

1. INTRODUCTION

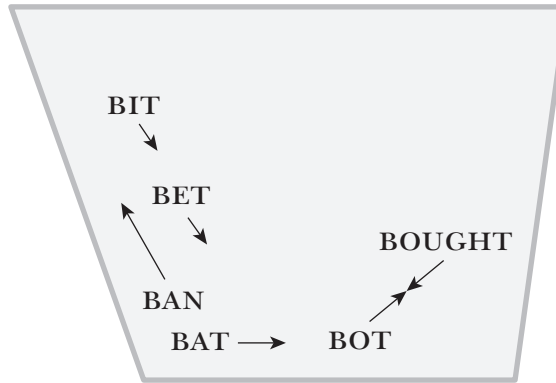
IN 2012, A GROUP OF LINGUISTS interested in expanding the discussion of speech in the American West came together at Stanford University for two days of conversation and collaboration, at the suggestion of Penny Eckert. What emerged was a consensus that we needed to do more to represent the varied backgrounds and experiences of speakers that forged the dialects in this region. The rich and variegated settlement history of the West has created vast potential for unique and innovative dialect formation. The first two volumes of *Speech in the Western States* (PADS 101 and 102) focus on the vowel patterns that have previously been described across Canada, California, and the Pacific Northwest, in particular what was referred to then as the Canadian or California Vowel Shift (CVS)—more recently as the low-back-merger shift (LBMS) (Becker 2019)—and prevelar raising. The first volume expanded on work from the coastal areas of the West (Fridland et al. 2016), while the second volume bolstered the representation of the inland states (Fridland et al. 2017). While non-White speakers were featured in some of this work, they were not widely investigated and were mainly examined alongside and in comparison to White speakers. What's more, the volumes included only states in the continental United States, and little attention was given to ethnoreligious or other social variability.

The studies in PADS volumes 101 and 102 primarily explored previously documented Western vowel patterns, focusing in particular on the LBMS. As mentioned above, much of the recent work on speech in both Canada and the West has examined how extensively this shift has affected speakers in those regions. As will be discussed in several chapters in this volume, the LBMS is illustrated in figure 1.1, which is provided to orient readers to this commonly discussed vowel pattern.

With the current volume, we hope also to provide a fuller description of variation in the Western states by also looking at features emergent from understudied speakers and varieties. Our earlier *Speech in the Western States* volumes noted the lack of such studies, a sentiment echoed by others:

While the West is typically treated as a monolithic dialect region (Labov, 1991; Labov [Ash, and Boberg], 2006), it is populated by myriad communities, with distinct settlement histories, local industries, and economic circumstances. The divergent social trajectories among Western communities plausibly give rise to distinct dialects. These dialects should be documented, and their development studied. [Podesva et al. 2015, 180]

FIGURE 1.1
Low-Back-Merger Shift (LBMS) Schematic



As a step toward addressing this call, the current volume centers the speech of underrepresented speakers. Underrepresentation may be in the sense of populations less often seen in the sociolinguistics literature or in the sense of key non-White or nonurban groups.

The goal of this third volume is to report on the speech of underrepresented speakers in such a way as to more accurately represent the demographic diversity of the region and thus improve our understanding of the history and current state of linguistic variation and change in the West. This includes, but goes well beyond, examining speakers' participation in vowel shifts previously attributed to White communities. Demographic diversity has been sorely lacking in most dialectological accounts, which tend to take White varieties as constitutive of regional variation and minority varieties as constitutive of ethnic variation. However, as Hall-Lew (2009, 10) argued, "an account of the speech patterns of any non-White ethnicities in a region is necessary for a fully representative dialectology." The studies in this volume join other dialectological scholarship on underrepresented groups that demonstrates how all speakers occupy both regional space and social space: neither can be emphasized to the exclusion of the other. Indeed, recognizing how communities orient to the regions in which they reside and help to contribute to the character of place (Johnstone 2004) creates an understanding of a dialect region as a social and ideological object, only fully understood in its ecological complexity.

Most of the representation issues we have raised here have started to be addressed in previous work with respect to ethnicity and race. As mentioned above, previous dialect research has often held aside non-White speakers or focused on a comparison of these speakers relative to more

widely researched White norms, such as the vowel changes that have been taken to represent “regional” sound change (e.g., Godinez and Maddieson 1985; Thomas 1989; Fought 1999, 2003; Anderson 2002; Fridland 2003; Childs and Mallinson 2004; Eberhardt 2008; Roeder 2009). As much previous work, including work in the previous two *Speech in the Western States* volumes, has shown, the assumption that non-White speakers do not participate in sound changes is often not the case; White speakers are not the only ones leading regional sound changes (e.g., Horvath 1998; Cardoso et al. 2016; Wassink 2016). In some cases, regional sound changes can take on local indexes of ethnic meaning (Eckert 2008; Hall-Lew 2013). What’s more, a region’s distinctive dialect characteristics are dependent on its particular historical, migratory, and sociocultural influences. As a result, non-White influences play a role in the formation of local dialectal patterns in different ways across regions (e.g., in New Mexico; Brumbaugh and Koops 2017).

The explanations for the observed underrepresentation of linguistic communities such as the ones presented in this volume are many. All, it may be argued, are problematic. One reason for lack of representation of ethnoracially defined communities at levels comparable to the representation of White groups is numerical: the speech community in question may be small and few speakers may be found. But what presents as an apparently straightforward, methodological issue is anything but. For example, social network analysts McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) describe homophily effects associated with ethnicity. Homophily is the observation that individuals tend to form positive ties with people who are similar to them in socially significant ways (i.e., the notion captured in the saying “birds of a feather flock together”). Ethnicity (and relatedly, racial classification) constitutes the basis for the greatest divide between social networks in the United States (Louch 2000). Strong racial homophily has been found for a wide array of relationships, ranging from marriage to work relations, to school choices and schoolmate friendships, to discussion of particular topics, even to “knowing about” someone (Marsden 1987). Analysts seeking access to speech communities for research commonly rely upon their own networks (which sometimes include undergraduate research pools at academic institutions) for sampling and may reinforce this network bias through the use of snowball sampling to further recruit participants. The speakers represented in much dialectological work, therefore, may more closely represent the demographics of the dialectologist than of the region under study, and most dialectologists have been White.

The racialization of speakers and linguistic varieties also factors into why non-White groups have often been left aside from linguistic research

more generally. Charity Hudley (2018) examines ways that the historical disciplinary practice of ascribing people to language groupings based on the analyst's assessment of racial attributes, skin color, and physical features (rather than social, cultural, and linguistic practices, identities, and orientations) has had limiting effects in linguistic research. Arriving at a more emic representation of racial identity prior to corpus creation and quantitative analysis, while desirable, is simply more time-consuming. People who identify as biracial or who speak multiple varieties present a challenge to the simplified demographic categories often used for quantitative analysis or comparison (Hall-Lew and Wong 2014; Holliday 2019). Despite the Labovian truism "there are no single-style speakers," some dialectological practice points to methods that "simplify" sampling in ways that align with the notion of "an ideal speaker-hearer" who speaks a single variety. As stated above, non-White speakers are assumed to speak an ethnolect, while White speakers are regarded as best representatives of more widespread patterns (their dialect is more often assumed to be geographical than social). Two important consequences of this are (1) that insufficient amounts of descriptive data are obtained to actually assess the comparability between non-White and White patterns of variation and (2) that the varieties spoken in such communities are approached as "special." For Indigenous communities, this can mean their varieties are explored solely within an endangered language frame. For Asian, Latinx, and Black American communities, this can mean centering difference through a focus on nonnativeness, vernacularity, or divergence from a White variety (Charity Hudley 2018). Though difference in features might be part of the story, modern dialectology will move forward through methods better able to show whether difference is, in fact, the whole story and provide reasonable accounts of features where it is not.

Thus, it should be recognized that some of the studies reported in this volume result from gaining access to communities outside the researcher's own, raising challenges due to differences in social networks as well as social inequality. Other studies represent inclusion of an underrepresented group made possible because of the researcher's insider status. And still others represent communities' willingness to put trust in an outsider. Many of the authors also point out the erasure of minority and underrepresented groups from previous accounts of regional dialects, those that presume "White" to be the default geographic variety, even given substantial non-White ethnic settlement or influence in an area.

With this new volume, while we hope to uncover shared sociophonetic features common to multiple social groups in a given dialect area, we hope to also critique potentially essentialist assumptions about the origin of fea-

tures and the range of features of import. We attempt to approach the study of dialect variation in a locally grounded and historically informed way, so as to best account for the relationship between local social complexity and linguistic variation. For instance, speakers who show previously identified Western vowel features (e.g., front lax vowel retraction) can simultaneously use other ethnically marked phonetic features, forms that might be excluded from work that focuses only on use or nonuse of White Western speech norms. We also know that ethnic varieties (like African American English, Chicano English, etc.) are not monolithic. Speakers may vary in forms used, frequencies of forms, combinations of variants used, or in unique combinations or novel uses of variants found in other segments of the community (e.g., as found in Lumbee American Indian English; Wolfram and Dannenberg 1999).

Because of the linguistic variation speakers are able to draw upon by being simultaneously part of multiple speech communities, previous quantitative studies of variation may not really reflect the full range of speakers' linguistic repertoires with respect to local changes. This might be especially true for those speakers who are members of groups less represented in the dialectological and sociolinguistic literature. In the current volume, we hope to present a range of research on varied features within Western dialect communities to provide a fuller picture of speech in the Western States. As part of this quest, we have enlisted a range of contributors focusing on communities that have been underrepresented in a host of ways, including, but not limited to, ethnic, ethnoreligious, geographic, and sociohistorical minoritization. They also take a wide-ranging approach to variables of study, with the idea that features as realized by White speakers in these respective communities may not be the features most relevant to dialectology. As articulated by several of our contributors, speech indexing "place" is likely not the same for speakers for whom regional identity is negotiated alongside nonmajority identity. As a result, researchers need to explore how understudied features such as prosodic patterns, consonantal processes, vowel inherent spectral change, or innovative shifts are working to convey interwoven regional and social identities. Drawing on underrepresented speakers' unique histories, settlement, and experiences, a number of the studies in this volume explore how the construction of place-based identities synthesizes different indexes of ethnicity and region.

Unlike our previous volumes, which used Western subregional divisions as an organizing rubric, the current collection is less interested in geographic coverage but instead organized around groups of interest within the Western region defined broadly. The first two chapters examine phonetic variation in the English of two Indigenous communities, one

in Washington State and one in Nevada. Exploring the notion of what it means to “sound Yakama” in English, Alicia Beckford Wassink and Sharon Hargus examine Yakama speakers’ production of the LBMS, (ING), (th) stopping, and /t/ glottaling or release. They demonstrate how the sociolinguistic construction of a localized ethnic identity involves a constellation of vowel and consonant features. Ian Clayton and Valerie Fridland examine how members of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, an urban reservation in Reno, Nevada, incorporate features from the larger Western community, including the LBMS as well as lesser-studied features such as BEG (without BAG) raising, /aw/ fronting, and prelateral merger, to create what they describe as a distinct Western ethnolect.

In California, where most work has not only focused on describing White but also predominantly coastal and urban speech, two chapters tackle the question of how groups that traveled unique sociohistorical paths to inland California communities use novel features of local speech that reflect their ethnic and sociohistorical roots. Sharese King and Jeremy Calder look more deeply at data from their earlier work that found African American speakers in Bakersfield show the same pattern of back vowel fronting as Whites in terms of steady-state formant measures. Here, focusing on vowel dynamics, they examine how African American speakers utilize nuanced features when fronting back vowels, evoking both local Western and Southern norms to construct a localized racial identity. Also exploring how vowel dynamism is utilized as a stylistic resource, Annette D’Onofrio and Janneke Van Hofwegen identify unique dialect features for second-generation Japanese Americans, or Nisei, living in a small agricultural town in California’s Central Valley. In their chapter, they investigate whether Nisei speakers have a more monophthongal realization for /eɪ/ and /oʊ/ than White speakers and consider how internment and anti-Japanese sentiment during and following World War II played a key role in the formation of this local dialect pattern.

Finally, we turn to underrepresentation spurred not only by ethnic marginalization but by religious isolation and geographic distance. Looking for evidence of a religiolect, Joseph Stanley explores whether a small community of Latter-day Saints in Washington State maintain features of Mormon English found in Utah, such as the *feel-fill* merger and BITE and BOUT monophthongization, or whether they have adopted the LBMS and Pacific Northwest features spoken more widely by non-Mormons in their locale. And to close the volume, we turn to Alaska, a state often left out in treatments of the Western dialect region and one that developed from a unique social history, defined in great part by its isolation, its Indigenous population, and its strategic location and rich oil resources. Perhaps not

too surprisingly, given its remoteness, little previous work has been done on Alaskan English. In his chapter, David Bowie looks for evidence that White speakers in Southcentral Alaska participate in the LBMS as is found more widely in the West and Canada. In particular, comparing speakers with years of birth ranging from 1936 to 1993, he examines both front and back vowel subsystems for evidence of the shift and for change over time, confirming that, at least for speakers in this region of Alaska, they pattern similarly to other Western varieties of English affected by this shift.

For the sake of coherence across chapters, we have made editorial choices that we recognize are imperfect. Unless an author preferred a different term, we use *Black* instead of *African American*, despite the fact that some view the latter to be less stigmatized, to avoid a term some feel to be ambiguous or too narrowly geographic in reference. We use *White* rather than *European American*, *Caucasian*, or *Anglo*. In this, we join the practice of our sister disciplines that work with better-theorized notions of race and ethnicity than are typical in linguistics. Our nomenclature in this volume highlights the unanalyzed, socially constructed, racialized social binary that centers Whiteness, setting it above Blackness and placing both outside of ethnic affiliation. Capitalization of *White* and *Black* reflect the recently revised style requirements of *American Speech* and PADS, which in turn are intended to recognize the fact that these labels point to mutable social constructs. We believe that dialectology has operated and still operates within this binary, centering certain dialects as ethnically unmarked varieties of English.

In our reference to Indigenous peoples, languages, and dialects, we adopt terms based on feedback from participants in those studies indicating their preferences. Other names adopted by authors in the volume are drawn from their own experience with the literature and participants' communities. Where authors are citing earlier work, labels from the original studies have been preserved to avoid misrepresenting the author's original intention.

As with the other two volumes, the work here is neither comprehensive of the region and its varied speakers nor near complete in terms of depth and coverage. For example, though originally included in our conception, we were not able to include any work examining varieties in Hawaii, Guam, or the Pacific Islands, and there are many more unrepresented varieties within Alaska and the continental Western United States that doubtless should be studied. Another shortcoming that we readily admit to is the adherence to the reductionist division of speakers into sex-based categories for men and women instead of interrogating more deeply the role of gender identity. This similarity across chapters is a powerful reminder of

the ubiquity of the binary gender ideology even across diverse communities.

We are just scratching the surface of linguistic variation in the Western United States and, especially, of underrepresented groups within that region. We hope these volumes help plug some gaping holes in our dialectological knowledge but, more importantly, help to bring forth new and exciting work on less examined communities within the larger expanse that constitutes the Western United States.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Bridget L. 2002. "Dialect Leveling and /ai/ Monophthongization among African American Detroiters." In "Mobility, Contact, and Language Change," edited by Lesley Milroy. Special issue, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 6, no. 1 (Feb.): 86–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00178>.
- Becker, Kara, ed. 2019. *The Low-Back-Merger Shift: Uniting the Canadian Vowel Shift, the California Vowel Shift, and Short Front Vowel Shifts across North America*. Publication of the American Dialect Society 104. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. <https://read.dukeupress.edu/pads/issue/104/1>.
- Brumbaugh, Susan, and Christian Koops. 2017. "Vowel Variation in Albuquerque, New Mexico." In Fridland et al. 2017, 31–57. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-4295200>.
- Cardoso, Amanda, Lauren Hall-Lew, Yova Kementchedjheva, and Ruaridh Purse. 2016. "Between California and the Pacific Northwest: The Front Lax Vowels in San Francisco English." In Fridland et al. 2016, 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-3772890>.
- Charity Hudley, Anne H. 2017. "Language and Racialization." In *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*, edited by Ofelia García, Nelson Flores, and Masimiliano Spotti, 381–402. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Childs, Becky, and Christine Mallinson. 2004. "African American English in Appalachia: Dialect Accommodation and Substrate Influence." *English World-Wide* 25, no. 1: 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.25.1.03chi>.
- Eberhardt, Maeve. 2008. "The Low-Back Merger in the Steel City: African American English in Pittsburgh." *American Speech* 83, no. 3 (Fall): 284–311. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2008-021>.
- Eckert, Penelope. 2008. "Where Do Ethnolects Stop?" *International Journal of Bilingualism* 12, nos. 1–2 (Mar.): 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069080120010301>.
- Fought, Carmen. 1999. "A Majority Sound Change in a Minority Community: /u/-Fronting in Chicano English." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3, no. 1 (Feb.): 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.t01-1-00060>.
- . 2003. *Chicano English in Context*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Fridland, Valerie. 2003. "Network Strength and the Realization of the Southern Vowel Shift among African Americans in Memphis, Tennessee." *American Speech* 78, no. 1 (Spring): 3–30. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-78-1-3>.
- Fridland, Valerie, Tyler Kendall, Betsy E. Evans, and Alicia Beckford Wassink, eds. 2016. *Speech in the Western States*. Vol. 1, *The Coastal States*. Publication of the American Dialect Society 101. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. <https://read.dukeupress.edu/pads/issue/101/1>.
- Fridland, Valerie, Alicia Beckford Wassink, Tyler Kendall, and Betsy E. Evans, eds. 2017. *Speech in the Western States*. Vol. 2, *The Mountain West*. Publication of the American Dialect Society 102. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. <https://read.dukeupress.edu/pads/issue/102/1>.
- Godinez, Manuel, Jr., and Ian Maddieson. 1985. "Vowel Differences between Chicano and General Californian English?" *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 53: 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1985.53.43>.
- Hall-Lew, Lauren. 2009. "Ethnicity and Phonetic Variation in a San Francisco Neighborhood." Ph.D. diss., Stanford University.
- . 2013. "'Flip-flop' and Mergers-in-Progress." In "Phonological Mergers in English," edited by Lynn Clark, Kevin Watson, and Warren Maguire. Special issue, *English Language and Linguistics* 17, no. 2 (July): 359–90. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674313000063>.
- Hall-Lew, Lauren, and Amy Wing-mei Wong. 2014. "Coding for Demographic Categories in the Creation of Legacy Corpora: Asian American Ethnic Identities." *Language and Linguistics Compass* 8, no. 11 (Nov.): 564–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12117>.
- Holliday, Nicole R. 2019. "Variation, Race, and Multiracial Identity in Linguistic Research." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 10, no. 1 (Jan./Feb.): e1480. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1480>.
- Horvath, Barbara. 1998. "Finding a Place in Sydney: Migrants and Language Change." In *The Sociolinguistics Reader*, vol. 1, *Multilingualism and Variation*, edited by Peter Trudgill and Jenny Cheshire, 90–102. London: Arnold.
- Johnstone, Barbara. 2004. "Place, Globalization, and Linguistic Variation." In *Sociolinguistic Variation: Critical Reflections*, edited by Carmen Fought, 65–83. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Labov, William. 1991. "The Three Dialects of English." In *New Ways of Analyzing Sound Change*, edited by Penelope Eckert, 1–44. San Diego, Calif.: Academic Press.
- Labov, William, Sharon Ash, and Charles Boberg. 2006. *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Louch, Hugh. 2000. "Personal Network Integration: Transitivity and Homophily in Strong-Tie Relations." *Social Networks* 22, no. 1 (May): 45–64. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733\(00\)00015-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733(00)00015-0).
- Marsden, Peter V. 1987. "Core Discussion Networks of Americans." *American Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (Feb.): 122–313. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095397>.

- McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 415–44. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415>.
- Podesva, Robert J., Annette D'Onofrio, Janneke Van Hofwegen, and Seung Kyung Kim. 2015. "Country Ideology and the California Vowel Shift." *Language Variation and Change* 27, no. 2 (July): 157–86. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S095439451500006X>.
- Roeder, Rebecca. 2009. "The Effects of Phonetic Environment on English /æ/ among Speakers of Mexican Heritage in Michigan." *Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics* 31. <https://twpl.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/twpl/article/view/6090>.
- Thomas, Erik R. 1989. "Vowel Changes in Columbus, Ohio." *Journal of English Linguistics* 22, no. 2 (Oct.): 205–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/007542428902200204>.
- . 2016. "The Vowels of Washington State." In Fridland et al. 2016, 77–105. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-3772912>.
- Wolfram, Walt, and Clare Dannenberg. 1999. "Dialect Identity in a Tri-ethnic Context: The Case of Lumbee American Indian English." *English World-Wide* 20, no. 2: 179–216. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.20.2.01wol>.