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Title: **Punks, Queers, and Anarchists: Linguistic Variation from the Outside**

Long Abstract:

"Progressive categories such as Beatniks, Freaks, and Punks present a challenge to the hegemony of the stable class system represented by the Jocks and Burnouts..." (Eckert 1989:17)

A consistent finding in sociolinguistics holds that the major factors in linguistic variation (and ultimately, language change) are the normative pressures that develop from exactly those social roles and obligations which are largely absent among members from "progressive categories" – alternative communities like Punks, Queers, and Anarchists (Jenkins 1996; Eckert 2000; Hall 2000). Existing outside the hegemonic forces of "normal" society, inhabiting impermanent social and psychological spaces, members of alternative communities are often highly mobile and engaged in large, multiplex, but not necessarily dense social networks (Hebdige 1979; Halberstam 2003; Nyong'o 2005). All characteristics that tend to defy the assumptions underlying basic sociolinguistic theory and research (Milroy & Gordon 2003). What, then, does this mean for our understanding of linguistic variation? How do alternative speakers use linguistic variation to index a persistent identity when the network of these speakers, and the resources they share, is always changing?

Interviews and structured elicitation data were collected from 27 members of alternative communities across three regional spaces in the US: Chicago, Austin, and Oakland. Phonological variables were analyzed first in comparison to local norms (i.e., do Chicago punks participate in the NCS (Labov et al., 2006)? Do trans* activists in Oakland exhibit the California Shift (Eckert 2004)?). While there is certainly variation between speakers, more interesting are the similarities that emerge across communities and regions—a broadly defined "alternative" community of practice that seems to emerge. Going beyond vowel variables and engaging in a more gestalt view of linguistic resources allows us to see an even greater degree of similarity among these "pimps and queens and criminal queers" (to quote Coco Rosie). For example, the syntactic and phonological resources of alternative speakers exhibit a collection of features that is both non-standard and non-local, such as the use of negative concord, high rising terminals, and stop cluster reduction. Likewise, discourses of empowerment and the ethically preferable status of being "alternative" can be found in the interviews of all speakers, regardless of local community (cf. Harriss 2007).

By comparing the different voices in these data, we see that linguistic variation from outside the hegemony may still give way to an overarching "alternative standard" for discursive, morphosyntactic, and phonological practices. I suggest that this "alternative standard" arises as a response to the mutability of alternative community networks—a sort of pan-regional | pan-ethnic | pan-community "linguistic hobo code" for signaling and recognizing comrades in otherwise unfamiliar settings (cf. Leap 1996). This extended notion of a community standard may, in turn, allow us to examine how extensive a "community of practice" may become and to what extent CoP and stance enact one another. Aspects of this alternative standard may, in turn, be adopted into the hegemonic market to index disaffection, leading the way for language change. (484 words)