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Editorial

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Editorial

Lauren Hall-Lew

Welcome to the first issue of the fourth volume of *Lifespans & Styles*, which features two papers that continue the journal's original mission of highlighting excellence in undergraduate research while furthering case studies of intraspeaker variation in sociolinguistics. While this issue is smaller than previous issues, both papers are of exceptionally high quality and relevance to our field.

The first paper, based on an honours dissertation at the University of Edinburgh by Alexandra Hofbauer, is a study of rhoticity in Singaporean English. Hofbauer's study makes use of relatively innovative methodologies and participant populations, and reveals a high degree of individual variation in rhoticity production. The speakers in Hofbauer's study were those speakers most likely to produce variable rhoticity, according to previous literature: highly educated young women, most of whom had attended convent schools. Her analysis of intraspeaker variation compares their speech in a reading task with speech from a Diapix task (van Engen et al. 2010), and finds that the pattern contradicts previous results: for those (few) speakers who are variably rhotic, rhoticity is higher in the "casual speech" task than the "careful speech" task. Hofbauer's further analysis of the individual speakers with variable rhoticity shows that they were more likely than the other speakers to name American English, rather than British English, as their preferred target variety.

The second paper, based on a seminar paper at the University of Zurich by Gian Peter Ochsner, is a study of two variants of a lexical sociolinguistic variable in U.S. English: *estate tax* and *death tax*. Based on televised speeches from the U.S. House of Representatives in 2015, Ochsner compares the use of these variants among Democrats and Republicans. Ochsner's results show a highly significant correlation between variant choice and political party, and he further makes the case that the Representatives who style-shift between the variants do so for politically motivated reasons. Ochsner's data show how these politicians vary by first using the variant favoured by the opposing party, regardless of whether or not that variant was used by the previous speaker, before switching to the variant favoured by their own party. Rather than evidencing social convergence towards the opposing party, Ochsner conducts an analysis of stancetaking to make the case that these instances of objective convergence are actually part of a strategy of ideological distancing.

Lastly, I would like to end with an exciting announcement! While all previous volumes of the journal held the subtitle *Undergraduate Working Papers on Intraspeaker Variation*, this one presents a new subtitle for the journal: *Undergraduate Papers in Sociolinguistics*. After 3 years of promoting the value of research on topics like lifespan change, style-shifting, accommodation, and other types of linguistic variation within the individual, we have now reached the capacity to be able to support and publish a broader range of topics in sociolinguistics. While the editorial staff will undoubtedly lead towards an interest in variationist sociolinguistics, we are in principle now open to any paper in sociolinguistics, more generally construed, as long as it is based on some form of new, empirical data. Going forward, we will also be implementing a more typical journal review process, which is reflected in dropping the word "Working" from the subtitle. We are grateful to my department, Linguistics and English Language at the University of Edinburgh, for the financial support to make this possible. Further financial support for *Lifespans and Styles* comes from the *PPLS Teaching and Learning Initiative Fund* from the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. Thanks are also due to our copyeditor, Dr Marion Nao, our volunteer Editorial Board (Victoria Dickson, Francesca Shaw, Maria Dokovova, Joel Merry, Ruaridh Purse, and Abigail Salvesen), and the wonderful Open Journal Systems support staff at the University of Edinburgh.

Lauren Hall-Lew
Editor

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