Editorial

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Editorial

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This is the first volume of *Lifespans & Styles: Undergraduate Working Papers on Intraspeaker Variation*. The journal was inspired by the fact that, while many undergraduates produce exceptional scholarship, most do not get an opportunity to share their work with the wider academic community. Some may go on to postgraduate study in the same field of study as their undergraduate degree, but most will not continue in academia, or if they do, they will often change subfield. Meanwhile, the research they produce for a class, a dissertation, or a thesis will end up in a university library archive or, much more likely, buried in the folders of their personal computer. It is my belief that this is a disservice to both the student and the academic community at large. This journal was founded in the spirit of giving excellent undergraduate work the exposure and longevity that it deserves.

In the 2011–2012 academic year I began an Honours seminar on intraspeaker sociolinguistic variation, which has so far run four times. 'Honours' at my university refers to all students in the final two years of a four year undergraduate degree. Based on the pedagogical principle that students learn by 'doing', and that research-based teaching is the most appropriate model for advanced students, this seminar was designed around a student-led research project. Because of the constraints on time and resources, the seminar focuses on within-speaker variation rather than between-speaker variation. The project calls for small groups or individual students to choose a single speaker and obtain recordings of that speaker in at least two different social contexts. Students read and design their projects based on model papers of this kind of study, such as those in the reference list below. This kind of course is not unique in either structure or topic (Gillian Sankoff famously ran a similar one for years at the University of Pennsylvania; Laurel MacKenzie is currently running one at the University of Manchester), and so my hope is that this journal will serve as a bridge between like-minded students at different institutions.

By the end of my first semester teaching this course it was clear that the work being produced by the best students was of professional quality, a level of excellence that I would expect to see appear, for example, at conferences like *NWAV*, *UKLVC*, or *ICLaVE*. It therefore seemed a shame that other scholars were not afforded the opportunity to hear about the same interesting results that I was getting to hear about as the course instructor. Since most of these students were not able to attend professional conferences, an online, open access journal seemed like the best way to communicate their work more widely.

This first volume includes four papers: Dickson and Turner were fourth year students in 2013; Geere, Everett, and MacLeod were fourth year students in 2012; Shaw and Crocker were fourth year students in 2011; and Ringrose was a third year student in 2013. Despite the very narrow topical focus of this journal, these four papers span a wide range of material, both in terms of the speakers they analyse (Graham Norton, Stephen Fry, Scarlett Johansson, and a personal acquaintance) and also with respect to the stylistic contrast they test (referee design; speaker design and attention paid to speech; character acting; pet-directed speech) and the linguistic variables they test (various segmental and suprasegmental phonetic features). At the same time, these are only four of the dozens of papers produced in the past few years; they provide a respectable foundation to this journal as well as an exciting glimpse of what is to come in future volumes.

This volume would not have been possible without the help of my two volunteer Editorial Board members, Victoria Dickson (Class of '14) and Francesca Shaw (Class of '12). I'd like to thank all four first authors who contributed to this volume, each of whom participated in the peer-review process. I am very grateful to our copyeditor, Dr Marion Nao of *Consulting Nao*, and to the financial support from the *PPLS Teaching and Learning Initiative Fund 2014*, which made it possible to employ her. I am further grateful to Angela Laurins, Library Learning Services Manager, who introduced me to the Open Journals platform and got the journal set up and running smoothly.

It is my sincere hope that future volumes of this journal will include contributions from students from institutions other than Edinburgh, so that this journal will be able to bring together work from an international community of undergraduate students. Anyone is welcome to submit a paper on the topic of intraspeaker variation if the work was conducted when the author was an undergraduate, and if the instructor's input has only been at the level of assessment or supervision.

I am extremely proud of the contributors who are part of this first volume of *Lifespans & Styles*. I hope you enjoy it.

Lauren Hall-Lew
Editor

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