ways, to social and linguistic variation in the experiences and standpoints of diverse individuals and groups is a course of action for sociolinguists to take as well. By studying variation within understudied groups, more nuanced research questions may emerge that may shed light on the myriad context-bound effects that intersecting social structures have in everyday settings on every day language use, variation, and change. With further analyses of language variation across diverse populations in ways that take into account structure and agency,

sociolinguists can contribute to sociological scholarship while fine-tuning accounts of how language varies socially.

Finally, both sociolinguists and sociologists can benefit from an approach toward language as a primary multilevel linking concept (Acker 1999) that mediates between general and concrete expressions of social structures. I have proposed that taking the community of practice framework, supplemented by insights from intersectionality and structuration theories, can be useful as a framework for refining sociologists' and sociolinguists' understanding of social class and other social structures. In viewing language as one structure among many other multilevel, intersecting concepts that are experienced by individuals and groups in uniquely contextualized ways, sociologists and sociolinguists might find common ground for greater collaboration.

In closing, I revisit structuration theory to examine more closely the idea that, as a social structure, language is both enabling and constraining. I extend the analysis that I have presented in the dissertation thus far to consider the implications of the church ladies' and porch sitters' language habits. From the perspective of structuration theory, I argue that the church ladies' more standard speech, and the porch sitters' more vernacular speech, can be conceptualized as the result of the different "enabling" and "constraining" aspects of the structure of language, as it intersects with class, race, and gender.

6.5 Future Applications

The expression of black women's social, linguistic, and ideological standpoints is that their language choices is best facilitated "in cultural settings where they are social actors—in places, that is, where their identity as women and as black women is neither questioned nor

marginalized" (Morgan 2002: 87). These cultural sites, or "safe spaces" (Collins 2000), are sometimes occupied only by black women—as in the black women's groups analyzed in this dissertation study.[37] Black women's communication styles, such as those of the church ladies and the porch sitters, are developed in the realm of everyday talk, in the context of their relationships with each other. For some groups of women, the security of safe spaces allows for the development of a strategy of self-empowerment that works within the system (as in the case of the church ladies); for others, it allows for self-expression outside of the restriction of standard English norms (as for the porch sitters).

If the power of self-expression that gives rise to nonstandard language choices, independent self definitions, collective standpoints, activism, and empowerment is theorized to take place in locally- and contextually-bound situations of everyday talk, then academics who want to investigate how this process takes place must gain access to those safe spaces where African American women are nurtured and encouraged to express themselves. This practice-based theme has been carried throughout this dissertation and is supported by structuration, intersectionality, and community of practice theories, which frame this study. Just as Giddens calls for an investigation of social reproduction and structural reproduction through the study of routine day-to-day life and the contextualities of interaction, Collins advocates studying practice in sites of conscious social grouping. For researchers to understand how black women use their language for empowerment and self-expression free from the constraints of Eurocentric linguistic norms, she contends it is necessary to analyze their language in locally-situated contexts, to keep from losing sight of how communication is at the center of constructing culture (Collins 2002: 243).

To tackle the problem of how to gain access to African American women's safe

spaces so that we can analyze how their language operates, several methods seem requisite.

First, during data collection, interviews should be sought with individual black women or

with black women in groups, not in racially heterogeneous groups or in groups with black

men. In mixed gender or race groups, black women's voices might be silenced (Allen 2002:

29) and speakers' linguistic repertoires may not fully be captured (Edwards 1988: 49).

Houston and Davis (2002: 3) also call for scholars who research aspects of African American

women's culture not to be ambivalent to the cause of black women's empowerment, but

rather to be philosophically and ideologically invested in it:

> Because Black women as a social group are still marginalized and oppressed in the
> United States, research *about* us is not necessarily empowering or emancipatory *for*
> us. For example, "us too" or "add Black women and stir" studies that uncritically
> apply masculinist or whitecentric concepts and methods to Black women's
> communicative lives may actually have the effect of maintaining or deepening
> gendered racism and other oppressive communication practices. Producing *more*
> research without careful attention to the conceptual frameworks underlying that
> research places Black women in jeopardy.

In this dissertation study, I have investigated social and linguistic variation within an

understudied, "invisible" population of black Appalachians, women in particular. I have

likely raised as many questions as I have provided answers for, which makes imperative the

need to expand the body of literature that studies not only this population, but also the social

and linguistic habits of women and men, in other regions of the country, who comprise other

groups that differ by status, race/ethnicity, religious ideology, et cetera. Future analyses of

diverse populations in ways that are theoretically nuanced and methodologically refined will

help sociologists and sociolinguists avoid generalist, deflationary, and loosely defined

approaches to "identities." As we refine our studies of the social backdrop against which we

interpret sociological and sociolinguistic data, we will be better able to relate our findings to

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[1] A few scholars such as Giddens define language as an institution (also see footnote 7, which applies Martin's (2004) definition of *institution* to language).

[2] Note the similarities between Willis' work and that of Eckert (2000), in her study of jocks and burnouts.

[3] In the 1960's, Labov designed an experiment to study *r* in New York speech by visiting three department stores that catered to different social classes: Saks Fifth Avenue (high prestige), Macy's (middle prestige), and S. Klein (low prestige). Labov visited each store himself and asked a clerk for the location of an item, such as shoes, that he knew to be on the fourth floor. When the clerk responded to his query with "fourth floor," Labov noted whether or not the clerk pronounced the *r*'s, in either medial (fou*r*th) or final (floo*r*) position. Then, Labov repeated his question ("Excuse me?"), in order to get the clerk to repeat "fourth floor" in a more careful pronunciation. After leaving the vicinity, Labov jotted down his findings as well as demographic information about the clerk. His overall results showed two clear trends. First, clerks' pronunciations of [r] increased with the prestige of the store (Saks' clerks pronounced [r] most; Klein's clearks the least). But in careful pronunciations, Labov found that the *lower* the prestige of the department store, the *more likely* the clerks were to pronounce [r]. Labov appealed to the explanation of "linguistic insecurity" to account for these findings: the lower class group knows that *r*-fulness is a prestige form; when they are in social situations where they feel compelled to monitor their speech, they outperform speakers of higher classes in using the prestige variant.

[4] Eckert's three "waves" do not encompass all sociolinguistic research. Historically-oriented studies (for example, those concerned with the Creolist/Anglicist debate over the origins of African American English) and those oriented toward structural issues (for example, studies of linguistic constraints on vowel shifting or the use of morphemes) do not fall under the "third wave" schema.

[5] Innumerable sociological studies not proceeding from an intersectionality perspective have investigated class, and some of this work has also investigated race, class, and gender from other conceptual and analytical frameworks. A discussion of this literature, however, is outside the scope of this dissertation.

[6] The racial formation literature also argues that the historical emergence of racial categories is embedded in class relations (Cox 1948, Roediger 1991, Allen 1994, Omi and Winant 1994, Ignatiev 1995, Saxton 2003)— though some of these theorists argue that neither race nor class has meaning aside from people's consciousness of each structure (e.g., Roediger 1991). Recent discussions about "whiteness," for example, have come to define this status not as a racial category or identity but as a position of power. Bonilla-Silva and Doane (2003) contend that even white skin *per se* can be seen as the uniform of white supremacy.

[7] Thanks to Rick Della Fave for assisting with revisions of this section.

[8] For example, Labov's (1972a) research on *indicators*, *markers*, and *stereotypes* shows that different linguistic phenomena entail gradient degrees of salience to speakers and listeners and are related to language change from above or below the level of consciousness.

[9] Martin (2004) uses the term *institution* rather than Giddens' term *structure* and posits 11 criteria for determining what constitutes a social institution. In my assessment, language meets all these criteria.

[10] On the other hand, some theorists working with language from a more general practice framework might not necessarily agree with the assumptions of structuration theory (e.g., ethnomethodologists, who are more interested in examining social processes at the micro level).

[11] Texana is North Carolina's largest black Appalachian community west of Asheville. This designation excludes the predominantly college population of Boone, North Carolina.

[12] All names of Texana residents are pseudonyms.

[13] Our explanations of our research did not vary much from this account. We occasionally brought up the trope "from Murphy to Manteo," which was familiar to residents, to explain our interest in the diversity of the state, particularly our intrigue with the fact that western and eastern North Carolinians sound so different. Residents typically agreed heartily with this statement and often had their own anecdotes to tell.

[14] A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix A. All speakers' names are pseudonyms. The speaker's actual year of birth has not been listed, since in a community as small as Texana identities could be reconstructed from gender and birth year alone. Instead, to preserve anonymity as much as possible, I have listed speakers according to where they fall into a birth year range of at least a 10 year span. Throughout this dissertation, all other identifying details in quotes or descriptions have been omitted or changed in a way that preserves meaning while preserving anonymity.

[15] Also known in other fields as the "Hawthorne effect."

[16] Debate remains in sociolinguistics as to whether black fieldworkers are better suited to collecting vernacular speech data from black informants (for some evidence, see Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994, but see also Cukor-Avila and Bailey 2001). Taking many research visits to Texana, becoming familiar with the community, and gaining the trust and rapport of the residents allowed Becky and me to collect linguistic and qualitative data. Yet, the question remains what kind of different experience black women fieldworkers might have had in Texana, and whether the experience would have helped or hindered data collection.

[17] If I had the project to do over again, I would take systematic field notes. When beginning the project, however, I did not anticipate that the research would eventually take me in a more qualitative direction.

[18] I have been unable to corroborate the spelling of Kaiasaki Little John; in general, little uniformity exists in the spelling of Cherokee names, due to the lack of available records (Starr 2004: 26).

[19] I found similar results in my master's thesis (Mallinson 2002), a study of the tiny community of Beech Bottom, located 200 miles from Texana. Despite some (mostly younger) residents' attempts to define themselves as multiethnic, they were invariably classified by local whites as black.

[20] Anderson (2002) documents that other black Appalachians from Western North Carolina moved to Detroit, Michigan, to look for factory and plant work. Davis (1998b) writes of how blacks' desire for travel and freedom and fantasies about life in the North were often documented in blues music. But fantasies about life there were counterbalanced by the reality that it was not the land of opportunity, particularly since blacks rarely had the support systems up North to deal with prejudice and racism, as they had when they lived in the South. Finally, Berry (2000) has also found that white Appalachians did move North to work in factories during this time period, just as many black Appalachians did.

[21] Murphy has more government housing, and a few informants we interviewed lived there. Several of them, including Anne, are older, single women who had previously lived in Texana proper. These tenants presumably had leave Texana and move to the apartments for financial reasons rather than social, since they still drive over (or have someone drive them) to Texana several days out of the week to visit.

[22] Local rumor has it, however, that the nearby Coats American plant, which makes thread and employs several men and women from Texana, may be closing soon. Workers have recently been put on a two-weeks-on, two-weeks-off shift, and locals anticipate that the plant will soon shut down for good

[23] At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in Murphy, North Carolina, was $16,926. Statistics for Texana apart from Murphy do not exist since Texana is not an incorporated town.

[24] To revisit the definition of a CofP, see chapter 2.

[25] The porch sitters also use the term "black" to refer to themselves and other African Americans, but they never overtly commented on their use or choice of the term.

[26] The two church ladies' private smoking habits are comparable to those of the jocks in Eckert's (1989, 2000) study, who smoked—just not at school—and said that perhaps they would also smoke in college. In contrast, in Willis' (1977) study, the majority of the lads smoke, and, more importantly, are seen to smoke by other students at school. Smoking may thus be a key practice in the performance of different types of status-based identities.

[27] The frequent use of first names by interlocutors repeatedly in conversation has been stereotyped as part of the formality and standardness that indexes "white" speech; see Fought (in press).

[28] Zora's fifth and sixth emails marked the days until Christmas and started a friendship chain, respectively.

[29] These videotaped interviews had poor sound quality and were not usable for linguistic analysis.

[30] Emily also had an instance of the NP_i CALL NP_i V-ING construction (Wolfram 1994) in her statement, "I guess he called hisself giving it to my daughter for Christmas." See chapter 5 for a discussion of miscellaneous features observed in the church ladies' and porch sitters' speech.

[31] Habitual *be*, hypercorrection, and expletive use are not treated statistically as with the other morphosyntactic and phonological variables in this dissertation. Reasons include small token counts and the difficulty of systematizing the occurrences of these features in ways that would allow them to be quantified as with other linguistic features that are typically analyzed from a variationist approach.

[32] As noted in the text, Gail Ann has the highest rate of plural verbal -*s* among the church ladies. Among the porch sitters, Emily shows the highest rate of plural verbal -*s*. These patterns in which church ladies and which porch sitters show the highest use of plural verbal -*s* do not seem to correlate with the use of third singular -*s* absence, however. Whereas Gail Ann shows the highest rate among the church ladies for use of plural verbal -*s* by far, Gail Ann and Zora are tied in their use of third singular -*s* absence. Whereas Emily shows the highest rate of plural verbal -*s*, Michelle shows the highest rate of plural verbal -*s* among the porch sitters.

[33] At the same time, the occurrence of past tense *be* with plural subjects in the speech of the church ladies and porch sitters is less than 200 (n=171), and a token count of at least 200 is a general rule of thumb for conducting multivariate analyses. With more tokens of past tense *be* for these speakers, the analysis might have shown statistical significance for subject type.

[34] Mallinson and Wolfram's (2002) Beech Bottom study also did not find a constraint related to subject type.

[35] The accuracy of impressionistic tabulation of phonological variables such as /ai/ and postvocalic *r* have been debated. In this corpus, however, the tokens of *r* were reasonably easy to judge. When questions arose about whether a particular token was *r*-less or *r*-ful, impressions were doublechecked with two other sociolinguists.

[36] Brian Joseph (personal communication) and Robin Dodsworth (personal communication) point out, however, that such forms are becoming increasingly more common in English, and it is debatable whether they constitute instances of hypercorrection since the standard norms are always changing. Accordingly, the fact that none of the other church ladies hypercorrects may be more relevant than the fact that Gina does.

[37] These cultural spaces may also be sites of enjoyment by black men or whites as well, as in the blues tradition, or they may even make black women's thought and experience available to a larger audience, as in the case of black women's literature (Davis 1998a, Collins 2000). Regardless of the logistical characteristics of these safe spaces, the main criteria is that a safe space must be a realm in which black women feel comfortable enough to express themselves and craft alternative identities, feel secure enough speak out and to reject the subjugation they face, and thereby come to develop their consciousness (Collins 2000).

APPENDIX

Appendix A. Speaker List and Age by Year of Birth (Range)

1905-1935: Margaret Anne, Karen, Betty, William, Gail Ann, Joan, Milly

1935-1950: Anne, Melissa, Matthew, Fred, Randy, Linda Sue, Ray, Eddy

1950-1965: Zora, Michelle, Tim, Gina, Rachel Anne, Zelda, Emily, Michael,

Maggie Lou, Zebe, Debbie, Monica, Faith

1970-1980: Yvonne, Sean, Brenda, Roger, Tammy, Rebecca, Claire, Darren,

Alison

1985-1995: Chris, David, Andrea, Missy, Doug, Sarah, Tina, Jane, Dan, Donna,

George, Heather