

## The Sociolinguistics of Diaspora: Language in the Jamaican Canadian Community

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### 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

#### *1.1 Diaspora Sociolinguistics: The Big Questions*

The sociolinguistics of diaspora is beginning to address issues that are raised by "geopolitical and geocultural" changes in late modernity (Blommaert, 2010): mobility and interconnectivity are increasing, and social and communicative networks are getting more complex. Many of the theoretical and methodological challenges that these processes pose to sociolinguists have been formulated by academics working in the sociolinguistics of globalization, such as Alastair Pennycook (2007) and Jan Blommaert (2003, 2010). Diasporic communities are constantly increasing in size and number in the metropolitan centers of the world, making them sites of *super-diversity* (Vertovec, 2007), and this increase is in itself a feature of globalization. If we restrict our academic interest to language in *diasporic* communities, it becomes possible to ask some of the relevant questions on globalization more succinctly, and to bring empirical work to bear on questions of theory in a more focused way.

Among the big questions of diasporic sociolinguistics, then, are the following:

- What happens to individual heritage languages as they are transplanted into new settings, creating new dialect contact situations?
- What happens to established models of sociolinguistic description?

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<sup>1</sup> Postdoctoral funding from the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation (Cologne) during the 2006/07 fieldwork period is gratefully acknowledged. This paper has benefited from discussions with many colleagues in the years since fieldwork began. It is not possible here to mention them all, but Norma Mendoza-Denton and Bryan James Gordon must be singled out for providing advice and inspiration over several years. Comments that I received from listeners at SALSA 2011, in particular Liz Keating, Aslihan Akkaya, and Michael Silverstein, as well as from Dagmar Deuber, Ana Deumert, Carl Blyth and Stefan Dollinger, were incorporated in this version. Ben Rampton and Devyani Sharma had very helpful discussions about diasporic language and lectal focusing with me. As always, my transcriptions would be much worse if Joseph T. Farquharson had not extended himself so generously. None of the above is to blame for this paper's shortcomings. Thanks also to Jim Quan at CTV Toronto for explaining the Amazing Race. I owe the biggest debt of gratitude to Carrie Mullings and Tanya Mullings for supporting my research.

- What role does language play in the representational politics of diaspora communities?

In the first question, "what happens" should be read in both the formal and the functional sense: languages (and varieties of languages) change their shape and their social discourse functions as they enter new mixes of linguistic resources. To understand these transformations is a prime concern of sociolinguists.

The second question addresses the disciplinary questions that arise from those transformations. The theoretical models that sociolinguistics has most frequently relied on since its inception in, roughly, the 1960s grew from empirical work in stable monolingual settings. They modeled variation as taking place along a unidimensional continuum between more standard-like and more vernacular-like forms. For those of us who, like myself, are interested in creole languages, the most widely referenced descriptive sociolinguistic model is the (post-)creole continuum (DeCamp, 1971). The model sees variation in places like Jamaica or Haiti, where a creole language exists alongside a standard language that has historically acted as its lexifier, and where the prior assumes all the functions of informal use from which the latter is withheld, as ordered along a formal continuum. On its one end there is speech that is maximally Creole-like (the basilect), and on the other end there is maximally standard-like speech (the acrolect). Most language in daily use comes down somewhere in between the two, i.e. in the mesolectal region. Certainly it is not without problem to call such creole continuum situations "monolingual," because there exist both social and formal-linguistic reasons to consider the basilect and the acrolect to be distinct languages, rather than varieties of the same language (ultimately, this amounts to a political decision, cf. Devonish, 2003). However, the continuum view aligns with the sense of unidimensional variation that defines mainstream sociolinguistics, which emerged from work in monolingual communities such as New York City (Labov, 2006). The question is, then, whether such models of variation in domestic contexts can easily be transferred and applied to diasporic communities.

The third question connects these linguistic concerns to discourses in cultural studies. That line of investigation sees semiotic action in and by diasporic groups as expressive of their representational politics, or as ways to define a common cultural identity in the face of displacement and alterity within a surrounding mainstream community. Work by, for example, Stuart Hall has frequently pointed to the fundamental changes in personal and group identity that the diasporic experience precipitates (Hall, 1990); in the case of Caribbeans, this often entails a racialization of the self for the first time at the time of relocation (Fanon, 1967; Hall, 2005). As linguists, we are in a position to ask: what function does linguistic variation, seen as a semiotic resource that can be used along with others (Eckert, 1996), perform in this representational politics of diaspora?

Blommaert writes about linguistic variation under conditions of globalization as a "messy marketplace" (2010), invoking Bourdieu's (1991) economic imagery. With contact being a defining feature, diasporic language performance is fundamentally diffuse. In the diasporic group of Jamaicans in Toronto that I discuss here, where both the local and the heritage language are varieties of the same language, English,<sup>2</sup> it is even more diffuse: the

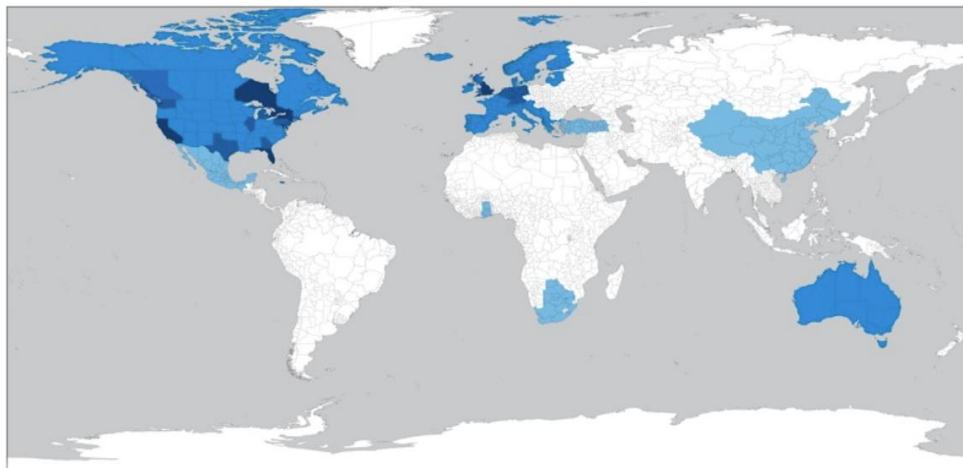
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<sup>2</sup> Certainly and obviously, British varieties of English entered the mix of languages from which Jamaican Creole emerged (Cassidy, 1982). It is however, as Devonish (2003) points out, sufficiently different from most other varieties of English to warrant consideration as a distinct language. I wish to make no claim here as to the language status of Jamaican Creole, though I do think that on purely historical grounds it can also legitimately be considered a variety of English (see also Mufwene,

descriptive effort here cannot lean on differences between languages as a diagnostic crutch. In order to trace the influence of the various tributary varieties on the "mess" of diasporic language mixing, one is forced to rely on cues at a finer level of structural detail.

### 1.2 *The Study of Diasporic Patwa*

Jamaican Creole, or Patwa,<sup>3</sup> can be considered a hyper-mobile vernacular variety. While many countries' populations are mobile and diasporically dispersed across the globe, their native vernaculars rarely travel as far as Jamaican Patwa does. It remains in use in many diasporic communities and, critically, is also frequently transmitted to the second generation of immigrants (Mair, 2011). Meanwhile, the *standard* variety of Jamaican English is replaced by local standards in the second generation of diasporic speakers: the children of Jamaican immigrants in Canada typically orient toward Canadian English for a standard linguistic code to be used in formal domains (cp. Sebba, 1993 on London Jamaican and local standard English use). The role of a linguistic icon of Jamaican culture in diasporic usage thus falls to Jamaican Creole, but not English.



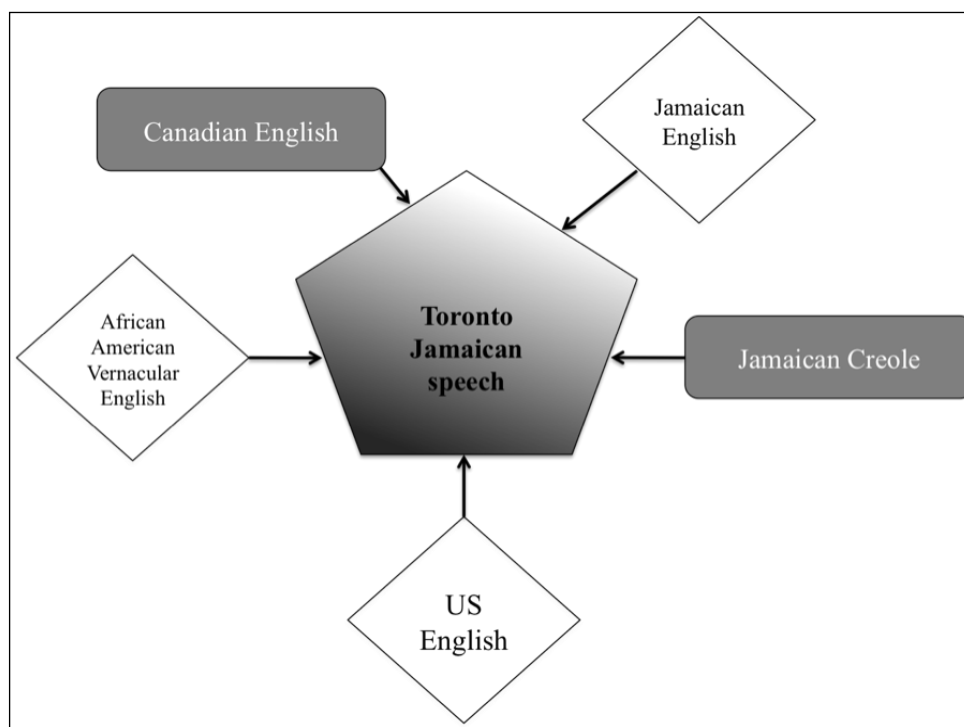
**Figure 1. Regional base of 1,318 forum contributors to [www.jamaicans.com](http://www.jamaicans.com) (2008), from Mair (2011, used by permission).**

Digital communication has been identified as an important site for the construction of diasporic identity (Hinrichs, 2006; Hinrichs & White-Sustaíta, 2011; Karim, 2003). In a recent study of digital interactions in online discussion forums, Mair (2011) has mapped the location of residence for 1,318 writers who contributed to the online discussion forum [www.jamaicans.com](http://www.jamaicans.com). Figure 1 reproduces that map, with darker-shaded regions showing a higher density of writers. While the resolution of the map is partly misleading about the actual centers of the Jamaican diaspora – for example, the dark shades for Ontario, or for New York State, are in reality earned almost single-handedly by the Toronto/Hamilton metropolitan area and by Brooklyn and Queens – it does make strikingly clear how widely Jamaicans are dispersed across the globe. It also illustrates what Mair calls the "long shadow of Empire and (post)-colonial migration to Britain and North America."

2001 for support of this view), which takes nothing away from the necessary case for Patwa speakers' language rights.

<sup>3</sup> *Patwa* (sometimes spelled <Patois>) is the preferred designator for Jamaican Creole among native speakers.

Linguistic performance in a diasporic community draws on a feature pool (Mufwene, 2001) whose composition of tributary varieties is both locally and individually specific. It tends to include a speaker's heritage language and the dominant local language as a matter of course. In Toronto, Jamaican Creole (JC) and Canadian English (CanE) are available to practically all members of the Jamaican community; Figure 2 therefore shows them in shaded boxes. Additional varieties can enter a speaker's mix depending on varying factors such as personal networks and the interactional goals at hand. For example, African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) is impressionistically a much more substantial influence among members of the Canadian hip-hop scene than among the Reggae musicians and promoters studied in the present paper. (AAVE is not domestic to Canada, see however the diasporic enclave varieties of AAVE studied by Tagliamonte and Poplack 2001. Instead it exerts its influence through hip-hop music and the media.) Standard Jamaican English is most likely to be used by speakers who are themselves immigrants from Jamaica; as mentioned above, members of subsequent generations tend to orient instead to CanE as a standard variety. Finally, varieties of US English are available in the Canadian cultural space for stylized uses in double voicing (Rampton, 1998), as in the case of a playful performance of a Southern US accent, or a New York accent, etc.



**Figure 2. The tributary varieties of Toronto Jamaican speech.**

In much post-structuralist linguistic work on language in interactional and social context, and especially in work on language and globalization, the usefulness of notions of languages and language varieties as separable entities has been questioned. This challenge is rooted in a descriptive emphasis on the fluid nature of linguistic performance (see for example Pennycook's study of "postcolonial performativity," 2007). Similarly, Blommaert repeatedly and "categorically opt[s] for a sociolinguistics of resources, not of languages"

(2010, pp. 20-21), where resources are emicized sets of linguistic signs that perform contextualized indexical functions, and which speakers can in turn index by using certain selected features. Thus the sociolinguist's focus shifts from an interest in how languages work to how linguistic performance is constructed. While the anti-essentialist caution underlying this theoretical perspective is necessary and appreciated, one must be careful not to forget that the view of languages and varieties as describable constructs is and has always been conceived of as a conscious, intentional abstraction. This is the case even and especially in Saussurean synchrony, with its distinction between *langue* and *parole*. In those cases where one of the constituents of a given speaker's set of resources is a language in his or her own mind, it may be neither useful nor helpful to abandon the idea of linguistic systems (Bohmann, 2010, p. 205). Most language users tend to think of their linguistic resources as discrete units, so that even in a speaker-oriented view of variation, we are well advised to retain the notion of the variety as one of our most valuable abstractions. One can only agree with Blommaert that globalization is marked by the steady complexification of social and semiotic networks, and that the field of sociolinguistics must draw lessons of both the methodological and the theoretical type from this fact. But again, we ought to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater: more often than not, it is describable linguistic varieties (or sets of varieties) that underlie speakers' linguistic performances, though their command of each variety will vary (and nobody knows any variety perfectly). Blommaert identifies as a major task for sociolinguistics to account for these "truncated repertoires."

### 1.3 Research Agenda and Method

The research agenda for the present paper is twofold. First, I approach the issue of the changing indexicality of Patwa as a mobile resource. Is Patwa among Jamaican Canadians used as a code in conversational code-switching, with a complete range of discourse functions, the way it is used in Jamaica? Or are there noticeable differences? The second item on the agenda is methodological: I discuss ways of handling the diffuseness of variation in diasporic speech in a varieties-of-English setting.

In doing so, I assume that Jamaican Canadians, in constructing their linguistic performance, draw on the tributary varieties in their feature pool to varying degrees at different times in an interaction. The two major varieties that enter the mix are Patwa and CanE. The primary task is therefore the description of variation between features of those two varieties at the level of individual style, with a focus on phonetics. I trace the frequency of features that vary between JC and CanE as they unfold in a stretch of discourse. This procedure is tantamount to tracing the degrees of *focusing* (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) for each variety, or lect, across discourse contexts.

The description of phonetic variation in the diffuse marketplace of a diasporic setting promises to be most successful if a quantitative methodology, as a way of obtaining reproducible findings with transparent sets of analytical criteria, can be applied. However, quantitative methods for the analysis of individual style have not yet been extensively elaborated in sociolinguistics. There is Bell's (1984, 2001) well-known audience design framework. It was developed for variation in stable monolingual settings, which it assumes to be taking place on a unidimensional continuum. It offers monofactorial explanations for variation: essentially, speakers converge toward their interlocutors' frequency of feature use for certain variables; deviations from this pattern are usually explained by invoking the effect of a "referee." The model's strength lies in an impressive predictive power for data recorded in settings similar to those in which it was developed.

Another sociolinguist who has applied quantitative techniques to individual variation in discourse is Scott Kiesling. In his ethnographically based (2009) study of speech in an

American college fraternity, he correlates frequencies for the ING variable with the interactional setting in which a stretch of discourse was recorded (the three contexts were "socializing," "interview," "meeting," p. 181). He then correlates frequencies for three vocalic variables with interactional activities whose relevance for the life of the fraternity was extracted ethnographically: expert talk, gossiping, commiserating, and so on (p. 184). Like Bell, Kiesling models monolingual variation. The strength of his work lies in its sensitivity to interactional context.

A third quantitative measure of style is the Lectal Focusing Index (LFI), experimentally presented by Rampton & Sharma at the Sociolinguistics Symposium (2010) but so far not employed in a printed publication. Because it does away with the notion of a unidimensional continuum underlying stylistic variation—and because, in fact, it was developed in the study of the diasporic speech of Indians in London—this approach is best suited as a methodological example for the present study. I present it in detail in section 3.2 below, where I apply it, with certain modifications, to my data.

## 2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted during stays in Toronto in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2011, each lasting between two and 22 weeks. After initial survey work in multiple locales, the scope of interview and observation work was narrowed to CHRY, a community radio station located on the campus of York University. 24 Jamaican-Canadians were interviewed for 40 minutes or more. Two individuals were particularly open to the project and helpful in facilitating further access to networks within the social context of the radio station. Tanya Mullings and Carrie Mullings are part of a community of practice surrounding Canadian Reggae: Tanya as a singer and musician who has obtained national recognition for her work (for example, she was nominated for the Juno award in Reggae in 2008), and Carrie as promoter of Canadian Reggae and host of a weekly radio show devoted to Canadian Reggae. Her show, "Rebel Vibe," is the only radio program playing only Canadian-made Reggae music. It is broadcast on FM in Toronto and also maintains a worldwide audience via its internet stream.

Tanya and Carrie are the daughters of Karl Mullings (1942-2005), a Jamaican who immigrated to Canada as a young adult in the 1960s, and a European-Canadian mother. Karl, an intensely networked key figure of the local Caribbean community, promoted Jamaican culture in Toronto as an event manager, night club owner, and music promoter. In 1967 he was instrumental in starting the Caribana festival, the yearly Caribbean Carnival in the streets of Toronto that is attended by tens of thousands of spectators. Tanya and Carrie attribute to their father's influence their pride in Caribbean, especially Jamaican, culture, and their wish to actively foster the representation of Jamaicans in the Canadian public domain by producing and promoting Jamaican-Canadian Reggae music. In raising his daughters, Karl placed explicit value on their ability to speak Patwa at a high, near-native level of competence. By also acquiring CanE natively from their mother, in school, and in the surrounding community, the sisters grew up to be biracial, bicultural speakers of a multilectal inventory of linguistic resources.

I conducted many hours of audio or video recordings of both sisters' speech in interviews and in observation. In particular, I was able to follow Carrie around for long periods of time as she went through her day, hosting her radio show or meeting with musicians, music producers, friends, and family members. Some of these meetings were arranged for my benefit, to enable me to speak to more members of the Jamaican community in Toronto.

### 3 Lactal Focusing on Rebel VibeZ

Rebel VibeZ is broadcast live every Monday from 10am to 12pm. Carrie is the show's main host, and Tanya acts as a co-host. In 2008, when the data discussed here was recorded, two more individuals were regularly present in the studio during the broadcasts: Brother Jason, a DJ who spins records on a turntable at different points in the show,<sup>4</sup> and Diana, who worked as an assistant to Carrie by, for example, welcoming and coordinating studio guests and taking phone callers from listeners before passing them on to Carrie, sometimes for on-air conversations.

Every hour of broadcasting on Rebel VibeZ features conversations with studio guests. These guests are usually practitioners in the Toronto Reggae scene: they include musicians, singers, and event promoters. Guests frequently visit the show in hopes of obtaining some airtime with Carrie to promote an event or a new recording.

Most of the musicians have day jobs that allow them to sustain their musical activity financially. As a consequence, Rebel VibeZ gets significantly more studio visitors on those Mondays that coincide with a National Holiday. The day when the data presented here was recorded, May 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, was Victoria Day, a statutory holiday in Ontario and some other Canadian provinces, and so this show was particularly well attended. The studio door is usually left open during broadcasts so that visitors can walk in and stand along the walls of the studio. In all, I counted 22 visitors throughout the two-hour broadcast, myself not included.

Most of the visitors to the Rebel VibeZ studio participate in the cultural context of Canadian Reggae, and most also have a Caribbean family background. Many are practitioners of the Rastafarian religion; others borrow elements of Rastafarian dress and hair style—for example, by wearing dreadlocks and a tam, the type of knitted protective hat that is made to be worn with dreadlocks.

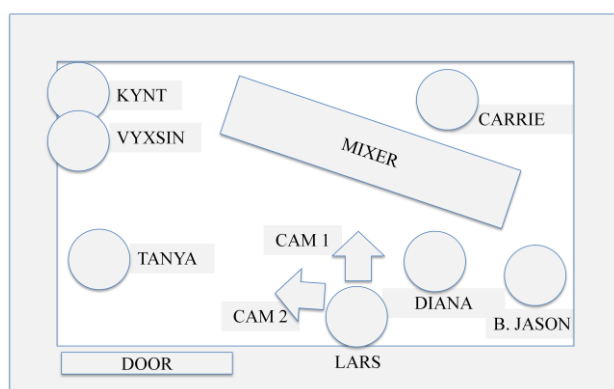
On this particular day, two additional guests were also present at the show: Kynt and Vyxsin. In 2007, they participated in the twelfth season of the elimination TV show "The Amazing Race," produced by the American network CBS and simulcasted in Canada by CTV. They were eliminated during the eighth (of eleven) "leg" of the season, which aired in late December 2007. Kynt and Vyxsin come from Kentucky. They are a couple, and both are affiliated with the Goth subculture. In one episode of season 12 they describe themselves thus: "We're just a couple of Goth kids from Louisville, Kentucky." They were ranked fifth out of all participating teams on season 12 of the Amazing Race. Nonetheless, in the episode in which they were eliminated from the race, the host of the show, Phil Keoghan, jokingly told them that he "would have to give you the award for the most fashionable couple ever on the Amazing Race."



**Figure 3. Kynt and Vyxsin.**

<sup>4</sup> Among other reasons, in order to enable studio guests to deliver live vocal performances.

Both Kynt and Vyxsin, who were 32 and 29 years old in May 2008, use extravagant make-up and clothing in constructing their "Goth" look. They place high value on stylistic practice: Kynt's Myspace profile (<<http://www.myspace.com/522923>>, accessed 12 May, 2011) cites as his favorite quote: "LIFE ISN'T ABOUT FINDING YOURSELF. LIFE IS ABOUT CREATING YOURSELF." Following the exposure to large television audiences both in the U.S. and Canada, the couple decided to pursue fashion modeling. In May of 2008, this new career<sup>5</sup> brought them to Toronto, where they had been invited to model in a fashion show. Despite the lack of any obvious connection between Kynt and Vyxsin's background and Goth style with Reggae music, their booking agent had arranged with the radio station that they would appear on Rebel VibeZ for a promotional interview, and Carrie had agreed to their appearance.



**Figure 4. Schematic map of participants in Rebel VibeZ broadcast, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008.**

During the broadcast of Rebel VibeZ of May 19, 2008, there was a stable configuration of participants within the on-air studio as sketched in Figure 4. The sketch does not show any of the floating visitors who walked in and out of the studio in intervals of rarely more than ten minutes. My position opposite Carrie's is shown together with the position and direction of two video cameras on tripods, which were trained on Tanya and Carrie. Both Tanya and Carrie wore wireless lavalier microphones that recorded their speech and most of their interlocutors' speech. As an additional sound source, the mp3 log of the radio station's broadcast signal for the two hours of the show was used. The log provides unique access to the speech of telephone callers to whom Carrie spoke on the air. That signal is not played on the in-studio monitor loudspeakers in order to avoid feedback, and so would not have been picked up by any of my microphones within the studio.

### 3.1 Carrie Mullings as Cultural Broker

Carrie acts as a mediator between the community of Jamaicans in Toronto and society at large. The social role of the member of one social group who mediates between that group and others has been a longstanding interest in social and cultural anthropology (Rasmussen, 2003 provides an overview). A common case is mediation across linguistic

<sup>5</sup> At the time of this writing, the 18<sup>th</sup> season of the *Amazing Race* is being aired, in which Kynt and Vyxsin are participating for the second time. The CBS website for the show provides short biographies for all candidates, and Kynt and Vyxsin are shown as still pursuing modeling as their occupation.

and cultural boundaries between a small minority group and the surrounding majority. The term *cultural broker* is most often employed in studies on these kinds of community members, but other terms such as "facilitator" (Rasmussen, 2003), "go-between" (Hagedorn, 1988), or "translator between languages and cultures" (Hagedorn, 1988; Penfield, 1987) have been applied as well. It is characteristic of cultural brokers to be specially equipped, often by virtue of their linguistic skills (Penfield, 1987, p. 162), for the task of presenting their own community's interest to other groups. Carrie has unusually complete levels of competence in both Jamaican and Canadian linguistic resources. Her mixed racial identity associates her with both the black minority in Toronto and the white majority. Much anthropological work has also found broker figures to be charged with symbolic functions, such as administering rituals, or cultural tasks of representation. Carrie is engaged precisely in the work of representing her diasporic culture in the local mainstream.

Readings on ethnographic fieldwork traditionally warn of ethnographic information from individuals who, like Carrie, have some sort of a special status based on which they act as representatives for their community (see e.g. Wax, 1971, ch. 31, who warns of potential political bias among such representative community members). Nonetheless, it is clear that knowledge obtained from cultural brokers can, with the necessary reflexivity, instruct fieldwork in the most valuable ways (also Crapanzano, 1980, a book-length study devoted to one such key informant; see Turner, 1968). After all it is these brokers who have the most experience of anyone in their community with explaining and speaking about their group to outsiders, such as, in many cases including the present one, fieldworkers. Excerpt (1) illustrates the kind of information, and in fact the wealth of insight, that can be gleaned from working with a mediator like Carrie. This excerpt shows Carrie at work as a radio DJ.

(1) **A group a Rastaman**<sup>6</sup>

Jason: ((on air)) what do you think ss- we should  
give them a little piece of "Singers in the  
Neighborhood" a little later on in the day  
[ ( ) ]

[38] Carrie: [ ↑oh my ↑gosh you know you you ey you you know  
who's inside CHRY studios (.95)  
super↓stars (.35) a↓gain (.94)  
super↓stars (.17) a↓gain (.) The Amazing Race

<sup>6</sup> The raw video data for excerpt (1) can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/WEhM7-414WU>. Jason's and Tanya's speech does not appear very clearly on the video data; it was transcribed with the additional help of the radio station's audio log (both Jason and Tanya have their own microphones during on-air segments and so can be heard clearly on the broadcast signal). The transcription conventions used here for the most part follow Gail Jefferson's system as summarized in, for example, Atkinson and Heritage (eds., 1984) and in recent CA textbooks. In addition, I adopted the following conventions: underlining was used for stretches of discourse that contain JC for an entire clause or utterance (in these cases, Creole was transcribed using the phonemic orthography proposed in Cassidy & Le Page, 1967). And instead of line numbers, segment numbers are given in square brackets (see section 3.2 on how segments are determined).

- Kynt [kɪnt] a Kent [kɛnt] I'm calling him Kynt  
 [kɪnt] sorry Kent [kɛnt] you know what I said  
 Kent [kɛnt] (.29) Kent [kɛnt] and Vyxsin let me  
 tell you something (.) they cause controversy  
 on the television screen  
 ((laughter among all in the studio))
- [39] → a gruup a Rastaman goin waak insaid ya  
*a group of Rastamen might walk in here*  
an se um (.) wo::w (.)  
*and say*  
 I'm telling you they have such a good vibe  
 so far .hh
- [40] we're gonna get to talk to them they're here  
 for fashion and supporting different um  
 designers ah ah it's it's it's a good thing  
 it's a good thing and they're gonna be in  
 different magazines and (.) um hem=yah (.84)
- [41] → talk se sompm Brother Jason  
*say something*  
 [ mi de pon a hai tide (.62) I'm tired ]  
*I'm on a high today*  
 I'm [2 tired yesterday hh oh (1.1) yeah 2]]
- Jason: [ .hh (1.0) ((laughs)) yeah]
- Tanya: [2 yes (.5) I had to drag her out last  
 night from Harlem<sup>7</sup> I'm going radio tomorrow  
 come on she said she's not 2] as disciplined as  
 me

With Carrie acting as a social mediator as the host of a diasporic radio show, she faces a set of demands that are partly in competition with each other, and which arguably add up to a definition of her specific kind of brokerage. I argue that Carrie meets these demands in part through the strategic deployment of different linguistic styles. They can be

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<sup>7</sup> Harlem Night Club in Toronto, where Carrie was hosting a live Reggae show the previous night.

sketched as belonging to four types: authenticity, intelligibility, spontaneous fluency, and positive representation. Let me briefly expand on all four.

- *Authenticity.* The core audience of Rebel VibeZ is made up of members of the Caribbean, and especially Jamaican, community in Toronto. The use of Patwa is a symbolic strategy of creating authenticity through code choice as a linguistic act of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Such purely symbolic creation of authenticity can be achieved through the use of shibboleths that are well known even in the majority community. However, when language is used that requires in-depth knowledge of Jamaican culture to be understood, the ideology of authenticity (Coupland, 2003) is also served iconically: non-Jamaicans are excluded from communication, and only the authentically Jamaicans can be part of the in-group who understands.
- *Intelligibility.* Carrie has to make sure that listeners, regardless of their competence in Patwa, understand most of the language used on Rebel VibeZ. Both her core audience – Caribbeans in Toronto – and the surrounding community include many speakers who are only superficially acquainted with Patwa.
- *Spontaneous fluency.* In his study of the language of radio announcers, Goffman (1981a) formulates one demand that every radio broadcaster faces: "The key contingency in radio announcing (I take it) is to produce the effect of a spontaneous, fluent flow of words—if not a forceful, pleasing personality—under conditions that lay speakers would be unable to manage" (198).<sup>8</sup> This demand applies especially to the host of an entertainment program such as Rebel VibeZ.
- *Positive representation.* The diasporic community for which Carrie acts as spokesperson is under a specific kind of cultural pressure in the social context of the surrounding community. Jamaican drug gangs perpetrated a series of killings that haunted Toronto in 2005, the year of the "summer of the gun," and which extended into subsequent years (Appleby, 2007). Some public discourse presented these killings as characteristic of Jamaicans in general, and many Jamaican-Canadian participants in my fieldwork spoke of a sense of cultural embattlement among the community.<sup>9</sup> Carrie said in interviews that she is careful not to broadcast a representation of Jamaicans that would support this negative view of Jamaicans. However, the discourse excerpted in (1) does not illustrate Carrie negotiating this demand.

Excerpt (1) shows Carrie using language choice as a tool in meeting the authenticity demand. For example, in segment 39 she playfully speaks of a hypothetical group of Rastamen who might, at a hypothetical point in time, enter the studio and notice the subcultural incongruence that exists between Kynt and Vyxsin on the one hand and the

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<sup>8</sup> Goffman gives two concrete examples (1981a): the need to project personal belief in a product for which the announcer must read an advertisement on air, even when they are reading the ad not out of personal interest but in order to meet the commercial needs of the station that employs them; and the need to make their speech sound spontaneous even at times when it is being read from a script.

<sup>9</sup> As Henry (1994) documents, the opinion of the Torontonians public of the Caribbean community in general and Jamaicans in particular is generally negative, supported by, for example, "evidence" such as low educational achievement and economic performance.

regular scene of Reggae musicians who frequent the studio on the other. Their reaction at seeing the atypically Caucasian and androgynous Goth couple in the studio during a Rebel Vibe broadcast, Carrie surmises, would be surprise ("wow"). In other words, Carrie playfully creates the persona of an imagined onlooker, citing their imagined comments on the scene and altogether taking a "Jamaican" perspective on Kynt and Vyxsin. Crucially, this is where the longest stretch of Patwa speech in this excerpt occurs.

However, as the host and the effectual link to other cultures, Carrie also ties the two visitors into her framework of identification: she presents them as interesting and as non-mainstream ("they cause controversy," 38), thereby observing rules of politeness at the same time as answering to the 'spontaneous fluency' demand. This excerpt provides evidence that this is not always an easy task. For example, in segment 41 Carrie clearly runs out of things to say to, or about, Kynt and Vyxsin, showing that up to now, her efforts to make the two relevant to her show have not been successful by her own assessment (this changes for the better later in the recording). An earlier striking sign of the disconnect between Carrie and the two guests is the trouble in segment 38, where Carrie struggles to repair the pronunciation of Kynt's name. Kynt chose a non-standard re-spelling of his given name, Kent,<sup>10</sup> presumably in the interest of enhancing his visibility in front of audiences of all kinds in the mass media. In his native English dialect area, most speakers pronounce pre-nasal DRESS vowels (i.e. vowels such as the one in the word DRESS, see Wells, 1982) as identical to the KIT vowel. His re-spelling of his name with a <y> indicates that he is probably aware of what dialectologists call the PIN/PEN vowel merger in his home dialect, and potentially also of the contrast between the merger and the distinct quality of those vowels in most standard varieties of English.<sup>11</sup> The PIN/PEN merger is completely absent from Canada (not to mention Jamaica), where Carrie grew up and where the words *pin* and *pen* have distinct qualities (Boberg, 2010). In short, while the spelling <Kynt> for *Kent* may be salient in Canada, the underlying joke is not accessible to many native speakers of CanE because of the reliably distinct quality of the KIT and DRESS vowels in northern varieties of North American English (for Canada see Boberg, 2010). The misunderstanding about the point of the re-spelling of his name therefore can be interpreted as an icon of the disparity in cultural backgrounds between Carrie and Kynt.

While the use of Patwa is a suitable answer to the 'authenticity' demand, it is also in obvious competition with the 'intelligibility' demand. As a consequence, it is noticeable that much of Carrie's language use that reads as "Jamaican" is drawn from the "Dread Talk" register of JC (1986, 1998, 2000). Dread Talk is the variety of JC used by Rastafarians, and defining differences between JC and Dread Talk are almost exclusively of a lexical nature. Given the prominence of Rastafarianism in popular culture, many such lexical items are well known and function as shibboleths of Jamaican speech and identity, rather than being a challenge to intelligibility. In this excerpt and practically all others from this recording, Carrie uses Dread Talk items such as *idren* 'brother,' *outernational* 'international/foreign,' *vibe*, etc. Aside from focusing on shibboleths, Carrie keeps her own use of Patwa restricted to short utterances. Her guests generally use much longer stretches of Patwa.

The 'spontaneous fluency' maxim is visibly in effect as well. It probably explains the general playfulness of Carrie's discourse in this excerpt. She uses the salient contrast between Kynt and Vyxsin's subculture and Rastafarianism to humorous effect. Any rhetorical, playful identification between the visitors and Rasta culture is bound to be a

<sup>10</sup> On his Myspace page, Kynt's name is actually listed as *Kent*.

<sup>11</sup> It is likely that Kynt is aware of the difference between speakers who merge PIN and PEN and those who don't, since his hometown, Louisville, is situated right at the isogloss between the Southern US pattern (the merger) and the non-Southern non-merger (Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2006).

source of humor based on the unexpected association of incongruous parts. Carrie draws on that source of fun in the "group of Rastamen" quote in segment 39.

### 3.2 *Towards a Metric of Lectal Focusing*

Ben Rampton and Devyani Sharma, within the context of a large research project on language in the Indian community in London, have explored the issue of quantitatively tracking of stylistic variation among different varieties of English within one speaker. As is the case with Toronto Jamaican speech, the situation they study shows variation that cannot readily be forced into a unidimensional standard-nonstandard continuum. They have therefore zeroed in on the degree of *focusing* of the different lects in a speaker's repertoire at different points in the discourse (Rampton & Devyani Sharma, 2010). They refer to this method, or rather: its descriptive output, as a *lectal focusing index* (LFI).

To arrive at the LFI, Rampton and Sharma first divide up the (transcribed) talk by an individual into units that are determined by the breaks between turn-constructional units (TCU). If within a TCU, there is a change in the stance that the speaker is taking toward the discourse, that also introduces a break in the discourse and thus starts a new analytical discourse unit.

In the next step, each discourse unit is parsed for phonetic features that index one of the varieties in the speaker's repertoire. Because the vast majority of structural features is shared by most varieties of English, only a selection of consonantal and vocalic features enter this analysis: those that are marked in one of the varieties in the speaker's repertoire. Nonetheless, the method's strength lies in the fact that a range of features – those that are indexically linked to one variety – enter the LFI computation. In Rampton and Sharma's study, three varieties are quantified: Standard British English (BrE), Vernacular BrE, and Indian English (IndE). Each discourse unit will have a score between 0 and 1 for each of those varieties (i.e. one unit has the following scores: Standard BrE: .0, Vernacular BrE: .3, IndE: .69, indicating that the speaker is focusing most strongly on IndE within this stretch of discourse). The features that are quantified are not in complementary distribution among the different lects (though some are). Therefore, the scores for the different varieties within each unit of discourse do not necessarily add up to 1.

Rampton and Sharma mention two reservations that they hold with regard to their own method at this current point. One reservation is that they do not find their criteria for the segmentation of the discourse into analyzable units to be clear enough (i.e. the combination of TCU and stance). Another reservation is that the analyst necessarily has to make clear and strong assumptions about which variety a particular variable indexes, which, one might argue, makes the approach "a bit top down" (Devyani Sharma, personal communication).

I address the first reservation by adopting two different criteria for the segmentation of the discourse into quantifiable units: (i) I use as the central criterion the notion of "activity," understood as the answer to the simple question "What is she doing?", both in the theorized, specific sense of conversation-analytic work and in the quotidian sense. Whenever that answer changes, there is a break between discourse units. (ii) If within one 'activity,' there is a change of topic, participant framework (in the sense of Goodwin's 1990 elaboration of Goffman's 1981a "participation frameworks"), or footing (Goffman, 1981b), that will also cause the start of the next segment.<sup>12</sup> In my experience, this is a

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<sup>12</sup> Changes in participant framework almost always implicate changes in footing, and so do topic changes. Goffman (1981a) makes this clear specifically for radio announcer's talk. My list of three secondary criteria (participant framework, topic, footing) might therefore be consolidated to footing alone. I mention all three here for the sake of clarity.

rather clear enough set of criteria that makes for excellent rates of inter-coder reliability. It has the additional advantage that in discourse stretches in which nothing really changes, and which are interrupted only by a brief turn from another speaker, there is no real need to introduce a new segment so long as the main speaker's activity remains the same.

I am not convinced that the second reservation actually states a weakness. As I have argued above, I believe that our ability as linguists to work with abstractions of linguistic varieties, which allows us to map linguistic features that we encounter in discourse onto (previously described, necessarily abstract notions of) linguistic varieties, should be seen as a strength of our trade, not a weakness. Furthermore, we do this mapping only after careful description that is based on fieldwork and informs our description of a speaker's repertoire of lects. At worst, the approach might therefore be considered "partly top down."

One more modification to Rampton and Sharma's LFI procedure was adopted: while their paper quantifies features only categorically, assigning values of either 0 or 1 for each variable/lect, I have also included scalar values for a number of vocalic variables that vary between CanE and JC. (In these cases, the values for each variable indeed happen to be in complementary distribution among the two varieties, although this would not necessarily have to be so.) In the present case, scoring variables on a continuum makes sense in the case of, for example, the TRAP vowel in words such as *mat*, *track*, *bad* (pre-nasal contexts were excluded). The realization [æ] indexes CanE, whereas [a] indexes Jamaican (Boberg, 2010; Devonish & Harry, 2008). A speaker who has full command of both Canadian and Jamaican varieties of English can be said to command a continuous range of possible realizations for some vocalic variables: strongly "Canadian" ones, strongly "Jamaican" ones, and in-between ones that are not marked very strongly as either one or the other.

For Carrie's realizations of the TRAP vowel, then, a frontness measure was instrumentally obtained in Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2010) as the second formant frequency. The full set of F2 measurements for Carrie ( $N \geq 200$  tokens for the TRAP vowel) was normalized to a scale from 0 to 1. Values closer to 1, resulting from higher F2 values, i.e. from vowels produced closer to the front of the mouth, entered the LFI for "CanE." The same value was then subtracted from 1 and the result entered into the LFI calculation for "Patwa."

A second kind of scalar variable was a raising index for the FACE and the GOAT vowel. In CanE, these vowels are raising diphthongs, i.e. their F1 is higher at nucleus than at glide. In Jamaican Creole, they are falling diphthongs (as in [fies, guot]), so the nucleus has a lower F1 than the glide. I measured F1 at 9% and at 80% of the vowel duration for each token and calculated a raising index for each by subtracting the F1 of the glide from the F1 of the nucleus. Positive values indicate a more Canadian-like realization, and negative ones a more Jamaican-like realization. A monophthongal realization would have a raising index of 0. The complete range of raising index values was then again normalized to a scale from 0 to 1, where values closer to 0 indicated more Jamaican-like realizations.

**Table 1** shows all the variables that entered the LFI calculation. Categorical variables were impressionistically coded; scalar variables are based on instrumental formant

measurements. The LFI values for each discourse segment are averages of all variables that occur in that segment.

**Table 1. Variables quantified for the LFI for CanE and Patwa.**

CanE		Patwa		
-	Lax GOOSE/FLEECE	-	Tense GOOSE/FLEECE	CATEGORICAL
-	Flapped intravoc. /t/	-	STRUT rounding	
-	BATH fronting	-	Released intravocalic /t/	
-	MOUTH centering [ʌʊ]	-	Voiceless TH stopping	
		-	BATH backing	SCALAR
-	FACE/GOOSE raising index	-	1 – (FACE/GOOSE raising index)	
-	TRAP index	-	1 – (TRAP index)	

To test the LFI procedure I introduce another excerpt from the same recording as the one that was presented above: an on-air conversation between Carrie and a caller, Otis-I, who is a Rastafarian and Reggae musician in Toronto.

- (2) **Otis-I**<sup>13</sup>
- Carrie: ((off air, addressing Diana)) hm? Otis-I? tell  
him hold on (.) is line one? (1.5) two?  
(7 sec)
- [21] ((on air)) you know it's a holiday Monday when  
you have a lot of artists linked up with the  
Rebel Vibes wanna say good morning and welcome  
on the telephone lines to Otis-I (.33)
- Otis: Ha:ile Sela:ssie-I [ Rastafa:ri daata  
daughter
- [22] Carrie: [ hm(h)mm the fi(h)rst
- Otis: Empress Menen [ ( )<sup>14</sup>
- Carrie: [ so is

<sup>13</sup> The raw video data for excerpt (2) can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/Eg1RCpJqo0g>. Otis's speech was transcribed from the radio station's mp3 log; that signal is also mixed into the video clip.

<sup>14</sup> The full title of Emperor Haile Selassie's wife, a Rastafarian honorific used to address women.

- so you're on the roads you're on you're on the  
roads right now
- Otis: yu nuo enitaim yu hiir mi a kaal yu  
*you know whenever you hear me calling you*
- mi mos op orli ino  
*I must have had to get up early you know*
- Carrie: alright .hhh
- [23] → and we're going to get to some Otis-I ['ɔʊrɪs]  
a little [lɪrlɪ] later [lɛɪər] on in the show  
because we got a ['gɑrə] lot of ['lɑrɛf]  
requests
- [24] I must tell you bredren my email  
blows up for "Live Good" [ I'm telling you
- Otis: [ really
- Carrie: the ver- what what what for all of this nice  
music that you're putting out I'm telling you  
you're it's it's .hh hh haaa refreshing (.40)  
refreshing
- [25] so you see good moods we're gonna get in the  
good moods a little later on we're gonna live  
good with people and we're gonna give a  
blessin up to the Otis-I
- Otis: yu don nuo yu nuo hafi liv gud an gud muud  
*that's for sure you know you have to live well*  
*and stay in a good mood*
- yu hafi tel yu aal de taim [ ( ) ]  
*you have to tell yourself all the time*
- aal an rekagnaiz yu hafi dos mek yu uon muud  
*and realize that you just have to make your*  
*own mood*
- yu siit?  
*you see?*
- [26] Carrie: [ mm hm ]
- yu don nuo yu don nuo  
*that's for sure that's for sure*

Otis: ( )

Carrie: yu afi bles op di ai<sup>15</sup> an tangks (.) tangks  
*you must praise the divine in yourself, and*  
*thanks*

veri moch fo di lingk op  
*thanks very much for getting in touch*

Otis: aits op Jason tu man yu siit kaa  
*respect to Jason as well you know because*

faar iz a lang taim mi no get a chaans  
*because it's been a long time since I've had a*  
*chance*

fi lisen tu yu ino  
*to listen to you*

Carrie: alright well you hear Brother Jason

Brother Jason's gonna come in here very

shortly to start - [ taat spin som myuuzik  
*to start to spin some*  
*music*

Otis: [ ( ) ((laugh))

Carrie: bless [ up

Otis: ( ) [ okay

( ) Rastafari Selassie ai gaid an pratek  
*Rastafari Selassie-I guide and*  
*protect*

yu hiir?  
*you hear?*

Carrie: blessed love idren

Otis: fliemz an faiya:  
*flames and fire*

Carrie: aw (2.32)

[27] ((song starts playing on air))

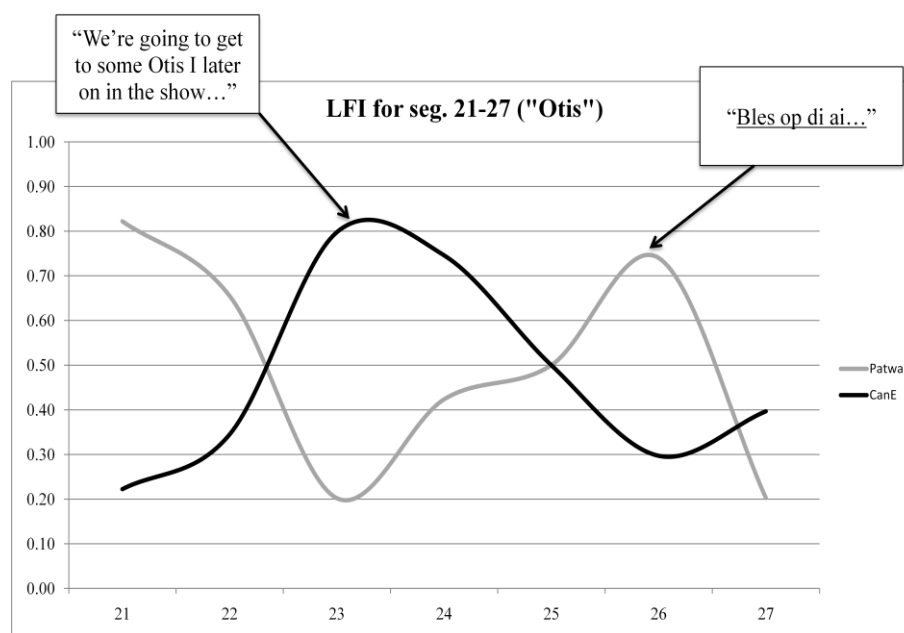
and you know this one's big-big in Jamaica

right now (Lise) Kelly loves it Ron (Muchet)

<sup>15</sup> *Yu afi bles op di ai* 'you have to honor the holy within.' *I* [ai] is the holy syllable of Dread Talk (Pollard, 2000). *I* can be used as a personal pronoun for all three singular persons (cp. the JC paradigm *mi-yu-im/har/i(t)*). *I-an-I* can be used to mean 'we,' as well as singular 'I.' *The I* denotes a concept in Rastafarian religious thinking, roughly 'the holy within each created being.' The syllable *I* is used in some of the lexical re-formations of Dread Talk, e.g. *idren* 'brother,' where *I* replaces the first syllable of the corresponding JC source *bredren*.

loves it Richard B loves it even D T Taylor's  
talkin about it

The transcript shows Carrie negotiating the competing demands for Jamaican authenticity and for intelligibility. The authenticity demand is here reinforced by the fact that Otis speaks only basilectal Patwa (specifically, the Dread Talk variety). Otis's opening salutation in segment 21-22 is strongly ingroup-directed. In order to open up the discourse to a wider audience that includes non-Rastafarians and non-Patwa speakers, Carrie reacts by stylistically diverging away from Otis's style. She changes footing and directly addresses her audience: "We're going to get to some Otis-I a little later on in the show..." (23). Phonetically, this segment is strongly marked as Canadian: all of the intravocalic, post-stress /t/ sounds are flapped, including the one in *Otis-I*. Figure 5 sequentially plots out the LFI values for all the discourse segments in (2). It clearly shows that segment 23 marks a peak for CanE.



**Figure 5. The LFI procedure applied to Carrie's speech in the "Otis" excerpt.**

As Carrie steers the conversation toward a close, her speech gets increasingly more Patwa-like and less CanE-like (24, 25, 26). She ends the conversation with a closing salutation delivered in Patwa (26). It is common for code-switches to occur in the context of salutations; for e-mail data Hinrichs (2006) has described this discourse strategy as "framing" (see also Bullock, Hinrichs, & Toribio, 2011). Framing can be seen as a strategy of employing one of the codes in one's repertoire for mostly symbolic purposes, and in the margins of a discourse unit.<sup>16</sup> Communicative primacy is accorded to the other code, i.e. the unmarked, dominant one – in this case, (Canadian) English. The function of Patwa in

<sup>16</sup> That discourse unit, in the present case, is the speech event "on-air conversation with caller."

segment 26 amounts to, in Blommaert's formulation, "pure indexicality" (2003); meanwhile it bears little communicative charge.

#### 4 Conclusions

This paper has started from an inventory of the big questions faced by diaspora sociolinguistics, an area of study that is currently growing due in large parts to a merger of interests between varieties of English studies and the sociolinguistics of globalization. In a case study of Jamaican speech in Toronto, this paper has addressed two methodological issues: I have argued that in order to trace changes in the indexicality of mobile varieties such as Jamaican Creole, we must study them in interactional context, ideally at the level of individual style. Second, I have argued that it is in our interest to merge the quantitative strengths of sociolinguistics with the detail and descriptive depth that qualitative approaches can provide. I have tried to demonstrate that a combination of conversation transcript analysis and the quantification of features in a procedure that Rampton and Sharma (2010) have termed the lectal focusing index (LFI), and for which I have proposed some adaptations, is a promising avenue to take in this project.

Specifically, the method used here has provided a way of visualizing the points of an interaction at which a speaker focuses most strongly on one of the lects in her repertoire. This evidence, together with the fieldworker's interpretation of the interactional context, goes a long way in helping us explain the dynamics of Patwa use in a diasporic context.

In this analysis, Patwa has emerged as a code which is carefully deployed for primarily symbolic purposes by Carrie Mullings. In doing so, she brokers between those among her studio guests and audience who are fully competent in Patwa – e.g. musicians who speak Patwa in all of their discourse, as well as her audience's interest in having Rebel Vibe be a locus of "authentic" Jamaicanness – and those who are less, or not at all, competent in Patwa, but wish to be part of the cultural practice of Canadian Reggae nonetheless, e.g. non-Jamaican Caribbeans in Toronto, or Torontonians of non-Caribbean descent.

I will end on a brief discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the LFI procedure. Among its plusses are these:

- The LFI is a potent method of capturing some of the structure underlying the diffuse, "messy marketplace" (Blommaert, 2010) that is linguistic variation in a diasporic community.
- It visualizes those discourse contexts in which focusing occurs for individual lects within a speaker's repertoire, thus providing a direct link between activity and linguistic structure.
- It provides a way of reining in the strengths of a quantitative, variable-centered approach to linguistic variation while freeing us from the assumption of a unidimensional continuum.

Among the minuses, or areas of possible future improvement, are these:

- Because the LFI procedure is designed for the analysis of discourse segments that can sometimes be rather short, the number of quantifiable linguistic items within a segment can be low, which might be seen as challenging the reliability of the index in the statistical sense. My addition of scalar values for continuous vocalic variables goes part of the way toward a remedy of this

problem by (i) providing additional data points and (ii) adding a higher level of detail than categorical variables can provide.

- By simply averaging among all data points within a discourse segment, the LFI does not account for the differential indexical loads of different variables. For example, Irvine (2004) makes clear that in the Jamaican creole continuum, those TH sounds that are realized as [θ] in international standard English have a much greater potential to mark discourse as creole when they are stopped, i.e. realized as [t], than their voiced counterparts, i.e. [ð]~[d]. In short, the pronunciation [tɪŋk] for *think* is much more load-bearing as a marker of creoleness than the pronunciation [dis] for *this*. Future iterations of the LFI might address the interconnected issue of implicationality and different indexical weights among variables.

Further potential for research lies in the area of the phonetic correlates of symbolic heritage language use in diasporic contexts. For example: does the mostly indexical use of performable linguistic shibboleths (such as common Rastafarian words and phrases) usually "pull along" other parts of the discourse, which are then phonetically realized in the performed code? Or are shibboleths integrated as islands within dominantly local phonology of the surrounding majority variety? What conditions variation in the discourse that *surrounds* the performable shibboleths? As we are addressing the methodological challenges that are posed by diasporic mixes of varieties of the same language, scholars in varieties of English studies are becoming uniquely positioned to make crucial contributions to the emerging academic discourse on language and globalization.

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