SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION IN THE PARIS SUBURBS

Mikaël Jan Jamin

PhD Thesis

University of Kent at Canterbury

July 2005

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates linguistic variation, diffusion and change in two suburban towns of Paris (La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois), using quantitative methods to analyse innovative accent forms presently developing. After an introductory chapter which sets out the origins and objectives of the study, Chapter 2 gives the background to the Paris *banlieues* as well as a description of the research sites. *Banlieues* are ideal places of investigation for the linguist interested in sociolectal variation in that they accommodate a population which is relatively isolated from the linguistic norm of the dominant society. As a result of this isolation, a recognisable localised vernacular has emerged. This is in itself unsurprising, as similar phenomena have been observed elsewhere in low-contact contexts. What is particularly interesting here is that this vernacular has emerged in an urban context, generally characteristised by a relatively high degree of sociolectal contact, especially with prestigious varieties. Chapter 3 aims at showing how previous research has tackled the study of sociolinguistic variation in urban contexts. We then discuss the sociolinguistic literature more specifically focused on *banlieues*. From this, three linguistic variables thought to be potentially interesting are selected. In Chapter 4, the methodology used to obtain the linguistic data is discussed and the social characteristics of the sample are described. We then proceed to analyse the linguistic data collected. Chapter 5 focuses on the sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation in the corpus. Chapter 6 investigates /r/-realisation and Chapter 7 variation between /a/ and /ɑ/. Generally, the same social group seems to lead the adoption of non-standard variants for most variables: working-class youngsters from immigrant backgrounds. Interestingly, the adoption seems to be spreading to other social and ethnic groups, especially amongst the younger age group of the sample. This diffusion is quantitatively explained in terms of integration and identification with the street-culture which has developed in the *banlieues* and of the nature of social network ties that the street creates. What is also interesting is that for all age groups and for all the linguistic variables concerned, a generational increase is observed. This in turn suggests that this possible diffusion of non-standard forms in the *banlieues* might be introducing a change in progress in contemporary metropolitan French.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES vii
LIST OF TABLES ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS xiii
STATEMENT xv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Preliminary 1
1.2 Origins and development of the project 1
1.3 Aims of the study 3
1.4 Themes and methodology 4
1.5 Plan of the thesis 4
CHAPTER 2: THE BANLIEUES AS SOCIAL CONTEXT 6
2.0 Introductory 6
2.1.0 Suburbs and cities: general tendencies 6
2.1.1 Developing countries 7
2.1.2 Developed countries 8
2.2.0 The French *banlieue* 10
2.2.1 *Banlieue* as an outcast place 11
2.2.2 The French *banlieue* today 13
2.3.0 The Paris *banlieue* 14
2.3.1 Socio-economic distribution of the Paris *banlieues*: historical background 15
2.3.2 *Banlieue* architecture and its socio-economic consequences 18
2.4.0 *Grands ensembles*: demographic and social issues 22
2.4.1 *Grand ensemble* and street-culture 23
2.4.2 The *black* and *beur* generations and street-culture 25
2.4.3 The emergence of *vernacular of the cités* 27
2.5.0 The French *banlieues*: a summary 29
2.6.0 Description of the research sites 31
2.6.1 Description of La Courneuve and its locality 31
2.6.2 The 4000 Logements 34
2.6.3 Territorial perceptions and representations in La Courneuve 37
2.6.4 Description of Fontenay-sous-Bois and its locality 40
2.6.5 Street-culture in Fontenay-sous-Bois 43
2.7.0 Conclusion 44
CHAPTER 3: SOME ISSUES IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE 46
3.0 Introductory 46
3.1.0 Sociolinguistic variation 46
3.1.1 The synchronic observation of linguistic change 47
3.1.2 Changes from below 48
3.1.3 Harlem 48
3.1.4 Martha's Vineyard 48
3.1.5 Social network theory and *banlieues* accent 51

3.1.6 Weak ties and linguistic diffusion 53
3.1.7 Weak ties and linguistic change 53
3.1.8 The influence of non-mainstream values 54
3.1.9 Kroch's theory of linguistic change 55
3.2.0 Previous sociolinguistic studies in French 58
3.2.1 Previous studies in French phonology 59
3.2.2 Previous Labovian studies in France 60
3.2.3 Previous studies explicitly focussing on *banlieues* 62
3.3.0 Selection of variables 65
3.3.1 The 'conservative' aspects of *banlieue* accent 66
3.3.2 The innovative aspects of *banlieues accent* 67
3.3.3 Linguistic variables selected for analysis 69
3.4 Conclusion 70
CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS 72
4.0 Introduction 72
4.1.0 Sample and data collection 72
4.1.1 The pilot study 72
4.1.2 Contacts 72
4.1.3 Places of investigation for the pilot study 74
4.1.4 The pilot study sample 75
4.2.0 Main fieldwork: summer 1998 75
4.2.1 Contacts in La Courneuve 76
4.2.2 Contacts in Fontenay-sous-Bois 79
4.3.0 Status of the fieldworker and interview strategy 80
4.3.1 La Courneuve 80
4.3.2 Fontenay-sous-Bois 82
4.4.0 The interviews 83
4.4.1 Elicitation of stylistic variation 84
4.4.2 Word lists 86
4.4.3 Reading passages 86
4.4.4 Interview style 86
4.4.5 Recording equipment 89
4.5.0 Sample and data analysis 90
4.5.1 The corpus 90
4.5.2 Age and sex 90
4.5.3 Nativeness 91
4.5.4 Ethnicity 92
4.5.5 Social Class 94
4.5.6 Classification of informants by social class 96
4.5.7 Social class structure of the 1998 sample 97
4.5.8 Social network strength and street-culture index score 99
4.5.9 Relationship between social network and street-culture indices 99
4.5.10 Calculation of the street-culture index score 100
4.5.11 Relationship between street-culture score and other extra-linguistic variables 103
4.6.0 Data-related issues 105

4.6.1 Presentation of data 106
4.6.2 Statistical testing of results 106
4.7 Evaluation of fieldwork and conclusion 107
CHAPTER 5: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF DENTAL AND VELAR STOPS 109
5.0 Introduction 109
5.1.0 Definition of the palatalisation process 109
5.1.1 Affrication and affricates 111
5.2.0 Previous studies on palatalisation and affrication 113
5.2.1 Canada 113
5.2.2 France and Europe 114
5.3.0 Variable realisation of palatalisation in the corpus 118
5.3.1 Palatalised dental plosives 118
5.3.2 Variable realisation of palatalised velar plosives in the corpus 119
5.4 Quantification of palatalisation of dental and velar plosives 120
5.5.0 Linguistic constraints on the palatalisation of dental and velars 120
5.5.1 Factors preventing variable palatalisation 120
5.5.2 Connected speech processes preventing variable palatalisation 122
5.5.3 Lexical factors preventing variable palatalisation 123
5.5.4 Constraints influencing the variable palatalisation of dental and velar stops 123
5.5.5 Constraints on palatalisation: general distributional factors 124
5.5.6 Stress distribution 127
5.5.7 Vocalic constraints on the distribution of palatalisation: dental plosives 128
5.5.8 Vocalic constraints on the distribution of palatalisation: velar plosives 130
5.6 Summary of the linguistic constraints observed 133
5.7.0 Sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation in the 1998 corpus 133
5.7.1 Social correlates of variation: age and sex 134
5.7.2 Social correlates of variation: social class 137
5.7.3 Correlation between social class and age 138
5.7.4 Social correlates of variation: ethnic origin 140
5.7.5 Social correlates of variation: style 143
5.7.6 Social correlates of variation: street-culture 144
5.8 Conclusion 148
CHAPTER 6: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF WORD-FINAL /r/ 151
6.0 Introduction 151
6.1 Cross-linguistic variation in /r/: general tendencies 151
6.2.0 Segmental distribution of /r/ in French 153
6.2.1 Allophonic distribution of /r/ in French 154
6.3 Evolution of /r/ in French 156
6.4 The cross-linguistic involvement of /r/ in rapid changes 159
6.5.0 Previous sociolinguistic studies on /r/ 160
6.5.1 Studies on the change from [r] to [ʀ] 160
6.5.2 Belgium 160
6.5.3 Canada 161
6.5.4 /r/-deletion 162
6.5.5 New trends in French /r/: Perpignan and Grenoble 163

6.5.7 Grenoble 165
6.5.8 /r/ in *français populaire* and Parisian French 166
6.5.9 A new variant? Glottalised [ʁʔ] 167
6.5.10 Summary of previous findings on /r/ 168
6.6.0 /r/ in the 1998 data 169
6.6.1 Contexts selected for analysis 169
6.6.2 Description of the /r/ variants of interest 170
6.6.3.0 Linguistic constraints on post-vocalic word-final /r/ 171
6.6.3.1 Preceding vowel 171
6.6.3.2 Pause 171
6.7 Sociolinguistic perception of /r/ variants 172
6.8.0 Social correlates of variation: social class 174
6.8.1 Correlation between social class and age 175
6.8.2 Social correlates of variation: age and sex 177
6.8.3 Social class, age and style 180
6.8.4 Social correlates of variation: ethnic origin 182
6.8.5 Social correlates of variation: street-culture 184
6.9 Conclusion 187
CHAPTER 7: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF /A/ 189
7.0 Introduction 189
7.1 Variation in /A/ in Standard French 189
7.2 Previous studies of /A/ 191
7.3.0 Historical background of the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ distinction 195
7.3.1 Linguistic factors 195
7.3.2 Social factors 197
7.4.0 /A/ in the 1998 data 201
7.4.1 Linguistic constraints 201
7.4.2 Quantification and analysis of /A/ realisation in 1998 sample 201
7.4.3 Syllabic distribution of /A/ in the 1998 data 203
7.4.4 Influence of stress in /A/ 205
7.4.5.0 Lexical constraints in /A/ realisation 207
7.4.5.1 Influence of spelling and phonemic contrast 207
7.4.5.2 Influence of word length 209
7.4.6.0 Segmental constraints 210
7.4.6.1 Further segmental constraints involving uvular /ʁ/ 213
7.4.6.2 Further segmental constraints involving approximant /w/ 214
7.5.0 Extra-linguistic factors 218
7.5.1 Social correlates of variation in /A/: social class 218
7.5.2 Social correlates of variation in /A/: sex 219
7.5.3 Social correlates of variation in /A/: ethnic background 221
7.5.4 Social correlates of variation in /A/: style 225
7.5.5 Social correlates of variation in /A/: street-culture index 226
7.6 Conclusion 228
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION 230
8.0 Introduction 230
8.1 Assessment of results 230

8.1.2 The choice of variables 230
8.1.3 Discussion of the main sociolinguistic findings 231
8.2 Vernacular forms of the *cités*: linguistic change in progress? 235
8.3 Concluding remarks 238
APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK MATERIAL 239
1.1 Interview questions 239
1.2 Interview texts 243
1.2.1 "Devoir de CM2" 243
1.2.2 "Conversation" 243
1.3 Word lists 244
APPENDIX 2: PALATALISATION 247
2.1 Palatalisation in velar plosives: detail per vocalic environment 248
2.2 Palatalisation across ethnic groups: detail per vocalic environment 249
APPENDIX 3: /A/ REALISATION 254
3.1 Lexical influence on [ɑ] realisation 254
3.1.1 Word length 254
REFERENCES 256

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 14
Territorial distribution of workers of non-metropolitan origin in 1982 (adapted from Pinson 1992: 102) 14
Figure 2.2 16
Percentage of working-class households in the *région parisienne* in 1975 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 188) 16
Figure 2.3 17
Percentage of executives and members of the liberal professions per household in the *région parisienne* in 1975 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 188) 17
Figure 2.4 21
Distribution of *ZUS* in the Paris region 21
(adapted from Guglielmo and Moulin 1986 in Pinson 1992: 93) 21
Figure 2.5 31
Situation of Seine-Saint-Denis in the Paris region (*Centre de Documentation de La Courneuve*) 31
Figure 2.6 32
Location of La Courneuve in the *département de Seine-Saint-Denis* (*Centre de Documentation de la Courneuve*) 32
Figure 2.7 36
Perspective view of the *4000 grand ensemble* (adapted from Lepoutre 1997: 54) 36
Figure 2.8 38
The *4000 grand ensemble*: 38
Variation in toponymic usage according to location (adapted from Lepoutre 1997: 55) 38
Figure 2.9 41
Location of the *département* of Val de Marne within the Paris region after the administrative reform of 1964 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 12) 41
Figure 2.10 42
Location of Fontenay-sous-Bois within the *département* of Val-de-Marne (adapted from Orgeco S.A. Rond Point 93, 1992. *Analyse des résultats du recensement 1990, Service des Affaires Economiques, Mairie de Fontenay*). 42
Figure 4.1 87
Characteristic network of modules for adolescent or young adult speaker 87
(adapted from Labov 1981 in Milroy 1987b: 71) 87
Figure 5.1 110
Sagittal cross-section of the vocal organs during the production of the medial phase of a palatalised voiced alveolar stop [d^j] (adapted from Laver 1994: 323) 110
Figure 7.1 193
Chronological age of the informants of Martinet (1945), Reichstein (1960) and Deyhime (1967) informants (adapted from Martinet 1970: 118) 193
Figure 7.2 194
Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition according to age in closed final syllables (adapted from Martinet 1970: 118): pair *pâte ~ patte* 194
Figure 7.3 194

Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition by age in open final syllables (adapted from Martinet (1970: 118): pair *rat* ~ *ras* 194

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 93
Ethnic origin in the 1998 sample 93
Table 4.3 94
Informants by age and ethnic origin (1998 sample) 94
Table 4.4 95
Marceau's social class scale 95
(adapted from Armstrong 1993: 48) 95
Table 4.5 96
Macaulay's social class scale (1976: 174) 96
Table 4.6 97
Distribution of social class in the 1998 sample 97
Table 4.7 98
Distribution of social class in La Courneuve according to Macaulay's classification 98
Table 4.8 103
Distribution of index scores in the 1998 sample: age, sex and social class 103
Table 4.9 104
Distribution of index scores in the 1998 sample: age, sex and ethnic origin 104
Table 5.1 126
Palatalisation in dental plosives by context 126
Table 5.2 126
Palatalisation in velar plosives by context 126
Table 5.3 128
Palatalisation in dental plosives: stress distribution 128
Table 5.4 128
Palatalisation in velar plosives: stress distribution 128
Table 5.5 129
Palatalisation by following-vowel environment: dental plosives 129
Table 5.6 131
Palatalisation of /k/according to following vowel, or preceding vowel for/ ɔ̃/ and /ɛ̃/ . 131
Table 5.7 132
Palatalisation of /g/ according to following vowel 132
Table 5.8 134
Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by age and sex 134
Table 5.9 136
Patterns of change in the individual and the community (adapted from Labov 1994: 83) 136
Table 5.10 137
Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by social class groups 137
Table 5.11 138
Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by social group and age group 138
Table 5.12 140
Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: 32-speaker sample 140
Table 5.13 140

Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: younger group 140
Table 5.14 141
Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: older group 141
Table 5.15 142
Number of palatalised environments in the 1998 sample: ethnic distribution 142
Table 5.16 143
Palatalisation by speech style across three ethnic origins: older age group 143
Table 5.17 144
Palatalisation by speech style across three ethnic origins: younger age group 144
Table 5.18 146
Palatalisation by street-culture score 146
Table 5.19 147
Street-culture scores and ethnicity: younger age group 147
Table 6.1 154
Segmental distribution of /r/ in French (adapted from Hume 1987: 144) 154
Table 6.2 155
Variants of /R/ observed in Belgian French 155
(adapted from Demolin 2001: 65) 155
Table 6.3 172
Post-vocalic word-final /r/ variants in pre-pausal and non prepausal position 172
Table 6.4 173
Post-vocalic word-final /r/ variants by speech style: pre-pausal position 173
Table 6.5 174
Word-final /r/ variants by social class: pre-pausal position 174
Table 6.6 176
Word-final /r/ variants by age and social class: pre-pausal position 176
Table 6.7 178
Word-final /r/ variants by age and sex: pre-pausal position 178
Table 6.8 180
Word-final /r/ variants by age and sex: non-prepausal position 180
Table 6.9 181
Word-final /r/ variants in two speech styles according to sex and social class: younger age group 181
Table 6.10 182
Word-final /r/ variants by ethnic origin: pre-pausal position 182
Table 6.11 183
Word-final /r/ variants by age and ethnic origin: pre-pausal position 183
Table 6.12 185
Word-final /r/ variants by street-culture index score: pre-pausal position 185
Table 7.1 190
Phonetic and orthographical distribution of front and back realisations of /A/ in standard French (adapted from Léon 1966: 62) 190
Table 7.2 192
Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction in closed and open final syllables and non-word-final syllables (adapted from Deyhime 1967: 166) 192
Figure 7.4 197

Schematic representation of the counterclockwise chain shift (adapted from Lennig 1978: 139) 197
Table 7.3 203
[ɑ] by syllable distribution and structure in the 1998 data 203
Table 7.4 204
[ɑ] by syllable distribution and syllable type: four informants 204
Table 7.5 205
[ɑ] by syllable distribution and stress position in the 1998 data 205
Table 7.6 206
[ɑ] by syllable distribution and stress position: four informants 206
Table 7.7 208
Influence of spelling and phonemic contrast in 5 lexical items: four informants 208
Table 7.8 209
Back [ɑ] variants by word length 209
Table 7.9 212
[ɑ] by following consonant 212
Table 7.11 213
Influence of uvular /ʀ/ on the occurrence of [ɑ] 213
Table 7.12 214
Frequency of [ɑ] in contexts (C)_/ʀ/ and (C)/w/_ /ʀ/ 214
Table 7.13 215
[ɑ] after /w/ in non-final and final syllables 215
Table 7.14 216
Frequency of [ɑ] in lexical items involving /wA/ 216
Table 7.15 218
[ɑ]-realisation by social class 218
Table 7.16 219
[ɑ]-realisation by age and social class 219
Table 7.17 220
[ɑ]-realisation by sex 220
Table 7.18 220
[ɑ]-realisation by age and sex 220
Table 7.19 221
[ɑ] by ethnic background: 32-speaker sample 221
Table 7.20 222
[ɑ] by ethnic background and age 222
Table 7.21 223
[ɑ]-realisation by ethnic background and sex: younger group 223
Table 7.22 224
[ɑ]-realisation by ethnic background and sex 224
Table 7.23 225
[ɑ]-realisation by sex and style: 32-speaker sample 225
Table 7.24 226

[ɑ]-realisation by sex and style: younger age group 226
Table 7.25 227
[ɑ]-realisation by street-culture index 227
Table 2.a 248
Palatalisation by stress position, following-vowel environment and syllable distribution: voiceless velar plosives 248
Table 2.b 249
Palatalisation of dental plosives by ethnic background: stressed position 249
Table 2.c 250
Palatalisation of dental plosives by ethnic background: unstressed position 250
Table 2.d 251
Palatalisation of velar plosive /k/ by ethnic background: stressed position 251
Table 2.e 252
Palatalisation of velar plosive /k/ by ethnic background: unstressed position 252
Table 2.f 253
Palatalisation of velar plosive /g/ by ethnic background: stressed and unstressed position 253
Table 3.a 254
Influence of word length on [ɑ]-realisation: all lexical items 254

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my thanks to the following:

- My supervisors Dr. Nigel Armstrong and Dr. David Hornsby, without whose constant guidance, support and friendship this project would not have emerged.

- The Association for French Language Studies, for awarding me the AFLS Annual Postgraduate Bursary in 2001 and 2002. This substantial financial support saved the research project in 2001 when my personal funds were low and enabled me to study on a full-time basis for 6 months of the project. It has greatly accelerated the completion of this work.

- The speakers whose language is described here, and all those who made the fieldwork possible, especially the team of youth leaders from the *Service Jeunesse* of La Courneuve. I am particularly indebted to Abdel Saadouni, team leader at the *Service Jeunesse*, who facilitated my integration in his team and in other *associations* of La Courneuve, as well as organizing free lunch meals at the *Restaurant Municipal*;

- Zoe Boughton, for her support in the early stages of the project.

- Michael Pickles, for supplying me with his work on /R/, with very helpful references as well as greatly appreciated feedback.

- Professor Douglas Walker, for giving me guidance and references on palatalisation and affrication in Canadian varieties of French.

- Professors Françoise Gadet, Anne Judge, Tony Lodge, Tim Pooley, Dr. Aidan Coveney, Dr. Leigh Oakes, Farid Aitsiselmi and everybody I met through the AFLS for their help and stimulating feedback; my apologies for those who I forget to mention here.

- My early sociolinguistics teacher and friend, Dr. Jean-Pierre Régis at the *Université de Tours*, for introducing me to a world where "you do not listen what people say, rather how they are saying it".

- Dr. Eric Jamin for his explanation of the ANOVA test on Excel.

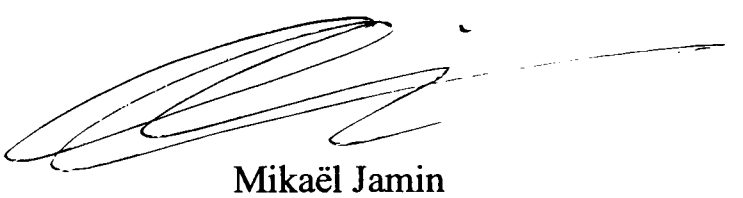
- My parents, Gwenola and Gilbert Jamin for their financial support during the fieldwork and at the last stages of the study. Their constant emotional support has also been invaluable to the present work.

- My wife Clare, to whom I am the most deeply indebted. Her constant support through times when submission seemed very far away has actually enabled this blessed moment to take place.

Mikaël Jamin.

STATEMENT

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Kent at Canterbury. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work submitted previously or done in collaboration. It does not exceed 100,000 words in length.



Mikaël Jamin

To my son Tom

"A change tends to sneak quietly into a language, like a seed, which enters the soil and germinates unseen. At some point, it sprouts through the surface." Aitchison (1995: 60)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary

The subject of this thesis is sociolinguistic variation, diffusion and change in the phonology of a sample of Parisian adults and adolescents examined within a generally Labovian framework. The function of this chapter is to explain why such a project was undertaken, how it has developed, and what it aims to contribute to the field of sociolinguistics.

1.2 Origins and development of the project

The project originates in a desire to apply the study of sociolinguistic variation to French phonology within a broad Labovian framework. Indeed, Labov's paradigm has proven highly relevant to a substantial amount of sociolinguistic studies and has provided insights into processes of linguistic change. However, most sociolinguistic studies have focussed on American and British English and other languages rather than Metropolitan French.

Leaving aside scepticism about what has been traditionally seen as an Anglo-Saxon dominated discipline, the dearth of Labovian studies in French phonology is perhaps due to a lesser degree of variation found in Metropolitan France (except for the broad north vs. south division). Indeed, France does not yet seem to have developed the distinct urban accents[1] for which the Labovian model is designed (see Armstrong and Boughton 1998 on the relative homogeneity of urban French in northern France).

It may be that the early urbanisation in Great Britain and the United States enabled urban communities to develop, thus prompting the emergence of localised urban accents. In contrast, France's later industrialisation and the fact that the country

[1] With some exceptions, notably in Paris and in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.

remained mostly rural until the early 20th Century (among other factors) preserved the dialect-speaking communities for a considerably longer time, to the extent that France has only become fully French-speaking fairly recently[2]. With this in mind, electing to carry out a sociolinguistic survey in Paris is of importance because it underwent industrialisation earlier and to a greater extent than most French cities, prompting the development of a long-established working-class community. The emergence of a localised vernacular was thus more likely to take place in the French capital city.

Furthermore, the evidence emerging from many sociolinguistic studies suggests that any change towards focused urban vernaculars are likely to surface within socially isolated or lower-status groups of a major city (Labov 1972: 299-300). A variationist study of Parisian French therefore needs to focus on such groups. Where do we find these in Paris? Socially isolated groups are likely to be found in the suburbs of the capital.

This might seem rather odd to the British reader for whom the term *suburb* connotes a rather middle-class type of population, but the demographic distribution of urban France is rather different to that of Britain (see Chapter 2 for more detail and a comparison between the two countries). To take this difference into account, we will refer to *banlieues* rather than *suburbs*.

Returning to the above point, the working-class population of Paris has been relocated in the *banlieues* since the 20th century. Furthermore, *banlieues*, (the research site La Courneuve being a perfect illustration of this), are also places having large populations from immigrant background with minimal or poor education, with a high proportion of youths benefiting from little parental supervision, feeling rejected from the dominant French society and the employment market. It is well known (Trudgill 1989: 230-1) that socially isolated groups are able to resist normative pressures and develop their own focussed vernacular forms. The young population of the Parisian *banlieues*

---

[2] Approximately since World War I.

therefore seem a long overdue subject for sociolinguistic research in contemporary French.

Interestingly, it is precisely in these impoverished *banlieues* that a localised urban vernacular seems to have has emerged since the 1980s. The accent features of this vernacular (which we will label for now 'the accent of the *banlieues*') have become increasingly recognisable by all French native speakers, notably through interest in the media and its adoption for comic value by comedians such as *Les Inconnus* or *Smain*. This accent has however been neglected by most linguists, who have preferred to focus to a greater extent on the variation at the lexical level.

1.3 Aims of the study

It is felt that the phonology of this vernacular is worthy of study for the following reasons:

a) it represents a good opportunity to apply the variationist model of Labov to a large urban setting in France. This might in turn increase our general understanding of patterns of sociolinguistic variation;

b) it may be that the covert prestige (see 2.4.1 below) of this *banlieue* accent among many French adolescents living both within and outside the *banlieues* is promoting the adoption and diffusion of some *banlieues* linguistic features; if so, the social mechanisms prompting this diffusion are worthy of investigation;

c) phonological features adopted into other French vernaculars may ultimately be adopted in contemporary standard French, i.e. they may lose their social and geolinguistic marking.

1.4 Themes and methodology

The present study is thus concerned with three broad themes: a) sociolinguistic variation in French phonology; b) linguistic diffusion and c) linguistic change. Clearly, the themes are inter-related, as the presence of sociolinguistic variation is one of the requisites for linguistic diffusion and change. Each theme will therefore involve similar areas of linguistic enquiry, which are listed below:

a) As mentioned above, sociolinguistic variation in French phonology will be examined in a broad Labovian framework. The thesis will be concerned with the correlation between three linguistic variables (palatalisation of dental and velar plosives, /A/ realisation and /r/ realisation) and six extra-linguistic variables, namely style, age, sex, social class, ethnic origin and integration in the close-knit social networks of the street.

b) Linguistic diffusion will also be discussed in relation to the speaker variables listed above. However, the explanatory power of social network theory will be employed here, as recent developments in this field have provided a model of linguistic diffusion which is highly relevant in the context of the present study. Again, this is discussed further in Chapter 3.

c) Linguistic change will again be examined in terms of its relationship with the speaker variables listed above. However, the thesis will attempt to show that internal and external reasons for linguistic change are very intricately linked. The three main themes mentioned here and their related areas of linguistic investigation are discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

1.5 Plan of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is organised in seven further chapters: Chapter 2 provides a general discussion of suburbs in the world and endeavours to present the uniqueness of Paris *banlieues* and their population. It also explains the reasons for the selection of La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois as research sites and gives a socio-economic description of the two towns. In Chapter 3, the relevant literature is surveyed with a view

to situating the present research in the context of previous sociolinguistic work. Chapter 4 is concerned with methodological issues, i.e. with the description of data collection and analysis which form the basis for this study. Chapters 5 to 7 contain the results of the study. They present the sociolinguistic distribution of the three variables of interest in the data. Each chapter starts with a discussion of the historical and research background necessary to understand and situate in context the present study's results. Chapter 5 deals with the variable palatalisation and affrication of dental and velar plosives in our population sample. Chapter 6 is concerned with variation in /r/-realisation and Chapter 7 with variation in /A/. Chapter 8 will be used to summarise and discuss the different results collected in the present study. We will subsequently evaluate their contribution to the field of sociolinguistics.

CHAPTER 2: THE BANLIEUES AS SOCIAL CONTEXT

2.0 Introductory

The principal purpose of the present chapter is to describe the factors which make the Parisian *banlieues* a unique place of investigation for the sociolinguist. Our research is concerned with the emergence of vernacular forms in the population of the Paris suburbs and it is felt that these forms are closely linked to the urban environment in which they appear. It is therefore necessary to describe this environment and its relationship with the sociolinguistic issues of interest in the thesis.

We will first situate the French suburbs within a wider context. Differences and similarities between suburbs in the world will be demonstrated. Indeed, as it will be observed in 2.1 below, suburbs do not categorically follow symmetrical socio-economic patterns. It is hoped this will in turn illustrate the unique character of the Paris suburbs. Against this wider context, a description of the two research sites, La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois will be given. We will endeavour to show that these two locations are ideal for the purpose of this study.

2.1.0 Suburbs and cities: general tendencies

The last two centuries have shown dramatic developments in the urbanisation of most countries. Industrialisation, rural exodus, mass production and consumption, the progressive globalisation of the world's businesses, exchanges and economies, as well as the constant increase in the world's population, all have expanded cities to sizes never seen before. The world's urban population has grown from 360 million in the 1920s to 2 billion in the 1980s (Imbert and Chombart de Lauwe 1982: 7-16).

Suburbs are the principal places where these ever-expanding cities can extend their surfaces; it is therefore not surprising that some suburbs are now 50% larger than the centres themselves (Imbert and Chombart de Lauwe 1982: 10).

It has been pointed out (George 1982: 17-24) that comparing suburbs across the world is a difficult task, owing to the differences in social structures and cultural patterns between the countries in which they develop. Nevertheless, a recurrent suburb-versus-centre pattern can be observed: social groups are distributed differently across suburbs and centres. The general trend being that peripheries tend to be associated with the lower social groupings, and the centres with the higher ones. This is generally the case in Europe, as in Warsaw for instance, where most executives are concentrated in the centres while a majority of unqualified and manual workers live in the outskirts (Jalowiecki 1982: 87-102)[3].

It is this differing social distribution between centre and periphery which is potentially interesting for the sociolinguist, for it provides an ideal site to observe sociolinguistic variation. However, as pointed out above, the relationship between suburb and centre differs according to the socio-economic characteristics of each country. Two major trends nevertheless emerge and can be grouped in terms of developing and developed country. Let us look at these in more detail to highlight the uniqueness of the French context.

2.1.1 Developing countries

Developing countries show similarities with the Warsaw model mentioned above, i.e. a richer centre versus a poorer periphery. This is because accommodation conditions are linked to land value. Firstly, the probability of settlement in the outskirts is conditioned by the fact that these are the principal place of arrival from the rural areas. Furthermore, as land is unaffordable for most migrants, shantytowns are built on non-constructible land, which is usually located in the periphery. This is the case of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil for instance, where *favellas* (shantytowns) develop chaotically (and usually illegally) on the mountains while the richer quarters remain in the valley.

---

[3] As mentioned in chapter 1 above, Britain presents the opposite pattern.

It is worth mentioning here that in developing countries, the rural exodus to urban centres is not due to the job prospects of developing towns, but to the dramatic impoverishment of the agricultural sector (Imbert and Chombart de Lauwe 1982: 19-23). In Mexico, migrants are exploited by landowners who exploit the value of land which they often rent themselves from the Federal State[4]. This exploitation leads to even greater impoverishment of these populations.

The structure of the poorer populations in the suburbs of developing countries thus seems to be more heterogeneous than in their developed counterparts. Although the working-class areas tend to remain close to the factories (i.e. in the North for Mexico), it is not rare to find higher social groupings within lower ones.

2.1.2 Developed countries

Developed countries tend to adopt a rather more planned policy towards their urban development. The socio-economic gap between suburb and centre is also generally less extreme. However, important differences between countries need to be specified.

The USA provides a significant counter-example to the pattern which associates suburbs with the lower classes and the centres with the higher. Indeed, *inner cities* tend to shelter poorer populations, usually belonging to the black lower working-class, dwelling in the oldest buildings of the towns. This socio-economic and racial segregation is often depicted as *ghettoization*. Very poor conditions of accommodation aggravate the phenomenon, as does a very high rate of unemployment[5]. On the contrary, *outer cities*

---

[4]This is the case of the *Ejidales* districts of Mexico: federal land of little value is rented to landowners by corrupt local federal authorities for 'agricultural exploitation'. Rather than cultivating it, the landowners rent it themselves for housing development. They also control the water supplies of these areas. The level of local corruption is so high in Mexico that in 1959, the Federal State passed a bill to legalise the ownership of *Ejidales* lands to landowners. The bill has been repealed since, in the 1970s.

[5]Marcuse (1982) links urban development and the American tax system to account for the general decline of city centres, especially in the North and North-East: it is financially more advantageous for a company to move out of an area and settle a new plant elsewhere (i.e. in the South or South-West) than it is to renew its old equipment. Hence the number of abandoned buildings, factories, offices and localised unemployment. The lack of urban planning at national and local levels to solve the problem entails an imbalance between states and towns, as well as between *outer* and *inner* cities. In Western Europe, planning laws are more vigorously enforced.

are typically middle-class areas, characterised by long streets of similar detached houses, individual gardens, parks, sport facilities, hypermarkets, etc. They are distributed in areas so vast that they usually have their own centrality (this is the case in Los Angeles for instance). This means that they are not dependent on the town centre but possess their own business influence and attract their own workforce (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 28-9).

A similar association of suburbs with the middle class can be found in Great Britain, but the *outer* and *inner cities* are organised in *districts* and *estates*. They do not represent any overall administrative identity, as they do in France for instance. The French socio-economic opposition between the town-centre and the *banlieue* is therefore not truly applicable to Great Britain. It has been argued (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 24-5) that when comparing Paris and London for instance, the social contrast between the West End and the East End is more significant. Another feature highly localised to Britain is that the building of towers and blocks, which was in fashion in the architecture of most European countries in the 1950-60s, was supplemented by individual houses.

Considering the French suburbs, a distinction has to be made between *petite* (close) and *grande* (distant) *banlieues*. The *grande banlieue* shows similarities with the American conception of a middle-class residential place. The perceived need for a slower and more rural pace of life as well as the rise of housing price in the centres are reasons for this counter-urbanisation[6]. The *petite banlieue*, i.e. the area which is directly in contact with the town centres, consists of originally distinct villages or towns which were assimilated with the progressive development of the centres. The populations dwelling in the *petite banlieue* generally belong to the lower classes. Similarities (although a strict comparison is not tenable) with the American *inner cities* can be found in a high rate of unemployment, a concentration of ethnic minorities and a deteriorated housing stock. More details on France are given in 2.2 and 2.3 below.

---

[6]As this urbanisation tends to link rural areas to the outskirts of the towns, the coinage *rurbanisation* is frequently used in the literature.

To summarise, although important differences emerge in the structure of the world's urbanisation, i.e. in the social distribution between suburb and centre, similarities can generally be observed. There seems to be a recurrent geographical concentration of the lower classes in areas of low quality housing, with high rates of unemployment, poor levels of education, etc.. This usually entails the development of parallel markets such as drug dealing, the rise of violence and social discontent. Menanteau (1994: 89-131) argues that the riots and looting which took place in Brooklyn (1967), Los Angeles (1992), Birmingham (1985) and France (1981-91)[7] all had essentially the same origins. Violence occurred in places where heterogeneous populations had been ghettoized[8] (see Body-Cengrot 1993 for a more detailed account of urban violence).

2.2.0 The French *banlieue*

Suburbs thus have an increasing influence on the majority of cities in the world. Their development is more planned in economically mature countries than in developing ones. A characteristic trend is that suburbs tend to shelter poorer populations in lower quality housing, although the USA and Great Britain have in general an opposite distribution. The French suburbs are distinct from both models, with the *petite banlieue* following the pattern commonly observed in the rest of the world (richer centre versus poorer outskirts) and the *grande banlieue* showing similarities with the Anglo-Saxon model. Therefore, for a native speaker of French, the term *banlieue* has a twofold definition (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 80): it can be understood as referring to socially-prestigious residential areas (corresponding to the British conception of *suburb*), or as a reference to

---

[7]Violence occurred in *Les Minguettes*, Venissieux (Lyon) and in Vaulx-en-Velin (Lyon) in 1990. In Spring 1991, incidents occurred in Sartrouville, Mantes-La-Jolie, Les Mureaux (Yvelines, in the Paris region) as well as in Toulouse, Saint-Etienne and Carpentras.

[8] Where in the USA treatment of such social problems is essentially based on *self-help* (Marcuse 1982: 172), West-European countries advocate larger state intervention. In Great Britain, quotas on immigration have been adopted and local social policies such as in the *Ethnic Projects* are preferred to national measures, (although urban programmes have been implemented since 1968). In France, a more centralised approach has been adopted under the term *politique de la ville*, bringing together a wide range of social and architectural measures (housing benefits, building renovations, etc.). This point is illustrated in 2.3.1 below.

an outcast area, a sort of social ghetto[9] sharing similarities with the American *inner cities*.

2.2.1 *Banlieue* as an outcast place

The view that the *banlieue* is an outcast or rather isolated place is not new. The term *banlieue* originates in the combining of *leuca,* the Latin equivalent for *league* and the Germanic term *ban* referring to the territory outside the village castle under the jurisdiction of the lord. Thus, the *banni leuca* (which was first attested in the 11th Century) was the one-league-zone in which the lord could raise tax. Although under the jurisdiction of the local aristocrat for this purpose, the *banni leuca* was considered as an independent area, as an outside zone, as somewhat "en ban du lieu" (literally "outside the place", Goudaillier 2001: 14).

It is interesting to note that the *banni leuca* had its own legal status, but progressively lost its independence as the villages grew into towns, and the towns into cities. *Banlieue* has nevertheless retained a certain degree of distinctiveness with regard to the centre, as opposed to *faubourgs* (outskirts), which remain closely integrated within the town's territory. This probably accounts for the negative symbolic value contained in the term *banlieusard*[10] (suburbanite) which accords the *banlieue* inhabitants the status of 'outsiders'.

The idea that the *banlieue* is an outcast area probably also has Parisian origins. In the late 19th Century, an abandoned area where former fortifications[11] had been demolished surrounded Paris. These fortifications had been built in 1841-5 to protect Paris from

---

[9]Vieillard-Baron (1994) argues that the stigmatisation of *banlieue* to *ghetto* is inappropriate and is the expression of social fear and ignorance.

[10]The term was first used in 1889 by Paris councillors as a pejorative term for designating suburban councillors (Menanteau 1994: 17).

[11] These were known as "les fortifs", among the *classes populaires* of the French capital. "Les fortifs" have now been replaced by the "boulevard périphérique", which separates Paris *intra muros* from the *petite banlieue* (Goudaillier 2001: 11).

uprising. This area was called *la zone*[12] by the middle class who feared to enter it, for it was a wasteland where the lower classes had gathered within shantytowns[13]. This area was frequently assimilated to the territory of criminals, who called themselves the *apaches*. The area terrified the middle class who did not dare enter *la zone* for fear of their life. A similar negative assimilation takes place in contemporary French society: *banlieue* is often associated with *ilôts sensibles* which is the official administrative term for locations with social difficulties[14] (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 73). In the media, some of these areas are referred to as *zones de non-droit* (no-go zones), implying that French laws and regulations cannot regulate them. Although policing is extremely difficult and dangerous in some *banlieues*[15], the term is somewhat exaggerated and sensationalist.

It is of course the *banlieues* associated with these social problems which are of sociolinguistic interest here, as the social isolation of their population from the dominant linguistic norm makes them a place where non-standard linguistic forms are prone to emerge. Indeed, Trudgill (1995a) shows that low-contact communities have a greater propensity to retain localised forms than high-contact communities[16]. Following our description above, this study will thus focus on *petite banlieue*. Let us first place the *banlieues* in the context of contemporary France to understand better how such places developed.

---

[12]The term has negative connotations in French for this reason. It refers to an area but also to the chaotic and anarchic social order of the place. Thus, by extension, *un zonard* refers to a social outcast, one who refuses to comply with the social order.

[13] Gadet (1998: 14) uses the expression "langage des fortifs" to refer to the variety of working-class French which developed in this area until the 1940-50s. She adds that illustrative examples of this variety can be found in the film *Hôtel du Nord*, starring Gabin and Arletty.

[14] Bachmann and Basier (1989) as well as Hargreaves (1996) argue that the role of the press has been essential in the development of the social marking of the *banlieue*. In their depiction of French suburban life, journalists, politicians and writers project social myths and fears through their use of images and metaphors. The analogical nature of these rhetorical devices is of tremendous power: linguistic registers perpetrating the myth of the savage, of entrapment, of decay and illness introduce new negative symbolisms. These comfort the reader in his social assumptions, hence his shared responsibility. Once this negative stigma is socially established, it is adopted by the inhabitants of the *banlieue* themselves.

[15] See for instance "*De quoi j'me mèle* N^0 87: *Quand les jeunes font la loi*". Arte Satellite, 16th Jan. 2003.

[16] The terms *low- and high-contact* are here borrowed from the field of dialectology. *Low-contact* communities are traditionally geographically peripheral or isolated populations while *high-contact* communities are usually found in central areas, on trading routes, etc. We use the terms ***high***- and *low-contact* here to refer to a varying degree of social isolation.

2.2.2 The French *banlieue* today

The contemporary French *banlieue* was essentially created through the emergence of three historical phenomena: rural-urban migration, the Industrial Revolution and the development of transport in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even recently, the majority of *banlieue* towns showed large demographic growth with an average increase of seven per cent between 1982 and 1992. In 1996, they represented a population of 18.2 million inhabitants and covered six per cent of French metropolitan territory (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 65). The reasons behind the growing importance of the *banlieues* are essentially higher birth and migration rates in peripheries than in centres, although these two parameters do not necessarily occur conjointly in time or place (see Soulignac 1993: 23-50).

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding a movement of industry towards the peripheries[17], the unemployment rate is generally greater in the *banlieues* than at the national level, with 25% of the working population unemployed against the national rate of 12.6% in 1990. Young people constitute a major proportion of the suburban population with the under-25 group varying between 25% and 50%. Concerning the non-metropolitan populations, concentrations of 70% can be found in some *banlieues*, while in certain suburban schools, 95% of the pupils can be of non-metropolitan origin. These high percentages of immigrant populations show considerable regional differences in non-metropolitan densities, as illustrated in figure 2.1 below.

[17] This movement operates more in the *grande banlieue* than in the *petite banlieue* and concerns essentially high-technology industries, which do not require a large unqualified workforce. It also concerns the relocation outside Paris of the offices of international companies such as Bouygues, which do not create new jobs (see Menanteau 1994: 72-6).

Figure 2.1

Territorial distribution of workers of non-metropolitan origin in 1982 (adapted from Pinson 1992: 102)

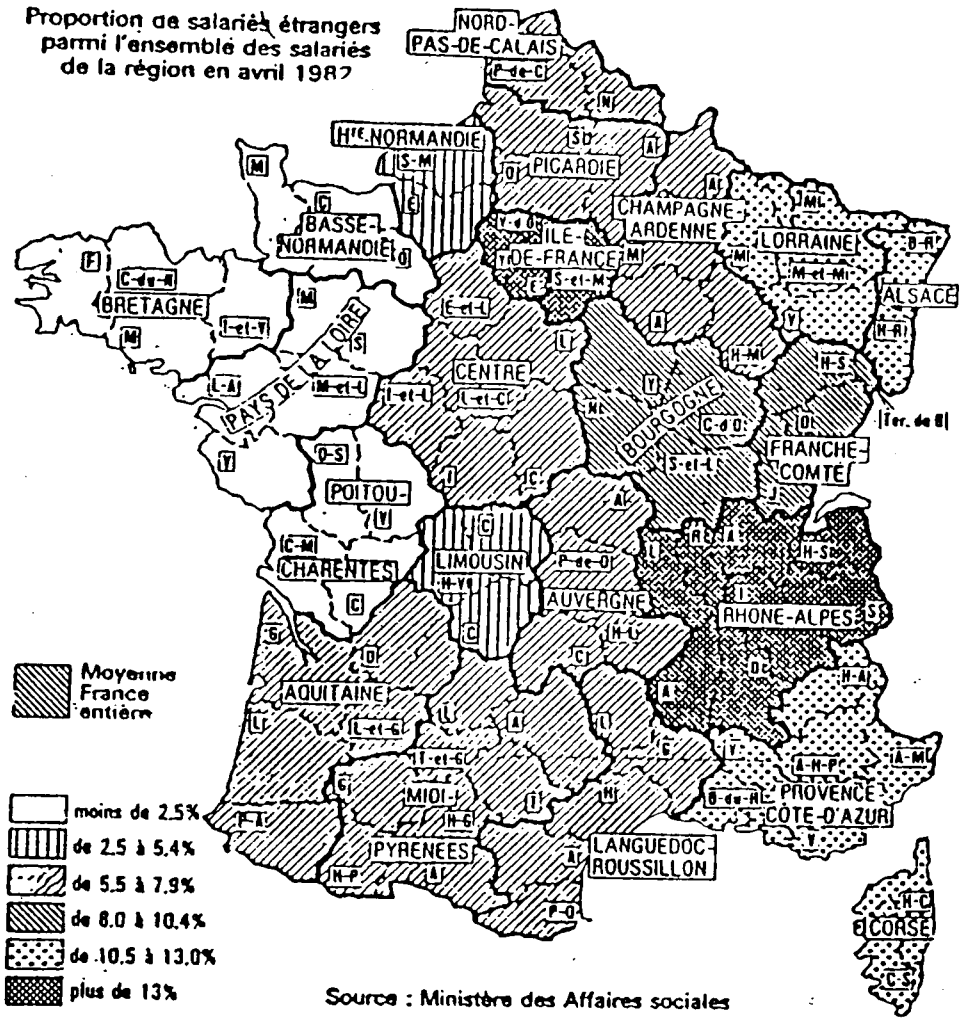


Figure 2.1 shows that the immigrant populations are essentially concentrated in the Rhônes-Alpes and the Ile-de-France regions, with rates higher than 13%, while other regions (e.g. Brittany) show densities of less than 2.5%. Let us now focus on the specific context of Paris.

2.3.0 The Paris *banlieue*

The term *banlieue* is often associated with the French capital town. This is probably because its suburban expansion started earlier than in other cities as well as on a larger scale (Pinson 1992: 72-3). In 1990, 40% of the French *banlieusards* lived in the Paris

banlieue, representing a population of 7 million. At the onset of our study, it thus made logistical sense to concentrate our efforts on the French capital, particularly on the northern and eastern *banlieues*. Let us see why directly below.

2.3.1 Socio-economic distribution of the Paris *banlieues*: historical background

Since the end of the 17th Century, the migration to the *banlieue* and especially to the South and West of Paris generally concerned the aristocracy fleeing the noise and commotion of the court in search of a calmer rural pace of life. Living in the *banlieue* was then seen as a luxury and as an upper-class phenomenon.

At the time of the Industrial Revolution, a large-scale migration from rural *province* to Paris took place. The migrant populations settled in the North and North-East of the capital town, where the industry had been implanted. Large working-class areas were formed around the factories such as those in Saint-Denis, which possessed the largest community of this type in 1891. The industrial role played by the northern *banlieues* was reinforced during the First World War, as a major part of the French armaments and other heavy industry were implanted in the area.

At the end of the 19th Century and the start of the 20th, three different types of *banlieues* could be distinguished across the geography of Paris:

a) the working-class suburbs of the North and North-East;
b) the middle-class quarters of the West and South-West (essentially consisting of the aristocracy and those with private incomes);
c) the farming suburban areas of the South and South-East.

To some extent, this threefold distribution of the Paris Region is still relevant today. The northern parts of Paris, including its *banlieue*, remain poorer and more industrial. By contrast, the Gross Product of the *département des Hauts-de-Seine* (a *département* situated to the West of Paris) is superior to that of Greece. In 1990, the *Yvette valley* in the South of Paris was home to half of the entire population of France's industrial

researchers. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 below show a clear north-south divide in the geographical distribution of the working and the middle classes.

Figure 2.2

Percentage of working-class households in the *région parisienne* in 1975 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 188)

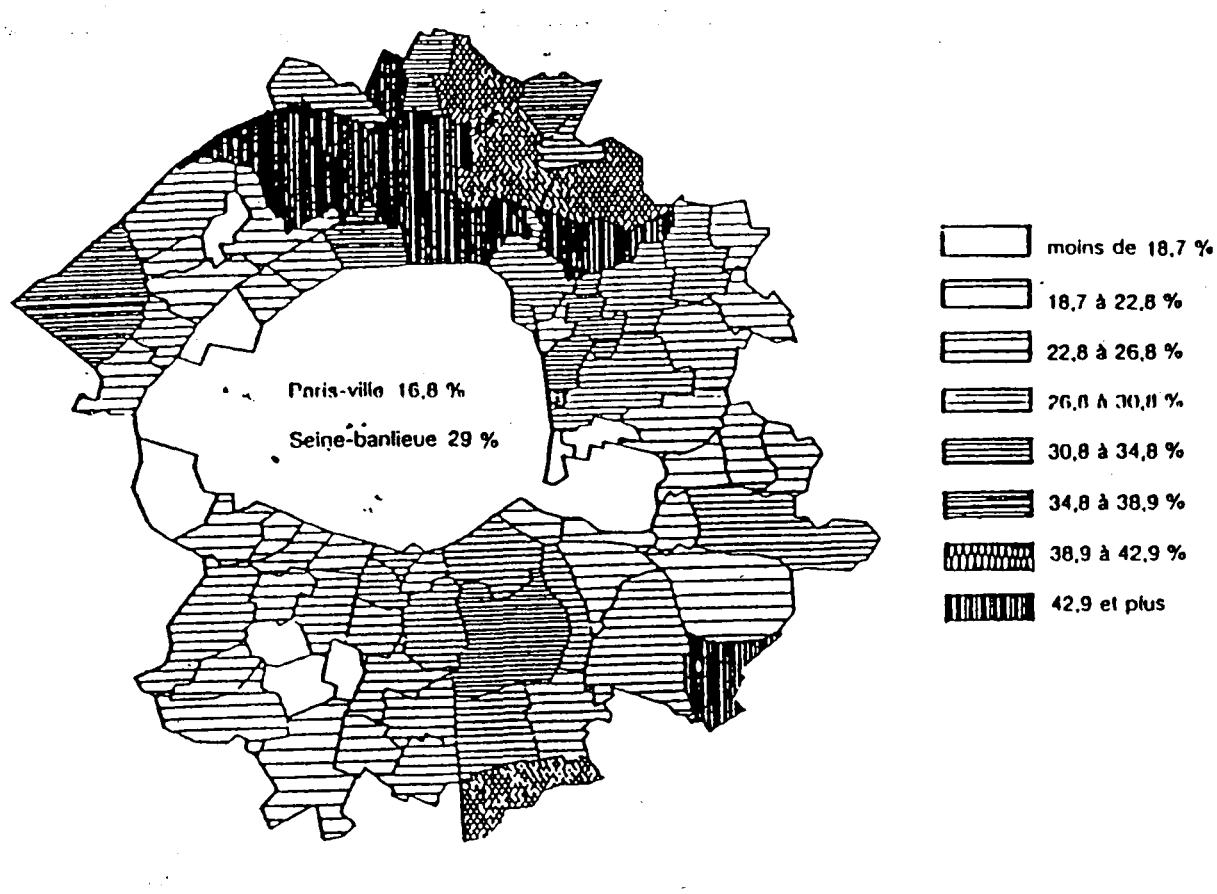
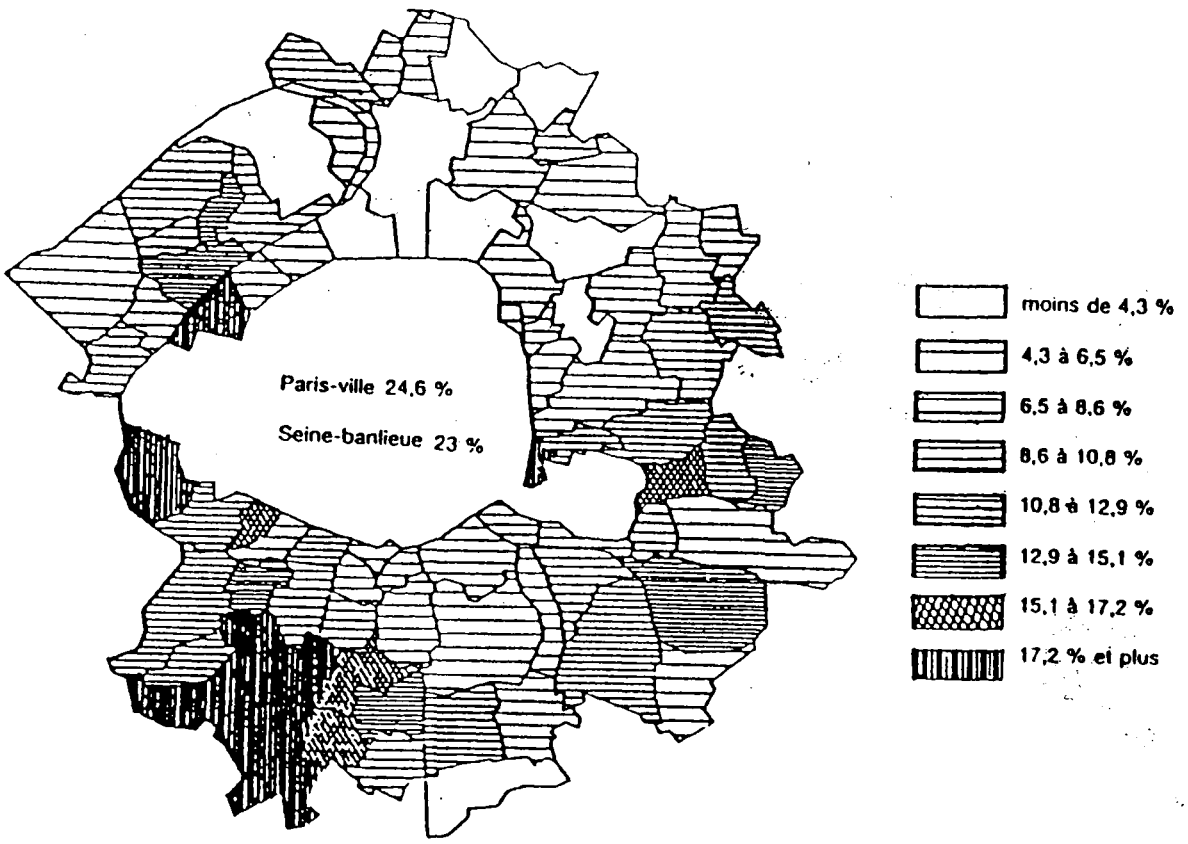


Figure 2.3

Percentage of executives and members of the liberal professions per household in the *région parisienne* in 1975 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 188)



Source : C. Rhein, « Extension de l'agglomération parisienne et transformations socio-démographiques de la Seine-banlieue, 1954-1976, in *Villes en parallèle*, n° 10, 1986, *op. cit.*

Beside this large socio-economic difference in its geography, the sheer size of the Paris region is also significant: it produces 30% of the French GNP. The major economic influence of the French capital city is probably due to the large degree of centralisation characteristic of France. It has been argued (Marchand 1993: 379-400) that this phenomenon has been aggravated in the last 150 years by different state policies, aiming at centrally controlling the country from Paris, without allowing the provincial cities to develop accordingly[18].

[18] A recent reversal of this trend can however be observed since the 1980s, notably with the Defferre reforms of 1982 which promoted the relocation of national institutions such as the *ENA* (*Ecole Nationale d'Administration*) outside Paris and the development of large industrial companies in the provinces, such

This concentration of economic power (and thus of workforce) in Paris and its lack of re-distribution of economic growth into the provinces are to some degree responsible for the modern face of the Paris *banlieues* (both in terms of their extent and their architectural characteristics), and for the social problems associated with them. Indeed to some extent, centralisation has partly created the social isolation of *banlieue* inhabitants. Let us examine how and why.

2.3.2 *Banlieue* architecture and its socio-economic consequences

In 1934, Le Corbusier[19] wrote in the *Charte d'Athènes* that the *banlieue*

> est le symbole à la fois du déchet et de la tentative. C'est une sorte d'écume battant les murs de la ville. Au cours des dix-neuvième et vingtième siècles, cette écume est devenue marée, puis inondation.

This demographic growth of Paris and its outskirts, which was due to the massive rural exodus of the 19th and 20th centuries, was considerably reinforced by a major baby boom and the arrival of non-metropolitan immigrants after the Second World War. This was dramatically aggravated by the fact that the previous governments did not consider as a priority the increased need for housing, and thus fell critically behind in this area. The consequence of this 'demographic flood' was the development of *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) in the *banlieues* of Paris. In 1966, 120 *bidonvilles* still surrounded the Paris region, representing a population of 50,000 (Pinson 1992: 52).

The very cold winters of the early 1950s, especially that of 1954, which motivated the famous broadcast appeal by *l'abbé Pierre*[20], highlighted the crucial need for

---

as Airbus in Toulouse. For a more detail account of decentralisation in France, see for instance Schmidt (1990).

[19]Le Corbusier was the leader of a team of architects who advocated a change in urban development in favour of modernity. By signing the *Charte d'Athènes,* they defended the idea that the individual should have access to modern comfort, i.e. central heating, double gazing, etc. Fully equipped flats built within large towers and blocks remained a recurrent architectural feature of their work (Pinson 1992: 34-45).

[20] L'abbé Pierre founded the *Chiffoniers de l'Emmaüs* in the 1950s to help clothe, feed, and provide accommodation for the poor. His appeal on national radio asked for national solidarity and government

accommodation and the need for measures on a national level. Rapid action was taken to make housing a national priority with the creation of *ZUP* (*Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité*[21]) in 1958. A "taylorist"[22] approach was adopted to optimise productivity: immense residential areas were built in series, adopting the ideas of the *Charte d'Athènes* team. During the 1960s, 500,000 lodgings per year were built, requiring a team of 6,000 architects. The housing effort became so intensive that the French urban area increased from 7% in 1954 to 14% in 1975. This corresponds to the *grands ensembles*[23] period, which is responsible for the modern face of the French *banlieue*. The *grands ensembles* are usually composed of separate *quartiers* (districts) which are themselves divided into different *cités* (blocks or compound of blocks).

This architectural "taylorism" led unfortunately to a standardisation of the shape and size of the French *banlieues*. A single architect was responsible for the design of a whole *grand ensemble* project, usually imposing his vision without any preliminary consultation with the local authorities. Furthermore, the prefabricated and low-cost nature of the materials lacked any soundproofing and long-lasting qualities. In order to build faster, the finish was also generally inferior. The architects' primary aim was to accommodate; thus spaces for socialising or community facilities were sparsely planned and remained too artificial. Public transport was also neglected or limited to commuting purposes.

---

measures for housing. The first lines of his call moved the entire French nation: "Mes amis, au secours! Une femme vient de mourir gelée. Chaque nuit, ils sont plus de mille recroquevillés sous le gel, sans pain, plus d'un presque nu. Ecoutez-moi : deux centres de dépannage viennent de se créer. Ils regorgent déjà. Il nous faut pour ce soir et, au plus tard pour demain, 5000 couvertures, 300 grandes tentes américaines, 200 poêles catalytiques [...]". The answer to his call was phenomenal (see Menanteau 1994: 39).

[21] Priority Zones for Urban Development [my translation].

[22] French coining used notably by Menanteau (1994: 55).

[23] Community housing developments [my translation]. Vieillard-Baron (1996:111-12) states that there is no administrative definition of *grands ensembles*, although a minimum of 1,000 lodgings and the criteria of a certain territorial autonomy are often used. They are usually council-run social accommodation. Their designers shared the idea that the *grands ensembles* were to reduce class differences, promote community values and thus help create an improved future society.

The *grand ensemble* policy later prompted the emergence of a new sort of urban depression, the *Sarcellite*[24] (literally *Sarcellitis*), caused by the social isolation within a gigantic, uniform and lifeless urban environment. It has been argued (Pinson 1992: 38)[25] that limiting the economic importance of the street solely to communication purposes leads to its social decrepitude. This has since led architects to reintroduce pedestrian streets in town centres, for instance.

A large number of *grands ensembles* have been classified as *zones sensibles* (socially 'sensitive' areas) since the early 1980s. The social trauma caused by *ZUP* developments in some local suburban towns can be illustrated by the example of Grigny (South of Paris), where the population increased from 1,700 inhabitants in 1967 to 25,600 in 1975. The emergence of *grands ensembles* corresponded to a loss of landmarks and of historical associations for both the local and migrant populations, and added to the contemporary social tensions caused by the economic recession. The very nature of this suburban architecture now acts as an isolative element for whole communities who do not relate to the concept of a town but to that of a *quartier* (collectives of towers or blocks). This point will be developed further in 2.4.1 and 2.6.3 below.

Conscious of these mistakes, the French government has replaced the *ZUP* with the *ZAC* (*Zone d'Aménagement Concerté*)[26] since 1967. The *ZAC* are often run by private investors in consultation with the local authorities, and more than one architect is employed to limit the uniformity of housing. A mixture of small collective blocks and individual houses, shared facilities and parks represents a less ambitious architectural conception of urban development.

---

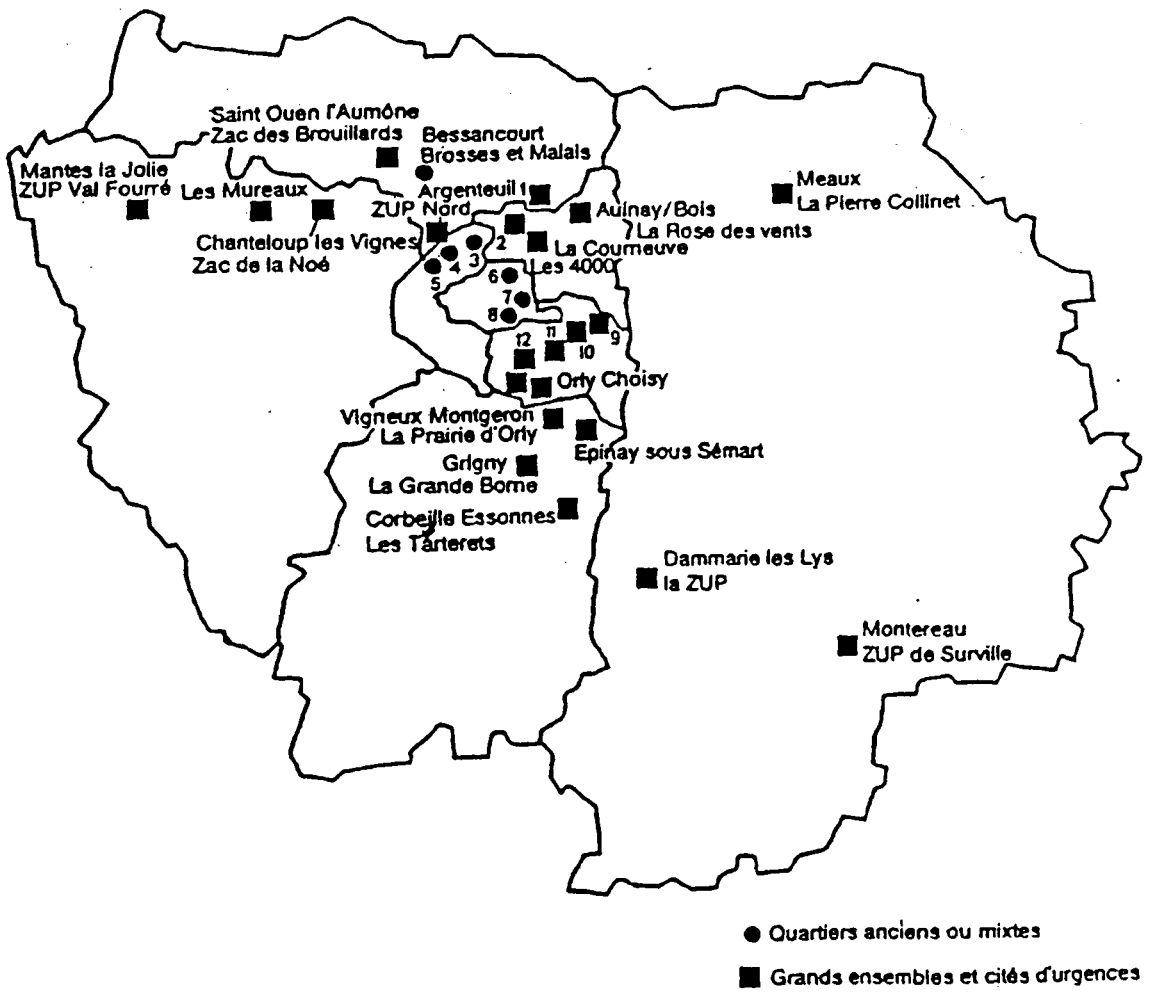
[24]Sarcelles (near Paris) is one of the first towns in which a *grand ensemble* was built. The name *Sarcellite* was extended to the feeling of social and psychological isolation felt elsewhere in other *grands ensembles*.
[25]"La rue, autrefois solidaire de l'immeuble, s'en détache, réduite à la fonction d'une voie de circulation et d'accès automobile, oubliant les usages urbains multiples qui en faisaient dans la morphologie urbaine antérieure, un espace de convivialité, de sociabilité et de festivité. Le commerce quitte d'ailleurs forcément cette rue, devenue simple voirie, pour être introduit dans le centre commercial, lui-même conçu comme équipement au même titre que l'école ou le centre social" (Pinson 1992: 38).
[26] Coordinated development zone [my translation].

Measures to improve the *ZUP* areas have also been taken since 1977, with the *Réforme du Logement* (housing reform): increased *Aide Personalisée au Logement* (Personal Housing Benefits) helps the poorer families while the *Habitat Vie Sociale* (Housing and Social Life) recognises 52 districts in need of reducing their internal social differences. In 1983, a group of architects, *banlieue 89*, were appointed to bring new concepts into suburban architecture in order to reform the appearance of the French *banlieues*. Their work probably inspired the later creation of 12 *GPU* (*Grand Projets Urbains*)[27] in 1992. These *GPU* represent drastic renovation programmes including the demolition of dilapidated buildings. In 1982-3, *ZUS* (*Zones Urbaines Sensibles*) were defined as 700 districts which showed socio-economic difficulties. Figure 2.4 below shows the distribution of these districts within the Paris region.

Figure 2.4

Distribution of *ZUS* in the Paris region

(adapted from Guglielmo and Moulin 1986 in Pinson 1992: 93)



[27]Large-scale Urban Projects [my translation].

Figure 2.4 clearly shows that the *ZUS* are located either in the North or in the East of Paris and its region. These remain in large part *grands ensembles* areas. Three hundred of these *ZUS* benefited from the *ZRU* programme, (*Zones de Redynamisation Urbaine*)[28], which consisted in the creation of youth employment and in providing these areas with more police staff to aid crime prevention. This wide range of measures prompted the creation in 1990 of the *Ministère de la Ville* to efficiently implement them within the *politique de la ville*. The measures were aimed at the reduction of socio-economic differences between cities, and at increasing access to accommodation for the less well-off (Vieillard-Baron 1996: 75-90).

Despite these recent measures, the hasty solutions adopted to cope with a large housing deficit after the Second World War prompted the emergence of a large number of *grands ensembles*, most of which still exist today and are a marked feature of Parisian *banlieues*. They remain places where social tensions frequently arise and are for that reason subject to strongly negative social marking. We now examine demographic and social issues associated with the Paris *grands ensembles* in more detail, for these have sociolinguistic consequences and are for that reason of particular interest to our study.

2.4.0 *Grands ensembles*: demographic and social issues

This revolutionary urban conception has had major socio-economic consequences for French *banlieusards*, especially in Paris, where this phenomenon was the largest in scale. When they were first built, it was hoped that the *grands ensembles* would represent an improvement in modernity and comfort. One in five of their population were middle-class at that time. But as families from different backgrounds and with different ways of life gathered in the same areas, collective life soon lost its appeal. Those who could afford to leave moved out into individual houses in the *grande banlieue* and were replaced by a poorer population attracted by the lower rents. Within this new population, a large number of non-metropolitan immigrants settled in the *petite banlieue*. They came in large part from North Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, and from sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

---

[28] Urban Regeneration Zone [my translation].

Some fifteen years later, the size of immigrant households being generally larger, the population of young people in the suburban *grands ensembles* is on average proportionally greater than other age groups. Youth unemployment is higher than the national average (respectively 18.8% versus 9% for the youngest age group in 1990); the crime rate is also proportionally higher, aggravated by lower educational standards resulting often from language deficiencies and a lesser degree of parental competence in the supervision of schoolwork. This lack of educational infrastructure, together with unemployment and crime have created a feeling of rejection of the dominant social values amongst the youth living in *grands ensembles*. What is particularly interesting is that the predominance of the street as the only meeting place and the social isolation of the youth have prompted the emergence of a strong street-culture.

2.4.1 *Grand ensemble* and street-culture

The term street-culture has different connotative meanings and therefore needs further description here. Calvet (1994: 28-30), using Thrasher (1963)'s work on Chicago gangs states that the street-culture found in the *cités* constitutes a sort of "*culture intersticielle*", which is both geographical and social, diachronic and synchronic. This sub-culture is located in the transition zone between the city centre and the *grande banlieue*, at the transition time between childhood and adulthood, between the culture of the parents and that of French society at large.

The street-culture in France is a direct consequence of architectural choice: the unsuitability of the street as a social meeting-place is inadequately compensated by public spaces, i.e. staircases, entrances to buildings. The absence of streets in the *grands ensembles* generates a lack of distinction between private and public territories and a feeling of imprisonment, a typical feature of the *sarcellite* described in 2.3.2 above. Lepoutre (1997: 31) argues that suburban unhappiness is created by the failure of public spaces to generate intermediate social contacts, i.e. links emerging in the middle of a

scale between family ties and secondary anonymous ones. This is probably due to the sheer gigantic scale of *grands ensembles*[29].

Bachmann and Basier (1989: 99-100) add that this lack of distinction between private and public space and the absence of social contact between generations are causes of tensions between the old and the young populations. As described in 2.4.0 above, young people form a higher percentage than any other age group in the *grands ensembles*, which accentuates social tension between generations. Furthermore, the younger population is consistently exposed to the older, as the sole meeting places available to the youngsters are the bases of blocks and the squares. This helps create social myths in which youth is associated with crime (Bachmann and Basier 1989: 105-06). These types of myths are in turn adopted by young *banlieusards*, who see the street as a dangerous place.

Lepoutre suggests that the street-culture essentially concerns young people aged from ten to sixteen (1997: 22-4). He explains that this age limit corresponds to the period when access to a certain independence from parental supervision takes place. This autonomy occurs while the adult perspective of a working life still does not have a significant influence. The development of an overall conceptualisation of society and the desire to find a place within it seems only to take place at the end of adolescence.

Nevertheless, as no human community can function without the basis of a system of shared values or attitudes (Lepoutre 1997: 20), the street-culture provides the young population with a common vision of the world, based on the peer-group and a strong sense of belonging to a *cité* or *quartier* (see 2.6.3 below for an illustration of this in La Courneuve). For Calvet (1994: 29), this search for an interstitial identity has developed in the France of the 1980s and 1990s France in three principal directions:

---

[29] This is however also observable in the British and American contexts. For working-class communities who dwell in more individual or less gigantic types of housing, "the street is often seen as an extension of the home" (Milroy 1987a: 92).

a) The adoption of hip-hop[30] with the emergence of French rap bands, the widespread practice of break-dance and graffiti art (see Bazin 1995, Bachmann and Basier 1985, Cannon 1997 or Lepoutre 1997 among others).
b) The imitation of black American styles of clothing (baseball cap, tracksuits, etc.).
c) The development of a vernacular[31] and a large use of innovative slang forms.

It is this *vernacular of the cités,* and particularly its phonology, which is of specific interest to the present study. But the adoption of hip-hop in the *banlieues*, as a street-based approach to life, is also of sociolinguistic importance: it has helped provide the young populations of the *banlieues* with a certain social prestige. The street-culture, rap songs depicting life in the *grands ensembles*, the myth of the toughness of living in the *quartiers Nord* (see below in 2.6.3), all participate in creating a covertly-attractive image of suburban life. Indeed, living in a *grand ensemble* is usually depicted by adolescents as a sign of toughness, especially among males (Bachmann and Basier 1989: 65). We thus are in presence of a relatively deprived and isolated population which has created a new localised identity endowed with a certain degree of non-mainstream prestige.

2.4.2 The *black* and *beur* generations and street-culture

The creation of a street-culture is also rooted in the ethnic origin of the suburban youngsters. As described above in 2.4.0, a large number of immigrant communities arrived in the *banlieues* after the Second World War. With regard to Paris, they generally settled in the North and the East (see Calvet 1994: 247-90 for an account of immigrant settlement in Paris *intra muros*). They found affordable accommodation in

---

[30] The hip-hop movement is associated to the street and urban contexts generally (Bazin 1995: 19). Its values defend multi-culturality, denounce the moral contradictions of society and offer a street-based approach to art. Originally developed amongst the immigrant populations of New york's south Bronx projects (Cannon 1997: 150), this movement addresses issues closely related to the daily experience of teenagers in the *grands ensembles* and which probably explain its popularity in France.

[31] We refer to this vernacular as vernacular of the *cités* and not vernacular of the *banlieues*, this variety of French being associated with *grands ensembles* and collective living, rather than with the term *banlieue*. Furthermore, we discussed in 2.2.0 above that this latter term has two different connotations. Aitsiselmi (2000: 33) notes that scholars use different terminologies to name this vernacular. He notes that "le parler des jeunes des banlieues ou 'le Céfran' (Séguin et Teillard 1996), 'le français contemporain des cités' (Goudaillier 1997) ou encore 'la tchatche de banlieue' (Goudaillier 1997; Pierre Adolphe et al. 1998) can all be found in the literature".

the *grands ensembles,* alongside a French population of metropolitan origin and belonging to a large extent to the working class. Due to the higher birth rate of immigrant households, the generation of children from non-metropolitan background now accounts for a large majority of the younger population in the *cités* (Hargreaves 2000: 13). In certain suburban schools for instance, 95% of the pupils can be of non-metropolitan origin.

This population of youngsters, which is sometimes named the *black* and *beur* generation in the literature[32] (see Calvet 1994 or Aitsiselmi 2000 among others), came to the attention of the French public in the 1980s with the *Marche pour l'Egalité et Contre le Racisme* (Hargreaves 2001: 11). The political statement of this movement was that the young populations of non-metropolitan origin living in the French suburbs were "less willing than their parents to live as second-class citizens in French society" (Hargreaves 2000: 11). *Beur* activists and leaders (e.g. Arezki Dahmani, cited in Hargreaves 2000: 11), anti-racist organisations (e.g. *SOS racisme* led by Harlem Désir) and novelists such as Medhi Charef[33] or Azouz Begag[34] have since helped create an awareness of the integrative problems encountered by the *blacks* and *beurs* in France.

As described in 2.4.0 above, the younger age groups in the *cités* are faced with a high rate of unemployment and a low level of schooling, which can provoke socio-economic frustration, crime and violence. This socio-economic isolation aggravates the identity crisis undergone by the young *blacks* and *beurs*. In spite of their French nationality and the fact that they have lived in France their entire life, they feel excluded from French society. At the same time, they do not completely adhere to their parents' non-French culture (Calvet 1994: 69). The street-culture described above is thus widely adopted by the suburban *blacks* and *beurs*, for it provides them with an alternative set of values,

---

[32] *Black* is borrowed from English to designate a French person from African background (Goudaillier 2001: 65-6). It is usually extended to describe a person of Afro-Caribbean origin or simply with a black skin-colour. It is felt that the term is used as a euphemism, in order to avoid the racist connotations attached to French term *noir*. It seems that it is for similar reasons that *verlan* (backslang) term "*renoi*" is also often preferred to *noir*. *Beur* is used to designate a French person of Maghrebi origin and comes from the *verlanisation* of *arabe* (see Goudaillier 2001: 63).

[33] See *Le thé au Harem d'Archi Ahmed* for instance.

[34] See the largely autobiographical *Le Gone du Chaâba*.

which is neither that of the dominant French majority, nor that of their parents' ethnic background. We shall argue below that this 'in–between' culture (or "culture interstititielle"[35]) is directly illustrated in the vernacular which has emerged in the French *banlieues*.

2.4.3 The emergence of *vernacular of the cités*

At the lexical level in *vernacular of the cités*, direct lexical borrowings of immigrant origin co-exist with neologisms and encoding processes based on derivational processes generally found in most varieties of metropolitan French (see notably Goudaillier 2001: 17-33). Perhaps the most famous example of such encoding processes is that of *verlan*[36]. *Verlan* (or back slang) is a process of encoding language by inverting the order of the syllables within a word. Thus *verlan* itself comes from *l'envers* (backwards) > *vers-l'en*.

Because of its multicultural nature, Goudaillier (2001: 7) describes this vernacular as a "parler véhiculaire inter-ethnique". This vernacular seems to be gaining ground in France, both within and outside the *cités* and *grands ensembles* of the French *banlieues*. Both Calvet (1994: 29) and Lepoutre (1997: 22) describe it as a culturally recognisable speech. The sheer proportion of the younger age group in the *banlieues* probably explains the extent of the phenomenon.

Goudaillier (2001: 6-14) explains that *vernacular of the cités* has a threefold function:

a) Adopting a different linguistic code helps the young population of the *cités* state their social exclusion, their difference and their rejection of the dominant social model. It is a statement of identity. It has been shown in many linguistic studies (see Romaine 1984: 104 among others) that the development of vernacular features is at its highest in adolescent years and that the vernacular asserts in-group membership and identity (on the latter, see the discussion of Labov's 1972 study of Harlem teenagers in Chapter 3).

---

[35] Goudaillier (2001: 6).

[36] However, this encoding process is by no means a new phenomenon since it is first attested in the 16th century (Merle 1997: 49).

b) The encoding processes used in *vernacular of the cités* such as *verlan* and slang enable the speakers not to be understood by other groups in society, thus protecting the peer-group interests. Goudaillier (2001: 10) states for instance that this cryptic function (e.g. the use of *verlan*) is a useful tool for the young *banlieusards* in the Paris underground. They can mock the other passengers among themselves without fear of being understood.

c) Finally, an important function of the vernacular is simply to play with the dominant language, whether this is a conscious or unconscious effort (Goudaillier 2001: 10). It is important to remember that language games (in this case using vernacular forms) are typical of younger age groups.

It is unclear whether vernacular forms of the *cités* are diffusing to other age or social groups, or spreading outside the less well-off *banlieues*. This has never been investigated. Impressionistically, one hears these vernacular forms in the speech of seemingly middle-class and educated speakers, in the French media for instance. Some of these forms have recently made a legitimised entry into the standardised variety of French. Lexical forms such as *beur* can now be found in most French dictionaries.

Why is this vernacular attractive to speakers living outside the *banlieues*? At the lexical level, Hagège (in Goudaillier 2001: 3) states that it is probably again this playful side of *the vernacular of the cités* which is attractive to youngsters who live outside the *grands ensembles* or who belong to the middle classes. The covert prestige associated with life in the *grands ensembles,* which is perpetrated through the hip-hop culture and the success of rap music, perhaps also enhances the attraction of this speech. Moreover, the fact that *grands ensembles* are in the vicinity of Paris, where the French media are based, facilitates the broadcasting of *banlieue* life and culture to all social classes and all French regions. Also, although the youngsters do not travel to the Paris city centre on a regular basis (Goudaillier 2001: 14), face-to-face contacts also exist between speakers of *cité* vernacular and those who live outside the *grands ensembles*. The *Champs-Elysées*,

the *Gare du Nord*, or *Les Halles* are favoured locations for young *banlieusards*, who travel to these areas of Paris because they offer services (e.g. fast-food, sports shops, clubs and cinemas), adapted to their tastes and needs (Lepoutre 1997: 60).

The possible geographical diffusion of these vernacular forms outside the *banlieues* is beyond the scope of this study, which will focus on social diffusion within two *suburban* towns of Paris. This issue is nevertheless worth investigating and it is hoped that it will be the subject of further research. Before we describe the research sites, it may be helpful to summarise the major points hitherto outlined which make *banlieues* such a suitable locus for sociolinguistic investigation.

2.5.0 The French *banlieues*: a summary

Paris is unique in its urban structure in that it has developed two distinct types of suburbs. The *petite banlieue* follows the worldwide distributional trend, which can be summarised as à richer centre versus a poorer periphery. In contrast, the *grande banlieue* follows the American or British model, i.e. individual housing inhabited for the most part by predominantly middle-class communities. In the *petite banlieue*, housing is predominantly collective. The post-War period witnessed an important housing shortage in France which prompted an intense period of urban development, resulting in the emergence of gigantic collective accommodation projects, the *grands ensembles*. These are highly concentrated in the *petite banlieue*, especially in the North and the East of Paris.

This is where the population of interest to the present study is generally located. This population usually suffers from social isolation, unemployment and crime and is composed of a large younger age group, coming to a large extent from immigrant backgrounds. These young populations have created a street-based culture, most closely expressed in hip-hop, as an alternative set of social values. This is because they feel rejected by the dominant French society but also remote from their parents' ethnic culture. As part of this street culture, the young generations have developed a vernacular, which we have referred to as vernacular of the *cités*. The emergence of

vernacular forms and their maintenance seems strongly linked to the close-knit nature of the teenage peer groups within the *grands ensembles*. Teenagers are traditionally more sensitive to peer-group pressure, which favours the maintenance of the vernacular in their speech (on this, see section 3.1.5 below). Whether this is due to its identity value, its cryptic function or simply its playful aspects, the vernacular of interest seems to confer covert prestige on its speakers. Relayed by the success and diffusion of hip-hop through the French media, it therefore tends to be adopted, albeit at the lexical level only, by the young populations living both within and outside a *grand ensemble* context. We explore in later chapters the question as to whether some phonological forms might follow the same pattern.

In order to successfully find populations using *cité* vernacular forms in spontaneous speech, the research sites needed therefore to be located in the Northern and Eastern part of Paris *banlieues*. As vernacular forms of the *cités* seem associated with adolescents, the fieldwork needed to collect a large sample of teenage speech. The ethnic origin of speakers was controlled in the population sample, as *beurs* and *blacks* might be the source of sociolinguistic variation. It was also felt to be interesting to compare quantitatively the use of vernacular forms across social classes and age groups to provide a scientific assessment of this possible linguistic diffusion. If our results indicate that diffusion is taking place, a further issue will concern the social mechanisms which favour it.

To investigate the issues outlined in this chapter, two research sites were therefore selected: La Courneuve (North of Paris) and Fontenay-sous-Bois (East of Paris). Let us now describe the two towns, with a view to assessing the extent to which they correspond to the poorer *banlieues* profile given above. We will also outline ethnological issues associated with each site, as these are of sociolinguistic interest.

2.6.0 Description of the research sites

2.6.1 Description of La Courneuve and its locality[37]

La Courneuve was selected as its characteristics correspond relatively well to the model of deprived *banlieues* described above. Located in the *petite banlieue*, La Courneuve is situated about 5 kilometres (approximately 3 miles) north of Paris, following the Paris-Chantilly main road. The town is 752 hectares in area and is surrounded by eight neighbouring *municipalités*[38]: Aubervilliers, Saint-Denis, Stains, Dugny, Le Bourget, Drancy, Bobigny and Pantin. These towns, together with 31 others, constitute the *département de Seine-Saint-Denis* since the reform of the administrative boundaries of the Seine *département*[39] in 1964. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show *Seine-Saint-Denis* within the Paris region and La Courneuve within its *département*.

Figure 2.5

Situation of Seine-Saint-Denis in the Paris region (*Centre de Documentation de La Courneuve*)

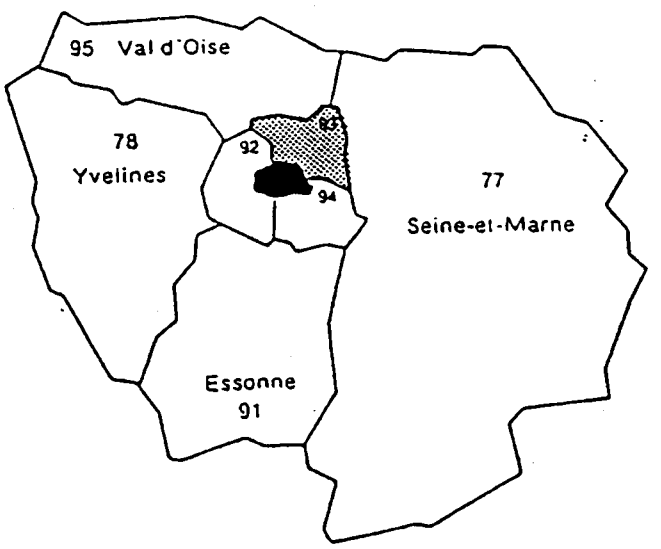


Figure 2.6

Location of La Courneuve in the *département de Seine-Saint-Denis* (*Centre de Documentation de la Courneuve*)

The *département de Seine-Saint-Denis* shared the intensive industrialisation of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries as well as the *grands ensembles* policies of the 1950s and 1960s discussed above in 2.3.1. More recently, the town of Saint-Denis was chosen as the site for the building of the *Stade de France* for the football World Cup of 1998. This event has been beneficial for the entire *département*, especially for Saint-Denis, where new *RER*[40] train lines and a new station linking the town to Paris were created. *France 98* has also accelerated the renovation of Saint-Denis's town centre. Although renovation

---

[37] All the figures given are taken from the 1990 census.
[38] Towns.
[39] This broadly corresponds to *county* as an administrative area in France.
[40] Réseau Express Régional.

programmes have also been implemented in La Courneuve (see in 2.6.2 below), Saint-Denis is perceived as a richer rival or as a better place according to some informants in the present study who dwell in La Courneuve. Bachmann and Basier (1989: 129-30) argue that its neighbouring towns, for reasons connected with urban development, challenge La Courneuve economically. Its town centre cannot compete with the attraction of other towns because it is divided into heterogeneous quarters facing in opposite directions (see figure 2.7 below).

Until 1885, with the development of the first factories, agriculture remained the only economic activity of the town. As mentioned in 2.3.1 above, it was the First World War which led to the area's considerable industrialisation, thanks to the rapid development of railway communications. The industrial sector is still a major source of employment, involving 43.9% of the working population in 1990[41], although it has been overtaken by the tertiary sector which employs 56.1%. The principal economic activities of the town are manufacturing, services, commerce and transport.

From a demographic point of view, La Courneuve also follows the less well-off *banlieue* trends. It is a town of some 35,000 inhabitants with a high proportion of young people. 63.7% of the population is under 40, 41% under 25. The number of immigrants is also considerable, at 25.3% of the total population. The majority of these immigrants come from outside the European Union.

To accommodate the needs of its large young population, La Courneuve is provided with three *collèges* (11-14 secondary schools), three *Lycées* (15-18 college in the UK system), including one *LEP* (*Lycée d'Enseignement Professionnel*), which is devoted to vocational and technical education. The *Service Municipal de la Jeunesse* (council-run youth service) offers educational, cultural and sports activities to a population aged between 2 and 17, through its 23 *centres de loisirs* ('leisure centres'[42]) and its four

---

[41] Source: *INSEE-RPG* survey.

[42]This term is a literal translation from French: it does not correspond to the British concept of leisure centre. The French *Centre de Loisir* is reserved for young children, and usually consists of one small building or room in which the young people can do manual activities, and around which basic sport

maisons de quartier (youth clubs) reserved for adolescents aged from 12 to 17. These youth clubs, distributed in the main districts of the town, were used as recording sites during the fieldwork. This point will be described in more detail in 4.2.1 below.

The unemployment rate in 1990 was higher than the national average (10.8%) at 16.7% and affects more women than men (19.6% against 14.4%). It is the young age group (those under 25) which represents the highest rate at 30.1%. A wide range of social services is therefore found in La Courneuve: two employment agencies (one local, one national) and several benefits boards (*Assédics* or *Associations pour l'Emploi Dans l'Industrie et le Commerce* for unemployment and *CAF* or *Caisse d'Allocations Familiales* for housing) add to the work of non-governmental agencies such as l'*APEIS* (*Association pour l'Emploi et l'Insertion Sociale*[43]).

Housing in La Courneuve is predominantly collective (10,000 flats versus 1538 individual houses and bungalows). Approximately 87% of the population therefore live in a flat. Out of all flats, 8,000 are council-owned. Only 27% of La Courneuve's inhabitants own their homes, 69% rent their accommodation and 4% do not have to pay any rent for socio-economic reasons. As regards sanitary and heating facilities, only 87% of all houses and flats are adequately equipped. Let us now focus on the issue of collective housing[44] in La Courneuve as we saw above that this was of sociolinguistic interest. Indeed, it was explained in 2.4.1 that *grands ensembles* favoured the emergence of a street-culture and of localised vernacular forms.

2.6.2 The 4000 Logements

La Courneuve is often associated with the *grand ensemble* of the *4000 logements* (the 4000 lodgings), although its population represents only about 42% of La Courneuve's

---

facilities have been built. The difference between *centres de loisir* and *maisons de quartier* is essentially one of age group.

[43] Association for employment and social integration.

[44] By *collective housing* we mean a grouping of accommodation, such as tower blocks of flats. What is *collective* are the public spaces, i.e. staircases, corridors, hallways, etc.

inhabitants[45]. This housing development, typical of the *ZUP* era, is often used in the press as a national symbol for the social difficulties encountered in the poorer French *banlieues* (Bachmann and Basier 1989: 14) and for the dilapidated state in which their buildings often fall (Lepoutre 1997: 37).

Built in the early 1960s, the *grand ensemble des 4000*, (or simply *les 4000*, as it is often referred to by its inhabitants) contains in fact 3,600 lodgings out of the 4,100 planned by its designers. Its population decreased in thirty years from 17,500 to 14,500. In 1990, 80% of its households had a gross annual income of less than 10,000 Francs per month (slightly below £1,000 approximately) and 44% earned below 5,000 Francs per month (approximately below £500). Again in 1990, the vast majority (82.4%) of the *4000* inhabitants consisted of junior non-manual and manual workers.

The *4000 logements*, first administrated by the Paris council, have since been the property of La Courneuve's *OPHLM* (*Office Public des Habitations à Loyer Modéré)*[46], which has taken action to bring about renovation. This district has benefited since 1977 from a wide range of different urban development programmes aimed at the social improvement and urban renovation of the houses and tower blocks. Programmes such as *HVS* (*Habitat Vie Sociale)*[47], *DSQ* (*Développement Social des Quartiers)*[48] have been implemented with the recent partnership of a *GPU* (*Grand Projet Urbain,* see 2.3.1 above), to improve the level of social activities of the district as well as to restructure its architecture. It has been decided to destroy certain old blocks[49], and improve the insulation and waterproofing of the remaining buildings; large holes have been pierced through the structure of other blocks such as *Balzac* (see Figure 2.7 below) to provide the *grand ensemble* with an "opening to the outside" and with a certain "disruption of its uniformity" (Lepoutre 1997: 38). The more recent buildings (1980s) of the town centre benefit from these two architectural concepts and show by their smaller size as well as

---

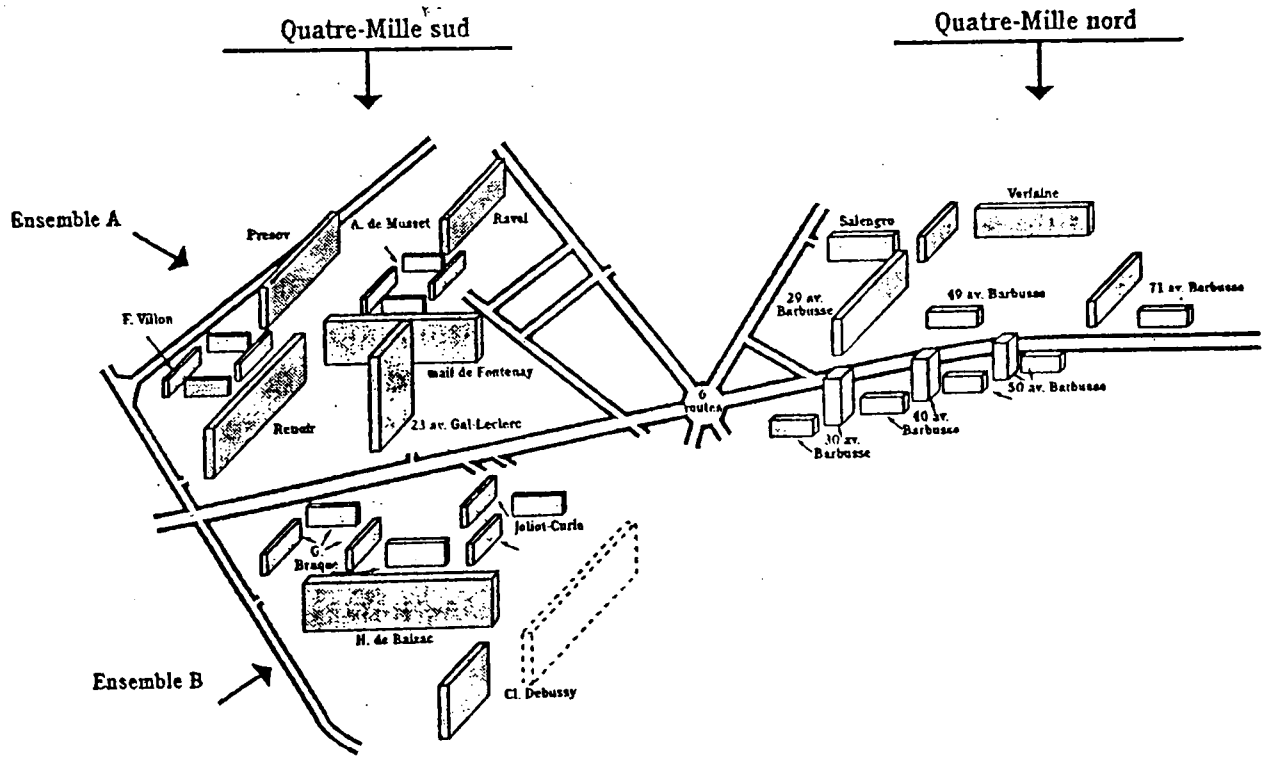
[45] All the figures in this paragraph are adapted from Lepoutre (1997: 25-35) and are adapted from the 1990 census.
[46] Council housing services.
[47] Environment and social life.
[48] Social development of neighbourhoods.
[49] The *cités Debussy* and *Renoir*, see figure 2.7 below.

by the originality of their design that efforts have been made to ameliorate the *grand ensemble* concept.

Figure 2.7 below clearly shows that the *4000 Logements* are divided into three different series of blocks separated from one another by six main roads. A north-south distinction has been made in the toponomy of the *grand ensemble*: it will be argued below in 2.6.3 that living in the *4000 Nord* or the *4000 Sud* has social importance. Figure 2.7 also indicates in broken lines the demolition of the *Debussy* block within the *GPU* programme[50].

Figure 2.7

Perspective view of the *4000 grand ensemble* (adapted from Lepoutre 1997: 54)



[50]As mentioned above, the *Renoir* block was also destroyed in June 2000.

As in other *grand ensembles*, the architectural organisation of *les* 4000 has favoured the emergence of a street-culture amongst its young population[51]. We now examine how this came about.

2.6.3 Territorial perceptions and representations in La Courneuve

Owing to its organisation in series of blocks forming districts or *quartiers*[52] and separated by main communication routes, the feeling of entrapment is considerable in *les 4000*. A consequence of this enclosure is the youngsters' symbolic construction of territory which is based on *quartiers* (Lepoutre 1997: 50-8). The *quartier*, representing a series of blocks or towers, refers to the area one lives in but also defines who one is. The notion of belonging to the *4000 Nord*, to the *4000 Sud* or to *Barbusse* is of tremendous importance for the young people, who reconstruct the toponymy, according to the place they symbolically wish to belong to or view themselves in, as shown in figure 2.8 below.

---

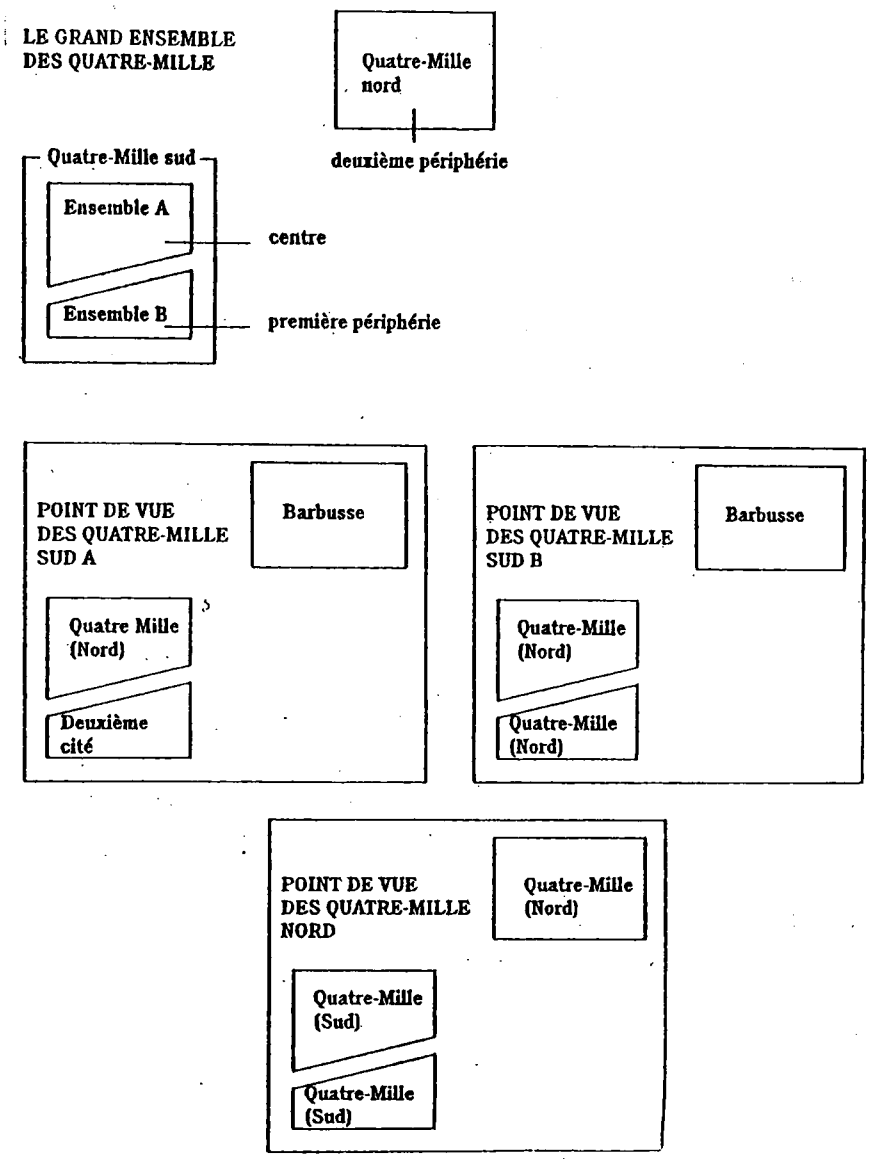
[51] One of the earliest studies of the street-culture in France actually took place in La Courneuve (see Bachmann and Basier 1984). For a more recent account, see Lepoutre (1997).

[52] See figure 2.7 above.

Figure 2.8

The *4000 grand ensemble*:

Variation in toponymic usage according to location (adapted from Lepoutre 1997: 55)



Lepoutre (1997: 50-6) explains this toponymic variation by the lack of public space and by a fascination for the symbolism of the North. The *Quartiers Nord* of Paris and its *banlieue* are often considered as the toughest, an important prestige feature of street-culture[53]. They also are the object of French rap songs[54] and evoke similarities with the northern districts of New York, Harlem and the Bronx; hence the prestige of living in *les*

4000 Nord. This covert prestige sometimes extends to the idea that coming from any *banlieue* is a sign of toughness in itself. An illustration of this was reported to the fieldworker by young informants, who claim to have avoided a fight when on holiday in a French provincial sea resort simply by stating that they came from the *banlieue parisienne*[55].

This territorial identification in terms of *quartier* entails social markings between blocks or between areas. Bachmann and Basier (1989: 46) state that for certain inhabitants, to change block often represents a change of life: territories are so isolated that myths about certain buildings are created and a hierarchy instituted between them. As an illustration of this, some *4000* inhabitants are convinced that crime is higher in certain blocks or towers and they sometimes even assume that their building is worse than others in that regard (Bachmann and Basier 1989: 46).

For the younger generation, the *quartier* or the *cité* is a territory that has to be defended against intruders from other districts or buildings. As shown in the creation of their own toponymy, the *quartier* represents the centre of a mentally constructed world where anything situated outside this centre is considered as peripheral. This centre-periphery construction defines the young people's social space and its protection provides them with a sense of a peer community. Understandably, such a reliance on the local peer-group and such a strong sense of territory are very favourable factors to the emergence of highly localised vernacular forms.

But how localised is the vernacular of the *cités*? Does one find similar vernacular forms in every *cité* or *grand ensemble*? Are these forms present only in deprived *banlieues*? To

---

[53]Lepoutre (1997: 22) points out that the contradiction in using the term street-culture to refer to a streetless environment can be overcome by considering it as symbolic reference to urban life-space.
[54]See MC Solaar, *Quartier Nord* in "*Qui sème le vent récolte le tempo*", Polydor, 1991 or Suprême NTM, *En direct du grand Nord*, in "*J'appuie sur la gâchette*", Sony Music 1993, cited by Lepoutre (1997: 51). See also *Saint-Denis style* in "*Suprème NTM*", Sony Music 1998.
[55] The French fascination for Paris is a factor which goes some way towards explaining this phenomenon. Popular rap-bands from the Paris region, (i.e. *Suprème NTM*), reinforce this tough image by claiming that the authenticity of their style is due to their suburban and Parisian experience of the street-culture.

investigate these issues, a second research site, Fontenay-Sous-Bois, was selected. Fontenay was chosen because it presented similar collective housing but was not deemed to be a deprived *banlieue* town. We now give a brief description of its characteristics.

2.6.4 Description of Fontenay-sous-Bois and its locality[56]

Fontenay-sous-Bois is situated in the Val de Marne *département*, approximately a mile and a half from the eastern limits of Paris (Vincennes). The town is 557 hectares in area with a population density of 96 inhabitant/ha.. Fontenay is surrounded by six neighbouring towns: Rosny-sous-Bois, Montreuil-sous-Bois, Vincennes, Nogent-sur Marne, Le Perreux-sur Marne, Neuilly-Plaisance. Figure 2.9 indicates the location of Val de Marne within the Paris region. This *département* (indicated by *C* in figure 2.9 below) was created in 1964 following the administrative reform of the Paris region. Areas formerly belonging to the *départements* of Seine and those of Seine-et-Oise were redesigned to create the *petite couronne*[57] *départements*.

---

[56] All the figures given in this section are adapted from Orgeco S.A. Rond-point 93 (1992). Analyse des résultats du recensement 1990. *Service des Affaires Economiques. Mairie de Fontenay.*

[57] Literally: *small crown* of Paris. The metaphor refers here to the city of Paris being composed of three circular areas: the city itself as the centre of the crown, the *départements* directly surrounding the city (*petite couronne*) and those around the *petite couronne*, called *départements de la grande couronne* ('large crown *départements*').

Figure 2.9

Location of the *département* of Val de Marne within the Paris region after the administrative reform of 1964 (adapted from Soulignac 1993: 12)

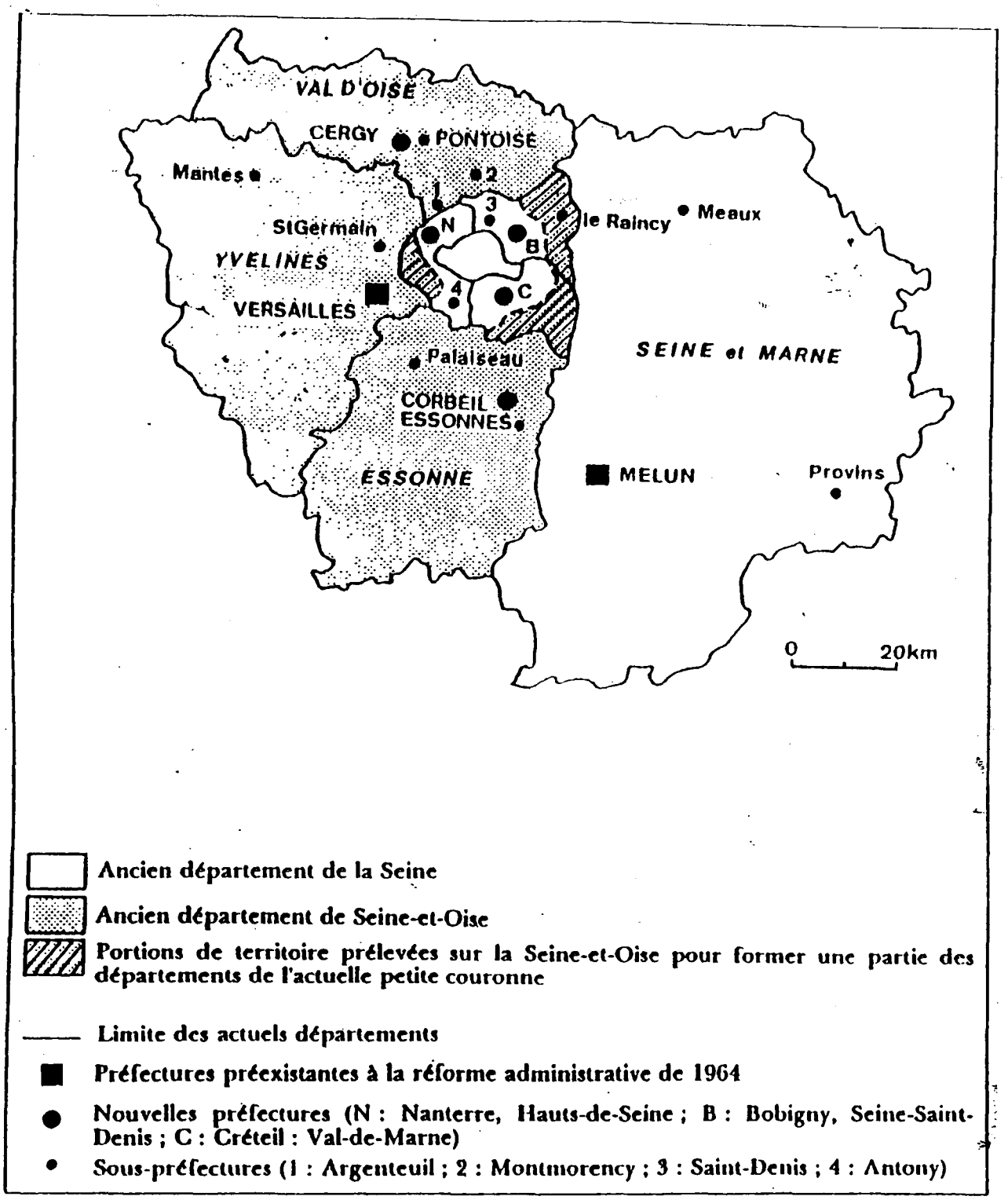
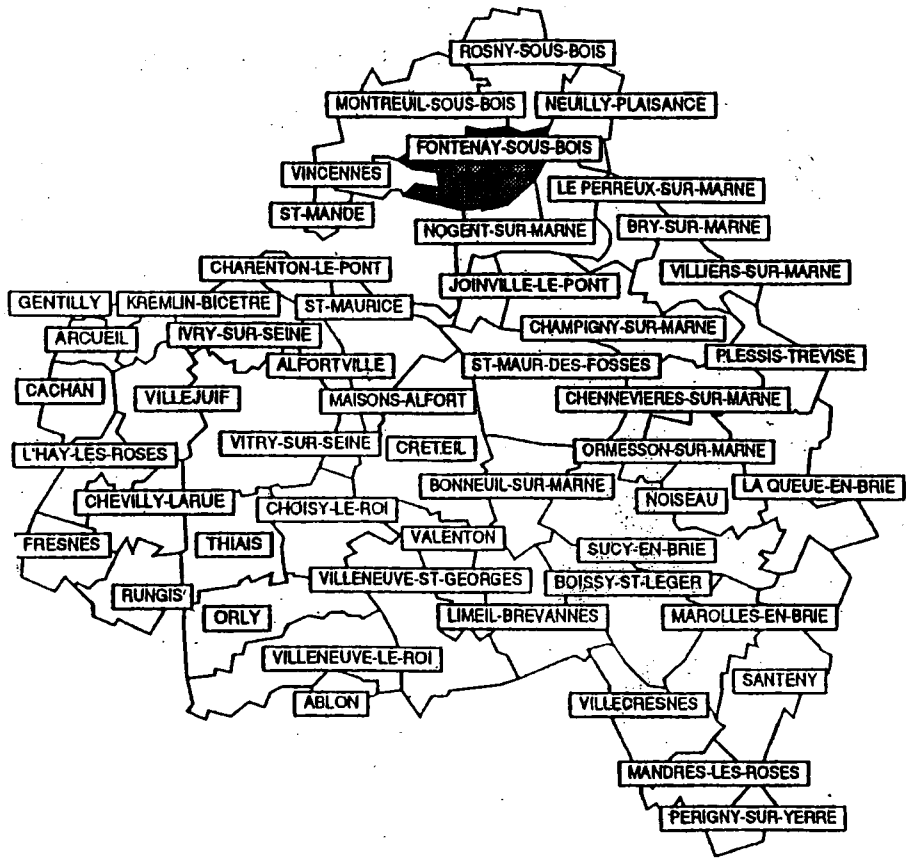


Figure 2.10 below shows the location of Fontenay-sous-Bois within the *département* of Val-de-Marne.

Figure 2.10

Location of Fontenay-sous-Bois within the *département* of Val-de-Marne (adapted from Orgeco S.A. Rond Point 93, 1992. *Analyse des résultats du recensement 1990, Service des Affaires Economiques, Mairie de Fontenay*).



By contrast with La Courneuve, Fontenay-sous-Bois is historically a place of residence for the lower middle-class wishing to escape from the commotion of Paris to enjoy a calmer country lifestyle (see 2.3.0 above). Its industrial development is relatively recent (dating from the end of the *Trente Glorieuses*[58]) and does not involve heavy industry.

The population of Fontenay is larger than that of La Courneuve, at 51,855 inhabitants. The majority of this population is aged between 20 and 60, the younger age group (under 25) representing approximately 16%. The demographic characteristics of Fontenay bear similarities with those of most French towns: the younger age group

[58] The "*Trente Glorieuses*" era refers to the 30-year period of high economic growth which started after World War II and ended with the oil crises in the seventies. This period is associated with the improvement of socio-economic conditions in France which led to its relative prosperity in materialistic terms.

decreasing, the older increasing with the middle age group remaining stable, implying a general ageing of the population.

The unemployment rate is slightly lower than the national average (10.8%) at 9.1%, and affects particularly immigrants as well as a young population which increasingly is economically inactive: 17% of young people of working age are unemployed, as are 15% of the population of immigrant origin, against 8% for the French. The immigrant population represents 11% of Fontenay's inhabitants. Economic activities principally concern the secondary and tertiary sectors: 38% of Fontenay's inhabitants belong to the lower middle class, generally non-manual employees, while the working class represents 14%. A significant section of the population consists of executives and professional people, at 23%. The residential status of the town is underlined by the fact that only 29% of its population actually work in the neighbourhood.

Although a *grand ensemble* project has been undertaken in Fontenay, it was carried out within a *ZAC, Zone d'Aménagement Concerté*[59] programme (see 2.3.2 above). An intensive building period took place between 1975 and 1982, although 40% of its accommodation was built between 1949 and 1974. This explains why 75% of Fontenay's housing is collective, this type of construction being favoured in these periods (cf. 2.3.1 above). A small majority of accommodation (53%) is rented, of which 26% consists of social housing. 5% of tenants in social housing have an income low enough to entitle them to 100% housing benefit. Thus overall the socio-economic profile of Fontenay is that of a lower middle- to higher working-class *banlieue* town, with a similar (if less large-scale) collective style of housing.

2.6.5 Street-culture in Fontenay-sous-Bois

It is difficult to state clearly whether this slightly better-off background might have restrictive effects on the presence of a street-culture. The social marking of Fontenay's *cités* is relatively insignificant compared to that of *Les 4000* for instance. Most young informants recorded in Fontenay during the fieldwork admitted that the town was "une

banlieue calme". The number of unemployed young people and of immigrants in Fontenay is smaller than in La Courneuve. The size and structure of its housing is not comparable either. In Fontenay, most *cités*-type buildings are found in smaller clusters and are more dispersed in different locations of the town.

However, the presence of a street-culture and of a *grand ensemble* mentality was frequently observed among the informants recorded in the Fontenay *cités*. A majority of the young people concerned belong to strong peer-groups, mainly from the main *quartiers* of the town. According to some of our informants, fights with youths from Fontenay's neighbouring towns (e.g. Rosny-sous-Bois) were not unusual. The adolescents we observed spent a lot of time "hanging out" in staircases, at the entrance of buildings and other types of public spaces and were deeply involved in hip-hop type activities (notably graffiti writing and rapping).

What is particularly interesting is that during discussions with young informants from Fontenay, the rhetoric was similar to that heard in La Courneuve. The adolescents saw themselves as being isolated both geographically and socially, rejected integrative and mainstream behaviours and relied heavily on the peer group to forge their identity. It will thus be interesting to investigate the presence of vernacular forms in our Fontenay speakers.

2.7.0 Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that our fieldwork sites are inhabited by an urban population which is geographically and socially isolated, multicultural and belongs for the most part to the working class. As we will see in Chapter 3, all these factors have a propensity to favour sociolinguistic variation, specifically of localised non-standard forms. In our case, these forms seem to be linked to collective living in the *grands ensembles* and *cités*, which prompt amongst the youth the creation of strong street peer groups and the rejection of mainstream societal values. These *grands ensembles* are typically found in the northern and eastern *banlieue* of Paris. The study of language in

---

[59] Mixed housing development zone [my translation].

the *banlieues* and particularly that of the *petite banlieue* of northern Paris should therefore prove very fruitful from a sociolinguistic point of view. For our purpose, we have selected two differing *banlieue* towns. La Courneuve is typical of the deprived *banlieues* model (see 2.2.1 above), while Fontenay-sous-Bois has a slightly more favoured socio-economic profile. The choice of these two locations will allow us to evaluate the degree to which vernacular forms of the *cités* are localised[60]. Before examining our own data, however, it is instructive to consider findings from earlier studies which have addressed similar issues.

[60] We will not give a strict comparison between the two populations of the two towns as such, as this would have required a longer and more logistically demanding period of fieldwork. Rather, we will investigate the presence of vernacular forms in informants from Fontenay as part of the overall corpus (see 4.5.1 for a description of the corpus).

CHAPTER 3: SOME ISSUES IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE

3.0 Introductory

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: firstly, the relevant sociolinguistic background will be discussed in order to understand the theoretical and methodological choices[61] which were made in studying vernacular accent forms of the *cités*. The second objective of the chapter is to evaluate the present state of sociolinguistic research in French phonology – specifically that concerning French in the *banlieues*. This should enable us, thirdly, to select the linguistic variables of interest for analysis at the end of this chapter.

3.1.0 Sociolinguistic variation

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the present study adopts a variationist framework, i.e. focuses, using quantitative methods, on the correlation between linguistic and social factors, with a view to unveiling the social mechanisms involved in processes of linguistic diffusion and change possibly in progress in metropolitan France.

Although Gauchat (1905) was the first scholar to have studied the co-variation between social characteristics and linguistic features[62], it is Labov, who, in a series of groundbreaking studies (1963, 1966, 1972a, 1972b) quantitatively demonstrated the highly systematic nature of linguistic variation. Crucially also, he developed a methodology[63] to investigate it. Before Labov, scholars had widely dismissed linguistic variation, especially in large urban centres, as being of little theoretical interest.

However, Labovian studies in large urban centres (see Labov 1966, 2001, Trudgill 1974, Macaulay 1977 among others) have, since the 1960s, amassed a conclusive amount of

---

[61] See Chapter 4 for a fuller description of these.
[62] It is interesting to note that this first study focused on French. It was carried out in the village of Charmey, Switzerland.
[63] The adaptation of these to the present study context is discussed in Chapter 4 below.

evidence on the regular patterning of linguistic variation in its social context and have convincingly shown, among other recurring findings, more use of non-standard forms in the lower social groupings, a greater propensity in women to adopt more non-local prestigious forms of speech than men, a tendency in all social classes to adopt more standard features in formal socio-situational contexts and a proclivity on the part of lower-middle class speakers to lead linguistic change in the direction of a prestige norm. The adoption of a Labovian approach is thus very suitable for studying variation in Paris and represents an opportunity to test the paradigm in a metropolitan French context.

3.1.1 The synchronic observation of linguistic change

What makes the Labovian framework particularly suitable for the present work is that it is concerned with the involvement of linguistic variation in processes of linguistic change. Indeed, the presence of variation is of tremendous importance to Labov in that it can represent a synchronic indicator of linguistic change in progress.

Labov (1972b: 123) makes a distinction between changes which speakers consciously participate in, and which take place above the level of conscious awareness (called *changes from above*), and those changes which go unnoticed by most speakers for a long period of time, since they are influenced by social pressures below the level of conscious awareness (called *changes from below*). Generally speaking, a large majority of linguistic changes from above tend to go in the direction of prestigious or standard forms of speech. Perhaps the most famous example of a change from above was described in Labov's study of New York department stores (1972b: 122-42). Studying the speech of sales staff in three different department stores of differing prestige, Labov showed that r-insertion in words like *fourth* and *floor*, a prestige feature of American English, was directly proportional to the perceived prestige of each department store and increased when more attention was paid to speech across all three stores' staff.

3.1.2 Changes from below

In contrast with this type of change which tends to be prompted by mainstream societal pressures, Labov has shown that other types of social dynamics acted as counteracting sociolinguistic forces and could impose low-prestige norms in the face of dominant mainstream values.

3.1.3 Harlem

In his Harlem study (1972a), Labov showed that close-knit street networks have the capacity to resist the dominant societal pressures and impose low-prestige linguistic norms. Studying the vernacular of large street gangs of Harlem teenagers, Labov noted that the integration to a peer group provided a cultural and emotional alternative to dominant prestige values such as those of belonging to a family or getting an education. The influence of such an alternative set of cultural values is so strong that it allows the maintenance of vernacular norms within the peer group. Labov also observed (1972a: 255-85) a direct correlation between extent of integration into the street peer group structure and low-prestige vernacular forms. We shall see that the similarities between the vernacular of Harlem teenagers and the vernacular of the *cités* is striking, as so far as the relation between social structure and linguistic variation is concerned.

3.1.4 Martha's Vineyard

Labov's earliest work shows that some social practices which go against mainstream societal pressure by imposing low prestige or local forms of speech are so powerful that they can prompt linguistic change. This is illustrated by the linguistic survey of English in Martha's Vineyard (1963: 273-307).

Situated three miles off mainland America (as part of the state of Massachusetts), and with a relatively small permanent population of 6000, the island represented for Labov an ideal self-contained environment for an exploratory study. The island was also interesting because 30 years previously, a linguistic survey had been conducted amongst the old families of Martha's Vineyard, thus allowing a comparison 'in real time' with an approximate time gap of a generation.

Labov conducted 69 interviews among the permanent population of the island (thus excluding visitors and tourists) and classified his informants according to age, sex, social class and ethnic background. He also elicited different speech styles according to attention paid to speech. When he compared the previous survey to his own results, Labov noticed that diphthongs [ai] and [au] in words like *life* and *house* tended to be centralised by local islanders to [əɪ] and [əʊ]. Most speakers did not show large degrees of stylistic variation, suggesting that they were not aware this change was taking place in their speech. The most prominent users of centralised diphthongs were speakers between 31 and 45 years of age, living in the western parts of the island in the town of Chilmark. Labov also observed that, regarding professional activities, it was the fishermen from Chilmark who showed the highest figures of [əɪ] and [əʊ] diphthongs. Somehow, it seemed that these diphthongs had diffused from the speech of Chilmark's fishermen into that of the islanders, particularly those of English descent.

Labov went on to investigate the social motivation behind this change. When looking at the previous linguistic survey, he discovered that the centralisation of the diphthongs was not a new phenomenon but was in fact a tendency which was already present in the speech of the island's fishermen. This pronunciation was inherited from old-fashioned forms used on the mainland in the 18th and 19th centuries. There was also some evidence that these diphthongs had almost disappeared on the island and merged with those used on the mainland (i.e. [ai] and [au]). This almost-completed change had reversed and reverted to the original pronunciations in the speech of the fishermen. This group of the island's population had therefore exaggerated a tendency which was already there. This however did not account for the diffusion of the centralised diphthongs amongst the 31 to 45 year-old Vineyarders. Labov realised that the answer to that question was to be found in the socio-economic characteristics of the island.

Indeed, Chilmark was once the epicentre of a flourishing whale-fishing industry. However, at the time of Labov's survey, the fishing industry only employed 2.5% of the island population, most of the island's workforce now working in tourism. The

population of Martha's Vineyard increases to approximately 40,000 every summer when the tourists holiday from the mainland. This cyclical demographic boom divided the island and its population in various ways: geographically, tourists and all industry services associated to tourism tended to be concentrated in the eastern part of the island (commonly called *Down-Island* by the islanders). Socially, this sudden growth in population was resented by many locals who live permanently on the island. This was aggravated by the fact that many of the non-permanent residents (known by locals as the *summer people*) had bought secondary properties in the area. Most of the permanent population of island descent (and specifically Chilmark's fishermen) tended to be found in the western part of the island, in an area called *Up-Island*.

Labov showed that the diffusion of the centralised diphthongs was motivated by the fact that Up-Islanders wished to distinguish themselves from the *summer people*. They adopted the fishermen's pronunciation because this group of people, living in close-knit communities and being the most opposed to the tourists' incursion, symbolically represented true Vineyard identity for most Vineyarders. This hypothesis was confirmed by the fact that the highest rates of centralised diphthongs were found in the speech of speakers permanently residing on the island and who had no desire to leave for the mainland (unsurprisingly, these speakers were mostly aged 31 to 45 years old). In contrast, and specifically in the younger population, fewer centralised diphthongs were used among speakers who planned to migrate to the mainland and find work there.

According to the model provided by Martha's vineyard, linguistic changes from below take place in a series of overlapping stages: at stage one, a non-standard feature exists in the speech of a particular social group (Chilmark's fishermen retained the old-fashioned centralised diphthongs). At stage two, a second social group, identifying with the original group models its speech behaviour to symbolically resemble the group they identify with, exaggerating the first group's linguistic features (Up-Islanders). At stage three, these new linguistic features gradually become the norm (most 31 to 45 year-old islanders of English descent adopt the centralised diphthong as the local norm). At stage

four, new social groups model themselves on this norm (other age groups and islanders from other ethnic backgrounds).

The above model of change is pertinent to the present study in two respects, social and linguistic. Clearly, as illustrated above in 2.4, the enclosure found in Paris *banlieues* somewhat resembles the social (and geographical) isolation of Martha's Vineyard. One could symbolically think of Paris inner cities as islands[64] whose population refuses the incursion from the mainlanders, i.e. here mainstream societal values. Furthermore, like Labov's Vineyarders, the *banlieues* population seems to be in the process of adopting non-standard linguistic features, to highlight their resentment and difference.

3.1.5 Social network theory and *banlieues* accent

A Labovian analysis based on broad extra-linguistic categories (such as social class, sex, etc.) is well adapted to highly stratified urban societies. However one of the major issues arising from the study of sociolinguistic variation in the less well-off *banlieues* of Paris is that their population is socially rather homogenous. Further theoretical and methodological background was therefore needed to ensure that this problem could be accounted for. Sociolinguists (see notably Milroy 1987a and 1987b) whose research priorities concern the speech of socially excluded, homogenous, close-knit populations similar to those of deprived *banlieues* have adapted social network theory to study this issue. Social network theory provides a micro-model of society which is different to the ('classic') macro-division of a community into social classes. Instead, in social network theory, society is seen as the sum of smaller tight-knit social units (or networks, e.g. a group of friends) linked together by looser social ties, (or weak ties, e.g. a friend of a friend).

An individual's social network is defined as the sum of relationships which an individual has contracted with others (Milroy 1987b: 105), and varies according to the quantity and quality of its ties. Networks can be dense (every individual involved in the

---

[64] See Chapter 2, section 2.6.3 regarding the feeling of enclosure felt in the *grands ensembles* and the centre vs. periphery concept of territory symbolically built by the *cités* population.

network knowing every other individual) and multiplex (individuals knowing one another in several capacities, e.g. individuals being both workmates and neighbours). By contrast, a network can be loose-knit (individuals knowing only one other member of the network) and uniplex (individuals having only one common activity or link). A set of indicators measuring multiplexity and density (see Milroy 1987a: 141-44) can be assigned to each individual and the sum of these indicators gives a network strength score. The purpose of such a score is to show the degree of integration of an individual within a group or community. This is of sociolinguistic interest as it can explain how sensitive an individual is to the normative pressure of the group or community in which s/he is integrated.

The underlying hypothesis behind using this ethnological concept as a speaker variable is that close-knit social networks (i.e. very dense and multiplex ones) might act as norm-enforcement mechanisms, and hence explain the maintenance of peer-group vernacular forms[65] within these socially homogenous communities. The correlation between the maintenance of non-standard vernacular features and strong network ties has been amply evidenced by previous studies and does not need for that reason to be discussed further here. The reader is however referred to Milroy (1987a), Laks (1980), Cheshire (1982), Eckert (1988, 2000), Edwards (1992) among others for a fuller account. Incidentally, Labov's work in Harlem (see above in 3.1.3) prefigures sociolinguistic studies using social networks; Labov was one of the first linguists to quantify the relationship between local membership and linguistic behaviour. In more recent work on Philadelphia neighbourhoods (see Labov 2001: 325-65), he makes more explicit use of social network theory.

A social network approach is thus a useful analytical tool for the present study, for both theoretical and methodological reasons: firstly, Milroy and Milroy (1992: 6) state that a "network approach is more feasible with groups who are economically marginal, or powerless, or resident in homogeneous and territorially well-defined neighborhoods",

---

[65] It must be noted however that the maintenance of group forms by strong ties does not solely concern vernacular forms.

which is the case for much of the *banlieue* population living in the *grands ensembles.* Indeed, as described above in 2.2.4.1, the communities living in the Paris *banlieue*s are extremely close-knit as a result of the enclosure and proximity provided by the neighbourhood. But the main interest of using social network theory for the present study is that it provides explanations on the social mechanisms involved in the maintenance and diffusion of linguistic forms. In Chapter 4, section 4.5.8 we describe the social network methodology adapted to the present study.

3.1.6 Weak ties and linguistic diffusion

The second advantage of applying social network theory in this case is that it can also account for processes of linguistic diffusion. Indeed, if strong ties within social networks act as a norm-enforcement mechanism and thus maintain localised vernacular features within a group, loose-knit ties (or weak ties) have a contrary effect, in that they seem to facilitate linguistic diffusion.

The importance of weak ties is underlined by Granovetter (1973) who argues that they provide cohesion on a larger social scale: they constitute external connections between the close-knit networks that exist within communities. Since weak ties provide easier access to socio-cultural or socio-economic innovations, they are more likely to spread them. External pressures are more likely to be exerted through this kind of tie, as weak networks tend to be non-localised and less group-normative. It is not implausible therefore that such weak ties act as 'exporters' of localised phonological forms. We argue in Chapter 4 that the adoption of *banlieues* forms via weak ties within the 1998 sample illustrates a potential for the social diffusion of highly localised vernacular forms.

3.1.7 Weak ties and linguistic change

As described above, social network theory is used to explain linguistic diffusion from one close-knit network to another via weak ties. Similarly, this can be adapted to account for language change: the key idea is that linguistic change is more likely to be

introduced through weak network ties. As these appear to link close-knit clusters across communities (Milroy and Milroy 1992: 17), and tend to exert external pressures (Milroy and Milroy 1985: 187), linguistic innovation is more likely to be transmitted through them rather than through strong ties.

Labov's (2001) findings from the study of linguistic variation and change in Philadelphia recently brought confirmatory information on this viewpoint. However, it appears that "the leaders of linguistic change [...] show an unusual combination of centrality [within their network] with a high frequency of social interaction outside of their immediate locality" (2001: 364). Individuals with these types of ties thus seem necessary for linguistic innovations to spread successfully. In the case of Philadelphia, these individuals were upwardly mobile, upper working-class women.

In the context of the present study, it is therefore not implausible that *cités* pronunciation features could be propagated by looser ties between close-knit networks, thus diffusing accent forms of the *cités* into the entire French-speaking community. We need however to consider what social forces are capable of propagating such changes.

3.1.8 The influence of non-mainstream values

Labov (2001: 516) suggests that one of the most powerful forces which drive linguistic change is the desire on the part of speakers to go against the established norms of their community:

> 1 The Nonconformity Principle: *Ongoing linguistic changes are emblematic of nonconformity of established social norms of appropriate behavior, and are generated in the social milieu that most consistently defies those norms.*

What Labov observed in Philadelphia was that the speakers who were leading the linguistic change were not only upwardly-mobile, upper working-class women (see directly above), "but women with a particular ability to confront established norms and the motivation to defy them" (2001: 516).

In the context of the present study, it is felt that nonconformity is again the motivating force behind the development of vernacular forms of the *cités* amongst the youth of the *grands ensembles* (see Chapter 2, sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Furthermore, it is strongly believed that street-culture is instrumental in conveying covert prestige to the accent of the *cités*. Although this accent is not regarded as overtly prestigious by the dominant classes of society and would probably prompt a rejection of its speaker in a formal speech event (at a job interview for instance), it is nevertheless (covertly) prestigious at the peer-group level, conveying for its user a tough, street-wise image, which is very attractive to adolescents dwelling in the *grands ensembles*. The term 'covert' is used here because prestige of this type is often not openly acknowledged.

The correlation between a high use of vernacular forms and a high degree of adherence to non-mainstream values has been documented by a number of studies (see notably those of Labov 1972a in Harlem, Cheshire 1982 in Reading, Eckert 1988, 1989, 2000, 2003 and Edwards 1992 in Detroit and Laks 1980 in Villejuif). This is also tested in the present study: the scale described in Chapter 4, section 4.5.8 below measures the informants' degree of integration into the street-culture. This is in turn correlated to their use of *banlieue* accent features.

3.1.9 Kroch's theory of linguistic change

Social networks seem to enable us to understand variation and change in close-knit communities like those found in the *banlieues*. Kroch (1978) offers a theory of *the kind* of linguistic changes which might generally be observed. Interpreting the findings of variationist scholars such as those discussed above, Kroch (1978: 21) hypothesizes that many phonological changes are "phonetically motivated processes"[66] and that their diffusion is primarily due to their "linguistic character". These processes are listed below as:

---

[66] By *phonetically motivated*, we mean that these changes require less articulatory effort. We avoid the term "natural" here (for a discussion on "natural" linguistic changes, see notably Trudgill 1989).

a) consonantal simplifications
b) vocalic processes of chain shifting
c) assimilations of foreign phonemes to a native pattern.

According to Kroch's hypothesis, the lower classes seem to be the main instigators of linguistic change because of their greater propensity to adopt the phonetically conditioned changes listed above. Although he acknowledges that these processes cannot "all be reduced to a simplification of some sort" and that "[s]implified articulation is just one of the possible manifestations of phonetic conditioning", he admits that "[i]t happens to be a very common one that covers much of the available data" (Kroch 1978: 23)[67].

Kroch (1978: 31) adds that the higher classes contrastingly tend to adopt a more conservative attitude towards new linguistic forms when these become noticeable to them. This conservative behaviour is motivated by a desire to distance themselves symbolically from the lower classes. He states that "a process of suppression [then] begins in the upper middle class and slowly spreads downward through the social hierarchy" (Kroch 1978: 31). It is through the association of low prestige value to these forms that this suppression process is implemented. The linguistic changes which the higher classes introduce tend to go against the phonetic processes mentioned above in a), b), and c). As an example, the higher classes tend to retain the original pronunciation of foreign words, although it involves articulating sounds which are alien to their phonological system (Kroch 1978: 29).

Examining this model, Trudgill (1995a) argues that linguistic change and its typology may not be ideologically motivated as Kroch suggests, but rather be related to the degree of contact between populations speaking different varieties as well the structure of the social networks found in these populations. Trudgill (1995a: 8) argues that low-contact

---

[67] Interestingly, Gadet (2003: 82) states that "les thèmes de la simplicité et de la simplification, qui frôlent le risque des surinterprétations idéologiques, ont souvent été avancés pour illustrer la différence entre standard et populaire » (see 3.3.1 for a definition of *français populaire*). She adds (2003: 83) that this idea has since convincingly been invalidated by Berruto (1983).

societies are more likely to be close-knit and therefore more prone to develop and maintain complex (or rather less phonetically-motivated) linguistic forms. In contrast, in societies where high contact between social groups is found, simplification-type changes are likely to take place. Trudgill illustrates this with the comparison of high-contact Norwegian and low-contact Faroese, two Scandinavian languages having Old Norse as their common ancestor. He states (1995a: 9) that

> the sound changes which have occurred in Norwegian in recent centuries have been rather more natural and expected, and rather less complex, than many of those which have occurred in Faroese. For example, the vowel shift undergone by many varieties of Norwegian such as that /a:/ > /o: > /u:/ > /ʉ:/ strikes no linguist as being at all strange [...]. On the other hand, Faroese changes such as "Verschärfung", whereby forms such as /kigv/ developed from earlier /ku:/ "cow" and /nudž/ from earlier /ny:/ "new" [...] are intuitively felt by many historical linguists to be rather unusual.

Leaving aside the issue of the typology of change, Labov's findings on linguistic change in New York (1966) and Philadelphia (2001) tend to run counter to Kroch's model, which sees the lower classes as the initiators of change. Labov has observed that (2001: 32):

> the innovating groups were always located in an upper working class, or lower middle class [...] Thus the crucial division in the society from the point of view of language change was not middle class vs. working class, but rather centrally located groups as against peripherally located groups.

Nevertheless, Labov later states (2001: 510):

> The mechanism of change that has been disengaged from the Philadelphia Neighborhood Study, and from Eckert's work in the Detroit area, is a different view of the operation of social class, and yet not very different from Kroch's. Although the most advanced speakers are to be found in the upwardly mobile groups, they build on and develop changes that originated in the lower working class. The basic concept is that linguistic change is a deviation from accepted norms: it is a type of nonconformity to the dominant patterns of society.

Beside feeding the debate over the social origin of linguistic change, the present study represents an ideal opportunity to test Kroch's hypothesis on the typology of change with data collected in the context of the French *banlieues*. The articulatory nature of the linguistic variables selected (see 3.3.0 below) will thus be considered with this objective in mind. The general theoretical background of the research now presented, we turn to the more specific evaluation of sociolinguistic research undertaken within a French context.

3.2.0 Previous sociolinguistic studies in French

The sociolinguistic literature on French is relatively substantial but very few studies are directly relevant to the present study. Besides, most sociolinguistic studies focus on the Canadian varieties. An important part of the variationist work carried out in Canada has resulted from the collection of large corpora, notably those of Sankoff and Cedergren collected in 1971 in Montreal and of Poplack collected in 1981 in Ottawa-Hull.

It is also rather regrettable from our point of view that most variationist studies with French as prime focus have been concerned with morpho-syntactic rather than phonological variation. Blanche-Benveniste and JeanJean (1987: 201-9) list 47 corpora of spoken French and classify the different research by level of linguistic enquiry. Overwhelmingly, out of 14 categories, 12 deal with syntax and morphology.

With regard to metropolitan French, the dearth of sociolinguistic research, especially at the phonological level has been amply remarked upon (see *inter alia* Lavandera 1981: 157, Green 1990: 2, Gadet 1995: 75 among others). It has frequently been argued (see

for instance Green 1990: 2-3) that this lack of interest in Labovian variationism on the part of French linguists was due to a stronger hold in France of traditional methods of investigating variation such as dialectology and philology. It has also been stated (Green 1990: 2-3, Armstrong 1993: 15) that phonological variation is of less sociolinguistic importance in France because of the high degree of standardization French has undergone. Indeed, regional and social variation is found at a significantly lower degree in the phonology of metropolitan French (leaving aside the broad north/south dialect division) when compared to American or British English. This has led Lodge (1993: 256) and Armstrong (1993: 274, 2001: 10) to hypothesize that socio-stylistic variation in French is perhaps more clearly marked in syntax and lexis.

3.2.1 Previous studies in French phonology

A number of studies have nevertheless elected to focus on phonological variation in French. A detailed discussion of the literature directly relevant to each of the variables of interest will be given in the relevant chapters. Therefore, only the general framework of research in French phonology necessary to place the present work in context will be sketched here.

Scholars dealing with metropolitan varieties of French have, with some exceptions (see directly below), retained an essentially functionalist perspective, following the tradition developed in particular by Martinet (1945, 1962, 1974) and Walter (1976, 1982). Martinet's and Walter's main sociolinguistic focus has been to show the presence of phonological variation in the standard variety of French, i.e. the variety spoken by a majority of middle-class educated speakers living in the northern and central half of the Hexagon. Their main findings are the relative stability of the French consonant system, the loss of length as a contrastive feature in vowel phonemes, the merger of open vowel phonemes /a ~ ɑ/ and nasals /ɛ̃ ~ œ̃ / and the strong tendency on the part of mid-vowels to occur in complementary distribution.

Martinet (1945) was also the first French linguist to investigate regional variation using quantitative methods but, as stated above, did so from a functionalist perspective, (i.e.

he studied the maintenance of phonological contrasts within his informants' phonological system arguing that the loss of some opposition was linked to their relatively low functional load, affecting few minimal pairs, e.g /ɛ̃~ œ̃ / in *brin* and *brun*). He also based his findings on self-reporting speech and not on direct observation. Martinet's (1945) study presents a division of French territory into 12 zones according to regional pronunciation. Two other studies (Walter 1982 and Carton et al. 1983) have somewhat refined this regional division.

Interestingly, all three studies mentioned above distinguish Paris from the rest of France, although other scholars[68] who have studied variation in the capital broadly confirm the phonological trends observed in standard French by Martinet and Walter (cf. above in this section). The major difference which seems to distinguish Paris from the rest of northern France and from standard French seems to be the higher maintenance of the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition in Parisian speech.

3.2.2 Previous Labovian studies in France

Studies of French undertaken within a broad Labovian framework have shown interesting sociolinguistic patterns. These, however, are very few in number, the Labovian model having been "applied only by a small number of English-speaking linguists [...] or significantly remoulded by French researchers to suit the local circumstances" (Green 1990: 2).

A substantial amount of corpus-based work in French phonology has focused on schwa-deletion (Laks 1980[69], Armstrong 1993, Hansen 1991, Armstrong and Unsworth 1999), liquid-deletion (see Laks 1977, 1980, Ashby 1984, Armstrong 1993, 2001 among others) and variable liaison (Ashby 1981, Encrevé 1983, 1988, Green and Hintze 1990, 2001). The general trends related by those studies are more segment-deletion in the lower social groupings, among males and in less scripted speech styles; studies also report an overall decrease in use of variable liaison across generations (see for instance

---

[68] See notably Reichstein 1960, Léon 1966, Deyhime 1967, Dauses 1973, François 1974, Mettas 1979 among others.

[69] A more detailed discussion of Laks's 1980 study is given below in 3.2.3.

Green and Hintze 2001). The choice of schwa-deletion, liquid-deletion and liaison as linguistic variables has undoubtedly been motivated by their higher degree of socio-stylistic salience in French.

Other variationist studies have dealt with different phonological variables than those above, but a detailed review of these is beyond the scope of this chapter. Without giving an exhaustive list, the reader is however referred to Peretz (1977) and Lennig (1978) who also report a neutralisation of the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition in the vowel system of Parisian French[70], to Lefebvre (1991) and Hornsby (1996, 1998) on the varieties of northern France, to Taylor (1996) and Armstrong and Unsworth (1999) on the schwa in French spoken in southern France.

The variationist studies which are the most relevant to the present study are those of Pooley (1996: 298-303, 2001) in the Lille region of Northern France and Pickles (2001) in Perpignan, situated in the Languedoc region of Southern France. They need further mention here, for they deal in part with urban youth French whilst taking into account the ethnic origin of speakers.

Pooley (1996: 298-303, 2001) observes fewer regional features in the speech of his young male informants of North African origin than in those of their female counterparts and speakers of metropolitan origin. He argues (2001: 191) that young *beur* males are less integrated than *beur* females into the local peer-groups and thus feel less loyal to regional values and regional linguistic norms.

Pickles (2001) recorded a sample of young informants in six different secondary schools of Perpignan, in the south of France. He divides his informants into four major categories according to their ethnolinguistic backgrounds: a) Non-meridional[71] origin; b) Catalan origin; c) Hispanic origin and d) Maghrebi origin. What he observes across

the variables he studies is a general convergence of his informants towards a more northern pronunciation and variation in /r/ according to ethnic background (see below in Chapter 6, section 6.5.6).

3.2.3 Previous studies explicitly focussing on *banlieues*

Following Labov's (1972a) work on teenager groups in Harlem, Bernard Laks (1977, 1980, 1983) was the first French sociolinguist to study the speech of a group of teenagers living in a working-class *banlieue*. He carried out fieldwork in Villejuif, south-east Paris, within a variationist framework. He remarks (1980: 390-1) that the speaker variables usually used by sociolinguists (e.g. age, social class and schooling among others) do not provide information about the internal structure of the group he studied and therefore conceal possible explanations for the linguistic variation found within it. Indeed, according to the 'traditional' speaker variables mentioned above, his group of teenagers was highly homogeneous (the youngsters were all working-class males) but displayed heterogeneous linguistic behaviour.

Using ethnological criteria (see tables 2 and 3 in Laks 1980: 256-57), Laks was able to analyse the internal structure of the group, dividing his informants in two sub-groups:
a) the *dominants*, who were more strongly influenced by the mainstream dominant culture.
b) the *dominés*, who were closer to the street-culture and non-mainstream values.

Laks observed that it is the *dominés* who tended to adopt more non-standard forms (such as liquid-deletion). The adoption of vernacular forms by the group was thus highly correlated and indeed proportional to the informant's level of integration into street-based groups and the street culture. This echoes the findings of Labov in Harlem (see 3.1.3 above). Labov observed that *lames* (teenagers or individuals who gravitate

---

[70] These two studies are described in more detail below, since their analyses of /A/ in Parisian French makes them directly relevant to this study.
[71] *Non–meridional* here refers to speakers who originate from the northern half of the Hexagon, speaking varieties of French with *oïl* dialectal substrates. Only figures concerning these speakers have been retained here as southern varieties of French solely have front /a/.

around street groups but are not integrated into them) show lower rates of vernacular forms than teenagers who have a more central position in the street peer-group.

Laks's Villejuif study did not take into account variation according to sex or ethnic origin. The sociolinguistic literature focusing on *banlieues* or urban speech which has followed Laks's study in the 1980s has progressively given more weight to the ethnic factor, for several related reasons: firstly, immigration laws (the ending of the migration flux in 1974 and the 1976 rights of immigrant families to re-unite) changed the nature of immigrant life in France (Billiez, J., Krief, K., Lambert, P., Romano, A., Trimaille, C. 2003: 34). For the first time, male workers who regularly came to work in France could settle in the Metropole with their families. This in turn prompted the problem of the linguistic integration of youth from immigration backgrounds (e.g. within the French education system). A demand for a better understanding of the linguistic practices and needs of these populations was thus created and notably prompted the creation of the *CNRS*-sponsored *GRECO*[72] *13 Migrations Internationales* in 1978 to coordinate research on immigration across the various fields of Humanities and the Social Sciences.

Sociolinguistic research on urban youth speech with a focus on ethnicity also developed in the 1980s under the influence of an increased representation of ethnic groups in the press and in sociological studies (see notably Bachmann and Basier 1985 and 1989). Chevrot, Germanou, Merabti and Pillakouri (1983) thus mark the beginning of an era in terms of sociolinguistic work on adolescent urban speech which takes ethnicity into consideration. Focusing on the speech of 19 adolescents in the Grenoble region, they observe higher rates of non-standard forms[73] in adolescents who have had a short or technical type of schooling. They also note more non-standard forms among males. Although their sample does not explicitly take into account ethnicity as an independent variable, Chevrot et al. imply that the use of non-standard forms is greater among

---

[72] Or *Groupement de Recherches Coordonnées*.

[73] Chevrot et al. are essentially concerned with the morpho-lexical level of linguistic analysis. The non-standard forms they observe are essentially: a) the use of slang with a foreign origin (Romany, Arabic

youngsters from immigrant backgrounds, as this group is over-represented among their speakers with short or technical types of schooling.

Scholars working in Grenoble (see notably Billiez 1979, 1985a, 1985b, 1992, Billiez et al. 2003) have been very active in sociolinguistic research on the youth vernacular spoken by adolescents from immigration backgrounds. Although they tend to adopt an approach which is essentially qualitative and interactionist, Billiez and her team have found evidence of linguistic variation among the youngsters from immigrant background they studied. Billiez (1985a and 1985b) showed for instance differences amongst young arabophones and hispanophones in their attitudes towards their respective background languages. Among other findings, Billiez notes that many youngsters of Arab origin claim Arabic as their own (as part of their identity) although their competence in the language is very poor or non-existent.

Following the work carried out in Grenoble, most of the sociolinguistic literature on *banlieues* French focuses either:

a) on multi- or bilingual practices such as code-switching and inter-ethnic speech (see for instance Dabène and Billiez 1986, Meratbi 1991; Billiez 1992; Binisti 2000; Tétrault forthcoming);

b) on similar linguistic strategies to express ethno-social identity but in the written medium (e.g. in rap music texts, see among others Billiez 1996, Gasquet-Cyrus et al. 1999, Trimaille 1999a and 1999b);

c) on referencing and explaining the etymology of slang and of lexical and morpholexical innovations (see Goudaillier 2001, Boyer 1997);

d) on different encoding processes such as *verlan*, a back slang which gives *zicmu* for *musique* for instance (see Bachmann and Basier 1984, Méla 1988, 1991 or Plénat 1995, Doran 2002).

---

varieties) and b) the use of encoding processes such as *verlan* and *javanais* and suffixation in *os*, *av* (as in *graillav* = to eat).

All these studies are very good sources of variation on the morpho-lexical level with a strong focus on slang. Very few studies have focused on the syntax of *banlieues* French, perhaps because this linguistic level does not seem to present major innovations when compared to the lexis or to non-standard syntactic features of standard French (Gadet 2003: 86). Among others, the reader is referred to Conein and Gadet (2000: 42-44) Gadet (1998: 20-1, and 2003: 86) or Liogier (2002: 47), who both relate a tendency on the part of *banlieue* speakers to avoid complex syntactic structures.

To our knowledge, even fewer studies have focused on the phonetic and phonological features of *banlieues* French and none have done so within a variationist framework. Studies which have explicitly focused on the phonetic and phonological characteristics of *banlieue* French have been exclusively qualitative in nature. Gadet (1998, 2003) based her observations on extracts of conversations recorded in the Paris *banlieues* by her students but does not adopt a quantitative approach. Romano (in Billiez et al. 2003: 45) who conducted spectrographic measurements of the speech of eight adolescents[74] from a *banlieue* of Grenoble describes sex differences in the use of *banlieue* features (see 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 below for a description of these) but offers no quantitative account of the correlation between linguistic and extra-linguistic variables. The present study aims therefore to fill some of the lacunae in the sociolinguistic research on *banlieue* French.

3.3.0 Selection of variables

Before discussing the selection of the variables for the present study, let us first review the different phonological features which Gadet and Romano report as emerging in the French *banlieues*. We will add observations drawn from our own corpus. It is important to point out here that these features are not restricted to Paris but seem to be shared by similar multicultural and socially isolated groups speaking urban varieties of contemporary French. As we will see below, these features of *cités* French have both 'conservative' and 'innovative' aspects. They also seem to include features emerging outside the *banlieues*, in more standardised varieties of French.

3.3.1 The 'conservative' aspects of *banlieue* accent

Conein et Gadet (2000: 40) consider that the accent of the *cités* "perpétue la langue populaire[75] décrite entre le début du siècle et les années 40-50" (see Bauche 1920; Frei 1929; François 1985; Gadet 1992 for a description). As examples of this, she states (2000: 41) that it retains the simplifications of consonant clusters, and the assimilations and deletions mentioned above in section 3.2.2. An example of simplification would the dropping of /g/ and /k/ in context /ɛ/_{/s, z/} {/p, t, k/} as in *expliquer*: [ɛsplike]. This is extending to context /ɛ/_{/s, z/} V as in *exception*: [ɛsɛpsjɔ̃].

Impressionistic observations during fieldwork, (discussed in Chapter 4 below), suggested that the variety of *banlieue* accent we observed in La Courneuve also presents similarities to working-class Parisian speech, in that it involves a high frequency of back [ɑ]-use. The back [ɑ] can occur in all environments and syllabic positions (open or closed) as in: *la table* [lɑtɑb]; *c'est grave, là!* [segʀɑ:vlɑ]. In word-final position, [ɑ] is often backed and raised, sounding close to [ɔ] (*je ne sais pas* [ʃpɔ]).

This high degree of back [ɑ] use in the *banlieue* French spoken in La Courneuve seems in contradiction to what has previously been reported in the literature. Indeed, although it has been mentioned above that back [ɑ] was a typically working-class and Parisian feature (which explains its presence in our data), its use is reported in the more recent

---

[74] Four males and four females, mostly from immigration backgrounds.

[75] Gadet's definition of *langue populaire* refers to the "formes de langue orale les plus sensibles aux influences externes parce que les moins fixées, et les moins sensibles à la norme et aux prescriptions de la langue écrite" (1998: 11). She adds elsewhere (1992: 122) that "[l]a frontière entre français populaire, entendu comme langue des classes populaires, et français familier, usage de toutes les classes dans des contextes peu surveillés, est floue, et même, pour la plupart des phénomènes, inexistante." Gadet (1998: 12) notes that *langue populaire* is not a reflection of any "réalité linguistique", but a stereotype, which is the "produit des jugements spontanés des locuteurs". She nevertheless uses it, for the term is widespread in the literature. As the term carries social connotations but is also linked to informal styles of speech, it is rather inappropriate for the present sociolinguistic study. The more general term *non-standard French* seems rather more relevant.

literature (see Chapter 7, section 7.2) as increasingly obsolete, the phoneme /ɑ/ being involved in a near merger with phoneme /a/.

3.3.2 The innovative aspects of *banlieues accent*

As mentioned above, if the accent of the *cités* retains most features of non-standard French, it also seems to be at the forefront of phonetic changes observed in more standardised varieties of French (e.g. in the educated middle-class speech observed by Fónagy 1989). Fónagy (1989) and Carton (2001) observe the following trends currently emerging in standard French:

- the progressive neutralisation of contrasts between nasal vowel phonemes /ɑ̃/, /ɛ̃/ and /ɔ̃/;

- the nasalization of oral vowels as in *comme ça* [kɔmsɑ̃];

- the palatalisation and affrication of dental and velar plosives especially before /i/ and /ɣ/;

- schwa tagging, especially in prepausal position, as in *Claudine!* [klɔˈdinᵊ] (see notably Hansen's 1997 study of Parisian French or Carton 2000);

- the fronting of /ɔ/ to /œ/ (cf. Martinet's article "C'est jeuli, le Mareuc!", 1958);

- the devoicing and frication of high final vowels as in *merci*: [mɛʀsiç] , *j'ai vu*: [ʒevyç] and *tout*: [tux];

The similarities in this list with certain features of the vernacular of the *cités* are striking. In Billiez et al. (2003: 45), Romano lists the following as the most salient features of *banlieues* French in his sample collected in the *banlieues* of Grenoble:

- the affrication of dental plosives before high front vowels [i], [y]; according to Romano (2003: 45), both males and females seem to follow this trend with the same regularity;

- the palatalisation of velar plosives before close front vowels and open front vowels; although palatalisation and affrication (which are similar and related linguistic phenomena, see Chapter 6, section 5.1 below) are not restricted to *banlieues* speech (Carton 2001: 9, Romano 2003: 45), it seems that their presence is particularly marked (in terms of frequency and quality) in this accent;
- the devoicing of final vowels; this is for Romano (2003: 46) a typically female feature, although it is also found to a limited degree in the male speakers he studied;
- non-standard realisations of /r/, such as a laryngealised vowel variant and a strongly fricative variant, found specifically among male speakers. Pickles (2001) also reports a strident and strong articulation of /r/ among his male informants, specifically those of Northern African origin;
- innovations at the supra-segmental level such as the stressing of unstressed syllables and the use of marked intonation patterns. This is for Romano (2003: 48) very salient amongst his female informants.

To complete the above list, the following features have been observed in our own data[76]:

- raising of [ɔ] towards [o] as in *la mort* [lɑmoʁ̥ʔ], *la police* [lɑpolis];
- closing of [ɛ] to [e] before an uvular approximant in final position as in *ta mère* [tɑmeʁ̥ʔ], *j'suis vert* [ʃɥiveʁ̥ʔ] (on this, see also Gadet 1998: 19, 2000: 41);
- raising and lengthening of [œ] towards [ø], particularly before /r/ as in *j'ai peur* [ʒepøːʁ̥];

Impressionistically in our data, the consonants appear to follow most of the innovative trends described above, but the following two features are particularly noticeable:

---

[76] The different features listed here derive from the careful listening to two informants recorded during the pilot study in April 1998. The two speakers who were selected for their speech impressionistically seemed to be very representative of the accent of the *cités*. Both informants were 17: one male, one female. They both came from an immigration background (although they were themselves born in France) and belonged to the working class.

a) the palatalisation of dental and velar plosives seems to be very frequent as in contexts exemplified by *mon quartier* [mɔ̃kʲaʁtʃʲe]. It also very often results in the marked affrication of dentals and velars as in respectively *tu dis* [tʃydʒi] and *donc* [dɔ̃kʃ] and in the emergence of palatal consonants as in *enculé* [ɑ̃ɟyle] or [ɑ̃cyle];

b) high levels of allophonic variation in the realisation of /r/, including:
- the strongly fricative articulations of /r/, similar to those reported by Billiez (1992: 120), Romano in Billiez et al. (2003: 46-9) and Pickles (2001: 143-5).
- an approximant realisation of /r/ articulated very far back in the oral cavity, in the pharynx area.
- a seemingly innovative glottalised realisation of approximant [ʁˤ], most noticeable in final prepausal position as in *ta mère*: [tɑmeʁˤʔ]. To the best of our knowledge, this feature is not reported in any study, although the presence of glottal stops in French has been studied by Malécot (1975, see Chapter 7, section 6.5.9 below).

3.3.3 Linguistic variables selected for analysis

The conservative and innovative aspects of *banlieues* French listed above make the accent a potentially rich source of information on linguistic diffusion and change. We have selected three variables as being of particular interest for this study.

Two of these seem to be of the type observed in Martha's Vineyard, i.e. linguistic forms which are present among certain groups or populations but which have been adopted and exaggerated by the *banlieues* speakers of our sample. These two features are back [ɑ] and the palatalisation of dental and velar plosives. If the same forces which drove change in Martha's Vineyard are operating here[77], our task will be to identify the origin

[77] The parallel with Martha's Vineyard here lies more in the structure of the communities involved (i.e. close-knit communities) and in the social motivation for change (i.e. in a desire to state local identity), rather than in the type of linguistic variants selected by the speakers. In Martha's Vineyard, the variants adopted by the young islanders were obsolescent features of an older island dialect. This does not hold for young *banlieusards* who seem to be adopting both forms from the 'traditional' working-class speech of Paris and more innovatory features (see 3.3.1and 3.3.2 above).

of the adoption process, as well as the social mechanisms and motivations involved in the diffusion of change.

The third feature of *banlieue* French which deserves further investigation is that of non-standard /r/-realisations: specifically, glottalised /r/ (noted [ʁ̞ʔ]) seems truly innovative and has previously not been reported anywhere else in France. It also appears to be alien to the French phonological system. Its possible diffusion cannot therefore be attributed to a Martha's Vineyard-type of change from below. Given the unusual nature of this variant, and a high degree of allophonic variability in the /r/ phoneme generally, we shall investigate the possibility of a correlation between use of /r/ allophones and ethnic background. The presence of phonological variation across ethnic groups has not been widely researched in France within the variationist framework. The present study provides such an opportunity, bearing in mind that the presence of such variation might be indicative of a linguistic change in progress.

3.4 Conclusion

The research gaps which emerge from the literature review are thus both theoretical and empirical: firstly, it has been shown that theoretical models (such as Labov's change from below and the social network theory of diffusion and change) which have successfully been used in English-speaking contexts, have only been applied sporadically in metropolitan France. This is surprising, given the similarity between the social context of the French *banlieues* and that studied by Labov in Martha's Vineyard or by the Milroys in Belfast (i.e. self-contained close-knit communities).

Furthermore, from an empirical point of view, very little research (especially of the variationist kind) has been carried out on the phonological aspects of *banlieues* French. This is also surprising, as this accent appears at the forefront of innovative phonetic trends which have been observed both cross-regionally and across social classes by recent research.

Three particularly interesting phonetic features, the palatalisation of dental and velar stops, non-standard realisations of /r/ and the realisation of archiphoneme /A/ have been selected for analysis on a linguistic basis: all three features occur frequently in our sample; they are also all broadly non-standard but not widely used forms. However, back [ɑ] and palatalisation are both features which can be said to exist at a latent level in the phonological system of French while the selected non-standard realisations of /r/ (notably glottalised [ʁʔ]) seem genuinely innovatory. The purpose of this selection is to investigate the relationship between the phonetic nature of these variants and their potential for linguistic diffusion. We now thus continue on to the description and analysis of our corpus.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

The selection of the linguistic variables now explained, the purpose of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the methods adopted to collect and analyse the linguistic data which forms the basis for the present study. The fieldwork is firstly discussed in terms of methodology. This is followed by a description of the social characteristics of the population sample collected. We conclude with specific data related issues such as statistical testing.

4.1.0 Sample and data collection

4.1.1 The pilot study

The first fieldwork stage took place in April 1998. Walter (1982: 18-9) stresses the importance of including a pilot study within any piece of sociolinguistic research, stating that it represents a "première étape obligatoire de toute recherche sérieuse [...] qui conditionne et justifie l'étude des divergences dans la communauté" (1982: 19). The present pilot study had no strict quantitative objectives. Indeed, Milroy (1987b: 115) states that pilot studies "need not be ambitious in scope or very systematically organized", that they "help identify unexpected difficulties of many kinds and offer guidelines to overall design". The present pilot study was thus primarily undertaken to provide an impressionistic account of the phonological particularities of the vernacular of the *cités*; to construct a small population sample in several Parisian locations; to act as an icebreaker with possible contacts and evaluate the recording conditions which would be found on site; and finally, taking all these factors into account, to help prepare and maximise the effectiveness of the main fieldwork period.

4.1.2 Contacts

As the pre-fieldwork was to be conducted in a short period of time (ten days), it was felt that a random sample would take too long to collect. It was thus decided to opt for the

collection of a judgement sample (cf. Milroy 1987b: 19-28 for an explanation of the differences between random and judgement sampling). Moreover, as reported in the literature (see for instance Coveney 1996: 5 or Lennig 1978: 9-10), random samples are difficult to obtain from speakers in France, owing to a high rate of refusals for interviews. A similar judgement sampling method was used for the main fieldwork in summer 1998.

The informants were approached through clubs and societies, in order for these to act as locations where intermediaries were available to facilitate making contacts. It was also felt that the vernacular of the *cités* would be found with more regularity in the speech of the younger age group. In order to get access to such a population, it was decided to approach young people through youth clubs. As a large part of the sample would in effect be minors, it was indeed felt wise to work with official institutions such as these, and to conduct the recording of the younger age group under their aegis. Coveney (1996: 12) adds that using youth centres represents "a considerable advantage, as it [is] possible to get to know people quite rapidly, and to become, in effect, a temporary member of these temporary communities".

The search for contacts started in November 1997, via three main media:

a) through the intermediary help of a colleague, a short list of clubs and societies involved with young people living in the Paris *cités* was given to the researcher. A package presenting the research was sent to each of the listed addresses, together with the promise of a telephone call within ten days of reception. Only one organisation seemed enthusiastic about the research and requested more information: the *Service Jeunesse*[78] of La Courneuve (northern Paris). A meeting with the fieldworker was arranged for April 1998, during the school holidays.

b) As a need was felt for a back-up procedure in finding youth associations, it was decided to make a second approach, through more official bodies. The *Ministère de la*

---

[78] The *Service Jeunesse* is a council-run organisation which provides educational and leisure activities for the young population of French localities.

Jeunesse et des Sports was contacted and very helpful assistance was given by an official working at the service *Jeunesse-Vie Associative*. She appeared very enthusiastic and subsequently put the researcher in contact with the *Service Feu Vert*. This society provides the young population of poor Parisian estates with a street-based service in a range of educational and community matters: its principal aim is to reintegrate youngsters at the margins of society. One of the long-term roles of *Feu Vert* is for the youngsters to find a home of their own and eventually a job or a training scheme. A meeting with *Feu Vert* was also arranged for April 1998.

c) It was also decided to approach people in a random[79] fashion when on location, in order to test the response of the French public to the fieldworker. As vernacular forms of the *cités* was thought to be associated with hip-hop culture (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.1 below), it was felt that the researcher should try if possible to interview potential informants at events related to graffiti, rapping or break-dancing. This resulted in getting to know and record a group of youngsters belonging to a rap band, located in Fontenay–sous-Bois (see below in 4.2.2 for more detail). In another instance, a family member of the researcher and one of his friends, both dwelling in the south-western suburbs of Paris (Versailles) were also recorded.

4.1.3 Places of investigation for the pilot study

Five locations were investigated during the pilot study fieldwork: three suburban areas (La Courneuve, Fontenay-sous-Bois, Versailles) and two in Paris *intra-muros*[80] (*19ème* and *20ème arrondissements*). The selected areas were interesting on account of their differing socio-economic features, and illustrated the geographical distribution of the population presented in Chapter 2, section 2.3.1 above. As described above in 2.6, La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois have considerably different socio-economic characteristics, the former being essentially working-class while the population of the latter ranges for the most part from upper-working to middle class. Although no

[79] In a non-technical sense.
[80]Literally "within the walls". This expression is often used to describe the city of Paris itself, without taking the *banlieue* into account.

statistics were gathered for Versailles, it is traditionally seen as an upper-middle class town. The two Paris *arrondissements*, *19ème* and *20ème,* were selected on the grounds that they shared similar characteristics with the deprived towns of the *petite banlieue* with a significant working-class population, large concentrations of immigrants, and buildings from the *grands ensembles* period (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.2 above). It was thought that it would be interesting to investigate the distinguishing features of the accent of the *cités* within Paris itself.

4.1.4 The pilot study sample

20 informants were recorded during fieldwork for the pilot study in the five locations listed above. The sample was not controlled for age, sex or social class in a systematic way, although care was taken to ensure the collection of a varied informant sample. The emphasis was laid upon recording as much teenage speech as possible, since the vernacular of interest was thought at this preliminary stage to be an adolescent phenomenon. Conein and Gadet (2000: 40) state that the phonological characteristics of the vernacular of the cités are particularly salient and that they allow a rapid identification of its speakers. The qualitative analysis of the tapes from the pilot study enabled the researcher to observe the interesting phonological features of the vernacular of the *cités* described in Chapter 3, section 3.3 above. It also confirmed the researcher's impression that the presence of accent features of the *cités* was not dependent on the informant living in a *banlieue* but rather that it was prompted by social factors. Indeed, these forms were present in the speech of lower-class youngsters living in deprived multi-cultural settings within Paris, such as the *grands ensembles* of the *19ème* and *20ème arrondissements.* The expression "*accent des banlieues*", commonly heard in the French media thus seems inaccurate; the expression *accent des cités défavorisées* (deprived estates accent) would seem more accurate.

4.2.0 Main fieldwork: summer 1998

The main fieldwork for the present study was carried out from 14th July 1998 to 31st August 1998: this relatively short period of six weeks consisted of intensive recording

sessions, taking place in La Courneuve on week days, and Fontenay-sous-Bois at week-ends. This unequal distribution of the workload between the two towns was due to the fact that the *Service Jeunesse* of La Courneuve, the main contact for the research, was closed at weekends, and that these days were usually the only days when the contacts in Fontenay were available. The other locations investigated during the pilot studies were left aside for practical and logistical reasons: investigating further sites such as the *19ème* and *20ème arrondissements*, (as well as Versailles) would have been too time-consuming and too costly in terms of transport. Focusing on two sites also allowed a higher degree of integration into the local communities we investigated (see below in 4.3.0 and 4.3.1).

4.2.1 Contacts in La Courneuve

Most informants, especially those belonging to the younger age group were met through the intermediary of the *Service Municipal pour la Jeunesse* (or *SMJ*) of La Courneuve. As was explained above, the time constraints of the fieldwork imposed the collection of a judgement sample.

The *Service Jeunesse* provides adolescents aged from 12 to 17 with a range of cultural and sports activities, aiming to educate and socialise them. Holidays to French provincial locations or abroad are also offered, as well as homework tuition at night during the school periods. Contacts were established with the *Service Jeunesse* during the pilot study of April 1998. Although it was difficult to win over the *Service Jeunesse* chairman and all the youth leaders at the first meeting, the permanent team director and at least four out of five youth leaders had shown some enthusiasm for the project. It was later discovered that this reluctance had been prompted by a defensive attitude towards La Courneuve's social marking (see above in 2.6.3) and by the fact that previous research fieldwork which had been undertaken through the *Service Jeunesse* had been unsuccessful. A failure to bond with the young people, and thus gain their confidence, seemed to have been the problem. Bonding with informants is seen by Lepoutre (1997: 10) as a primary condition for participant observation, which relies on the fact that

informants cannot "be constantly aware they are in the presence of a researcher" (Burton 1978: 168-9 quoted in Milroy 1987b: 61).

The interest of working with the *Service Jeunesse* is that it offered access to four different *maisons de quartier*, distributed within the *4000 Nord*, the town centre, and the *4000 Sud*. The variety and range of young people for the study sample was therefore reasonably large. Nevertheless, since a sole researcher was to carry out all the recordings, it was decided with the team director initially to base the fieldwork in one of the youth clubs.

Beaufils was ideal for the fieldwork, for its facilities comprised a large common room, in which most of the socialising took place, and three smaller and more intimate rooms in which it was easy to record in reasonably good acoustic conditions. In the beginning of August 1998, when all the potential informants of the club were interviewed, it was decided to try to circulate between at least three clubs, targeting informants according to which sample cells needed to be filled. *Beaufils* was still kept as a base, while the *Club Edgard Quinet* (town-centre) and the *Maison Pour Tous Guy Moquet (4000 Nord)* were used as sites for recordings which had previously been arranged with informants.

One of the main advantages of the youth-club structure was that the adolescents were divided into two age groups, the 12-14 and the 15-17 year-olds. This guaranteed a fairly homogeneous age sampling. Furthermore, as certain youth leaders were allocated to supervise either the older group or the younger group, participating in the activities of both groups made it easier for the fieldworker to familiarise every member of the team with his presence and project. As mentioned above, a high level of reluctance towards the research was encountered at the start of the fieldwork, especially during the pilot study. However, the *SMJ's* team director offered the fieldworker the position of *animateur stagiaire* (trainee youth leader); this entailed the supply of free meals, free photocopying and telephone services, which were very helpful, given the limited budget available for the study.

The team director of the *SMJ* was also very helpful for networking purposes within La Courneuve. He introduced the fieldworker to two popular local figures who helped the fieldworker to integrate into the town centre's social life. One of these locals was the owner of a bakery-café situated in the heart of La Courneuve, and many informants were encountered through the café. Milroy (1987b: 66) successfully used this "friend of a friend" approach in her own fieldwork in Belfast to 'legitimise' her presence and obtain more spontaneous speech.

Word of mouth was also a powerful tool for making contacts: one interesting recording session took place in *Beaufils* with a speaker who had heard about the study from one of the youngsters, and who contacted the fieldworker directly after work to volunteer for an interview. Although too old to belong to the youth club, this informant was a former participant in its activities. On another occasion, random interviewing took place in the *Parc de la Mairie* of La Courneuve, on a day when the *SMJ* was closed and none of the Fontenay speakers could be contacted. Unsurprisingly, the refusal rate was very high.

A non-governmental body, the *APEIS* (*Association Pour l'Emploi et l'Insertion Sociale*), was used to collect recordings from a population older than that found in the *SMJ*. The *APEIS* is a national society aiming to help the unemployed with the administrative side of benefit-claiming by providing them with free telephoning and photocopying services, as well as by minimizing the social isolation of long-term unemployed people. The fact that unemployment affected more the unskilled than the skilled population was a reasonable guarantee of finding manual or working-class people at the *APEIS* office. This was also true for immigrant speakers of French. Contact with *APEIS* was suggested by the *SMJ* and the researcher was told he could liaise with the unemployment society using the *SMJ* as a reference. Staff at the *APEIS* were very keen to help, and promised to introduce the fieldworker to as many informants as possible. As the office was only open on Monday and Wednesday mornings, it was decided to maximise the contact time by arranging meetings outside office hours with speakers who could not spare sufficient time for recordings.

The *voirie* (service for the maintenance of council amenities) was also contacted through the *SMJ*, as the contacts obtained through the *APEIS* were felt to be quantitatively insufficient for the purpose of obtaining a satisfactory sample size. The *voirie* is run by the council, performs a range of maintenance services, including the collection of refuse, the cleaning of streets and roads, and the upkeep of public parks. This service was chosen on the same criteria as for the *APEIS*: it guaranteed access to adult manual workers, and a high proportion of adult immigrants. Moreover, the team manager organised a meeting between the researcher and his staff in order to find volunteers and explain the aim of the study. Age was also a consideration in selecting informants at the *voirie*, as only speakers in their forties were interviewed. The fact that the *voirie* staff could do a one-hour interview during their working hours whilst still getting paid probably explains the enthusiasm of certain informants for the research. An unused office was also provided for the interviews, allowing reasonably good recording conditions. Nevertheless, the staff at the *voirie* was exclusively male, which had consequences for the sample structure (see 4.5.1 below).

4.2.2 Contacts in Fontenay-sous-Bois

The Fontenay informants were first met during the pilot study in April 1998 at a hip-hop festival organised by the *Service Jeunesse* of Fontenay-sous-Bois. The approach focused initially on interviewing the band about their music, and only subsequently, once an amicable relationship had been established, was the primary interest of the research explained. The group was very cooperative in the April recording sessions.

Two full-time members of the band and three of their friends had been recorded during the pilot study. When the fieldworker returned to the town in summer 1998, one band member, who had not been recorded in April, was keen to help. A meeting was arranged with him and a fellow member in the Bois de Vincennes subsequent to which a long interview took place.

The fact that the fieldwork was divided between La Courneuve and Fontenay did not allow the researcher a large degree of flexibility. Furthermore, the fact that the fieldwork

took place in the summer meant that many potential informants belonging to the Fontenay network were away on vacation. Nevertheless, the band's DJ (Disc Jockey) played an extremely useful role: he arranged two further interviews with acquaintances. He also showed himself to be a good secondary 'fieldworker' in the sense that his participating presence during the interviews ensured a relaxing atmosphere for the new informants.

4.3.0 Status of the fieldworker and interview strategy

The status of the fieldworker often changed according to where the research was taking place. In La Courneuve, the researcher was seen more as an outsider by the adults met through the *APEIS* or the *voirie*; within the youth clubs, this changed to that of a member of the educational team. In Fontenay, the type of relationship to the informants was rather that of a peer. These three broad types of status required differing approaches in order to obtain interviews.

4.3.1 La Courneuve

In La Courneuve, in order to collect spontaneous data from both adolescents and adults, the fieldworker had to adopt different integrative strategies. Little difficulty was encountered with adults. A direct approach was chosen in the request for interviews, although the time and place of the recording was usually arranged for a later date. This had the advantage of allowing the informants to accustom themselves to the idea of being interviewed, and to develop a certain degree of informality at the second meeting.

Although the fieldworker had had experience as a youth leader in the past, integrating into the adolescents' and the *SMJ* team's micro-community was relatively challenging. The attitude of the fieldworker to the youth team was similar to that to the adults described above in 4.2.1. Nevertheless, a strong friendship developed with certain members of the team and the insights gained from them into how to integrate with the adolescents were immediately put into practice. As mentioned above, the fieldworker was given by the *SMJ* team the title of trainee youth leader but one who was "involved

in a project on language". This allowed him to be firm in threatening situations, which asserted the researcher's place within the community; it also helped him gain respect, as adolescents try to test the limits of adults' authority. It also explained the fieldworker's slightly silent presence, especially in the first days. It was sometimes felt that this twofold status was contradictory, as situations sometimes led the fieldworker to sanction behaviour he was trying to observe (e.g. arguments between youngsters, or similar confrontational situations, where a high degree of very low register speech - such as the exchange of strong insults - was heard). It was nevertheless necessary to adopt this attitude, so as to maintain status within the group and in order to be able to remain part of it. It also gained the approval of the team as a certain input of help from the fieldworker was appreciated.

The researcher was formally introduced to the clubs' groups by the team, and the reason for his presence was briefly explained, as it was the clubs' policy that trust could not develop without telling the truth. The team also admitted that if a cover story had been adopted, the chances of rejection from the group would have been too great if the true purpose of the fieldworker had been uncovered[81].

In the youth clubs, several integrative techniques were adopted. The first important factor was simply the constant presence of the fieldworker in the adolescents' environment, initiated in order to be associated with the life of the club. Even if joining in was not made easy during at first, the young people's jokes were acknowledged by smiles and laughter, in order to assert a non-threatening physical presence. As a cordial relationship developed, attempts were made to share jokes, stories or expressions with each individual, in order to maintain a daily bond with the youngsters. For instance, the scores of miniature football or table tennis from the day before were recalled, in order to prompt a new challenge. This clearly underlines the importance of participating in activities for the purposes of integration into adolescent groups. From the first day, the

[81] Milroy (1987b: 87-93) relates a dearth of formal ethical guidelines regarding sociolinguistic fieldwork. She nevertheless advocates (1987b: 90-3) that as in any field situation, a deep knowledge of local customs and a profound degree of awareness of cultural differences remain strong guarantors of good practise. As a

fieldworker joined in games of football and play fights, progressively gaining the attention and confidence of the group, as well as finding a social space and status within it. Doing overtime was also essential in showing the young people that the interest of the fieldworker for them was not purely research-oriented. Joining in the jokes, or in long intimate talks about the teenagers' problems or helping with administrative difficulties helped develop genuine friendships with some of them.

The development of such friendship can however have disadvantages. Milroy (1987a: 55-6, 1987b: 90) relates the development of similarly strong friendship ties with her Belfast informants. She adds (1987b: 90) that at "the end of the observation period, it was extremely difficult to loosen these ties" and that she sometimes felt that she was taking advantage of some of her informants' "need to talk through their problems with a sympathetic observer". Similar feelings were often experienced in La Courneuve, especially with informants who had socio-economic difficulties and might have been, in the words of Milroy (1987b: 90) using the interviews as makeshift "therapy sessions". With hindsight, the nature of sociolinguistic fieldwork (like any other type of participant observation) does generate this type of ambivalent feeling and is an unavoidable consequence of successful data elicitation.

4.3.2 Fontenay-sous-Bois

As in La Courneuve, the attitude of the fieldworker towards the Fontenay informants was intensively integrative, in the sense that the rituals, (i.e. the adoption of the custom manner of shaking hands, hip-hop style of clothing), were respected and copied. Providing the band with cigarettes and exchanging popular music material created bonds between the band and the fieldworker. The fact that the majority of the Fontenay informants were young adults facilitated a direct approach and the choice of topics for the interview discussions, since the age difference with the researcher was reduced.

---

rule of thumb, she adopts Labov's (1981: 33) general principle which states that the researcher should "avoid any act that would be embarrassing to explain if it became a public issue".

To summarise methodologies on both research sites, a significant amount of effort was invested in establishing informal types of relationships with our informants. For that reason, it is felt that the fieldwork was very successful in recording large amounts of spontaneous speech. Relying on integrative methods of observation was also a very suitable method for getting insights into the lives of Paris *banlieusards*. We now turn to the issue of data elicitation.

4.4.0 The interviews

The length of the interviews varied between 45 minutes and three hours. On average, when the first side of a 90-minute recording-tape was full, the fieldworker turned the tape over and allowed fifteen more minutes before stopping the interview. This method had the twofold advantage of minimizing the timing of discussions while securing the recording of one hour of speech per informant. For the adolescents, it was decided that no recording should be made until the fieldworker had spent at least half a day with the informant, or participated in a common activity beforehand. This had two aims: it guaranteed the building of mutual trust so as to prompt a more natural style of speech within an informal interview while allowing time to observe the speech of the informant interacting with peers, in order to check impressionistically whether any shift towards a more formal speech style took place during the interview.

Group interviews between three or four informants were also encouraged, although the majority of the recordings were on a one-to-one basis. The adolescents were welcome to join in interviews, as it has been shown (Blom and Gumperz 1972; Milroy and Milroy 1978; Reid 1978; Cheshire 1982 as cited in Milroy 1987a: 28), that the presence of peers acts as a group-norm enforcement mechanism and guarantees a more spontaneous style of speech. For reasons of sound quality, the taping of more than four informants, or recording in large rooms was always avoided.

Different approaches were adopted to ask for interviews, according to the age and sex of the informants: the younger age group was generally very enthusiastic about being recorded, but the older group was more reluctant. The strategy adopted for the latter

consisted in choosing first to interview the more talkative members of the group. It was thought that if the leaders had experienced recording and enjoyed it, more timid speakers would feel that they too could enjoy the experience.

The researcher was generally more direct in approach with male speakers than with females. This was probably due to the fact that the fieldworker was male himself and was more at ease with informants from the same sex. In his study of adolescents in Villejuif, Laks (1980: 78) states that he encountered difficulties when he approached the only female member of the group. As she was not a full-time member of the group, Laks decided to exclude her from his analysis. Milroy (1987a: 44-5) also mentions the importance of gender on fieldwork strategy. She states that a male fieldworker tends to be seen as a more threatening than a female one, this for obvious reasons. During fieldwork in Belfast, Milroy used the fact that she was female to her advantage, as she got access to her informants more easily. To address this issue during the fieldwork for the present study fieldwork, recording sessions with female teenagers were pre-arranged on set days, and a close friend usually accompanied the girls. Interviews with adolescents usually took place with a lesser degree of organisation. Topics were also sex-differentiated to some extent, although the set of questions was the same for every informant (a list of these questions features in Appendix 1, section 1.1). Female adolescents favoured more personal topics such as relationships, while males usually preferred to remain on a more general level.

4.4.1 Elicitation of stylistic variation

Three speech styles varying in formality were elicited: word-list style, reading-passage style, and interview style. These three speech styles range from the most formal to the least, being adapted from Labov (1972a: 70-109). Labov introduced the idea that linguists can obtain stylistic variation in experimental conditions, even in rapid anonymous surveys. This can be achieved by trying to influence the degree of attention a speaker pays to his or her speech (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.1 above). Thus Labov in his New York department stores survey distinguished between 'casual' and 'careful' styles, implying that speech style is regulated principally by attention paid to speech. However,

this model has been criticised by Bell (1984), who argues that stylistic variation is primarily influenced by the perceived status of the speaker's audience, which he names *audience design*.

This is illustrated by the case of one male informant, at the *club Beaufils* in La Courneuve: when asked if he would agree to do an interview, he addressed the fieldworker with an affected standard French accent, asking whether this was how he was supposed to talk during the recording. As he was told to speak just as when he interacted with his peers, he immediately reverted to a style closer to the vernacular of the *cités*. This showed the researcher that many adolescents possessed both styles and that they could switch from one to the other according to the formality of the situation or to assumed social status of the person they are interacting with. With this in mind, a significant amount of effort was put into making interviews as informal as possible (see below in 4.4.1). However, since the present fieldwork was being carried out by a sole researcher (thus limiting the possibility of varying the *audience* during an interview[82]), Labov's methods for the elicitation of stylistic variation were used, as the Labovian interview format remains a very practical tool (Milroy 1987b: 37).

During the interviews, the reading passages were read first, followed by the word lists (see the transcripts in Appendix 1). This was designed to elicit a more formal style at the beginning, by making sure the informant paid a maximum of attention to his or her speech. The informant felt that a test was taking place. The rest of the interview was dedicated to a more informal discussion to elicit a more casual style. It was felt that this order (from formal to informal) was generally successful in obtaining two broad types of speech styles (noted below as reading and interview styles): after the reading tests, the informants seemed to relax. Some commented on how glad they were that the tests were over and felt happy to start a more open form of conversation.

---

[82] It was impossible to organise interviews where I was not the interviewer. Group sessions without my presence turned out to be impossible to analyse as they were far too noisy to be exploitable.

4.4.2 Word lists

The word lists (see Appendix 1, section 1.3) and reading passages used in the present study are adapted from Lefebvre (1991: 59-70) and Fónagy (1989), although some words have been added to the list. The purpose of this was to increase the frequency of certain variables scarcely found in everyday conversation (Lefebvre 1991: 59-60). Lefebvre's word list was adopted because its coverage of the different sounds of French gave an exhaustive account of an individual's idiolect (Walter 1982: 76-7). Fónagy's (1989: 228) minimal pairs of French nasals were also used to investigate any possible merger.

4.4.3 Reading passages

Lefebvre's (1991: 64-5) reading-passage texts were used in the interviews, as they contained the words pronounced in the word lists. This had the advantage of providing two pronunciations of the same word, hopefully uttered at different levels of formality. According to Lefebvre, (1991: 64), the titles of the two reading passages, "Devoir de CM2" and "Conversation" have a psychological effect on the informant: the former gives the reader the impression of being subject to a test reminiscent of the classroom, while the latter invites a less careful style of reading.

4.4.4 Interview style

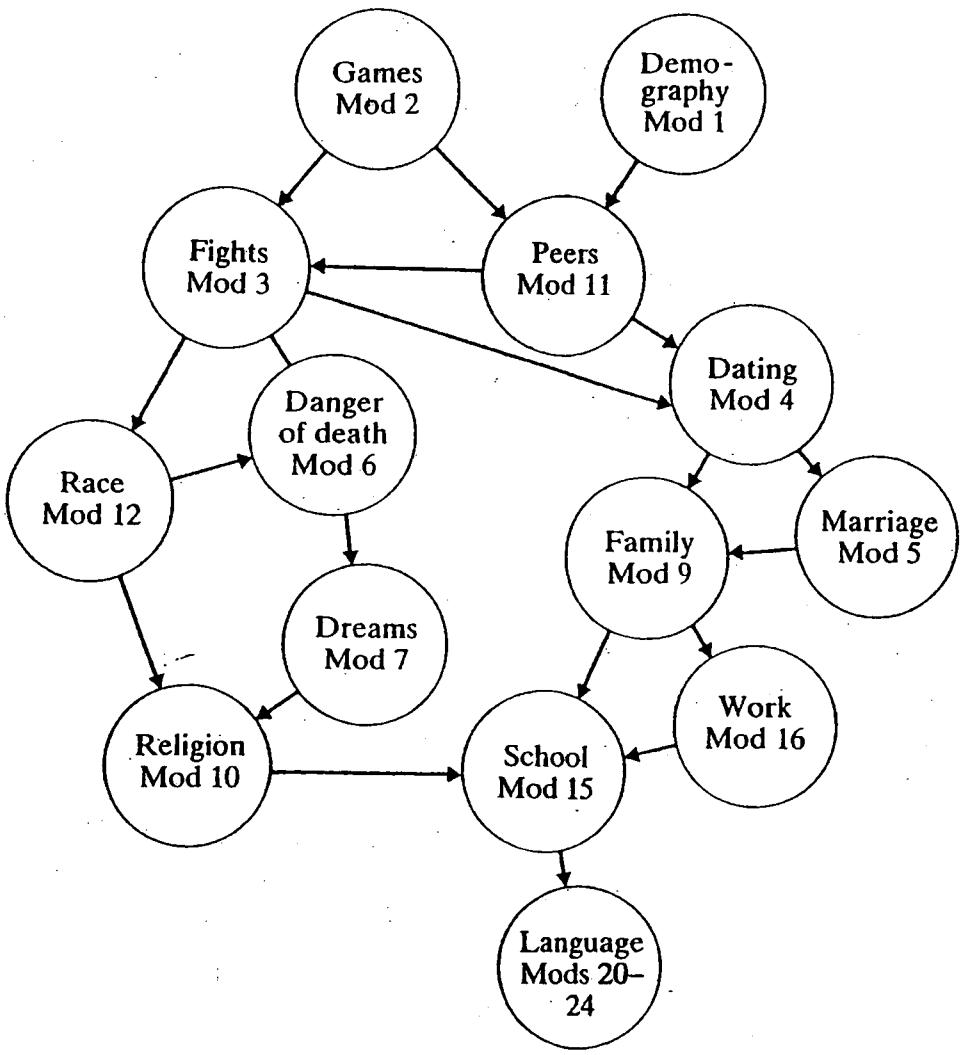
The main part of the interview was devoted to the elicitation of a more casual style. In order to facilitate such a style, it was felt important never to "dry up". A large number and wide range of questions were therefore prepared. The topics were aligned with adolescent interests in order to collect more relaxed speech in the manner of the *danger of death* question of Labov (1972a: 92-4). Although this method has not been successful in all sociolinguistic studies (see Milroy 1987b: 40 for a counter-example), it has been observed by Labov that when an informant is emotionally involved in the telling of a story, his or her speech tends to be less monitored, hence more spontaneous.

The questions were adapted from Labov (1981: Appendix as presented in Milroy 1987b: 71) and feature in Appendix 1, section 1. The interview strategy involves the prior selection of inter-related topics, from which the fieldworker can choose to start a discussion. A set of questions (or module) relates to a theme and each topic is interconnected in a network to several others by common linking questions as shown in figure 4.1 below:

Figure 4.1

Characteristic network of modules for adolescent or young adult speaker

(adapted from Labov 1981 in Milroy 1987b: 71)



This device imitates everyday conversation in the sense that digression is made possible. The key technique for recording a more spontaneous style of speech is to find a topic the interviewee is interested in, in order to encourage digression in the conversation. If the

informant seems to 'dry up' on a certain subject, the fieldworker can refer back to the questionnaire and try to initiate another digression.

The reason why digressions are important during an interview stems from the fact that they attenuate the observer's paradox (Labov 1972a: 209). Any linguist who tries to record natural or spontaneous language is faced with the observer's paradox. During an interview, "the speakers tend to modify their speech in self-conscious ways because they know they are being observed" (Trask 1997: 155). Thus during the recording, the artificiality of the situation is constantly recalled to the interviewee by the presence of the tape recorder and of the fieldworker. Milroy (1987b: 41-51) also underlines some limitations of the interview from this viewpoint. It is a speech event which, perhaps more than others, induces participants to follow the conversational maxims of relevance and brevity (Grice 1989: 26-31). An imbalance in the conversation roles is therefore created which has the twofold potential of creating an artificial discourse situation as well as reducing the amount of data recorded.

Against this, several techniques were applied during the fieldwork:

a) As argued by Milroy (1987b: 39), informants tend to forget that they are being recorded after a certain lapse of time. Douglas-Cowie (1978 as cited by Milroy 1987b: 39) argues that genuine casual style can be recorded after the first hour or so of recording. Interviews were thus conducted for a maximum amount of time. However, no significant style-shift cues (as described in Labov 1972a: 95) were observed after the first 60 minutes of interview. This was probably because, as described above in 4.3.0, the fieldworker endeavoured to get to know the informants prior to interviewing them[83].

b) A sweater was usually placed on the tape recorder to allow the informants to forget about its physical presence. This simple technique had a very beneficial effect on the recordings: some speakers even admitted that they had only been reminded they were

[83] This was obviously not always possible, especially with adults. In such cases, an effort was made not to record people straight away but to engage in an informal conversation the aims of which were to relax the atmosphere and gain the trust of the interviewee.

being interviewed at the moment when the fieldworker had had to change the side of the tape.

c) As the questions in the interviews dealt with personal issues, the informants could feel more emotionally involved. They were therefore more likely to answer the questions in a casual style and at more length. The questions were also designed to elicit a maximum of speech production. Therefore, they had to remain reasonably open and indirect so as to discourage the informants from being terse in their answers. Direct questions were nevertheless used at the beginning of the interviews to gather information on the speakers' social background.

d) As briefly described above, the ethnographic technique of *participant observation* was used whenever possible. Participant observation consists in the social integration of the researcher into the community or groups of interest, so as to reduce the informants' sense that an outside fieldworker is observing them (see Milroy 1987b: 79-81 for an evaluation of this method).

4.4.5 Recording equipment

All the recordings were made on a Sony TC-D3 with two plugged-in microphones: a Sony Stereo Microphone TC-D3 and a Signet mono directional. The microphones were linked to the dictaphone through a double input device. The advantage of this device is that the two microphones could be deployed separately within the recording space, gathering a wider range of voices in group sessions for instance. The fact that one of the microphones was mono-directional and the other multi-directional had two major advantages for the recordings. The Signet microphone placed close to an individual gave a high degree of clarity while the Sony microphone gave a clear recording of the general conversation if there was more than one speaker interviewed, or if the fieldworker's speech needed to be recorded.

The disadvantage was that the Sony microphone was of lower quality; although the voice of every person present during the interview (including the fieldworker) could be

heard, others were not at the same level of quality as that of the main informant. Being multi-directional, it picked up a large amount of ambient noise, especially in group recordings. Nevertheless, the recording of one single main informant at a time with maximum clarity being the principal objective, these two disadvantages did not compromise the general quality of the recording. The ability to follow the conversation between informants was too important to be jeopardised. The methods for data collection now described, we turn to the analysis of our sample.

4.5.0 Sample and data analysis

4.5.1 The corpus

Over the two periods of fieldwork, 55 informants were recorded. This allowed for the selection of speakers who showed the social characteristics suitable to our study. The sample whose behaviour will be analysed in the thesis is composed of 32 informants, selected both from the pilot study and the main fieldwork of summer 1998. The sample will sometimes be referred to as the *1998 sample.*

Our speaker sample was controlled with regard to four principal extra-linguistic variables: sex, age, social class and ethnic background. As described above in 4.4.1, stylistic variation was also accounted for. As the vernacular forms of interest were thought to be associated with the street-culture of the *grands ensembles*, a street-culture index score based on several criteria (see 4.5.6 below) was also designed to account for possible correlations with linguistic use.

4.5.2 Age and sex

Alongside a male-female distribution, it was decided that two main age groups should be distinguished: a younger age group, aged from 15 to 25, and an older age group aged from 30 to 50. This rather narrow gap between age groups was thought to be large enough to show age-related linguistic variation because it was felt that the adoption of suburban features drastically dropped or even stopped as soon as a speaker adopted a working life-style, or rejected the street-culture. A similar age classification is used by

Thibault (1983). Within the five age groups she considered, Thibault divided her younger informants into two groups, distinguishing *les jeunes* (15-23) from *les jeunes adultes* (24-35). The criterion for this distinction was the speakers' involvement in professional life or marriage. In this respect, Coveney (1996: 21) adds that "both marriage and employment have a significant effect on the individual's social network pattern, and consequently on their linguistic behaviour also". Furthermore, Lepoutre (1997: 24) argues that the rejection of street-culture occurs between 16 and 25 and corresponds to the time when young people project themselves on a wider social scale and accept the perspective of a working future. This consequently promotes the adoption of a different lifestyle, which shares similar features with that of the middle class.

Thus, the vernacular of interest was sensed as being incompatible with integration in the work environment. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to suppose that, by the age of 25 most speakers had entered the world of work while 30 was thought to be the age when speakers were likely to have adopted and accepted this sort of lifestyle. A larger generational gap might conceal the key age-period at which an abandonment of *cités* forms is occurring. It is not unlikely that a narrower gap between the two age groups, as selected here, might contrastingly have the potential to reveal at what age this (hypothetical) change takes place.

4.5.3 Nativeness

Following Armstrong (1993: 47), *nativeness* was defined as the criterion of having lived in the Paris region from the age of five. Five years old is thought to be the age when peer-group pressure starts to exert an influence on a child's speech. Armstrong's classification is based on Labov's (1970: 288-9) timescale for the acquisition of social dialects. Only one of the female informants of the older age group does not fulfil this criterion: OF30. She was nevertheless selected because since her teens, she had lived only in *grands ensembles* of Paris suburbs. She was also in regular and close contact with teenagers through her occupational activities. Another reason which motivated her

selection was that the overall sample lacked older females from working-class and metropolitan backgrounds.

4.5.4 Ethnicity

From the onset of the study, the vernacular of the *cités* was thought to have strong links with the population of young *blacks* and *beurs* of the *grands ensembles* (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.2 above). Nevertheless, the general impression received in Paris and its suburbs during the pilot study fieldwork was that informants from all ethnic origins largely shared vernacular features, as long as the age of the speaker(s) was approximately between 10 and 25. The majority of these features could not be allocated to any specific ethnic group.

This contrasts with the case for African American Vernacular English (AAVE), (described in Trudgill 1995b: 49-61). Interestingly, Great Britain shows similarities with the United States: although they are competent English speakers, the use of creole by young British-born Black speakers in the West Midlands is seen by Edwards (1997: 410) as a "positive assertion of their black identity and a rejection of the negative connotations placed on Black language by the dominant White society". The French model seemed in contrast with this, although phrases from Arabic dialects were used to some extent by north African youngsters to interact among themselves. The ethnic issue was therefore felt to be worthy of consideration.

It was furthermore felt that the innovative phonological forms of interest here were related in some way to the issue of ethnicity. To investigate this, informants were classified according to three different ethnic backgrounds: metropolitan origin, North African origin, and other origin. It was decided to group together all speakers of Maghrebi origin for two main reasons: firstly, it was difficult in practical terms to find equal numbers of speakers of Tunisian, Algerian and Moroccan origin. Secondly Lanly (1962) describes the phonology of North African French as one unified variety, although he accounts for geolinguistic variation within it. It was therefore felt that grouping Maghrebi speakers in one category still had the potential to reveal variation across ethnic

groups when compared to - say - the speakers of metropolitan origin[84]. Similar reasons prompted the decision not to distinguish between speakers of "other origin". The ethnic backgrounds of informants from this group were too diverse -The Comoro Islands (1 informant), the Ivory Coast (1), Mali (2), Portugal (1), Spain (2), Italy (1), Poland (1), to allow further sub-categorisation. As explained directly below, this would prompt a higher degree of statistical irregularity. As it was impressionistically felt that *cités* forms might be linked to *beurs*, what was deemed important for the "Other" group was that its informants were neither of metropolitan nor Maghrebi origin. Table 4.1 below shows the distribution of the 1998 sample informants with regard to ethnicity.

Table 4.1

Ethnic origin in the 1998 sample

Ethnic origin	Males 15-25	Females 15-25	Males 30-50	Females 30-50
Metropolitan origin	2	3	3	4
North African origin	3	4	2	2
Other origin	3	1	3	2

A minimum of 4 informants per cell is generally considered to be required for statistical robustness in sociolinguistic studies (Milroy 1987b: 21-2). The study of possible linguistic differences according to age, sex and ethnic origin will therefore have to be analysed with a relative degree of caution. However, when ethnicity is studied irrespective of the sex variable, a satisfactory number of informants is achieved as shown in table 4.2 below:

[84] Specialists of *beur* French agree on the possibility of considering North African French as one variety (J-P. Goudaillier and F. Aitsiselmi, p.c.).

Table 4.3

Informants by age and ethnic origin (1998 sample)

Ethnic origin	Informants 15-25	Informants 30-50
Metropolitan origin	5	7
North African origin	7	4
Other origin	4	5

4.5.5 Social Class

The definition of social class is a highly debated topic in sociology (Milroy 1987b: 98). In the present study a stratificational model of society has been adopted. It entails that a "class [...] consists of a group of persons sharing similar occupations and incomes, and as a consequence similar lifestyles and beliefs" (Milroy 1987b: 99). In this study, the speaker sample is thus controlled for social class and is adapted from the classification used by Armstrong (1993: 47-9). Armstrong conjointly uses two different social classification systems, that of Marceau (1977: 9) and that of Macaulay (1976), for the scale devised by the INSEE85 is unsuitable to Labovian types of study.

Indeed, most sociolinguistic studies are based on the Anglo-Saxon model of social stratification, which hierarchically differentiates between social classes: working, middle and upper class (Desrosières 1984: 15). As Armstrong (1993: 48) and Desrosières (1984: 28) both point out, the INSEE scale is non-hierarchical86. This creates adaptation

---

[85] (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques*).

[86] Desrosières (1984: 32) states that hasty comparisons between classification systems on an international level remain highly artificial because they do not take account of the social history behind the creation of such systems. Translation of certain categories is thus sometimes impossible. This is the case of *cadres* for instance, which in France implies a greater distinction between employed and self-employed compared to Germany or in the UK.

problems when linguistic variation is analysed in correlation with social class. Marceau's analysis of the INSEE scale is thus interesting for the purpose of studying sociolinguistic variation as it provides a stratification in three categories, shown in table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4

Marceau's social class scale

(adapted from Armstrong 1993: 48)

Populaire	*Moyenne*	*Supérieure*
-farmers -agricultural workers -manual workers	-middle and lower managers -junior white collar workers -non-professional self-employed workers (artisans) -shopkeepers	-owners of firms (more than ten workers) -the liberal professions -senior managers -secondary schoolteachers

However, Marceau's scale above "lacks the LWC / UWC division which has been reported to be important in several sociolinguistic studies of English data" (Armstrong 1993: 48). Taking this into account, Armstrong also uses Macaulay's (1976) classification system. Macaulay considers three further professional criteria to establish his scale: whether the person is a manual or non-manual worker; whether the person's occupation includes supervisory duties; whether the person is employed or self-employed. This creates a classification in four categories as shown below in table 4.5:

Table 4.5

Macaulay's social class scale (1976: 174)

III	IIB	IIA	I
-semi-skilled -unskilled	-skilled manual -self-employed non-professional	-intermediate -junior non-manual	-professional -managerial

When our informants were grouped into social categories, we thus used both Marceau's and Macaulay's scales (see table 4.6 in 4.5.7 below). However, as Macaulay's classification has four groupings (against three in Marceau's scale), it has the potential to reveal finer sociolinguistic divisions across our informants. We thus principally use groupings III, IIb, IIa and I when we correlate social class with linguistic variation in the tables of the present work. We now apply the above classifications to our sample.

4.5.6 Classification of informants by social class

The occupation of the father (or of the mother in case of single parenthood) was generally used to determine the social class of minors and that of young unemployed adults who still lived at home. The actual informant's occupation was used to rank all other adult speakers. The reason for this was that most adult informants were from rural or working-class backgrounds. Their parents' occupations were felt not to be a relevant factor in determining their social class.

Armstrong (1993: 48) comments on "the difficulty involved in drawing a principled distinction between two social categories" and states that this "stems from the multiplicity of competing criteria available". This is particularly salient when one wishes

to distinguish between IIA and IIB (ibid.). When difficulties such as those were encountered, two further class indicators were taken into account[87]. These were housing type[88] and education level (as used in Trudgill 1974: 36 in his Norwich study). Other social class indicators were sometimes also considered when known[89]: these include for instance the mother's occupation and similar details about other family members. These extra indicators were helpful in doubtful cases, e.g. those of university students from working-class background or young adults providing the parental household with an income.

4.5.7 Social class structure of the 1998 sample

Following the above criteria, the overall social-class distribution of the *1998 sample* is given in table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6

Distribution of social class in the 1998 sample

Social Class		N	%
III	*populaire*	6	18.7
IIB		10	31.2
IIA	*moyenne*	7	21.8
I	*supérieure*	9	28.1

It is difficult to determine whether our sample is representative of the population of La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois, for the 1990 census figures are rated on the *INSEE* scale which, as was mentioned above, is not hierarchical and does not exactly

[87] Taking into account these 2 extra criteria somewhat goes against Macaulay' classification system based on one criterion alone (occupation). The danger of taking into account several criteria is that they do not carry equal weight (see Brandis 1970 for a more detailed discussion of this issue). In certain cases however, this was necessary because of classification difficulties based on occupation alone.

[88] *HLM* (the French equivalent of council accommodation in Britain) versus *pavillon* or individual house, which are generally privately owned.

[89] Some of the informants recorded during the fieldwork felt that too much personal information would be detrimental to their anonymity and to that of their family; therefore personal or family details were only recorded when the informant was comfortable about giving such information.

correspond to the classification presented above in 4.5.5. For example, in Fontenay-sous-Bois, the documents given by the *Directeur des Affaires Economiques* at the *Hôtel de Ville* state that 35% of Fontenay's population are *ouvriers* or *employés*; 33% belong to the intermediate professions or are executives. Clearly, these figures do not separate manual from non-manual workers, skilled from unskilled workers, etc. It is therefore difficult to make a strict comparison, especially with regard to Fontenay.

However, the figures we obtained for La Courneuve (where most informants were recorded) were rather more detailed with regard to the distribution of the population according to occupation. It was thus possible to calculate percentages according to Macaulay's classification, as shown in table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7

Distribution of social class in La Courneuve according to Macaulay's classification

Social Class		%
III	*Populaire*	13.7
IIB		33.3
IIA	*Moyenne*	30.3
I	*Supérieure*	18.7

When tables 4.6 and 4.7 are compared, it is clear that there are fewer informants from categories I and III in our sample than in La Courneuve and too many from category IIA. Although the sample cannot be claimed to be representative, it is worth noticing that the broad proportion of each category is maintained in the sample. To conclude this section, although the concept of social class was difficult to apply to the present sample for the reasons outlined above, we shall see that our model was justified by our results.

4.5.8 Social network strength and street-culture index score

A classification of informants according to their integration into the street-culture was devised to provide complementary information to social class. The purpose of this sub-section is twofold: we aim to explain how the social network concept was applied to the present sample in terms of a street-culture index score and we present the structure of the sample according to this additional extra-linguistic variable.

4.5.9 Relationship between social network and street-culture indices

Although Milroy used a six-point scale with five indicators of density and multiplexity to measure her informants' integration[90] into social networks, she argues that it is by no means the only way to measure an informant's network strength score (i.e. his / her level of integration in the group or community). She states (1987b: 106-7) "that the indicators of this integration [...] are likely to be culturally determined and to vary from one community to another" and therefore need to be adapted to each particular community.

The concepts of density and multiplexity were thus adapted to the context of the present study. As it was felt that *cité* vernacular forms were closely related to the creation of a street-culture, our objective was to link density and multiplexity to the degree of integration of the speakers into the street peer-groups and activities. With this in mind, the creation of the scale featured below in 4.5.10 below is strongly influenced by the criteria used by Laks (1980: 256-57) to classify his informants[91]. As was discussed in 3.2.3 above, Laks carried out a study of a group of teenagers in Villejuif and found that there was a strong link between his informants' integration into the street-culture and

---

[90] An informant's social network score in the Belfast study was calculated by assigning her / him one point if he fulfilled each of the following criteria (Milroy 1987a: 141-42):

1. Membership of a high-density, territorially based cluster.
2. Having substantial ties of kinship in the neighbourhood. (More than one household, in addition to his own nuclear family)
3. Working at the same place as at least *two* others from the same area.
4. The same place of work as at least two others of the same sex from the area.
5. Voluntary association with workmates in leisure hours. This applies in practice only when conditions three and four are satisfied.

[91] Laks's set of criteria is too large to be described here in detail but the reader is referred to tables 2 and 3 in Laks (1980: 256-57).

the adoption of non-standard linguistic forms. Our approach consisted in combining Laks's criteria with those used by Milroy in Belfast.

4.5.10 Calculation of the street-culture index score

The informants' street-culture index score was calculated on a set of ten criteria:

a) Lives in a *HLM* within a *grand ensemble.*

b) Goes to work / school within a *grand ensemble.*

c) Does not go on holiday outside Paris without her / his friends.

d) Has daily direct contacts with *cité* youth through work / school.

e) Has her / his close friends within the *grand ensemble.*

f) Sees her / his close friends at school / work and outside school / work.

g) Regularly spends time with friends on the streets at night.

h) Present / past involvement in petty crime (theft, etc.).

i) Present / past problems with the police.

j) Has difficulty in finding a course of study / work.

A value of 1 is attributed to each criterion when it is fulfilled by the informant, and a value of 0 when it is not met. A score out of ten is consequently obtained. A high index score (i.e. close or equal to ten) thus indicates a very dense and multiplex network as well as a high degree of integration in the street culture, and vice versa. The choice between work / school evidently depends on the age of the informant.

It is firstly essential to stress that the index score quantified by table 4.8 below is indeed an index and that it remains for this reason arbitrary, or rather a set of constructed figures. As Milroy (1987b: 107) points out:

> the network measure is concerned with an underlying variable of *integration* to a social group; hence, selection of indicators is motivated by the need to characterize in a principled way differences between individuals with respect to degree of integration.

Thus the existence of such a network score is only valid when used to compare informants of the sample with one another. It is by no means an 'absolute' measure of their peer-group integration. In the same fashion, the binary values of 1 or 0 attributed to each criterion are simply designed to provide quantified information of a comparative nature.

As one can notice from our list above, the criteria take into account both sociological and attitudinal factors:
Criteria a) to f) are rather more concerned with sociological issues: they principally deal with the concepts of accommodation, density and multiplexity. Criteria g) to j) are more strictly concerned with the adoption of non-mainstream behaviours. A high street-culture score thus not only indicates a strong integration in the local community but also that this integration has non-mainstream influences on the informant's social behaviour. To understand this in more depth, let us review each criterion in more detail.

a) This criterion relates to the speaker's type of accommodation. The underlying idea is that speakers living within a council collective dwelling (*HLM* in a *grand ensemble*) are more likely to be in contact with the vernacular of the *cités* than if dwelling in individual houses. The reason why the *HLM* is important here is that *HLM* accommodation tends to be rented by households on lower income and *cité* vernacular seems to be a phenomenon associated with this type of household (see section 2.4 above).

b) This determines the extent to which the individual's personal ties remain located within the *grand ensemble*, e.g. whether they are only work or school related.

c) This criterion is designed to evaluate the mobility of the speaker outside the peer-group and his / her contacts outside the pressure of the *cité* peer-group.

d) This criterion is mainly designed to classify informants of the older groups and investigate the influence of the daily contact with youngsters through work (youth

leaders, teachers for instance). It is acknowledged that the younger age groups will necessarily score one here.

e) and f): these complement criterion b) concerning the multiplexity of the informants' personal ties.

g) This directly determines the speakers' exposure to the street-culture, to the groups and individuals who largely seem to escape parental supervision. It seems that evening activities (whether this means playing football in a square or hanging around in staircases) are closely linked to the experience of the street. Many younger informants, especially females, felt strongly that going outside at night was not commendable. For the younger informants, the streets at night seem to belong to a predominantly male population, to *les grands* (young adults) and to gangs and drug dealers.

h) The informants' involvement in 'street business' here (i.e. illegal or bootleg types of dealing) or in theft (shoplifting, stealing cars, mopeds) represents a relatively widespread non-mainstream activity and is of importance for it requires many contacts within the *grand ensemble* and therefore integration into the street-culture.

i) This criterion is self-explanatory and complements h); the difference is that several informants have rejected the street-culture and the peer-group after problems with the police.

j) This criterion measures the inadequacy or rejection felt by the informant towards the dominant social model.

As will be noted in the following chapters, it was necessary to organise broader groupings of scores, although our index gives an individual score out of 10. This is because the comparison of individual scores sometimes did not reveal a very clear-cut pattern. Depending on the variable studied, three to five groupings were used, each clearly stating the street-culture scores attained by a group. Thus when talking about

"group 1-2", we mean "group of informants with street culture scores of 1 or 2". It is also relatively obvious that "Group 1-2" means that the informants of the group are less influenced by the street-culture (less integrated into street life and groups) than – say "Group 9-10".

4.5.11 Relationship between street-culture score and other extra-linguistic variables

Table 4.8 below shows the distribution of informants according to street-culture score, age, sex and social class. Street-culture mean scores have been calculated for each age, sex and social group.

Table 4.8

Distribution of index scores in the 1998 sample: age, sex and social class

Informant group	Street-culture mean score	Social class
Males 15-25	8.5	III–IIB
	4.7	IIA-I
Females 15-25	3.7	III-IIB
	4.2	IIA-I
Males 30-50	4	III-IIB
	3.7	IIA-1
Females 30-50	2.5	III-IIB
	2.2	IIA-I

Table 4.8 shows several interesting patterns: as mentioned above, it is the younger males from the lower social categories who score the highest street-culture mean score. The street-culture seems to have a weaker influence on females, even females from the younger age group. This illustrates the point made above in 4.5.10 about the female adolescents, who have a reduced access to the streets, especially at night. Besides, as discussed in 3.1.0 above, sociolinguistic research has shown a tendency on the part of

women to adopt more overtly prestigious behaviours (whether these are linguistic or not). It is thus unsurprising that street-life tends not to be as attractive to females as it is to males.

Table 4.9 below shows the relationship between street-culture scores and ethnicity.

Table 4.9

Distribution of index scores in the 1998 sample: age, sex and ethnic origin

Age and sex	Ethnic origin	Street-culture index score
Males 15-25	Metropolitan	4.5
	North African	7.6
	Other	7
Females 15-25	Metropolitan	4.3
	North African	4
	Other	4
Males 30-50	Metropolitan	4.3
	North African	4
	Other	3.5
Females 30-50	Metropolitan	2
	North African	2.5
	Other	2.5

For the younger males, there is a clear link between street-culture score and ethnic background: the influence of the street-culture appears significantly stronger among speakers from an immigration background than among those of metropolitan origin. This result is unsurprising since as was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2 above that the street-culture was an alternative set of values. The identity crisis with which young *blacks* and *beurs* are faced explains why an alternative cultural model is more tempting.

The young male *beurs*' higher score of 7.6 is all the more impressive in that it represents a group mean.

Interestingly, young female speakers show very similar scores of street-culture index regardless of their ethnic origin. It is also very interesting to note that these scores are similar to those of young males of metropolitan background. It appears that the street-life model is less attractive to young females of any background or, as it was mentioned above, that young females have a restricted access to the street. It is worth pointing out here that female adolescents from Muslim backgrounds undergo stricter parental supervision. Lepoutre (1992: 280-6) states that the reputation (which includes the sexual virginity) of Muslim female teenagers is highly valued and that the reputation of young female members must be protected from the 'negative' marking of the streets. Many female informants (especially those from Muslim backgrounds) reported to the fieldworker that they were not allowed to venture into the streets at night, that it was not only dangerous for them to do so but that it would also give them a "bad reputation".

As observed in table 4.8 above, the street-culture scores for the older male group are lower than those of the younger male group but equivalent in value to those obtained by the younger female speakers. No correlation with ethnic origin is particularly striking here, although it is surprisingly the speakers of metropolitan origin who score the highest average. As was the case for the older males, the older female group shows no ethnic difference with regard to street-culture index. Again the lowest values for this index are found within this group. The correlation between street-culture index and the different linguistic variables selected for analysis will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

4.6.0 Data-related issues

Before we conclude, certain data-related issues need to be briefly discussed. To ensure better continuity in following chapters, we propose some general comments about the social and linguistic data.

4.6.1 Presentation of data

The presentation of data will principally be in tabular form. Tables usually display group scores of a particular variant in percentages (noted %). The total number of tokens collected (noted *N* in tables) from which the percentage score has been calculated is also given. This means that (N) encompasses all linguistic items in which the variant has or could have occurred.

4.6.2 Statistical testing of results

A majority of the quantitative results presented in the thesis have been tested for statistical significance. In statistics, a result is said to be significant when the variation between two scores or sets of scores is unlikely to be attributable to random fluctuation. Results were principally tested when interesting patterns of variation arose in the data. The aim of this subsection is to explain briefly the broad theoretical implications of the tests, not to give an exhaustive account of the calculations. These can be found in specialised literature (see Butler 1985 for instance).

The aim of the statistical testing used in the present study is to be able to reject the *null hypothesis* (see Fasold 1984: 91 for an introduction to this concept, or Butler 1985: 69-70 for a more detailed discussion), which is here the likeliness of random variation. The statistical test used for the 1998 data is *Analysis of Variance* (also known as ANOVA) which "tests whether the means of sets of scores from two samples are significantly different from each other" (Fasold 1984: 98). ANOVA is designed to determine whether samples drawn from different groups representing different populations considered with respect to a measurable characteristic (in our case the variable realisation of a particular linguistic variable) are behaving in a homogenous manner (i.e. whether there is less variation within than across groups). If this is the case, the findings may be considered as not simply resulting from random variation.

ANOVA is highly suitable to the present research data in that it allows the measurement of more than 2 groups of speakers at a time (e.g. younger and older male groups, older and younger female groups), provided they represent different levels of the same

characteristic (Fasold 1984: 99), e.g. the same *cité* vernacular variable. To reject the possibility of random variation between the group scores, ANOVA tests the difference between the mean of each group score by asking whether there is more variation between the mean group scores than within the groups scores, i.e whether there is more variation around the grand mean or around the group means (Fasold 1984: 100). The scores come from different populations (e.g. here from different speaker groups) when the variation between groups is many times greater than the variation within each group. This ratio is called is an F-ratio and to determine whether this ratio is sufficiently large, an F-ratio scale is used (see Butler 1985: 176-9 for such a scale). However, in the following chapters, the probability of a result will be expressed as a percentage. This is an indicator of significance which is easier to read and is provided by the ANOVA test.

As is conventional in social sciences, significance has been tested at the *five per cent level*, which means that the statistical probability (noted *p*) for the score to be the result of random variation is less than one in twenty. This is expressed below as: $p \leq 0.05$. As Fasold (1984: 93) observes, "often statisticians are not satisfied unless their results are significant at $p < 0.01$ (less than 1 chance in 100 that the null hypothesis is valid)". However, he adds (1984: 94) that "in sociolinguistic research, as in most social science research, it is very difficult to control all the variables". A significant result will therefore be in the five per cent range (for a more detailed discussion of levels of significance, see Butler 1985: 71-4).

4.7 Evaluation of fieldwork and conclusion

The fieldwork was successful in achieving its principal objectives: the pilot study was very useful in building and maintaining local contacts as well as revealing interesting areas of linguistic variation. The main fieldwork period of summer 1998 enabled the collection of linguistic data in relatively spontaneous conditions through a satisfactory degree of integration into the local community. We also recorded a quantity of data sufficient to achieve statistical regularity in most cases (as we shall see in Chapters 5, 6, and 7). The population sample collected is also adequately diverse in social terms. It was possible to distinguish different age and sex group in equal numbers, differentiate

between informants in terms of ethnicity, social class and integration to the street-culture. We discuss in the following chapters patterning according to these social variables.

Certain social patterns have already emerged from our sample: it has been observed that the lower working-class groups from immigrant backgrounds (specifically young males of north African origin) seem more integrated (and thus are logically more influenced) by the street–culture found in the *cités* and the *grands ensembles* of the Paris *banlieues*. We now turn to the analysis of the linguistic variables selected in 3.3.3, starting with variable palatalisation.

CHAPTER 5: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF DENTAL AND VELAR STOPS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present quantitative results regarding the sociolinguistic distribution of palatalised dental and velar stops in the 1998 corpus. We firstly define palatalisation and describe its phonetic qualities before reviewing the literature. We then discuss the linguistic constraints observed in the 1998 sample and subsequently present the correlation between palatalisation and the speaker variables defined in Chapter 4 above.

5.1.0 Definition of the palatalisation process

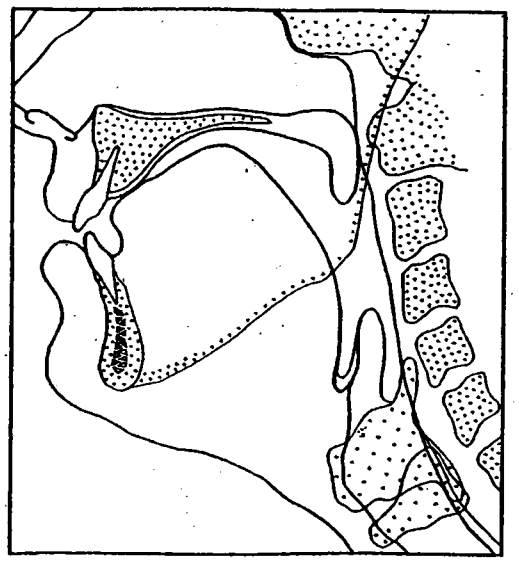
Palatalisation describes a general process of articulatory centralisation of speech sounds towards the hard palate. As Pope (1930:120) points out,

> palatalisation can be described as the process in which a non-palatal sound comes to be made, wholly or partially, in the position in which a palatal sound is articulated, i.e. with the characteristic lift of the middle or front of the tongue up to or towards the hard palate.

This phenomenon is more clearly illustrated by figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1

Sagittal cross-section of the vocal organs during the production of the medial phase of a palatalised voiced alveolar stop [d^j] (adapted from Laver 1994: 323)



Laver (1994: 323) states that palatalisation

> involves the body of the tongue being used to constrict the vocal tract in a stricture of open approximation at the palatal location, as an accompaniment to a stricture of greater degree. [...] In many languages, the secondary stricture tends to be replaced from the palatal location relatively slowly, and this then gives the offset phase of the palatalized segment a characteristically [j]-like offset (or, to put is another way, gives the following segment a [j]-like onset.

In French, palatalisation sometimes has the consequence of assimilating the articulations of velar and dental stops, merging /t/ and /d/ with /k/ and /g/ as in *casquette*: [$t^jast^j\varepsilon t$] (Léon 1993: 204). Rosset (1911: 312-3) points out that this 'assimilation of articulation' on the part of velars and dentals is facilitated by the lack of strict articulatory boundaries between the two consonants.

It is worth noting in our example above the production of a slight yod, a process referred to as *mouillure* in the literature on French. *Mouillure* can occur to varying degrees and is

sometimes hardly perceptible. Fónagy uses the symbol ['] to refer to a light degree of *mouillure* as in *voiture* [vwat'yʁ]. For Charbonneau (1955: 7) as for Fónagy (1989: 232), *mouillure* is the first stage in the centralising process through which palatalised stops can diachronically change into palatal stops [c], [ɟ] and into affricates [tʃ], [dʒ].

Palatalisation is thus an assimilatory process[92], a centralisation of the articulation towards the hard palate which generates varying degrees of *mouillure*. *Mouillure* varies from a slight yod-like sound to an affricate. In our sample, dental plosives are usually affricated while velar plosives are generally yodicised. However, as affrication can be seen as part of the more general process of palatalisation, we refer to affricated stops as palatalised stops. We now turn to a more detailed description of affrication.

5.1.1 Affrication and affricates

Although affrication is closely linked to palatalisation in diachronic terms (see Fònagy above), either process can be independently adopted by speakers from a synchronic point of view (Marchal 1980: 82). Affrication is defined by Laver (1994: 363) as the "phonetic process of making the overlap phase between a stop and the following articulation audibly and momentarily fricative". He adds that this process

> consists of prolonging the compressed air during the overlap phase, by allowing the active articulator to pass slightly more slowly through the zone of close approximation before reaching the stricture of open approximation for the medial phase of the resonant.

According to Charbonneau (1955: 6) affrication takes place after the palatalisation of a consonant and is "un nouveau processus articulatoire, [...] un déplacement (ou un relâchement) qui tend à reporter l'articulation vers les dents". In a more recent study of [ts] and [dz] in Canadian French, Charbonneau and Jacques (1972: 89), state that affrication is caused by the laxing of the articulation[93]. They suggest (1972: 88-9) that it involves the strengthening of the articulatory process, as palatalised consonants have a

larger contact area with the palate than their corresponding non-palatalised consonants, thus requiring more effort from the tongue muscles.

What is also pointed out in their study is that affricated stops should not be assimilated to palatals, although they share some characteristics with them. What they have in common is that the tip of the tongue lowers while the blade comes into contact with the palate. However, this contact is less important in terms of duration and area for affricated stops than for palatals. Moreover, the place of articulation is not situated at the centre of the oral cavity but towards the centre of the hard palate. Straka (1965) adds that palatalised stops such as affricated stops are "à mi-chemin entre la consonne dentale ou alvéolaire et la consonne palatale proprement dite" (Straka 1965, adapted by Charbonneau & Jacques 1972: 88).

In any case, palatalisation and affrication are closely linked; (Corneau 2000:27) shows that the traces of palatalisation found in her Belgian French informants

> are very similar in nature to the affrication found in Quebec French, because palatalisation is due to the coarticulation of the stop with a following high front vowel or a palatal approximant[94].

Both phenomena represent an assimilative process of the articulation in anticipation to a contiguous vowel. They both prompt a certain degree of *mouillure* in the articulation of the consonants; this can be realised as a yod (palatalisation) or as an affricate (affrication). As Corneau (2000: 27) states, "the palatalising effect of a given environment would depend upon the consonant that is actually being changed". The different realisations of palatalisation in the 1998 corpus are presented in 5.3.0 below.

---

[92] In the sense that it makes /t/ and /k/ share articulatory characteristics.
[93] This point is also made by Marchal (1980: 82).
[94] As stated above, we will thus refer to affricates as palatalised consonants (only dental and velar stops are considered here).

5.2.0 Previous studies on palatalisation and affrication

Before we focus on our corpus, let us examine previous research on the sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation in French. Palatalised and affricated dentals are not a rare phenomenon in French and can be found in many regional varieties all over the world[95]. However, as our review of the literature will show, there are relatively few quantitative studies on the subject. We first discuss work undertaken in North American French before considering European varieties of French.

5.2.1 Canada

Most research on palatalisation and affrication has been undertaken in Canada. This is unsurprising as affrication is one of the most recognisable features of Canadian varieties of French, especially those found in Quebec (Walker 1984: 125). Detailing the geographical distribution of palatalisation and affrication in Canada would be beyond the scope of this chapter but it is worth mentioning that affrication is not found everywhere (e.g. it is not present in the Acadian varieties of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). Within the Quebecker varieties, it is absent from the dialect of the Gaspésie and Côte-Nord regions (*CIRAL* or *Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherches sur les Activités Langagières*[96]). Generally however in Quebec, affrication is categorical before the high fronted vowels within the boundaries of a lexical item while it is variable across word boundaries[97] (Ostiguy and Tousignant 1993: 131).

According to the auditory observations on Montreal French by Legendre (1890), Rivard (1914), Rousseau (1935) and the instrumental studies of Charbonneau (1955), Gendron (1966), Charbonneau and Jacques (1972), affrication is a very widespread phenomenon and does not seem to be constrained by social factors (Marchal 1980:80). However, Charbonneau (1955: 146-7) suggests that the distribution of affricated pronunciations might vary with the level of education of the speaker. He states that if this was the case,

---

[95] See notably d'Ans (1968: 65-66), Chaudenson (1979: 87), Battye and Hintze (1992: 324-25), who report the presence of affricated stops in the regional varieties of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.
[96] University of Laval, see http://www.ciral.ulaval.ca/phonetique/phono/r42.htm
[97] In Quebec French, affrication is restricted to dental stops before high front vowels [y] and [i] as in *tu dis* [tsydzi].

socio-cultural factors must intervene in very complex ways, as affrication is heard amongst university lecturers for instance. Ostiguy and Tousignant add (1993: 130) that affrication can be heard in the speech of radio news-presenters and even in that of members of government.

Gendron (1966: 120) explains this apparent contradiction by referring to differing degrees of affrication according to style and social status. He states that (1966: 120) "l'assibilation est plus prononcée dans les milieux populaires que dans les milieux instruits". Marchal (1980: 81) who criticises the lack of empirical evidence for this position, conducts the only (to our knowledge at least) variationist study of affrication. He analysed the speech of six female speakers from the Sankoff-Cedergren Corpus, distinguishing their speech by level of style, age group and Linguistic Market Index. Marchal did not find significant sociolinguistic patterns. The intuitive knowledge on the part of most Canadian linguists that palatalisation is not socially marked probably explains why even recent studies such as that of Bento (1993) have focused on one sociolect (in the latter case, educated speech) and have focused on experimental issues beyond the scope of this chapter. We turn now to the study of palatalisation on this side of the Atlantic.

5.2.2 France and Europe

The sociolinguistic literature on palatalisation and affrication in French in Europe is rather meagre. Most scholars who have described the phenomenon adopt either a historical perspective (see for instance Pope 1952: 120-35, Rosset 1911: 313-15) or other types of non-quantitative approaches (Straka 1952: 216; Carton 1983: 84, 2001: 9-10; Léon 1993: 204, 225; Gadet 2003: 86-7). Let us first briefly review the different historical accounts of palatalisation.

According to the literature, palatalisation is a very long established and widespread phenomenon in the evolution of French. Pope (1952: 120-35) reports the existence of palatalisation in Gaul as early as the Late Latin and Gallo-Roman periods. Palatalisation prompted major sound changes in French. Fònagy (1989: 233) states that palatal

consonants which existed in Gallo-Roman words such as /ceval/ (from Latin *caballum*) or /forca/ (from Latin *fortia*) became affricates during the 4th and 5th centuries AD, giving respectively /tʃəval/ and /fortsə/. These affricates subsequently lost their plosive elements before the end of the 13th century. The reader is referred to Pope (1952: 120-35) for a more detailed account of the historical involvement of palatalisation in linguistic change in French.

What is interesting is that whenever palatalisation occurred in the evolution of French, either in the Gallo-Roman or the Modern French periods, it appears that it was a characteristic of lower social strata. Indeed, it is the *vulgar* varieties of Latin which were imported into Gaul and developed into palatalising varieties of Gallo-Roman. The literature also relates the presence of palatalisation in low-prestige varieties of French in significantly more recent periods. Indeed, according to the *CIRAL* website, palatalisation "est attestée depuis longtemps dans les patois français et dans le parler de Paris". This is confirmed by Rosset (1911: 314) who relates the presence of palatalisation of /t/ and /k/ in the working-class speech of Paris as early as the 17th century. He makes an observation which is interesting from our present perspective:

> depuis la fin du XVIIIe siècle, les grammairiens notent cette prononciation comme populaire et les gens instruits s'efforcent de l'éviter. Tandis que la langue littéraire et académique conserve à *k* son articulation traditionnelle, la prononciation populaire laisse aux assimilations phonétiques toute liberté de se produire.

Similarly, Léon (1993: 204) quotes Molière who wrote "*nomdeguieu* pour *nom de Dieu* (Dom Juan, acte II, scène 1)". It is interesting to note that in the play, the palatalisation of *Dieu* in *Guieu or Quieu* (which also involves devoicing) occurs in the speech of Charlotte, who is a peasant character in Dom Juan. This regional and lower-class characteristic of palatalising dialects in France is also discussed by Marchal (1980: 81) who points out that the vast majority of settlers who migrated from France to Canada belonged to the peasantry. Palatalised pronunciations were probably imported by "colons provenant de l'ouest de la France, spécialement des Charentes, du Poitou et des

régions voisines" (Marchal 1980: 81). We now turn to palatalisation in contemporary French.

According to Fònagy (1989: 232-33), it appears that palatalisation is currently in a process of resurgence. He interestingly notes that

> Si on faisait observer à un Français ne parlant que sa langue maternelle qu'il prononce dans des mots comme *tirer*, *voiture* ou *quatuor*, une consonne qui est bien loin du *t* standard, une sorte de '*t* mouillé' ou une occlusive palatale [c] il ne comprendrait pas de quoi on parle.

This suggests that this innovation, if in progress in France, is below the level of consciousness. To investigate the presence of palatalisation in French, Fònagy carried out an experiment in which he made two groups of Hungarian students with no prior knowledge of French transcribe a selection of French recordings. The reason for selecting Hungarian transcribers is that the Hungarian language not only possesses stops /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/ in its phonological system but also their palatal and affricate counterparts. In other words, palatalisation being phonemic in Hungarian, Hungarian transcribers should notice it. What Fònagy found is that the transcriptions of his informants faithfully reflect the palatalisation found in the recordings. He noted a stronger tendency to palatalise in /t/ than in /d/ (especially before /y/), more palatalised stops before /i/, /y/ and /e/ and a tendency on the part of the palatalised stops to affricate.

Are we, as Fònagy above and Carton (2001: 9-10) suggest, in the presence of a change in progress in France towards palatalisation? One should first remember that palatalisation seems to have never "disappeared" in the first place and that in that sense, it is not an innovation. It has been mentioned above that palatalised stops were found in lower-class speech in the 17th century. According to Straka (1952: 216) and Carton (1983: 84), palatalisation is still a characteristic of *français populaire*, especially in Paris. Léon (1993: 204) cites the examples found in Queneau (*Quiens*! for *Tiens*!), or the

pronunciation of Coluche (a working-class comedian from Paris) "qui palatalisait, même en finale 'le mec qu'avait une gueule de…' [lmɛč čavɛ yn ǧœl]".

What is rather more innovative is that these palatalised stops seem to be realised more and more as affricated stops, especially in the multicultural settings of the French *banlieues*. Romano (in Billiez et al. 2003: 45-6) reports "une affrication toujours très visible" in the corpus of *banlieue* adolescents from Grenoble he studied. However, he did not note any particular extra-linguistic pattern, such as marked sex-related difference for instance. He states that affrication is "également présent […] dans un corpus constitué de productions recueillies en situation plus surveillée (laboratoire), auprès de jeunes étudiants et enseignants de différentes régions" (2003: 46). With regard to palatalisation, Romano remarks that it is "un phénomène très commun en français populaire au niveau national" (ibid.) and that "ce phenomène ne semble pas non plus spécifique à ces groupes de jeunes citadins [the *banlieues* youth from Grenoble]" (ibid.). Regrettably, no quantitative data was used to support any of these hypotheses.

To summarise, it seems that palatalisation and affrication are rather widespread phenomena in French and have been present in the speech of the lower classes throughout the evolution of French. This tendency of working-class French to palatalise is reflected in its widespread presence in Canada and to a lesser extent, in many different regional dialects of France. It seems that standardisation has somewhat weakened the phenomenon to some degree in the Hexagon but has never succeeded in suppressing it completely. What is thus innovative is not the presence of palatalisation but its presence in the speech of standard French speakers (see Fònagy above) and its very marked character in the speech of the young urban population of *banlieues*. This raises interesting questions: why do we find affrication and palatalisation in both Grenoble and Paris in the speech of *banlieues* youth? Does the multicultural context of *banlieues* favour the adoption of these forms? Do youngsters use affricated and palatalised forms more than their elders? If so, might this be a case of change in progress in contemporary French? In an attempt to address these questions, we now turn to the study of palatalisation in our own corpus.

5.3.0 Variable realisation of palatalisation in the corpus

In the 1998 corpus, palatalisation has only been observed in dental and velar stops. We now review its different realisations in both places of articulation and illustrate these with examples from our corpus.

5.3.1 Palatalised dental plosives

In the 1998 sample, the palatalisation of dental plosives /t/ and /d/ occurs before high front vowels and their corresponding semi-vowels. As stated earlier, they can have several realisations:

a) [t'] (*slight mouillure*, we use Fònagy's notation here) for voiceless dental stops, [d'] for voiced dental stops as in *positif*: [pozit'if] and *ça veut dire* [savød'i:] respectively. This sound is better described as a very weakly articulated yod sound occurring after the plosion but which is not distinct enough to be noted [ʲ].

b) [tʲ] (palatalisation) for voiceless dental plosives,[dʲ] for voiced dental plosives, as in *politique*: [pɔlitʲik] and *différent*: [dʲifeʁɑ̃] respectively. This represents a higher degree of *mouillure* than the realisation described in a) above. It is worth mentioning that, in the 1998 corpus, instances of palatalisation are found with more regularity in velar plosives.

c) [tʃ] (affrication) for voiceless stops, [dʒ] for voiced stops as in *ma voiture*: [vwatʃy:], *éducation*: [edʒykasjɔ̃]. This 'hushing' variant ([ʃ, ʒ] as opposed to the 'hissing' variant [s, z] found in Canadian varieties of French) is the realisation which is the most commonly found regarding dentals in the corpus. It also involves some degree of lip rounding.

d) More rarely, a variant producing a hissing release of the airflow (assibilation) can be heard (as opposed to the hushing one described above in c); [ts] for voiceless dental stops, [dz] for voiced dental stops as in *politique*: [pɔlitsikʲ], *entendu*: [ɑ̃tɑ̃dzy:].

e) In very rare cases, a certain degree of vowel devoicing can be heard as in *étude*: [etɏyd]. Marchal (1980: 87) refers to this phenomenon as a possible "écrasement des voyelles adjacentes" which, in his corpus, can lead to the "disparition des noyaux vocaliques de syllable comme dans [atsitsyd] par exemple que passé à [atstsd] où l'affriquée devient son propre pivot de syllabe".

5.3.2 Variable realisation of palatalised velar plosives in the corpus

Palatalisation in velar plosives can occur before all front vowels, before fronted approximants and in rarer cases before nasals /ɔ̃/ and /ɛ̃/. It can be realised as follows:

a) [kʲ] (palatalisation) for voiceless velar stops, [gʲ] for voiced velar stops as in *pratiqué*: [pʀatikʲe], *gare* [gʲaʁ].

b) [j] (elision of the velar plosive and complete yodisation) for voiced velar plosives as in *obligatoire*: [ɔblijatwa:]. It is also found in first position as in *guerre* [jɛ:]. No occurrence in final position as in *drogue*: [dʀɔj] has been found in the sample although as we have seen, instances such as *politique*: [pɔlitsikʲ] have been observed.

c) [kʃ] or [kç] (affrication) for voiceless velar plosives, as in *tranquille*: [tʀɑ̃kʃil] and *bac*: [bakç]. Affrication occurs also in final position as in *drogue*: [dʀɔgj̥]. On a purely auditory basis, it is very difficult to differentiate between affricated velar plosives and their palatal counterparts, i.e. [c] for voiceless velar plosives, or palatal [ɟ] for voiced velar plosives.

Although it was mentioned above that palatalised sounds need for the purposes of precise articulatory description to be distinguished from palatals, all these sounds were considered as palatalised items in the analysis. Given the range of possible realisations and in the light of the problems described above (i.e. that the different palatalised realisations are very difficult to distinguish on a purely auditory basis), palatalisation of dental and velar stops was analysed as a binary variable, that is to say as having the two following variants: a simple stop, equivalent to zero degree of palatalisation; a palatalised stop, grading from a simple (but distinct) *mouillure* to an affricate, as described above in 5.1.0 and 5.1.1. We discuss the issue of token quantification in 5.4 below.

5.4 Quantification of palatalisation of dental and velar plosives

Doubtful cases were excluded from the analysis. This occurred for instance at times when the researcher was not convinced that the presence of *mouillure* was sufficiently significant to be taken into account. Most frequently, when in doubt, a work colleague of the researcher, also a native speaker of French, was asked if he had heard an affricate or a stop. The sound was only counted as a token when both researcher and colleague were positive about the nature of the consonant. Trudgill (1974) encountered similar differentiation problems when quantifying vowel quality for variable (a) in Norwich. He states (1974: 86) that "such problems are inevitable, since the phonetic symbols can only approximate, and the transcriber is fallible". The exclusion of doubtful cases seemed the appropriate methodology to ensure a suitable degree of confidence in the results.

5.5.0 Linguistic constraints on the palatalisation of dental and velars

5.5.1 Factors preventing variable palatalisation

The analysis of a linguistic variable, as developed by sociolinguists and particularly by Labov, is based on the *principle of accountability*, which states that "all occurrences of a given variant are noted, and where it has been possible to define the variables as a closed set of variants, all non-occurrences in the relevant environments" (Labov 1982: 30). The preliminary stage of any quantitative study of variation in a linguistic variable is

therefore the search for invariance (Labov 1975: 7), i.e. the rejection of linguistic factors which prevent variation for a given linguistic variable. In the case of palatalisation, it consists in defining the linguistic constraints responsible for the categorical use or non-use of palatalised stops.

Let us first consider dental plosives. In our sample, the following distributions seemed to rule out variation in the articulation of dental plosives and were therefore rejected in the analysis:

a) environments entailing the articulation of a dental stop /t, d/ and an alveolar or post-alveolar fricative (respectively /s, z, ʃ, ʒ/) were rejected as they consist of two consecutive segments rather than a single palatalised articulation. Thus word-internal and cross-word boundary environments such as those found in *toute seule*: [tutsœl], *adjugé*: [adʒyʒe] were excluded from the analysis.

b) Although variable palatalisation can occur when a consonant precedes the dental stop /t, d/ as in *petit*: [ptʃi], *que du*: [gdʒy], the presence of consonant /s/ seems to block palatalisation, as in *si tu veux*: * [stʃyvø], *tous diraient*: * [tusdʒiʁɛ]. It is interesting to note that in contrast with /s/, the voiced post-alveolar fricative /ʒ/ before /t, d/ allows palatalisation, as in *que je dise*: [kəːʒdʒiz]. /ʃ/ before dental plosives is rarer and no example has been found in the 1998 sample to extend this remark to the voiceless post-alveolar fricative.

c) Items where the stop is elided in favour of the fricative were also rejected. Marchal (1980: 87) gives an example of this in the Montreal variety of French where this phenomenon appears twice in the same word: *constitution* is realised as [kõs̪is̪ysjõ]. In our analysis, this type of realisation was discarded on two grounds: it was firstly felt that this phenomenon was linked to elision, not palatalisation; secondly, it had been decided to discard any doubtful cases (see 5.4 above). Although the occlusive was sometimes perceptible, it was thought logical to exclude this type of utterance. We now turn to velars.

The palatalisation in velars seems less constrained by preceding or following segments than in dentals; the following environments were however rejected from analysis:

a) environments involving the articulation of a velar stop /k, g/ and an alveolar or post-alveolar fricative (respectively /s, z, ʃ, ʒ/) were discarded. Word-internal and word-boundary environments, as found in *accent*: [aksɑ̃], *avec chance*: [avɛkʃɑ̃s], were therefore rejected. Again, as was explained above for dentals, these sequences entail the articulation of two consecutive segments, not that of a single palatalised one.

b) Items where the occlusive was elided by the fricative or the yod were not taken into account. This is for instance the case in *parce que*: [pasjə] or [pasə]. These types of realisation were discarded on the grounds that this phenomenon was to a greater extent linked to elision rather than to palatalisation and it was decided to discard any doubtful cases.

5.5.2 Connected speech processes preventing variable palatalisation

Certain types of connected speech processes (CSPs) block the variable palatalisation of dental plosives. These are for instance elisions which prompt the articulation of a dental stop and that of a following alveolar or post-alveolar fricative The elision of /e/ in d(é)jà: [dʒa], or that of /y/ in t(u) sais: [tse] prevent the variable palatalisation of the dental as they prompt the categorical utterance of the sequences [dʒ] and [ts] respectively. Examples such as these were therefore excluded from the analysis.

Elisions which create the production of a dental stop and that of a yod such as in certain d'y arriver: [sɛʁtɛ̃djaʁive] or il est parti à: [ilɛpaʁt(i)ja] were only included as loci of variable palatalisation on the basis that they can be affricated. For the two examples above, the palatalised variants are realised as [sɛʁtɛ̃dʒi(j)aʁive] or il est parti à: [ilɛpaʁtʃi(j)a].

Similarly to dentals, CSPs may have a constraining effect on velars. Again here, this concerns elisions prompting the production of a velar stop and of a subsequent alveolar or post-alveolar fricative. This is exemplified in the deletion of /ə/ in qu(e) c'est: [kse], dis lui qu(e) j'arrive: [dilɥigʒaʁiv]. As for dentals, only the affrication of velars before yod was counted as palatalisation. Hence, in qui arrive, [kjaʁiv] would not be counted as palatalised while [kʃi(j)aʁiv] would.

5.5.3 Lexical factors preventing variable palatalisation

Lexemes containing the consecutive articulation of a dental plosive and yod such as in *tiers*: [tjɛː], *aujourd'hui*: [oʒuʁdɥi] have only been counted as palatalised when the stop was affricated. Thus *tiens*: [tʃjɛ̃], [tʃɛ̃] and *dialogue*: [dʒjalɔg], [dʒalɔg] would be counted as palatalised tokens in the analysis.

Lexemes borrowed from foreign languages such as English or Arabic and containing affricates were discarded. This is the case of *la tchatche*, *Djamel*, or *jeans* for instance. It is clear that the direct importation of foreign affricated words is a completely different phenomenon to the palatalisation of normally non-palatalised stops.

Similarly for velars, direct borrowings from foreign languages containing yod were considered as palatalised tokens only when affricated. Examples are however rare for /k/ but can be found in *Tokyo*: [tokjo], affricated in [tokʃjo]. In velars, lexemes already containing a yod after voiceless velar plosive /k/ such as *psychiatrique*: [psikjatʁik] were counted as palatalisation tokens only because the stop can affricate as in [psikʃjatʁik] or palatalise as in [psicjatʁik].

5.5.4 Constraints influencing the variable palatalisation of dental and velar stops

We have hitherto described the elements which block the occurrence of variable palatalisation and have illustrated these with examples of tokens we excluded from the

analysis. Using quantitative data, we now review the factors which allow variation but seem to influence its occurrence. Four major types were observed in our corpus. These are:

a) distributional factors;
b) stress factors;
c) lexical factors
d) connected speech factors (henceforth CSPs); we will review these in turn below.

To facilitate the handling of data, we did not consider all the speakers from the sample. Instead, a sub-sample of 12 informants was selected. These informants all belong to the same age group (15–25)[98] and are equally distributed across each of the ethnic backgrounds defined in 4.5.4 above. The four informants with the highest palatalisation rates in each ethnic group were selected.

5.5.5 Constraints on palatalisation: general distributional factors

The analysis of the linguistic distribution of palatalisation in dental and velar plosives derives in large part from Charbonneau's (1955) study of affrication in Canadian French. Charbonneau (1955: 21-2) analyses the affrication of dental plosives /t/ and /d/ in four positions:

1 – Position initiale : syllabe accentuée – syllabe non accentuée.
2 – Position finale : [t/d] en finale de mots.
3 – Position intervocalique : syllabe accentuée – syllabe non accentuée.
4 – Groupes consonantiques : [t, d + C] – géminées [tt/dd]

Charbonneau (1955: 125) did not find any palatalisation in either /t/ nor /d/ in groupes consonantiques (type 4 above). This was confirmed in the 1998 corpus for dentals and velars. Groupes consonantiques (type 4) were thus discarded in the analysis. Although

[98] The rationale for the selection of this age group is that it isolates possible fluctuation in the data prompted by generational factors. The constraints exerted by age on variable palatalisation are analysed below in 5.7.1.

this observation remains tentative, this constraint is probably due to the phonotactic tendency of French to disfavour three-consonant clusters. In type 4 above, the palatalisation of the geminate would result in the addition of a fricative segment to the right of a CVCC sequence, thus creating a three-consonant cluster.

Charbonneau investigated the distribution of affrication of /t/ and /d/ in word-final position (type 2 above). However, he observed no palatalisation for type 2. This is also the case in the 1998 sample for /t/ and /d/. This distribution was therefore discarded for dental stops in the analysis and only pre-vocalic position was considered, (i.e. types 1 and 3 above). However, as was discussed in 5.3.2 above, velars can palatalise or affricate in word-final position. This position was therefore taken into account for velars.

To summarise, palatalisation in dental plosives will be analysed in word-initial (e.g.: tué, toujours, dire) and intervocalic positions (e.g.: voiture, scientifique, indiscret) both in stressed and unstressed syllables. Palatalisation in velars will be analysed in word-initial (cuisine, gare), word-final (donc, bague) and intervocalic (écarté, regardé).

It should be noted that the frequency of some environments differs greatly in our sample, (e.g. [tɥi] is rather rare in unstressed intervocalic position as in intuition; sequences /g / + V other than /ɑ/, /ɛ/, /ɔ/, /ɑ̃/ are also infrequent). For the detailed analysis of sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation which follows below, a minimum of ten tokens per environment was considered necessary to constitute a result worthy of comment. Furthermore, no more than thirty tokens per informant and per environment were selected for the analysis. Milroy (1987b: 135-5) states that "30 tokens is a reasonable goal to aim for". She adds (1987b: 135) that

> if the number of tokens is lower than 10, there is a strong likelihood of random fluctuation, while a figure higher than 10 moves towards 90 per cent conformity with the predicted norm [...].

30 tokens per environment for each speaker seems for this reason to be an ideal figure; it is the dividing point between small and large samples, which require different statistical treatment (Milroy 1987b: 135). However, it has been shown in the sociolinguistic literature that small samples are capable of yielding significant patterns. In his rapid anonymous survey of New York department stores (1972a: 43-69), Labov collected only four tokens per environment and per informant. This small amount of tokens was compensated by the calculation of group scores. For the present study, a goal of 30 tokens per environment and per informant was therefore aimed at, although this was not always possible.

We now turn to specific results regarding the distributional constraints on palatalisation in our corpus. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below respectively show the influence of syllable distribution on the palatalisation of dental and velar plosives.

Table 5.1

Palatalisation in dental plosives by context

Word-initial position		Intervocalic position	
N	%	N	%
1647	34.5	694	35.9

Table 5.2

Palatalisation in velar plosives by context

Word-initial position		Word-final position		Intervocalic position	
N	%	N	%	N	%
1395	15.0	200	33.3	552	17.1

(N) refers to the total number of tokens collected over 20 minutes of recording per informant. Scores for both speech styles have been aggregated[99]. It is clear from tables 5.1 and 5.2 that different distributional constraints are at play in the variable palatalisation of dental and velars. Regarding dental stops, syllable distribution does not seem to play a major role in the sub-sample, and the results are not statistically significant at $p = 0.8$. However, final position clearly appears to prompt higher rates of palatalisation in velars (at rates double those of intervocalic and initial positions, this result being significant at $p = 0.04$). Comparing further the rates of palatalisation in velar and dental stops, it seems that dentals are slightly more affected by the palatalising process (the latter showing an average of 35.2% of palatalised stops against 21.8% for velars).

5.5.6 Stress distribution

It is interesting to note that in his study of Montreal French, Charbonneau did not find significant differences in the palatalisation of /t/ and /d/ according to stress pattern (see for instance 1955: 78). In a more recent study of Quebec French, Bento (1993: 183, cited in Corneau 2000: 28) notes a similar lack of pattern related to stress, which prompted Corneau (ibid.) to exclude the stress constraints from her own study. This was however investigated in the present sub-sample, as from listening to the pilot study tapes, stress was felt to play an important role in variable palatalisation. Results are displayed in tables 5.3 and 5.4 below.

[99] Interview and reading styles. See 4.4.1 to 4.4.5 for a description of the speech styles elicited. When these two styles were analysed in isolation, no significant degree of variation was found with regard to

Table 5.3

Palatalisation in dental plosives: stress distribution

Stressed syllable		Unstressed syllable	
N	%	N	%
1134	42.7	1207	26.3

In contrast with the previous studies mentioned above, it seems that stress distribution is an influencing factor in the palatalisation of dental plosives, this result being significant at $p = 0.03$. Let us examine the same phenomenon in velars.

Table 5.4

Palatalisation in velar plosives: stress distribution

Stressed syllable		Unstressed syllable	
N	%	N	%
1197	20.2	950	15.5

A proportionally similar pattern can be observed regarding velar plosives (although $p = 0.3$ here). However, as mentioned above, lower palatalisation rates were observed in velars than in dentals. Even though stress seems to prompt higher palatalisation rates overall, it is worth noting that an unstressed syllable position does not prevent the phenomenon from occurring after either dental or velars. When the distribution of palatalisation is correlated with extra-linguistic factors below, we therefore aggregate scores of both stressed and unstressed positions.

5.5.7 Vocalic constraints on the distribution of palatalisation: dental plosives

Dental stops were only taken into account in the analysis when they are followed by high front vowels /i/ and /y/ and their corresponding approximants /j/ and /ɥ/ as these

---

palatalisation. The difference between interview style and the two reading styles taken together showed

are the only vocalic segments which prompt palatalisation or affrication[100] in dentals. Table 5.5 below displays the distribution of palatalisation in dental stops according to vocalic environment and voicing. Scores do not take stress or syllable position into account.

Table 5.5

Palatalisation by following-vowel environment: dental plosives

	_ /i/		_ /y/		_ /j/		_ /u/	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
/t/	404	39.1	430	51	110	34.6	590	1.1
/d/	507	28.8	264	42	36	26	-	-
/t/ + /d/	911	33.9	694	46.5	146	30.3	-	-

Contexts [tɥi] and [dɥi] do not feature in the table because no token was found in the sub-sample of interest; this probably is due to the low frequency of these items in everyday speech. When comparing each vowel-context regardless of voicing (i.e. the last row in table 5.5), it is clear that the following vowel affects the rates of palatalisation in dentals ($p = 0.03$). Context _ /y/ seems to prompt highest rates, which suggests that rounding facilitates palatalisation. In contrast, context _ /u/ not only disfavours palatalisation when the dental plosive is voiced but is also the most constraining environment when the plosive is devoiced, with a palatalisation rate of 1.1%. When voicing is considered regardless of the following-vowel segment, it seems that /t/ prompts more palatalisation than /d/. In context _ /i, y, j/, the average palatalisation score is 42.2% for /t/ versus 34.3% for /d/. We now turn to velars.

---

more interesting patterns.

[100] Charbonneau (1955: 26-36) investigates palatalisation in dentals before all vowels and only finds ***mouillure*** before high fronted vowels and approximants. Romano (in Billiez et al. 2002: 45-6) reports affrication in dentals in the speech of Grenoble teenagers only before the same vowels.

5.5.8 Vocalic constraints on the distribution of palatalisation: velar plosives

Palatalisation in velars seems less restricted than dentals in pre-vocalic contexts (in our corpus, we found 13 pre-vocalic contexts where palatalisation occurred in velars against four in dentals). After analysis of the sub-sample, three contexts did not seem to allow palatalisation in any syllable position: _ /o/, _ /ɑ̃/, and _ /wa/. These contexts were thus not taken into account.

Table 5.6 below shows the distribution of palatalisation in voiceless velar plosives according to following vowel. Final syllable position was not taken into account, as not all preceding vowels allow palatalisation in final position (cf. table 2.a Appendix 2, section 2.1). Total number (N) represents the number of tokens collected over an hour of recording per informant and illustrates rather well the difference in frequency of the different following-vowel contexts. Scores for both speech styles have been aggregated.

Table 5.6

Palatalisation of /k/according to following vowel, or preceding vowel for/ ɔ̃/ and /ɛ̃/

Vowel context	/k/	
	N	%
/o/	231	0.8
/ u/	54	1.8
/ j/	16	6.2
/ e/	43	9.3
/ə /	432	11.9
/ a/	389	12.88
/ ɛ/	272	16.35
/ ɛ̃/	84	20.65
/ i/	435	22.28
/ œ/	25	28
/ ɔ̃/	35	28.5
/y /	110	33.5
/ ɥi/	21	38

As was the case for dentals, high front vowels (and /ɥi/) seem to favour palatalisation to a larger degree. This result is reliable given the large number of tokens collected for /i/ and /y/ and the high significance of table 5.6 results (p = 0.0002). More surprising is the high palatalisation rates of nasal contexts /ɔ̃/ and /ɛ̃/ which in final position (e.g. *donc, cinq*) have palatalisation rates of respectively 28.5% and 29.4% (see table 2.a in Appendix 2). It is interesting to note that as was the case for dentals, following-vowel /u/

seems to restrict variable palatalisation, with a score of 1.8%. Table 5.7 displays the palatalisation found in voiced velar plosives according to vocalic context.

Table 5.7

Palatalisation of /g/ according to following vowel

	N	%
_/a/	128	6.6
_/ɛ/	29	10.3
_/a/+ _/ɛ/	157	8.4

As can be observed form the somewhat meagre numbers of tokens (N), palatalisation in the voiced velar plosive is rarer in our sub-sample; this might be due to two main factors: firstly, the phoneme /g/ has a low frequency of occurrence in discourse, and indeed in the entire 1998 sample. It is therefore natural not to find a large amount of palatalisation. Furthermore, as table 5.7 above shows, /g/ allows palatalisation in fewer linguistic contexts than its voiceless counterpart101 (variation was only found in vowel contexts _ /a/ and _ /ɛ/). Context _ /a/ seems a little less favourable to palatalisation than _ /ɛ/, although in this case the difference in the number of tokens found could be skewing the results102. This result is interesting if one compares the influence of voicing in dentals and velars: it seems that voiceless stops are more prone to palatalise than voiced ones, regardless of place of articulation. This echoes Fònagy's findings (see 5.2.2 above). This similarity between dentals and velars is in a sense logical as palatalisation is a centralising articulatory process which tends to "merge" dentals and velars.

---

[101] It is also noteworthy that for voiced velar plosives, palatalisation does not affect final position, at least in our sample.

[102] It was not possible to conduct an ANOVA test here, as figures for context _ /ɛ/ represent only one syllable distribution. For reasons explained in Chapter 4, section 4.6.2 above, ANOVA cannot calculate the variance within a group if there is only one figure within that group.

5.6 Summary of the linguistic constraints observed

Generally speaking, dentals are more subject to palatalisation than velars. For each type of consonant, it seems that stress and voicing have a strong influence on palatalisation: it is in voiceless segments and in stressed syllable position that the highest rates of palatalisation are found. Syllable distribution also seems to play a strongly constraining role, but only for velar plosives: the highest palatalisation rates for velars are found in final position. However, these higher scores are probably due to the fact that final syllable position in French is generally stressed. The nature of the following vowel also seems to be of importance. In both dentals and velars, high front vowels (and especially /y/) seem to favour palatalisation more than any other following vowel.

To summarise, palatalisation is an assimilative process of articulation, and in that sense facilitates pronunciation. The fact that it facilitates articulation and the relative lack of inhibiting factors might explain why palatalisation has not completely been suppressed by standardisation and why it is still present in many regional varieties of French (as well as in *français populaire*). It is not implausible that these factors also contribute to its renewed adoption by youngsters in the French *grands ensembles*. Indeed, as was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3, the less well-off *banlieues* are places where the dominant linguistic norm has a weaker influence than the local vernacular norm. However, it is still unclear whether palatalisation is really in progress in the young population of the *banlieues*. If it was the case, the reasons for its adoption and the social mechanisms which allow its diffusion need to be investigated. To address these issues, we now turn to the sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation in our sample.

5.7.0 Sociolinguistic distribution of palatalisation in the 1998 corpus

Results were obtained from listening to approximately 20 minutes of interview tape per informant; the transcription was stopped when five data sheets per informant were filled, giving an average of 770 tokens per informant. The threshold of 20 minutes of recording was chosen on the grounds that "useful phonological data can often be obtained in a relatively short time – perhaps as short as twenty to thirty minutes" (Milroy 1987b: 39).

In the different tables presented below, the number of tokens per group is very large. This is due to three factors: firstly, these linguistic environments have a high frequency in speech, at least in our sample; furthermore each speaker group consists of eight informants; results for dental and velar stops have been aggregated and represent palatalisation in all variable linguistic environments discussed above in section 5.3.

5.7.1 Social correlates of variation: age and sex

Table 5.8 below shows the palatalisation rates in the 1998 sample according to age and sex distribution. Results for both speech styles defined in 4.4.2, 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 are combined[103].

Table 5.8

Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by age and sex

Speaker group	N	%	Average
Males 15–25	6277	17.3	
Females 15–25	6002	12.1	14.7
Males 30–50	6552	6.8	
Females 30–50	5834	2.5	4.6

Table 5.8 displays a quite striking pattern of age-related differentiation with the younger group showing the highest rates of palatalised /t, d/ and /k, g/, this result being very significant at $p = 0.0006$. This appears to justify the decision to distinguish between under- and over-thirties in the speaker sample. When the variable of sex is considered regardless of age, males score higher than females. However, this result is not statistically significant ($p = 0.14$). When sex is tested for significance within each age group, it seems that sex is significant in the older age group ($p = 0.04$) but insignificant in the younger one ($p = 0.3$). It suggests that age is more important than sex for the two younger groups.

In any case, differentiation between the younger and older age groups is very large for both sexes with younger females still scoring twice as highly as older males, (i.e. the highest scoring group from the older speaker grouping). When ANOVA tests were conducted to consider the effect of age within each sex group, age seems to be more influential in women ($p = 0.0007$) than in men ($p = 0.04$). Another interesting feature displayed in table 5.8 is that regarding the sex variable, the proportional difference in scores is significantly higher within the older speaker group than in the younger one.

The generational difference in the use of palatalisation observed above suggests a possible linguistic change in progress. However, Labov (1994: 73) states that

> distributions across age levels might not represent change in the community at all, but instead might represent a characteristic pattern of 'age-grading' that is repeated in every generation.

Indeed, Labov (1994: 83) distinguishes four types of age-differentiated sociolinguistic patterns, of which only two can prompt linguistic change. All four types are illustrated in table 5.9 below:

---

[103] Again, the difference in palatalisation scores across the two reading styles was not worthy of consideration after analysis. The two reading styles were thus aggregated.

Table 5.9

Patterns of change in the individual and the community (adapted from Labov 1994: 83)

		Individual	Community
1	Stability	Stable	Stable
2	Age-grading	Unstable	Stable
3	Generational change	Stable	Unstable
4	Communal change	Unstable	Unstable

The first type of pattern (noted 1 on the table) represents the absence of age variation in the individual and the community. Type two (age-grading as referred to above) presents no long-term effect since "individuals change their linguistic behavior throughout their lifetimes, but the community as a whole does not" (Labov 1994: 84). Model four generally can be found when "all members of the community alter their frequencies together, or acquire new forms simultaneously" (Labov 1994: 84). The third model differs in that:

> [i]ndividual speakers enter the community with a characteristic frequency for a particular variable, maintained throughout their lifetimes; but regular increases in the values adopted by individuals, often incremented by generations, lead to linguistic change for the whole community (Labov 1994: 84).

Could the age-differentiated pattern displayed in table 5.8 represent such a change? For Labov, the only means of distinguishing between all the types of patterning listed above is to conduct linguistic studies in real time, i.e. to compare data collected in two

different periods of time (for examples of studies in real time, see among others Trudgill 1988 on Norwich English and Sankoff et al 2001 on Montreal French). Regarding the use of palatalisation in French, this represents an interesting prospect for further research. For now, it appears we are in the presence of a phenomenon which is primarily favoured by the younger age group, and especially males from that group. We now turn to differentiation in the use of palatalisation according to social class.

5.7.2 Social correlates of variation: social class

Table 5.10 below displays the distribution of palatalised dental and velar plosives according to the speakers' social class index (see 4.5.7 for a description of this classification with reference to our sample) where group III represents the lowest social class and group I the highest. Results for both speech styles have been aggregated.

Table 5.10

Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by social class groups

Social Group	N	%
III	4476	20.7
IIB	7982	7.5
IIA	8716	8.3
I	3491	4.3

Table 5.10 presents a clear correlation between palatalisation and social class which suggests that any possible adoption of the variant is a change from below, in the sense that it is the lower social class who initiate the change. Results achieve significance here at $p = 0.005$. It is interesting to note the relative lack of differentiation between the two intermediate social groups. Palatalisation is thus predominantly a lower-working class phenomenon but may be diffusing to other social strata. Given the influence of age in the adoption of affrication noted above in 5.7.1, let us now examine the constraints exerted by social class within each age group.

5.7.3 Correlation between social class and age

Table 5.11 below displays the distribution of palatalised dental and velar plosives according to the speakers' social class index and age group. Again, results for both speech styles have been aggregated. The number of informants per speaker group is provided in brackets in the age group column.

Table 5.11

Palatalisation of velar and dental stops by social group and age group

Social Group	Age Group	N	%
III	15–25 (4 inf.)	2949	27.3
	30–50 (2 inf.)	1527	8.3
IIB	15–25 (4 inf.)	3032	13.8
	30–50 (6 inf.)	4950	3.2
IIA	15–25 (7 inf.)	5502	9.4
	30–50 (4 inf.)	3214	6.4
I	15–25 (1 inf.)	796	8.7
	30–50 (4 inf.)	2695	3.6
III–IIB	15–25	5981	20.5
	30–50	6477	4.4
IIA–I	15–25	6298	9.3
	30–50	5909	5.1

Table 5.11 shows a generational increase in the use of palatalisation in all social classes. This suggests that at least in the younger age group, palatalisation is diffusing through the social scale. The adoption of palatalisation seems to be principally led by the lower classes ($p = 0.001$), and specifically the lower working class with 27.3%.

Generally within the younger age group, a sharper differentiation between social groups can be observed. The sharp increase in palatalisation rates between group III and group IIB is also very striking ($p = 0.05$). A similar phenomenon has been observed mostly in English language data between the lower middle- and the upper working-class (cf. Armstrong 1993: 48). In contrast here, it seems that a large difference appears at a lower level, i.e. between the lower and the higher working class.

In the older age group, the social class distribution is less clear-cut although the lower-working class group is still in the lead. There is much less difference in scores between these groups than in table 5.8. A peculiar feature for the older group is that IIA speakers have a higher palatalisation rate than those of group IIB. This result is not however statistically significant ($p = 0.27$).

A certain degree of caution is required when discussing social groups for table 5.11, as the social groups presented here do not have equal numbers of informants. To reduce this imbalance, group scores have been aggregated in two larger groups, III-IIB and IIA-I, which have eight informants each for both age groups. Interestingly, results for these groupings show the same social patterning, i.e. higher scores of palatalisation for the lower-ranking group with little class difference for older speakers.

We have thus observed that palatalisation seems to be essentially a lower working-class phenomenon, and that although it is found in the older age group, it is present in much higher proportions among the younger age group of our sample, especially young males. Palatalised pronunciations also seem to be diffusing socially within the younger age group. This prompts further questions, notably those of the ethnic origin of this phenomenon, of the reasons for the larger adoption of palatalised stops by the young

lower working-class males and finally, of the mechanisms behind the diffusion of these forms to other social groups.

5.7.4 Social correlates of variation: ethnic origin

The distribution of palatalisation according to ethnic background might provide answers to some of these questions. Table 5.12 below displays this distribution in our sample. Results for both speech styles have been aggregated.

Table 5.12

Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: 32-speaker sample

Ethnic Group	N	%
Metropolitan	9132	4.8
Other	7070	8.3
North African	8463	16.2

Table 5.12 clearly shows that the adoption of palatalised stops is led by the group of North African origin in our sample. The distribution of scores in table 5.12 is highly significant at $p = 0.006$. Interestingly, the group of speakers of other ethnic origins score at an intermediate point between the score of the Maghrebi group and that of the Metropolitan group. This suggests that the latter is the most reluctant to adopt the palatalised forms. This pattern is repeated in table 5.13 below, which displays the distribution of palatalisation according to ethnic background in the younger age group.

Table 5.13

Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: younger group

Ethnic Group	N	%
Metropolitan	3948	6.3
Other	3125	14
North African	5206	21.7

The fact that the young group of North African origin seems to be leading the adoption is confirmed statistically ($p = 0.014$). Can we however hypothesize that the innovation originates in speakers of Maghrebi origin? Two factors indicate that this is a strong possibility. Firstly, table 5.14 below shows that in the older group, speakers of North African origin again use more palatalised stops than any other speakers.

Table 5.14

Palatalisation of dental and velar stops by ethnic origin: older group

Ethnic Group	N	%
Metropolitan	5184	4.1
Other	3945	3.8
North African	3257	6.9

When compared to table 5.13 (younger age group), it seems that the palatalisation scores are approximately similar across the group of metropolitan origin and that of speakers from other ethnic backgrounds. Although the scores are somewhat low for all groups, the Maghrebi speakers are clearly in the lead here104. Another factor which suggests that the adoption of palatalised pronunciation originates in North African speakers is that not only do they palatalise with greater frequencies, they also palatalise in a wider range of linguistic environments.

To show this, we have selected the same sub-sample of 12 informants which was used above in 5.5.4. As a reminder, these informants all belong to the same age group (15-25) and are equally distributed across each of the three ethnic backgrounds of interest here. In our study of dental stops, palatalisation was found in 18 different environments (this takes into account: voice, syllable position, stress position, following-vowel

[104] However, the distribution of palatalisation in the older age group according to ethnic background does not achieve significance ($p = 0.55$).

environment) and in 37 environments in velars105. Table 5.15 below shows the number of palatalised environments per ethnic group.

Table 5.15

Number of palatalised environments in the 1998 sample: ethnic distribution

	N	Metropolitan	Other	Maghreb
Dentals	18	15	16	16
Velars	37	21	24	36

The fact that the speakers of Maghrebi origin palatalise in many more environments than any other group (especially regarding velar stops) suggests that palatalisation started earlier within that group. This would lead one to suppose a Maghrebi origin for the phenomenon. Impressionistically, the Maghrebi speakers also use the most extreme palatalised variants described in section 5.3 above106. The conjunction of factors described above might in turn explain why palatalisation is a predominantly lower working-class phenomenon, since as was mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.4.0 above, many immigrants (especially young beurs) belong to the lower working class.

If palatalisation originates in and is led by young working-class speakers from North African backgrounds, how and why is it spreading to other ethnic and social groups? The answer to this question seems twofold: firstly, the maintenance and diffusion of these forms might be facilitated by the nature of the social network ties found in the French banlieues and indeed in La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois. We investigate this possibility in 5.7.6 below. Secondly, in order to be adopted in the first place, palatalised stops must carry a certain social prestige. We therefore now turn to stylistic variation.

---

[105] More detail (i.e. the distribution of palatalisation by environment and ethnic background) can be found in Appendix 2, section 2. It has not been included here to ensure a greater clarity of exposition.

[106] This however needs to be confirmed by spectrographic evidence. Such an analysis was deemed too time-consuming for the present study but it represents an opportunity for future research.

5.7.5 Social correlates of variation: style

Tables 5.16 and 5.17 display the degree of stylistic variation observed in each ethnic group between interview style (unscripted, spontaneous speech) and reading style (which comprises reading passage style and word list style[107]). Results for the two age groups have been kept separate for greater clarity.

Table 5.16

Palatalisation by speech style across three ethnic origins: older age group

Ethnic origin	Interview style		Reading style	
	N	%	N	%
Metropolitan	4515	4.2	669	3.2
North African	2803	7.4	454	4.1
Other	3459	4.3	486	1.0

Very little stylistic variation is observable in table 5.16, so little that no ANOVA test achieved significance. Results however suggest that for the older age group, speakers of immigrant backgrounds seem to be more sensitive to the marking of palatalised pronunciations, with less palatalisation in the more scripted style (i.e. when they supposedly pay more attention to their speech). Again it is the speaker group of Northern African origin which shows the highest rates in both styles. Table 5.17 offers a comparison of this pattern within the younger age group.

[107] See Chapter 4, section 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 for a description of these.

Table 5.17

Palatalisation by speech style across three ethnic origins: younger age group

Ethnic origin	Interview style		Reading style	
	N	%	N	%
Metropolitan	3369	6.4	579	5.3
North African	4465	21.6	741	22.1
Other	2746	13.6	379	16.8

Again, very little stylistic variation is evident, which suggests that palatalised stops are not stylistically marked to a large degree (no results here achieved significance). Table 5.17 also seems to indicate that regardless of style, palatalisation is an indicator of ethnicity. More interestingly, when results from both tables are compared, it seems that a generational shift towards the palatalisation of stops is in progress. Indeed, it seems that both young speaker groups of immigrant background adopt more non-standard pronunciations in the more scripted style than the older age group and the young informants of metropolitan origin. Although the differences are very small, this suggests that palatalisation might not only lack negative marking for these two groups but might also convey a certain prestige. It also suggests a greater sensitivity of the Metropolitan French speakers to the dominant linguistic norm in more formal speech contexts.

A certain degree of prestige might thus be a factor affecting the adoption of palatalised stops. However, prestige alone does not explain the social processes at play in the maintenance and diffusion of these non-standard forms. We therefore now turn to the influence of the street-culture.

5.7.6 Social correlates of variation: street-culture

The answer to the question of maintenance and diffusion of palatalised stops might reside in the nature of the social network ties found in the French *banlieues*. It was

explained in Chapters 2 and 4 above that the ties in the French *grands ensembles* were extremely dense and multiplex. Ties of this type are favoured by collective living, the lack of private space and the predominance of the street. This concerns predominantly the young population of the *banlieues,* who hang out together in large close-knit groups, have common leisure activities, go to the same school and dwell in the same *cités*. This collective life in the street has created a vivid street-culture in the French *banlieues* and the non-standard features of interest in the present study form part of this culture. Could these non-standard forms (such as palatalisation here) be maintained and develop through the street-culture of the *grands ensembles* and the social ties it creates?

To investigate the relationship between street-culture and palatalised stops, a street-culture index score was assigned to each individual informant of the 1998 sample (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.10). The purpose of this index was to give a measurement of the influence that the street-culture exerted on the individual, through his / her social network ties and involvement in street life. Table 5.18 below shows the correlation between the street-culture score of our informants and the use of palatalised pronunciations. Individual street-culture scores have been grouped in larger groupings, so as to show clearer patterns of sociolinguistic differentiation. Group 1–2 is the least influenced by the street-culture (and has weaker social network ties) while group 9–10 is extremely influenced by the street-culture and has strong social network ties in the *grand ensemble* community. Results for both speech styles have been collated.

Table 5.18

Palatalisation by street-culture score

Index score	N	%
1–2	3286	4.1
3–4	13487	6.7
5–6	4815	12.5
7–8	1558	16.7
9–10	1519	35.9

Table 5.18 above shows a clear correlation between street-culture score and the use of palatalisation, with a sharp increase in palatalisation for group 9-10. This distribution is very significant at p = 1.38-6. It therefore seems very likely that the degree of informants' integration or identification with the subculture influences their adoption of this accent feature. It was pointed out above that the very infrastructure of the grands ensembles reinforced the density and multiplexity of adolescent networks. Table 5.18 also shows that palatalised pronunciations are associated to life in the street.

When looking at the interaction between street-culture index scores and other extra-linguistic variables, the processes of adoption and maintenance of palatalisation become clearer. Firstly, it was shown in 4.5.11, that the younger group of our sample has higher street-culture scores (an average of 5.2) than the older one (3.1). It is thus unsurprising to find higher rates of non-standard pronunciations in this age group, especially when other studies (see notably Cheshire 1982) have showed the proclivity on the part of adolescents to adopt non-standard vernacular forms.

If we now concentrate on the younger age group, the different sociolinguistic patterns observed in this chapter can tentatively be explained. Table 5.19 below shows the distribution of street-culture scores according to sex and ethnic background.

Table 5.19

Street-culture scores and ethnicity: younger age group

Ethnic origin	Street-culture scores	
	Males 15-25	Females 15-25
Metropolitan	4.5	4.3
North African	7.6	4
Other	7	4

Clearly, males are more integrated into the culture of the street and have stronger ties in the community. Interestingly, this is particularly true for the young males from immigrant backgrounds. The young males from metropolitan origin have a similar street-culture scores to those of the young female group as a whole, which means that like young females, they are influenced by street life and groups to a lesser extent. This explains the sex-differentiated distribution of palatalisation observed in 5.7.1 above as well as the ethnic differences in 5.7.4.

What is even more interesting is that it provides a possible model of linguistic diffusion for palatalised stops. As was pointed out above in 5.2.2, although palatalisation is an old Parisian working-class feature, its innovative use seems to be led by young *beurs*. The youngsters from other immigrant background are also very influenced and integrated into the street-culture, sharing street activities with young *beurs*. Indeed, they have similar street-culture scores. As close-knit social networks act as norm-enforcement mechanisms (see 3.1.5), it is unsurprising to observe high palatalisation rates in the "other origin" group, as well as rates situated at a middle point between those of *beurs* and speakers of metropolitan origin. According to our figures, one could speculate further that the diffusion of palatalised forms follows the following sequence:

North African origin > other origin > metropolitan origin

——————→ palatalised stops ——————→

Young males from metropolitan backgrounds and generally young females have weak ties. It is not unlikely that they act as diffusers of palatalised pronunciations from network to network. Indeed, their weak ties constitute external connections between the close-knit networks which exist within communities and tend to spread innovations (see 3.1.6). This is however speculative and needs confirmation by other studies. What would be interesting for now and would go towards confirming our hypothesis would be to find similar distributions and patterning in other innovative linguistic variants. This will be investigated in the next chapter.

5.8 Conclusion

We have seen that palatalisation is a widespread phenomenon in French and results from an assimilatory articulatory process, i.e. a centralisation of the articulation. Its realisations vary considerably from a small degree of mouillure to the realisation of an affricate. Palatalisation has played a considerable role in the evolution of French consonants, representing an intermediate stage between certain plosive and fricative sounds. More recently, although it is not socially marked in the different Canadian varieties of French, its use is generally associated in metropolitan France with rural varieties of regional French as well as working-class Parisian. Interestingly, affricated realisations are also characteristic of North African French.

It is therefore relatively unsurprising to find some degree of palatalisation in our Parisian sample. What is more unusual is to find high levels of the phenomenon, especially its more extreme form, the affricated variant. It seems that forms which were already present in the Parisian French of interest have been exaggerated in terms of both frequency and quality. Indeed when our two age groups are compared, it seems that palatalisation is in progress. In our sample, the adoption of palatalised pronunciations is principally led by young lower working-class males from immigrant backgrounds, especially those of North African origin. Young beurs seem to be earlier adopters of the forms, as they palatalise in higher frequencies and in more linguistic environments than any other ethnic group.

This finding echoes research carried out elsewhere in France (i.e. Grenoble), which reports a marked presence of palatalised forms in the speech of adolescents. Interestingly these palatalised forms are observed in populations similar to our sample (i.e. socially isolated adolescents largely from immigrant backgrounds).

We have attempted to provide an explanation based on quantitative results for the development of palatalisation in our sample. Firstly, the relative lack of stylistic variation observed in the younger age group suggests that the adoption of palatalised pronunciations represent a change from below the level of conscious awareness. It might also mean that these forms are endowed with a certain prestige in this group. This prestige might be appealing to the adolescents of our sample. But what type of prestige are we talking about? Probably that of a tough, street-wise identity.

Indeed, we showed quantitatively that high frequencies of palatalised stops in the speech of our informants were strongly linked with a high level of integration into street life and close-knit ties in the grands ensembles. Applying here concepts of social network theory which have proved invaluable in other sociolinguistic studies (see 3.1.5 above), it is not implausible that palatalised stops are maintained through the strong social network ties of adolescent groups and diffused from network to network by weaker ties. Quantitatively in our case, the strong ties are those of the young working-class males from immigrant backgrounds while the weak ties involve the young males from metropolitan backgrounds and young females in general. However, such an explanation remains tentative and needs confirmation by further research.

To conclude, while it is too early and too ambitious to talk about linguistic change in progress in contemporary French, one cannot ignore that new and interesting developments can be observed in the speech of the young lower working-class population of our sample. Significantly, it is the group from immigrant backgrounds (especially beurs) who seem at the forefront of this innovative linguistic behaviour. This group seems to have adopted non-standard forms which were present in both their

parents' speech (North African French) and that of the surrounding population (i.e. the Parisian working class). The young beurs seem to be leading a rule-generalisation process, increasing the frequency of palatalised stops in their speech as well as spreading these pronunciations to more and more linguistic environments. Given the past involvement of palatalisation in linguistic change and its apparent dynamics in the contemporary context, further developments in the study of palatalisation represent a very good prospect for research in French sociolinguistics. But is palatalisation an isolated phenomenon? To address this question, we now turn to /r/-realisation.

CHAPTER 6: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF WORD-FINAL /R/

6.0 Introduction

Results presented in the previous chapter suggest that young working-class males from immigrant backgrounds (especially those of Maghrebi origin) are leading a change towards the affrication of dental plosives and the palatalisation of velar plosives. It has been shown that the maintenance and diffusion of these non-standard forms is strongly linked to close-knit social networks and to the informants' integration into the street-culture found in La Courneuve. The present chapter is concerned with the sociolinguistic distribution of a second innovative area of *cités* French: the realisation of /r/[108].

We begin with a description of its distribution and contemporary allophones, followed by a brief chronological account of its evolution. We subsequently review findings from previous sociolinguistic studies. The second part of the chapter is concerned with the realisation of /r/ in the 1998 data, with a view to investigating the diffusion of its innovative variants and the social mechanisms favouring this.

6.1 Cross-linguistic variation in /r/: general tendencies

The first difficulty encountered when studying /r/ within a sociolinguistic study is its wide allophonic diversity. From a cross-linguistic point of view, the diversity of /r/-sounds is so extensive that scholars studying the liquid face problems when they endeavour to speak of rhotics as a single linguistic unit (Lindau 1985: 158, Wiese 2001: 10). Indeed, the nature of /r/ is so diverse in terms of manner and place of articulation that "an extensional listing of r-sounds seems impossible" (Wiese 2001: 12). Wiese (2001: 10), however, summarises the major variants of /r/ as follows:

---

[108] Although a majority of r-sounds are velar and uvular in French, the symbol /r/ will be used here to refer to the phoneme and must be understood as encompassing all possible allophones found in the different varieties of the language.

a) Place of articulation:

- Dental/alveolar
- Post-alveolar-retroflex
- Uvular

b) Manner of articulation:

- Trills
- Fricatives
- Approximants
- Taps/flaps
- Vowels

Wiese adds (2001: 10) that this diversity is further complicated by variation in terms of "voicing/aspiration, length and even nasality", which makes it "clearly impossible to give an articulatory characterization of the class of r-sounds". This has led Ladefoged and Maddieson to state (1996: 245) that "the overall unity of the group seems to rest mostly on the historical connections between these subgroups, and on the choice of the letter 'r' to represent them all". Wiese (2001: 12) however believes that the following generalisations are possible when describing rhotics:

> 1.The position in the phonotactic patterns of languages: r-sounds are vowel-adjacent elements in the syllable. The pattern is CrVrC, for any language allowing consonantal clusters at all[109].
>
> 2. r-sounds, while non-syllabic consonants in general often have a syllabic variant.
>
> 3. Rhotics of one type often alternate with rhotics of another type (synchronically or diachronically).
>
> 4. If rhotics alternate with each other, the phonotactics of these r-sounds do not change.
>
> 5. Phonological constraints on /r/ and other generalizations such as those in 1 to 4 above can refer to /r/ without any reference to the type of /r/ in question [...].

[109] Exceptions to this rule can however be found, notably in Russian in words like [rʒavi] (rusty).

Although he focuses principally on German /r/, Wiese (2001: 24) claims that the relative lack of segmental constraints on /r/ makes it an ideal linguistic site for the expression of extra-linguistic differences. This point is discussed immediately below with regard to French /r/.

6.2.0 Segmental distribution of /r/ in French

To understand the linguistic contexts favouring the occurrence of the variants of interest, and how some of these differ from r-forms commonly found in standard French, it is necessary to sketch briefly the segmental and allophonic distribution of /r/ in metropolitan French.

According to Juilland (1965) /r/ is the most frequent consonant in the French lexis, and the second most frequent phoneme after /e/. For Laks (1980: 216-17) this high frequency is very potent in sociolinguistic terms: if a given linguistic variable is socially significant, i.e. if it is used by speakers to mark their social status, the fact that it occurs very frequently will make it a highly salient linguistic locus for the expression of social identity. However, Laks also points out (1980: 216) that /r/ has a low level of functional yield in the system of phonemic oppositions of French. He adds that it is this and the high frequency of /r/ which makes it prone to mark social and stylistic variation.

According to Hume's comparative study of /r/ in Canadian and metropolitan varieties of French, /r/ can be found in the following seven environments:

Table 6.1

Segmental distribution of /r/ in French (adapted from Hume 1987: 144)

#RV	Word initial	*recommence; rue*
[#$]CRV	After a tautosyllabic consonant	*gros; comprend*
VRC#	Before a tautosyllabic consonant	*parce que; porte*
CR#	Word-final after a consonant	*quatre; vivre*
VR#	Word-final after a vowel	*demeure; toujours*
VR$C	Syllable-final before a consonant	*garder; permet*
V$RV	Intervocalic	*arriver; mari*

Table 6.1 clearly shows that the occurrence of the phoneme in spontaneous speech[110] is constrained neither by segmental distribution nor by syllable position. However, the position of /r/ in a sequence evidently has phonic consequences since the phoneme is involved in connected speech processes.

6.2.1 Allophonic distribution of /r/ in French

In standard French, the prescriptive realisation of /r/ is a uvular trill [ʀ] or fricative [ʁ]. In less standardised varieties and informal styles of speech however, /r/ is often articulated as a velar or uvular approximant[111] (Malderez 2000: 65-87). In such varieties and styles, /r/ is also realised as a vowel or can be elided altogether (Armstrong 1993: 142).

---

[110] This is also the case in the prescriptive norm of standard French (see Léon 1966: 111).

[111] Coveney (2001: 58) relates the study of Malderez (2000), who notes that in conversational style, the young Parisian male she studied "use[s] approximants 60% of the time, nearly twice as often as fricatives".

In his study of standard Belgian French, Demolin (2001: 65) observes the following distribution of /r/ variants according to segmental context:

Table 6.2
Variants of /R/ observed in Belgian French
(adapted from Demolin 2001: 65)

Symbol	Articulation	Linguistic context
[ʀ]	Voiced uvular trill	#_V, V_V
[ʀ̥]	Voiceless uvular trill	C[-voice]_, V_#
[χ]	Voiceless uvular fricative	C[-voice]_, V_#
[ʁ]	Voiced uvular fricative	V_V
[ɰ]	Velar approximant	V_V
[ɹ]	Alveolar approximant	V_V, _C[+voice]
[r]	Alveolar trill	#_V, V_V
[V̰]	Creaky voiced vowel	When V_V but V1≠ V2

Table 6.2 above is not exhaustive. The voiced uvular approximant [ʁ̞] is surprisingly not mentioned here. Like its velar counterpart [ɣ], this variant appears principally in intervocalic position in French, as in *Paris* [paʁ̞i] and word-finally as in *alors* [alɔʁ̞] (Coveney 2001: 57). Zero realisation, also absent from table 6.2 tends to occur word-

finally, principally in contexts V_# (as in *voyageur* [vwajaʒœ][112]), and VC_schwa# (as in *reconnaître* [ʀəkɔnɛt][113]. For more detail on the zero variant, see for instance Laks (1977, 1980: 198-246 and 1983) or Armstrong (1993: 142-80, 2001: 67-118) regarding metropolitan varieties.

The following linguistic constraints also prompt variation in the phonic quality of /r/, which is in most of these cases realised as a geminate uvular trill[114]:

a) schwa-deletion as in *procurera* [pʀokyʀːa];

b) prefix *-ir-* as in *irréel* [iʀːeɛl];

c) semantic distinction between tenses in certain verbs as in *mourrai(s)*: [muʀːɛ] (future/conditional), *mourrait* [muʀɛ] (imperfect)

d) emphatic stress as in *horrible!* [ɔʀːibl].

It is worth noting that when a uvular trill is lengthened, the spelling is usually –rr–. Walter (1976: 447) notes that in her middle-class Parisian speakers, /r/-lengthening is in regression.

6.3 Evolution of /r/ in French

We will now see that in French, the association of /r/ with socio-situational variation is very old indeed. When specifically examining the metropolitan French context, the evolution of /r/ from the 17th century to the present can generally be summarised as a shift from an apico-alveolar trill [r] or flap [ɾ] to a dorso-uvular [ʀ] one. Although the dorso-uvular is traditionally reported as a feature of modern standard French (Posner 1996: 294), its apical variant was relatively common in France until the late 19th century (Coveney 2001: 40).

---

[112] Cf. Fougeron and Smith (1993: 75; cited in Coveney 2001: 58).
[113] Ibid.
[114] All the following examples are adapted from Battye and Hintze (1992: 86-9)

Posner (1996: 294) states that in the 16th century, the lower classes living in the central half of the Hexagon had a weakened realisation of [r] closer to a "flap or dental fricative, or even sibilant [z]". According to Posner, pronunciations such as [pazi] for Paris became heavily stigmatised and this subsequently prompted the Parisian bourgeoisie "to react by using the 'strong' equivalent in intervocalic as well as in initial position" (1996: 294). It seems that this "strong equivalent", a dorso-uvular realisation, became accepted during and after the Revolution, a period during which the middle classes acquired social prestige (Straka 1952: 222; Posner 1996: 294-95 and Coveney 2001: 40).

This change emerged earlier in the northern half of the Hexagon, and in predominantly urban settings. This is confirmed by the fact that [r] is still heard in rural areas, among older speakers, especially in the areas of France of occitan substrates (notably the South-West, see Straka 1952: 247 or more recently Coveney 2001: 40). In the 1970s, Walter (1982: 120-61) also found [r]-use in Burgundy, Normandy, Champagne and the Orléans-Maine regions. Coveney (2001: 41) observed [r]-users in Poitou and states that [r]-users there also spoke the local dialect. Apical realisations in France are thus stereotypically associated with rural and older speakers (Posner 1997: 288).

Although many recent sociolinguistic studies have discussed the change from an apical to a dorsal articulation115 and point towards social processes behind the shift (e.g. rural-urban migration), Coveney (2001: 42) states that the original linguistic reason which prompted the change is still unknown: it was previously thought that it occurred because the dorso-uvular variant, leaving the apex free, provided an easier transition to a following vowel than an apico-alveolar realisation (Delattre 1944: 562-64).

From this perspective, one should expect to find greater use of the dorso-uvular variants in pre-vocalic position. However, recent results on Quebecois French by Clermont and Cedergren (1979), Hume (1987), Tousignant, Sankoff and Santerre (1989) question this

---

[115] Cf. among others Thiam (1995) in Southern Belgium; Clermont and Cedergren (1979), Hume (1987) and Tousignant (1987) in Canada. These will be reviewed in more detail below in 6.5.2 and 6.5.3.

hypothesis (Coveney 2001: 42). Comparing [r] and [ʀ] frequency in the spontaneous speech of speakers from Quebec, all the above studies conclude that the apical variant is more frequently used in the onset of a syllable as in mari, rue than in a coda as in toujours, porte, i.e in post-vocalic position. As the influence of contiguous vowels cannot conclusively explain this, Coveney (2001: 42) suggests that at least two other linguistic factors might have played a role: firstly, both [r] and [ʀ] are very similar from acoustic and auditory points of view; this might have allowed the change to develop as the use of different variants does not jeopardise inter-comprehension between speakers; secondly, certain variants of /r/ can combine front and back characteristics such as the apical trill with uvular friction [$\widehat{\text{ʁr}}$] reported in Santerre (1981: 213). This intermediate variant might have facilitated the transition from [r] to [ʀ].

The consonant has in any event been in constant evolution in France during the last two hundred years. As recently as the early 20th Century, uvular fricative variants were not considered standard French (cf. Passy 1913: 14). The uvular fricative, currently seen as appropriate in formal styles of speech, is frequently replaced by an approximant, and there is according to Coveney (2001: 58) "a strong case for presenting the uvular or velar approximant, rather then a fricative, as the principal allophone of /R/".

Coveney also points out (2001: 58) that further developments in French /r/ are not to be ruled out: he suggests however that it is very unlikely that this variant will further evolve into glides such as /w/, as has been the case in the French-based Creoles of Martinique and Guadeloupe (see also Posner 1997: 290).

For Armstrong (1993: 142) the evolution of /r/ in French can be summarised as a more general process of lenition. He states:

> its weakening in everyday speech seems to take place along one typical 'deletion path' (cf. Lass 1986: 176) [...] if 'plosive' is replaced by 'flap' i.e.:
>
> plosive > trill > fricative > approximant > vowel > zero.

This is rather surprising given that there is historical evidence to suggest that the zero-realisation in metropolitan French dates back at least to the 17th century. Armstrong himself mentions the example of Thurot (1966: 280-3) who cites the comments made by 17th and 18th century grammarians on the subject. Thurot relates the example of Hindret whose 1687 grammar gives a prescriptive approach on /r/-deletion, stating that it should be avoided in lexical items such as vinaigre, coffre, but that it is tolerable to elide /r/ in more frequent items such as notre, votre, quatre for instance, on the basis that uttering the liquid in the latter would unveil too high a degree of self-monitoring.

In any case, current trends of variation in French /r/ still require investigation. Coveney notes (2001: 58) that "research is needed in France to chart the progress of /R/ over the next few years to complement previous studies". As Paris has historically been at the forefront of change in /r/, it is interesting to investigate its realisation in the capital. As we shall see below, there is strong evidence of the emergence of innovative /r/ realisations.

6.4 The cross-linguistic involvement of /r/ in rapid changes

What makes the study of /r/ particularly interesting and relevant in this context is its frequent involvement in rapid changes. In Quebecois French for instance, although the change from front to back /r/ started later than in France (around 1950, cf. Vinay 1950 below), a similar pattern to that reported above is now gaining ground with the back [ʀ] diffusing as the prestige form. Sankoff, Blondeau and Charity (2001), studying 25 speakers recorded at three periods of their life (1971, 1984, and 1995) observe that most non-categorical users of back or front /r/ changed their behaviour towards [ʀ] during the period between 1971 and 1984.

Such rapid changes in /r/ also seem to be currently taking place in other languages, as evidenced by recent socio-phonetic research on British English. Indeed, Docherty and Foulkes (1999: 11) suggest that the recent diffusion of labiodental approximant [ʋ] and bilabial approximant [β] from London to the rest of England has been very rapid. Wiese (2001: 14) reports similar rapidity in northern standard German /r/, which has undergone a change from apical to uvular since World War Two. Why is /r/ involved in such rapid changes? The review of the sociolinguistic literature below offers some indications: in what follows we focus on French.

6.5.0 Previous sociolinguistic studies on /r/

Most studies of /r/ in French have focused on the following two aspects of variation in /r/:

a) the change from the apical to the uvular realisation;

b) /r/-deletion.

6.5.1 Studies on the change from [r] to [ʀ]

The general trend reported in the sociolinguistic literature on the change from [r] to [ʀ] is that it is principally motivated by the overt social prestige associated with the uvular variant. The change is thus generally led by the middle or upper-working classes and by females. We will illustrate this with two well-documented examples: those of Belgium and Canada.

6.5.2 Belgium

Thiam (1995) observes a change following the pattern mentioned above in the Borinage region of southern Belgium. The change seems to be led by females and middle-class speakers (in Thiam's case, those with university education). He notes an influence of style in /r/ use, conversational styles prompting more apical [r]-use than reading styles. He also finds [r]-use as conveying a certain degree of covert prestige; this because [r] is symbolically associated with the traditional working-class values of the Borinage region.

These values are inherited from a now derelict but formerly prosperous coal-mining industry.

6.5.3 Canada

Vinay (1950) was the first to investigate /r/-variation in Canada and noted a geographical division between two major dialect zones: he suggests that [r] dominates in Western Quebec (including Montreal) and [ʀ] is more of an Eastern Quebec variant (this zone includes Quebec city). Some 20 years later, Dumas (1972), who gives a description of working–class speech in Montreal, also finds geographical variation and to some extent social variation in /r/ along the same lines.

Santerre (1979) notices a rapid regression in [r]-use in Montreal, a regression subsequently confirmed by Clermont and Cedergren's (1979) results. The latter argue that this change, which seems to have occurred in one generation (post-World War Two children), is more prominent in the middle class116, notably amongst female speakers.

Tousignant, Sankoff and Santerre (1989), although they generally agree with Clermont and Cedergren's findings, observe that the change to the uvular articulation is led by the upper-working class.

A more recent study of change in real time by Sankoff, Blondeau and Charity (2001) confirms age as the principal extra-linguistic factor motivating the change to uvular [ʀ] in Montreal French. They note two interesting patterns: categorical users of either variant ([r] or [ʀ]) seem not to have altered their pronunciation during the course of their life. However, amongst non-categorical users, a shift towards the uvular seems to have

---

[116] For the sake of continuity and conformity with the social classification adopted for in the present study, the term *middle class* has been preferred to the notion of speakers scoring at an intermediate point on the LMI scale. In Clermont and Cedergren (1979), speakers have been classified according to a Linguistic Market Index, which takes into account symbolic and social attitudes towards language, rather than solely the professional activity and the education level of speakers. It is acknowledged here that the term middle class is not strictly equivalent, although speakers scoring at middle point on the LMI scale tend to belong to the middle class.

occurred. Sankoff et al. add interestingly that the great majority of speakers who have altered their linguistic behaviour within a 24-year period belong to the middle class.

Hume (1987) compares /r/-use in conversational style between two varieties of Canadian French and standard European French117. The variants she studied in all three varieties are /r/ deletion, and front vs. back articulation. In her sample of 16 educated middle-class speakers aged between 21 and 38, she unsurprisingly observes no apical use in her metropolitan speakers but more interestingly higher /r/-deletion rates among the Canadian informants, which prompts her to describe /r/-deletion as a typically Canadian characteristic. One can criticise this claim, as Hume only analyses middle-class speech. The study of /r/-deletion in lower social groupings in France has shown contrasting results.

6.5.4 /r/-deletion

As mentioned above, the change from apical to uvular occurred considerably earlier in France than in Canada and it is therefore unsurprising that most metropolitan studies of /r/ within the variationist paradigm have focused on different sociolinguistic issues such as /r/-deletion.

Laks (1977, 1980, 1983) in his network study of a group of lower working-class males in Villejuif finds high deletion rates amongst his working-class informants. This somewhat contradicts Hume's claim mentioned above. He also notes particularly high /r/-deletion amongst the informants who are most strongly influenced by non-mainstream values. He studied /r/-deletion in word-final post-obstruent position and found high deletion rates in this context.

Armstrong (1993, 2001) also studied /r/-deletion in a sample of adolescents aged 11-19 in Dieuze (Lorraine, North Eastern France). He also finds higher deletion rates in the

[117] To represent Standard European French, five native Parisian informants were selected. Five informants from Montreal represent Quebec French and six speakers from Sudbury represent the Franco-Ontarian variety.

context word-final obstruent + /r/ than in the two other variable contexts he studies (pre-consonantal and pre-pausal /r/). His main extra-linguistic findings can be summarised as a lower propensity to /r/-deletion as well as lower levels of style shift amongst his younger age group118. He notes very few sex-differentiated patterns within each age group.

So far, we have noted that variation in /r/ (whether a back versus front realisation or /r/-deletion) was clearly associated with social status and that this association was powerful enough to introduce rapid changes. More recent studies, however, have focused on a possible link between /r/ and ethnicity.

6.5.5 New trends in French /r/: Perpignan and Grenoble

Two recent quantitative studies, that of Pickles (2001 and forthcoming) in Perpignan and that of Romano (2003) in Grenoble have shown interesting developments in /r/ in France. 6.5.6 Perpignan

Pickles recorded a sample of 37 young informants (all aged around 15) in six different secondary schools of the town. He divided them into 4 major categories according to their ethnolinguistic backgrounds: a) Non-meridional origin; b) Catalan origin; c) Hispanic origin and d) Maghrebi origin. He describes nine different allophones of /r/ in Perpignan across his sample, three of which (listed in 7, 8 and 9 below) are of particular interest to the present study:

1) apical [r], inherited from the oc dialect substrate of the region and typical of meridional French;

2) voiced uvular trill [ʀ];

3) [ʀ] which symbolises a strongly stressed uvular trill.

4) voiced uvular fricative [ʁ], found in intervocalic position and word-final positions;

5) voiceless uvular trill [ʀ̥] in final position or contiguous to a voiceless consonant;

6) Ø, or /r/-deletion, found essentially in word-final position;

---

[118] 11-12 year olds, especially amongst younger females.

7) voiceless velar fricative [x];

8) voiceless uvular fricative [χ];

9) and finally "short [ʀ], often occurring in final position in monosyllabic words, for example sûr, dur, pur" (Pickles forthcoming, section 0.9119); this probably refers to a uvular approximant, possibly glottalised [ʁ̞ʔ].

The allophonic distribution in 1 to 6 above is very similar to that found in northern varieties of French, as described above. However, the last three variants are of particular interest here: fricatives [x] and [χ], although sometimes difficult to distinguish from [ʁ̞]120 are perceptibly very different from the realisations of /r/ generally heard in non-meridional France. The fact that they occur principally in word-final position undoubtedly reinforces this perception as they are more likely to be stressed or occur in pre-pausal position. These realisations are highly relevant here, for they also emerge from the present data, as we shall see below. The third variant of interest is short [ʀ] which may be understood as a short uvular approximant. The phonic similarities with the glottalised approximant [ʁ̞ʔ] which will also be discussed in detail in this chapter, are striking. Unfortunately, the sociolinguistic distribution of short [ʀ] is not given by Pickles.

What is particularly interesting in the Perpignan data is the greater propensity of Maghrebi speakers to use the two fricative variants, especially strong [χ] in word-final position. Pickles also finds higher rates of [x] and [χ] among male speakers in the sample. These higher rates of [χ] in the speech of his Maghrebi speakers prompt him to enquire whether dialect contact with Arabic and other north African dialects is responsible for the sociolinguistic pattern (forthcoming, section 0.6). Indeed, although /r/ is apical in Modern Arabic and North African dialects (e.g. Kabyle, Arabic), the

---

[119] As the work is currently in progress and no page numbers have yet been allocated, only the chapter section is mentioned here, with the kind permission of the author.

[120] Pickles (forthcoming, section 0.10.1).

realizations of French uvular [r] and its allophones are close in quality to allophones of /g/ and /k/ in Arabic. Pickles states (section 0.6) that the

> Arabic letter representing the sound [χ] is transcribed *kh* as in *Khaled, Khamis, Khabar.*
>
> It may be the case therefore that young Maghrébin speakers transfer these sounds to their spoken French as being those closest to the sounds they hear and wish to imitate. In doing so they produce sounds which strike the European ear as being more strident and consequently add a "Maghrébin" character to the speech.

A Northern African origin for this strident /r/ variant is to some extent confirmed by Lanly (1962: 316). In his account of North African French, Lanly describes final /r/ as

> "guttural et explosif et il tient certainement ces caractères de la jota espagnole ou du rha arabe [ḫa] qui est de même nature ("spirante-vélaire sourde"). On peut décrire approximativement ce phonème en disant qu'il représente une brusque expiration venant de l'arrière-gorge; il s'arrête brusquement avec ce souffle et aucune vibration de la langue ne l'accompagne et ne le prolonge.
>
> Tu sais ce qu'il a dit mon père ! [pe̥ḫ]

The reference to a sharp exhaling phase of /r/ and a sudden stop of the air stream is also interesting, for this "sudden stop" characteristic is also present in the glottalised variant of /r/ found in our data and analysed later in the chapter. Lanly also notes (1962: 317) in Algiers French "une prononciation très différente, extrêmement relâchée de r-final, aboutissant à une sorte de [e̥] (sourd) (à la créole) voiture: [wâtüe̥]". The similarity of these variants to those reported by Romano in Grenoble is also striking.

6.5.7 Grenoble

Experimental work by Romano (2003) on two adolescent networks in Grenoble indicates the emergence of innovative realisations of /r/ similar to those noted by Pickles. Although the ethnolinguistic origin of informants is not directly mentioned, it is

interesting to note that the networks Romano studies form part of pluri-ethnic communities with a high proportion of Maghrebi speakers.

Romano states (2003: 47-8) that the articulation of a number of /r/ tokens (especially in non-intervocalic position) is particularly energetic, sometimes prompting lengthening, and is associated with the presence of irregular vibration (notably in voiceless contexts). When comparing this realisation to more standard types of uvular spirants121 in a spectrographic analysis, Romano notices that this strong fricative involves a complex articulation, describing it as

> une sorte de fricative/vibrante dorso-uvulaire (pas toujours sonore et pas forcément vibrante) avec vraisemblablement un soulèvement de la partie prédorsale de la langue dans une région avancée, prévélaire ou palatale (2003: 48).

In accordance with Pickles's data, Romano (2003: 48) observes higher rates of this variant among the male informants of his sample. Romano also observes a short pharyngeal vowel [ɐ] or [ɐ̟] as in dire [diɐ], mère [mɛɐ̟]. He notices that it is particularly favoured by his male informants.

The two innovative variants noted by Pickles and Romano, (strongly fricated [χ] and pharyngeal [ɐ̟], although they seem linked to ethnicity, seem also to have their origin in français populaire which has traditionally been associated to the working-class speech of Paris.

6.5.8 /r/ in *français populaire* and Parisian French

Although their remarks are not based on quantitative data, Passy (1913: 71-3), Bauche (1920: 44-5), Straka (1952: 215), Gadet (1992: 35) all mention the strongly fricative characteristics of uvular /r/ in Parisian French and français populaire.

Some scholars also report an articulation of /r/ which occurs very far back in the oral cavity. Posner (1997: 288) states that "in 'vulgar' Parisian usage there is low voiced

pharyngeal constriction without friction". Carton et al. (1983: 84) provide a detailed phonetic description of the speech of a working-class male. They observe (1983: 84) realisations of /r/ which are articulated very far back, specifically when /r/ belongs to a syllable in position of emphatic stress. They also note that the articulation can be backed to the extent that /r/ is pharyngealised (with most of the tongue exerting stricture against the pharyngeal lining). They subsequently remark that this pharyngealised pronunciation prompts general backing of the articulation.

6.5.9 A new variant? Glottalised [ʁʔ]

The general backing of the articulation of /r/ and its pharyngealisation mentioned above for Parisian French may have prompted the emergence of a new variant found in the 1998 data: glottalised [ʁʔ]. To our knowledge, [ʁʔ] is not reported in the literature. But is glottalised [ʁʔ] a completely new variant? This seems unlikely: firstly, it could be a loan variant. Strong similarities can be found between the [ʁʔ] variant and the description given by Lanly (1962: 316) of North African French short /r/ (see above in 6.5.6); both variants are articulated far back and terminate in a "sudden stop". The variant may therefore originate from North African French.

Secondly, a glottalised articulation of /r/ might be a recurrent but relatively limited phenomenon in metropolitan French. Two studies mention its presence in the speech of standard French speakers. Malécot (1975), in his study of the glottal stop in French among the educated Parisian middle class mentions the glottalisation of consonants. He notes that the consonant which favours most the occurrence of a glottal stop is /r/, followed by dental and nasal consonants. Malécot found that glottalisation was more used by women and that there was also a "general tendency to glottalize voiced final consonants" (1975: 54), especially in pre-pausal position.

The second study which mentions glottal stops in French is that of Demolin (2001), in his sample of 20 speakers of Belgian French. Demolin notes (2001: 70) that /ʁ/ "can be

---

[121] Cf. examples of these in their phonic context in 6.2.1 above.

replaced by a creaky or laryngealised vowel having pulses around the frequencies of the trill" in intervocalic contexts when V1 ≠ V2 /ʀ/. He observes that his female informants articulate a glottal stop in the same context. Whatever is the origin of glottalised [ʁ̰ʔ], the literature on the phenomenon is extremely meagre.

6.5.10 Summary of previous findings on /r/

Cross-linguistically and specifically in French, /r/ displays a very wide range of allophonic variation according to segmental context. The phoneme is also often involved in rapid processes of linguistic change. In French, /r/ is a very frequently used phoneme. This gives its variants a particularly potent role for the expression of socio-stylistic differences (e.g. zero-realisation), especially in word-final and pre-pausal contexts. Linguistically, recent developments of /r/ in French seem to have followed two trends:

a) a propensity to lenite, involving either approximation (being articulated as an approximant or as a vowel) or deletion;

b) a proclivity to be articulated further back, as a pharyngeal fricative or back approximant, sometimes accompanied by particularly marked frication of a strident nature. This trend includes glottalisation.

Extra-linguistically, it seems that these two trends are led by adolescent males and at least with regard to the strongly fricative [χ], by young males of a Maghrebi origin. Traditionally also, pharyngeal articulations of /r/ are associated with working-class Parisian speech. According to Demolin, /r/ can also be replaced by a glottal stop, especially in the speech of female informants. This observation is also made for educated Parisian speech by Malécot, who notes a higher propensity of /r/ to glottalise in utterance-final position than other consonants.

As we shall see below, both trends are observable in our own 1998 data and raise the intriguing possibility that uvular phenomena in three distant French cities (Grenoble,

Perpignan and Paris) may be indicative of a general change in progress. We now turn to the analysis of /r/ in our own corpus.

6.6.0 /r/ in the 1998 data

6.6.1 Contexts selected for analysis

The variants of interest will only be analysed in word-final position, this for several reasons: firstly, the allophonic distribution of /r/ is highly constrained by its linguistic context (table 6.2 above in 6.2.1). Restricting its analysis to one syllabic position renders it more manageable within the limits of the study. Secondly, it has been shown that final position is a very potent locus for the expression of social and stylistic marking. Furthermore, its higher perceptibility increases the reliability of the data, since the analysis was conducted on an auditory basis. Finally, certain variants, such as glottalised /r/ have not been observed in any other position. For the sake of strict comparison between variants, final position was the only linguistic locus in which no variant was excluded from occurrence.

Following this principle, only post-vocalic /r/ has been taken into account in the analysis. Indeed, it has been noted above that post-consonantal /r/ in final position (as in quatre) tends to elide and thus prevents the occurrence of the variants of interest, such as glottal /r/ for instance. Furthermore, when /r/ is not deleted, voiceless consonant contexts such as C[-voice] _ (schwa){$,#} as in mettre categorically prompt the devoicing of /r/ in [ʀ̥] to [x], thus preventing variation in that context.

A distinction is however made between pre-pausal and non pre-pausal word-final position. The former being more likely to be stressed because it usually ends a rhythmic group, it is more perceptible from an auditory point of view. Given the variation in glottalisation observed by Malécot (1975, see above in 6.5.9) according to the presence or absence of a pause, the possibility of similar influences in our own data should be investigated.

6.6.2 Description of the /r/ variants of interest

In the 1998 data, post-vocalic /r/ in word-final position is variably realised as:

a) voiceless uvular trill [ʀ̥], as well as voiceless velar or uvular fricatives, respectively [x] and [χ]; it is very difficult to distinguish between these three sounds on a purely auditory basis and they have for that reason been grouped together under symbol [ʀ̥] in the analysis;

b) velar or uvular approximants, respectively [ɰ] and [ʁ̞]. The same remark applies for these two sounds which have been grouped under symbol [ʁ̞].

The following non-standard variants have been observed, again in pre-vocalic word-final position:

c) a laryngealised (or creaky[122]) vowel noted [V̰] (the symbol is adapted from Demolin 2001: 65). This variant is easy to picture for native speakers of French as it can be imagined as an exaggerated Parisian "/r/ grasséyé". It is noteworthy that Demolin (2001: 65) only reports this variant in inter-vocalic position;

d) a glottalised uvular approximant noted [ʁ̞ʔ]; according to Malécot's findings on the propensity of /r/ to glottalise, it is not implausible that glottalised variants of the velar approximant [ɰ] are also present in our data. As was explained in b) above, it is however very difficult to distinguish between velar and uvular approximants on an auditory basis, hence the choice of symbol [ʁ̞ʔ] to describe the /r/ sounds sharing a glottal character. [ʁ̞ʔ] can also be accompanied by traces of friction following the glottal stricture, probably due to the release of the air flow.

---

[122] Creaky voice (or laryngealization) is a "complex phonation type in which part of the vocal folds produce creak while another part produces ordinary voicing" (Trask 1997: 59). Creak can sometimes be heard "at the end of an utterance, when the pitch of the voice falls" (Trask 1997: 59).

e) a strongly fricative voiceless uvular variant noted [χ]; the energy required for its articulation and its auditory character differ from the uvular fricative found in standard French, as described above in a).

Two standard realisations [ʀ̥] and [ʁ̥] (each representing a set of sub-variants as described above in this section) will thus be compared to three non-standard ones: [V̥], [ʁ̥ʔ] and [χ] in the various tables of the present chapter. Firstly however, it is necessary to evaluate the effect of linguistic environment on /r/ realisation.

6.6.3.0 Linguistic constraints on post-vocalic word-final /r/

6.6.3.1 Preceding vowel

The nature of the preceding vowel is not reported as exerting a constraint on /r/-realisation in the literature. It seems that all vowels allow the same degree of allophonic variation in /r/. Romano (2003: 46) observes for instance that although strongly fricative [χ] is relatively "natural" when occurring in the context of palatal vowels, it also emerges in non-palatal contexts, i.e. with central and back vowels. This observation is borne out by our own data. The occurrence of /r/ variants showed no evidence of influence from prevocalic environment.

6.6.3.2 Pause

The sole constraint which seems to play an important role in the quality of post-vocalic word-final /r/ is the presence or absence of a pause. Table 6.3 below displays the distribution of variants of post-vocalic word-final /r/ in pre-pausal and non-pre-pausal contexts in the 1998 sample. The individual scores of the 32 informants have been aggregated for each variant. Total numbers (N) below represent an average of 30 tokens of /r/ per informant and per position. To eliminate any possible prosodic effects, only scores for interview style (the least scripted style of speech recorded) are included here:

Table 6.3

Post-vocalic word-final /r/ variants in pre-pausal and non prepausal position

		[ɻ̥]	[ʀ̥]	[ⱱ̟]	[ɻ̥ʔ]	[χ]
Position	N	%	%	%	%	%
Pre-pausal	927	62.4	19.9	1.9	9	6.1
Non prepausal	953	97.9	0	0.4	1	0.2

The results shown in table 6.3 are interesting for several reasons: firstly, out of all three non-standard articulations, it is glottalised /r/ which shows the highest realisation scores, although [ɻ̥ʔ]-rates are not especially high. Table 6.3 also establishes that [ɻ̥] is near categorical in non-prepausal position (97.9%). In pre-pausal position, the approximant also appears to be the form speakers aim at, [ɻ̥] scoring the highest rate of all variants. The score of 62.4% for [ɻ̥] in that position corroborates Malderez's (2000: 65-87) findings and indeed supports Coveney's "strong case for presenting the uvular or velar approximant, rather than a fricative, as the principal allophone of /ʀ/" (2001: 58). Unsurprisingly, in terms of frequency, [ʀ̥] is the second choice in the 1998 sample in that position at 19.9%.

The presence or absence of pause after word-final /r/ is thus a highly significant constraint for the non-standard variants of interest since non-prepausal position is unfavourable to variation. Prepausal /r/ thus appears more interesting from a sociolinguistic perspective. The higher degree of variation in that position is unsurprising given its higher perceptibility in speech (see above in 6.2.0). We now turn to the sociolinguistic distribution of /r/ in our sample.

6.7 Sociolinguistic perception of /r/ variants

[ɻ̥] and [ʀ̥] have hitherto been presented as the two standard forms of pre-vocalic word-final /r/ while [ⱱ̟], [ɻ̥ʔ] and [χ] have been considered non-standard. However, so far we have not considered the question of whether prestige attaches to each set of standard and

non-standard variants. Although very little stylistic variation actually occurs overall between interview and reading styles, table 6.4 below reveals interesting patterns of variation.

Table 6.4

Post-vocalic word-final /r/ variants by speech style: pre-pausal position

Speech style		[ɻ̥]	[ʀ̥]	[V̥]	[ɻ̥ʔ]	[χ]
	N	%	%	%	%	%
Interview	927	62.4	19.9	1.9	9.0	6.1
Reading	851	65.2	23.7	1.2	3.2	7.0

[ɻ̥] and [ʀ̥] show a similar rate across informal and formal styles. In contrast, laryngealised vowel and glottalised /r/ show a decrease across the two styles. Although figures are relatively low in both cases, it seems that [ɻ̥ʔ] is stylistically more marked than the laryngealized variant. This is perhaps due to the fact that [V̥] is relatively close to standard [ɻ̥] from an auditory perspective.

The surprising pattern in table 6.4 relates to the strong fricative [χ], which unexpectedly displays a slight increase in reading style, suggesting that it is not a style indicator. This might be due to different factors: [χ] being very close in nature to [ʀ̥] (only more energetically articulated and more strident), it is possible that the variant is not perceived as non-standard by the speakers of the sample. On the contrary, a strong articulation in reading style might be seen by the informant using [χ] as a sign of education, of proficiency in reading (in terms of trying to adopt a clear diction of all linguistic segments in a word, thus reinforcing the friction in /r/).

However tentative an explanation, it seems from table 6.4 that there obtains a certain hierarchy within the three non-standard variants on a 'more-to-less acceptable' scale, with glottalised /r/ as the least prestigious realisation and [χ] as the least marked non-

standard variant. This will be investigated further below when the distribution of /r/ is analysed in connection with further extra-linguistic factors.

6.8.0 Social correlates of variation: social class

One of the most striking patterns observed in the sample concerns the correlation between social class and the three non-standard variants described above. Table 6.5 below shows the distribution of post-vocalic word-final /r/ according to social class in the entire 1998 sample. Total numbers (N) represent an average of 30 tokens per speaker. Only results for prepausal word-final /r/ are considered here.

Table 6.5

Word-final /r/ variants by social class: pre-pausal position

Social Group	N	[ɻ̥] %	[ʀ̥] %	[ⱱ̟] %	[ɻ̥ʔ] %	[χ] %
III	171	57.4	9.0	2.7	27.1	3.4
IIB	296	62.1	21.1	0.3	4.0	11.8
IIA	320	59.8	26.9	2.7	5.7	4.5
I	140	75.2	15.3	2.6	4.6	2.0

The most surprising feature in table 6.5 above is the behaviour of the lowest social group (III): although the speakers from that group use approximant [ɻ̥] 57.4% of the time, they largely avoid using the other standard variant, the voiceless trill [ʀ̥], only scoring 9% for that realisation. Generally, for all groups except group III, [ʀ̥] is clearly the second most-used variant, scoring an average of 18% in groups IIB, IIA, and I. Group III behaves very differently and adopts [ɻ̥ʔ] as their second most-used variant. Although all groups use [ɻ̥ʔ] to some extent (and interestingly for groups IIB, IIA, and I, to approximately the same degree at 5% on average), the group located at the bottom of the social scale

seems to be leading the adoption of the glottalised variant (the social distribution for this variant being highly significant at p = 0.0003). What is also apparent in table 6.5 is the clear preference for standard [ʁ̞] on the part of the highest social grouping, and the greater reluctance of that group to use the uvular trill [ʀ̞] when compared to groups IIA and IIB. The two extreme poles of the social scale seem to adopt a similar attitude towards standard [ʀ̞].

It is interesting to note here that for most variants, groups IIA and IIB seem to behave in a similar fashion, with closely comparable scores for most variants. The only exception to this similarity in linguistic behaviour is the greater propensity on the part of group IIB to use strongly fricative [χ]. Group IIB thus seems to be leading the adoption of that particular variant, if indeed any change is in progress. This pattern is surprising, as it might be assumed that strongly fricative [χ], being a non-standard feature, would tend to behave like glottalised [ʁ̞ʔ] and be used at higher rates by the lowest-ranking group on the social scale. This is clearly not the case here, and it again indicates the complex sociolinguistic distribution of this variant.

The relative lack of social stratification in the laryngealised vowel variant makes it stand out in table 6.5. From this table, the association of this variant with the working class (as reported in the sociolinguistic literature) cannot be confirmed and the results do not achieve significance (p = 0.59). This variant requires finer differentiation between groups to show patterning.

6.8.1 Correlation between social class and age

Table 6.6 below displays the correlation between the /r/ variants of interest, social class and age in the 1998 sample. N represents an average of 30 tokens per informant in prepausal environment.

Table 6.6

Word-final /r/ variants by age and social class: pre-pausal position

			[ʁ̥]	[ʀ̥]	[ⱱ̟]	[ʁ̥ʔ]	[χ]
		N	%	%	%	%	%
III	15-25	111	55.3	4.4	0	35.7	4.3
	30-50	60	61.6	18.3	8.3	9.9	1.6
IIB	15-25	117	65	10.1	0	7.6	16.2
	30-50	179	60.2	28.4	0.5	1.6	8.9
IIA	15-25	205	64.7	20.4	3.3	5.5	5.6
	30-50	115	51.1	38.3	1.6	6.0	2.5
I	15-25	29	82.7	6.8	3.4	6.8	0
	30-50	111	73.3	17.4	2.5	4.1	2.5

Table 6.6 shows generational differences in the use of /r/ variants within and across all social groups. Caution must however be applied when dealing with younger group I and older group III: the former represents one informant123, the latter two. Nevertheless, the results for these two groups do tentatively suggest a general decrease of [ʀ̥]-use and a compensatory increase of approximant [ʁ̥]-use. This confirms the patterns observed in previous studies (cf. above in 6.2.1). The only group showing a generational decrease in [ʁ̥]-use is group III, for reasons discussed below.

Concerning the non-standard variants, percentage rates of [ⱱ̟]-use seem to confirm the lower working-class origin of the realisation but suggest its decline among the younger working-class groups. This result is however not significant for group III ($p = 0.17$) and group IIB ($p = 0.44$). Although percentage rates are very low overall for this variant, it seems that it has only diffused into the younger groups of the two higher social classes. It is also interesting to note the slight generational increase in [ⱱ̟]-use in groups IIA and I (although this result is insignificant for group IIA at $p = 0.63$).

The most striking pattern in table 6.6 is that of glottalised [ʁ̞ʔ]. Although it is present in all age and social groups, its adoption is clearly led by young lower working-class speakers at 35.7%. The high percentage for this variant explains the fall in standard [ʁ̞]-use observed above for group III. The fact that [ʁ̞ʔ]-use shows generational differentiation in all groups (except for group IIA where it seems relatively stable) suggests a social diffusion in progress124.

Strongly fricative [χ] also shows an age-grading pattern in the sample which suggests a generational and social diffusion similar to that of [ʁ̞ʔ], except within group I125. Indeed, the younger group I seems to reject the strident uvular fricative, and appears to compensate for this behaviour by adopting the highest [ʁ̞]-rate of the entire sample. The group leading any adoption of [χ] is the younger group from the IIB social class, i.e. young upper working-class speakers.

To summarise the principal patterns displayed in table 6.6, [ʁ̞] can be mostly associated with group I (both younger and older informants), [ⱱ̞] with older working-class and younger middle-class speakers; [ʁ̞ʔ] with younger lower working-class speakers and [χ] with upper working-class informants. [ʀ̥]-use seems to be undergoing a general decrease in its use for all groups. Let us break down these patterns in more detail.

6.8.2 Social correlates of variation: age and sex

Tables 6.7 and 6.8 below show the relationship between the /r/ variants, sex and age in the 1998 sample. N again represents an average of 30 tokens per informant.

---

[123] ANOVA testing was not possible for group I, as the test could not calculate the variance within younger group I (only one individual in the group).

[124] The generational difference between the younger and older age speakers in group III and IIB is highly significant at respectively $p = 0.13$ and $p = 0.005$. It is however not satisfactory for group IIA at $p = 0.87$.

[125] Again, no ANOVA test was available for group I here; all other results do not achieve significance: $p = 0.46$ for group III; $p = 0.27$ for group IIB; and $p = 0.39$ for group IIA.

Table 6.7

Word-final /r/ variants by age and sex: pre-pausal position

Group	N	[ɻ̥] %	[ʀ̥] %	[V̥] %	[ɻ̥ʔ] %	[χ] %
15-25						
Males	224	66.2	6.0	3.3	19.8	4.3
Females	238	60.9	19.9	0	7.5	10.8
30-50						
Males	239	58.7	31.7	4.5	6.6	5.3
Females	226	71.4	21.9	0	2.2	4.1

Table 6.7 is particularly revealing for it shows that the use of each of the non-standard /r/ variants is led by different age and sex groups: [V̥] represents a categorically male variant. Indeed, no female informant uses this realisation (results for this variant are close to significance at p = 0.07). This very clear pattern might however be partly constrained by physiological differences between male and female speech organs: Henton and Bladon (1988: 8) suggest that females seem to assume different glottal postures to males to compensate for their different glottal anatomies, i.e. less long vocal folds. Monsen and Engebreston (1977: 984) state that when prompted to do so, "a few female subjects [in their sample] experienced some difficulty in producing creaky voice". However, physiological differences do not prevent women from laryngealising altogether.

What accounts more appropriately for the pattern observed in table 6.7 is that creak seems associated with male speech in certain languages126: Henton and Bladon 1988 who studied the use of creak in 79 British speakers of two different dialects (RP and 'Modified Northern) describe creak as a cross-dialectal sociophonetic marker of male speech. Returning to French /r/, Demolin (2001: 70) notes the absence of laryngealisation on the part of his female informants who instead tend to utter a glottal

[126] In others, such as the Chaudic Languages of West Africa, creak is used for phonological contrast (Ladefoged 1971: 15) and is therefore not associated with extra-linguistic features.

stop in intervocalic contexts when V1 ≠ V2. Demolin also suggests (2001: 70) that "the realization of [R] might be linked to phonation type problems in some cases". At all events, when correlating this sex-differentiated pattern to the social class distribution discussed above, it is clear that [V̞] is associated with older working-class and younger middle-class males.

Similarly, [ʁ̞ʔ] is a predominantly young male variant (results for this variant are significant at p = 0.02) and more specifically, in the light of our own findings in table 6.5 above (see section 6.8.1), a young lower working-class male variant. The stylistic pattern discussed above in 6.7, which showed that the variant was somewhat negatively marked, might be explained by the symbolic association of the variant with this low-prestige group.

[χ] contrasts with both [V̞] and [ʁ̞ʔ] in that it seems to be favoured by the younger females of the sample (although this distribution is insignificant at p = 0.25). When considering these results together with table 6.6 of the preceding section, the adoption of the strident fricative thus appears to be led by upper working-class females. This might also explain in part the relative lack of stylistic marking observed for that variant. The fact that females and lower-intermediate social groupings tend to adopt more prestigious features of speech and thus tend to lead linguistic change towards more standard forms is a recurrent finding in the sociolinguistic literature, as we saw above (Chapter 3, section 3.1.0). We can suggest tentatively that, the adoption of [χ] by young females might conversely help legitimate this non-standard variant, or at least neutralise its negative marking to some degree.

Results in non-prepausal position appear, in spite of the very low figures involved, to confirm the patterns observed in prepausal position:

Table 6.8

Word-final /r/ variants by age and sex: non-prepausal position

Group	N	[ɻ̥] %	[ʀ̥] %	[ⱱ̰] %	[ɻ̥ʔ] %	[χ] %
15-25						
Males	239	96.6	0	0	2.0	0
Females	240	97.8	0	0	1.2	0.8
30-50						
Males	236	97.4	0	1.6	0.8	0
Females	238	100	0	0	0	0

Note in particular that even the very small scores observed here confirm the status of [ⱱ̰] as a predominantly older male variant, and of [χ] as the preserve of younger females.

6.8.3 Social class, age and style

The socio-stylistic hierarchy sketched above in 6.7 (i.e. the negative marking of [ⱱ̰] and [ɻ̥ʔ] and the somewhat more overtly prestigious character of [χ]) is very clear in the younger age group, as shown in table 6.9 below. Only the results collected for the three non-standard variants are displayed here. To simplify presentation, informants have been placed in broader social groupings, (i.e. III-IIB informants grouped together vs. IIA-I informants) and results are displayed by age, sex and social group. Figures in normal type have been calculated from tokens collected in interview style while results in bold represent /r/ rates in reading style. An average of 30 tokens per informant was analysed and only prepausal context was taken into account.

Table 6.9

Word-final /r/ variants in two speech styles according to sex and social class: younger age group

Sex	Social Class	Style		[ɐ̯]	[ɐ̯ʔ]	[χ]
			N	%	%	%
Males	III-IIB	Interview	109	0	34.1	5.3
		Reading	**120**	**0**	**14.1**	**13.3**
Males	IIA-I	Interview	115	6.6	5.5	3.3
		Reading	**109**	**0**	**0**	**2.5**
Females	III-IIB	Interview	119	0	9.2	15.1
		Reading	**96**	**0**	**2.9**	**12.4**
Females	IIA-I	Interview	119	0	5.8	6.6
		Reading	**97**	**0**	**1.6**	**12.2**

All groups, regardless of class or sex, show a decrease in their use of variants [ɐ̯ʔ] and [ɐ̯] in the more scripted styles, which confirms the lack of overt prestige of these two realisations. For [χ], the pattern is slightly different: with the exceptions of the IIA-I males and III-IIB females who show a very slight decrease, the III-IIB males and IIA-I females increase their use of [χ] in the more scripted style, suggesting that this variant conveys a certain degree of prestige. The fact that the III-IIB males score higher in the reading styles than any other group gives a crossover pattern which seems to confirm this127. Although caution is required by small speaker numbers, it can tentatively be

[127] This is not however, strictly speaking, a case of hypercorrection as [χ] is not an overtly prestigious form. Sociolinguists have traditionally used the term hypercorrection to describe either an "irregular misapplication of an imperfectly learned rule, as in the hypercorrect case marking of *whom did you say is calling*?" (Labov 1972b: 126) or a pattern showing a lower social group scoring higher rates of prestige forms than a higher social group in formal speech styles (see for instance Labov 1972b: 122-41). In our

argued that a strident and energetic realisation of the uvular fricative does not seem to mark speakers negatively in the reading styles.

This may explain another pattern observed above, (i.e. young females from the higher-working class leading the adoption of [χ]). Although [χ] is not an overtly prestigious feature as such, this group may perceive this variant as prestigious as it is associated with more formal styles of speech. As discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.1.0, women tend to lead the adoption of new prestige patterns (Labov 2001: 273-74). However, this tentative explanation fails to take into account a further factor which might have a strong influence on the sociolinguistic distribution of /r/ in the 1998 sample: the speakers' ethnic origin.

6.8.4 Social correlates of variation: ethnic origin

Table 6.10 below shows the correlation between the /r/ variants of interest and the speakers' ethnic origin in the entire 1998 sample.

Table 6.10

Word-final /r/ variants by ethnic origin: pre-pausal position

Group		[ɻ̥]	[ʀ̥]	[ⱱ̟]	[ɻ̥ʔ]	[χ]
	N	%	%	%	%	%
Metropolitan	347	66.3	23.4	3.5	3.7	2.7
Other	261	58.9	22.7	0	9.8	8.2
North African	319	58.5	15.3	1.5	14.5	9.8

Table 6.10 displays very different linguistic behaviour according to ethnic origin. Firstly, it is the group of metropolitan origin which displays the highest use of standard variants, especially the approximant [ɻ̥] (although results for this variant do not achieve significance ($p = 0.67$). It also seems that laryngealised [ⱱ̟] is also closely associated

---

case therefore, the pattern cannot be hypercorrection as [χ] is not a prestige form; it seems to be *perceived*

with this group (although p = 0.18 here). This is unsurprising given that this variant is traditionally reported as a Parisian working-class feature in the literature.

More interesting are the higher rates of glottalised [ʁ̞ʔ] and strongly fricative [χ] shown by the groups originating from immigrant backgrounds (though again, results for both variants did not achieve significance at respectively p = 0.1 and p = 0.08). The figures suggest that the adoption of these two non-standard variants is being led by members of the Maghrebi group and would appear to indicate a model of diffusion starting from the group of North African origin, spreading outwards to the speakers from other immigrant backgrounds and finally reaching speakers of metropolitan origin. However, table 6.11, which displays the correlation between the ethnic origin and age of the 1998 informants, presents a rather more complicated distribution.

Table 6.11

Word-final /r/ variants by age and ethnic origin: pre-pausal position

Group		[ʁ̞]	[ʀ̥]	[ⱱ̟]	[ʁ̞ʔ]	[χ]
	N	%	%	%	%	%
15-25						
Metropolitan	150	63.3	23.9	4.6	2.6	4.6
Other	111	65.1	9.5	0	20.5	4.4
North African	201	62.9	7.1	0.4	17.6	11.5
30-50						
Metropolitan	197	68.5	23.1	2.8	3.9	1.4
Other	150	53.9	33.3	0	1.3	11.3
North African	118	50.7	29.6	3.3	9.2	6.7

Table 6.11 shows several clear patterns. The younger group of metropolitan origin generally seems to behave more like the older age groups with high usage of the two standard variants of /r/. Interestingly, they have the highest use of laryngealised /r/ in the whole sample. We return to this point below in 6.8.5.

---

as such by young working-class females.

Among the older speakers, [ʁ̥ʔ]-use is highest in the group of North African origin. This suggests that this group may either have imported this pronunciation128, or exaggerated a tendency which already existed in French (see 6.5.9 above on glottalisation in French) or both. However, in the younger group, it is the speakers from other immigrant backgrounds who seem to favour [ʁ̥ʔ]-use to the highest degree, although less than 3% separate the two younger groups from immigrant backgrounds in their respective [ʁ̥ʔ]-use.

The adoption of [χ] is more clearly being led by speakers of Northern African origin in the younger age group, although this pattern is not echoed in the older age group. Indeed, it is older speakers from other backgrounds who have the highest [χ]-use in that group. Although no categorical claim can be made regarding a North African origin of [χ], it is evident that younger beurs are more sensitive to this variant. When comparing this pattern to others observed above for [χ], it seems that its adoption is led by the younger female beur speakers from upper working-class backgrounds.

Overall, the most striking feature is the similarity of /r/ distribution in the two younger age groups of immigrant backgrounds. Both seem to reject standard [ʁ̥] and favour [ʁ̥ʔ]. They also both use very few laryngealised vowels when compared to their metropolitan counterparts. Such a behavioural difference calls for investigation of the underlying social mechanisms which regulate /r/-use in the sample.

6.8.5 Social correlates of variation: street-culture

In Chapter 5 above, it was observed that a high street-culture index generally corresponded to a high use of non-standard variants (affrication of dental plosives and palatalisation of velars). It was shown that the younger groups from immigrant backgrounds had higher street-culture scores, which meant that they were more integrated into life in the street and had more close-knit social networks. It was also

---

[128] Cf. Lanly (1962: 316) above in 6.5.6.

noticed that younger females had weaker ties in the street-community than young males and were thus less influenced by it in their linguistic behaviour.

Table 6.12 below displays the correlation between street-culture index and /r/-use. Individual street-culture scores have again been collated in broader groupings.

Table 6.12

Word-final /r/ variants by street-culture index score: pre-pausal position

Index Score		[ɻ̥]	[ʀ̥]	[ⱱ̟]	[ɻ̥ʔ]	[χ]
	N	%	%	%	%	%
1-2	139	87.9	5.5	0	2.1	4.3
3-4	504	60.4	27.3	1.5	4.6	5.5
5-6	175	58.3	17.4	6.6	10.9	6.6
7-8	56	51.7	12.4	0	26.7	8.8
9-10	53	56.5	0	0	41.5	1.9

Speakers who show very little integration into the street-culture (index scores of 1 and 2) favour the approximant realisation (results are however insignificant for this variant at p = 0.35); but they also reject standard [ʀ̥] to a relatively large extent, scoring only 5.5% for that variant (results are not significant for [ʀ̥] at p = 0.11). At the other extreme, group 9-10 exaggerates this pattern and categorically rejects [ʀ̥].

Variant [ⱱ̟] seems to be favoured by groups with low to intermediate street-culture scores (results are insignificant at p = 0.12). It is categorically avoided by the groups situated at the two extreme poles of the street-culture scale. The fact that it is not adopted by group 1-2 is unsurprising given the working-class marking [ⱱ̟] is supposed to convey (see above in 6.8.1). However, its rejection by the groups scoring the highest

on the street-culture scale is more unexpected since it has been noted that these groups belonged in majority to the working class.

This might be explained as follows: it has been shown throughout the present chapter that although [V̥] was traditionally depicted as a working-class variant, it is presently in the process of being adopted by middle-class speakers and generally by young males of metropolitan origin. It is thus possible that variant [V̥] is in the process of loosing its strictly working-class marking, at least among the young cités population. The youngsters of the grands ensembles reject [V̥] because it no longer symbolises their working-class status.

If this is not the case, i.e. if [V̥] is still associated with working-class speech, it is not implausible that as [V̥] symbolises traditional (and therefore 'white') Parisian speech, and that this ethno-social marking is not desirable to a young population belonging to immigrant backgrounds, who feel rejected by the mainstream model of society. In order for the latter to mark a) their ethnic difference b) their lower social status and c) their belonging to street groups, they resort to the use of an innovative variant imported from the dialectal substrate of their parents' speech, i.e. glottalised [ʁ̥ʔ], and they exaggerate the frequency of its use.

Figures from section 6.8.4 above seem to confirm this. As was the case for palatalisation in chapter 5, glottalised [ʁ̥ʔ] seems to be diffusing through the close-knit community of the grand ensemble. In table 6.12 above, glottalised [ʁ̥ʔ] displays a very clear-cut stratification according to street-culture index, with [ʁ̥ʔ] scores reaching 41.5% in group 9-10 (results for [ʁ̥ʔ] are very significant at $p = 1.17\text{-}05$). It has been noted that the young speakers from immigrant backgrounds had the highest street-culture scores and led the adoption of [ʁ̥ʔ].

However, because [ʁʔ] is associated with the close-knit (and predominantly male) groups of the street, it is also negatively marked129. Consequently, female speakers from immigration backgrounds tend not to use [ʁʔ] to the same extent as their male counterparts. Scoring lower on the street-culture scale, they have weaker network ties in the grand ensemble community, and are therefore more sensitive to the negative marking of the variant.

This might explain the lack of patterning observed for [χ] in table 6.12 above and the figure of 1.9% within the 9-10 group. Young females from immigration backgrounds appear to be leading the adoption of strongly fricative [χ] but have lower street-culture scores. To symbolise their ethno-social difference but at the same time their rejection of the street-culture, they may be adopting a variant which is closer to the standard system of French, hence conveying less negative social marking. Strong fricative [χ] has perhaps for female beur speakers the double advantage of being less marked and associated with female speech in North African French. Morsly (1983: 70-2) in her study of 50 North African informants observes more uvular use amongst her female informants while males alternate between apical and uvular /r/. She adds (1983: 72) that apical /r/ is "un signe de virilité" amongst Arabic speakers. Young female beurs living in the cités cannot adopt apical /r/, since they would sound too masculine according to North African standard norms but also too "rural" according to French standard norms (see 6.3 above). The latter also explains the choice of a glottal rather than an apical realisation amongst male beurs.

6.9 Conclusion

Our explanation regarding the origin of the /r/ variants must remain tentative, and the further question remains open as to which feature will diffuse and why. It has been mentioned in Chapter 3 that, in order to diffuse successfully, linguistic variants must diffuse via weak social network ties.

---

[129] See section on stylistic variation in [ʁʔ] above in 6.7.

Variant [ʁʔ] does not seem to fulfil this criterion to a satisfactory degree, for both linguistic and extra-linguistic reasons. Linguistically speaking, it sounds somewhat alien to the phonetic system of French; from an extra-linguistic point of view, it appears to be a very potent indicator of social exclusion. It seems to have negative social marking and the fact that our speakers with the weakest ties in the community tend not to adopt it suggests that its use might remain limited to the grands ensembles.

Although it seems to be spreading amongst the young middle-class males to some extent, variant [V̰] is categorically rejected by females, regardless of age or class group. It has been noted that there may be a physiological reason for this rejection. Overall in the sample, the rates of [V̰]-use are also very low. This suggests that the diffusion of the variant will be very limited.

Variant [χ] shows more potential for diffusion. Indeed, it is present within the French sound system. It does not have a strong social marking and is in the process of being adopted by those with weak ties (i.e. upper working-class females) within the grands ensembles. We shall return to this issue in the conclusion (Chapter 8).

CHAPTER 7: THE VARIABLE REALISATION OF /A/

7.0 Introduction

The results from the last two chapters have shown that certain new non-standard pronunciation features seem to be emerging in the young population of Paris banlieues. Consistently, the adoption of these forms appears to be led by the same grouping in the population, i.e. the young working-class speakers from immigrant backgrounds. Our research has hitherto focused on consonantal phenomena. In contrast, the present chapter examines a vocalic variable, i.e. the realisation of /A/[130] in the sample. A high degree of variation was observed for this vowel during fieldwork. Although variation in /A/-realisation does not represent an innovative feature as such (see section 7.3.0 in this chapter), the presence of variation in the vowel is somewhat surprising: indeed, differences in /A/-realisation are largely reported as dying out in the literature.

7.1 Variation in /A/ in Standard French

The occurrence of back /ɑ/ in standard French is increasingly rare and limited to a small number of lexical items. This can be seen from Léon's table reproduced below, which displays the phonetic and orthographical distribution of the front and back /A/ variants.

[130] We capitalise here to indicate the archiphoneme.

Table 7.1

Phonetic and orthographical distribution of front and back realisations of /A/ in standard French (adapted from Léon 1966: 62)

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE	**SPELLING**	**FRONT A [a]**	**SPELLING**	**BACK A [ɑ]**
Open Syllable	a à	1)Almost always [a] *il a, tu as, avocat, là* [ila][tya] [avɔka][la] *chocolat, et caetera* [ʃɔkɔla][ɛtsetera]	-as â	2) [ɑ] in a few monosyllabic items *tas, las, bas, pas* [tɑ][lɑ][bɑ][pɑ] *bât* [bɑ]
Syllables closed by: [p] [b] [bl] [d] [f] [g] [kl] [ɲ] [r] [z] Syllables closed by: [t] [tr] [k] [kr] [ʃ] [ʒ] [m] [n] [l] [s]	a	3) Always [a] with these endings *pape* [pap] *arabe* [arab] *aimable* [ɛmabl] *balade* [balad] *girafe* [ʒiraf] *bague* [bag] *miracle* [mirakl] *montagne* [mɔ̃taɲ] *bar* [ba:r] *tard* [ta:r]		Never [ɑ] with these endings
	Never [a] with this ending		a	4) Always [ɑ:z] *rase, gaz, phrase* [rɑ:z][gɑ:z] [frɑ:z]
Direct opposition *in a few words* with similar structures:				
	a	5) /a/ *patte* [pat] *quatre* [katr] *bac* [bak] *nacre*[nakr] *tache* [taʃ] *rage* [raʒ] *flame* [flam] *Anne* [an] *Halle, balle, malle* [al, bal, mal]	â	6) /ɑ/ *pâte* [pɑ:t] *pâtre* [pɑ:tr] *pâques* [pɑ:k] *âcre* [ɑ:kr] *tâche* [tɑ:ʃ] *âge* [ɑ:ʒ] *âme*[ɑ:m] *âne* [ɑ:n] *hâle, bâle, mâle* [ɑ:l] [ɑ:l] [bɑ:l]
	a + sse	*chasse, fasse*; [ʃas] [fas]	â	*châsse* [ʃɑ:s]
	a + ce	*lace* [las]	a + sse	*lasse, passe* [lɑ:s] [pɑ:s]

Léon (1966: 61) observes that "[q]uatre-vingt quinze A sur cent sont antérieurs en français standard". What table 7.1 above also reveals is the complex distribution of back /A/ and its close association with vowel length, except in final open position as in items tas, las, bas, pas and bât for instance. The spelling of these lexical items (written with a now silent -s-, suggests an older pronunciation which might have included a certain degree of lengthening. The situation is significantly simpler in the two remaining contexts in which /A/ occurs, i.e. closed syllable ending in [j] and beginning with glide [w]. In such cases, [a] is always preferred in standard French. The occurrence of back [ɑ] in standard French is thus not only rare, but also seems constrained by linguistic factors to a relatively large extent. Most quantitative studies (not all concerned with the standard variety of French) carried out on /A/ realisation broadly confirm Léon's findings, as we shall see below in 7.2. However, in the grands ensembles investigated, our general impression during fieldwork was that the occurrence of back [ɑ] was relatively frequent (even very frequent in the speech of some informants), and did not seem as linguistically constrained as Léon suggests.

7.2 Previous studies of /A/

The progressive neutralisation of the /a/~/ɑ/ contrast is relatively recent if one takes Martinet's 1945 quantitative study as a starting point. In his survey analysing the speech of French army officers in a prison camp during World War Two, Martinet notes a strong maintenance of the phonemic distinction in /A/, especially amongst his Parisian speakers. Although his results are based on reported rather than actual use[131], he also observes that the distinction is better maintained in closed syllables than in open ones. In minimal pair patte ~ pâte, non-meridional speakers maintain the distinction 95% of the time and Parisian speakers 100%. In final open syllables (e.g. in lexical pair rat-ras) 32%

[131] Martinet's informants were not interviewed but asked to fill a questionnaire in which they had to self-assess their pronunciation of minimal pairs. In quantitative studies, self-reported use is of course problematic in that it creates a certain degree of bias in the results. Informants tend to over- or under-estimate their actual use of a given linguistic feature (see Trudgill 1972 and 1974 for examples) or report what realisations they perceive ought to be used. The interest of using Martinet's survey as a starting point is that further studies (Reichstein 1960, Deyhime 1967) were later carried out using the same questionnaire and that this allows for a comparison.

Léon (1966: 61) observes that "[q]uatre-vingt quinze A sur cent sont antérieurs en français standard". What table 7.1 above also reveals is the complex distribution of back /A/ and its close association with vowel length, except in final open position as in items tas, las, bas, pas and bât for instance. The spelling of these lexical items (written with a now silent -s-, suggests an older pronunciation which might have included a certain degree of lengthening. The situation is significantly simpler in the two remaining contexts in which /A/ occurs, i.e. closed syllable ending in [j] and beginning with glide [w]. In such cases, [a] is always preferred in standard French. The occurrence of back [ɑ] in standard French is thus not only rare, but also seems constrained by linguistic factors to a relatively large extent. Most quantitative studies (not all concerned with the standard variety of French) carried out on /A/ realisation broadly confirm Léon's findings, as we shall see below in 7.2. However, in the grands ensembles investigated, our general impression during fieldwork was that the occurrence of back [ɑ] was relatively frequent (even very frequent in the speech of some informants), and did not seem as linguistically constrained as Léon suggests.

7.2 Previous studies of /A/

The progressive neutralisation of the /a/~/ɑ/ contrast is relatively recent if one takes Martinet's 1945 quantitative study as a starting point. In his survey analysing the speech of French army officers in a prison camp during World War Two, Martinet notes a strong maintenance of the phonemic distinction in /A/, especially amongst his Parisian speakers. Although his results are based on reported rather than actual use[131], he also observes that the distinction is better maintained in closed syllables than in open ones. In minimal pair patte ~ pâte, non-meridional speakers maintain the distinction 95% of the time and Parisian speakers 100%. In final open syllables (e.g. in lexical pair rat-ras) 32%

[131] Martinet's informants were not interviewed but asked to fill a questionnaire in which they had to self-assess their pronunciation of minimal pairs. In quantitative studies, self-reported use is of course problematic in that it creates a certain degree of bias in the results. Informants tend to over- or under-estimate their actual use of a given linguistic feature (see Trudgill 1972 and 1974 for examples) or report what realisations they perceive ought to be used. The interest of using Martinet's survey as a starting point is that further studies (Reichstein 1960, Deyhime 1967) were later carried out using the same questionnaire and that this allows for a comparison.

of his non-meridional speakers neutralise the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ opposition, while his Parisian speakers score 15% neutralisation. In non-final syllables as in pair pathé ~ pâté, these percentages increase to 25% for non-meridionals and 19% for Parisians.

Later studies using Martinet's questionnaire show a progressive decline in the distinction. Reichstein's (1960) study of a sample of Parisian schoolgirls aged between 12 and 16 shows a sharp reduction in the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition in all syllabic positions, and again particularly in open syllables. Average percentage scores give 46.9% distinction in closed final syllables (with only 49% of maintenance for the pair patte ~ pâte). This figure drops to 10.4% in open final syllables; 30.5% in closed non-final syllables and 27.3% in open non-final syllables. She also notices that the distinction is especially weak before /r/.

Deyhime's (1967) linguistic survey of 500 students originating from all the different regions of France observes similar trends, as illustrated in table 7.2 below. Paris stands for Parisian speakers and Fnm for français non-méridionaux.

Table 7.2

Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction in closed and open final syllables and non-word-final syllables (adapted from Deyhime 1967: 166)

Speaker group	*rat ~ ras*	*pâtes ~ patte*	*parage ~ barrage*
Paris	38	87	22
Fnm	38	88	21

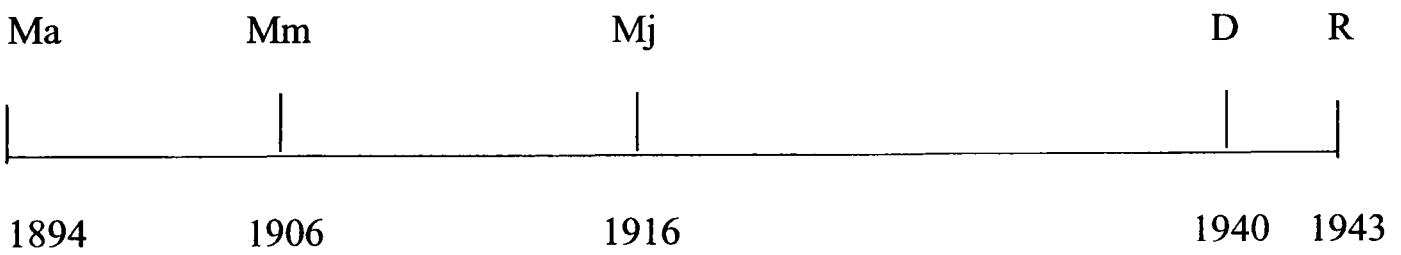
Table 7.2 clearly shows that for both groups, the maintenance of the distinction is higher in closed final syllables than in their open counterparts and that it is in non-final position that the merger is most advanced. Another interesting fact is the closeness of the score between Paris and Fnm, which suggests a shift in the linguistic behaviour of Parisian speakers towards a *province*-based lack of /a ~ ɑ/ distinction. Deyhime's results on the

patte ~ *pâte* minimal pair are nevertheless surprising and significantly higher than that of Reichstein's, with 87% of maintenance. Walter (1976: 54) explains this contrastive pattern by arguing that Deyhime's informants of an average age of 23 are significantly older than Reichstein's; this higher percentage score thus suggests that "cette distinction s'acquiert tardivement" (ibid.).

Martinet (1970) summarises the findings of the above studies in an interesting chronological comparison. He plots his own 1945 study informants according to their average date of birth with those of Reichstein's and Deyhime's on a chronological scale as illustrated in figure 7.1 below:

Figure 7.1

Chronological age of the informants of Martinet (1945), Reichstein (1960) and Deyhime (1967) informants (adapted from Martinet 1970: 118)



Ma: Martinet's *anciens* (older informants)
Mm: Martinet's *moyens* (middle age informants)
Mj: Martinet's *jeunes* (younger informants)
D: Deyhime's informants
R: Reichstein's informants

Martinet then uses this scale to show the reduction in /a ~ ɑ / distinction in both open and closed final syllables. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 below display /a ~ ɑ / retention rates in closed syllables (in pair *pattes* ~ *pâte*) and open syllable (in pair *rat* and *ras*) according

to the scale above. Paris stands for Parisian speakers and Fnm stands for *Français non-méridionaux*.

Figure 7.2

Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition according to age in closed final syllables (adapted from Martinet 1970: 118): pair *pâte ~ patte*

Ma	Mm	Mj	D	R
Paris				
100	100	100	87	49
Fnm				
99	96	92	88	

Figure 7.3

Percentage (%) of speakers maintaining the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition by age in open final syllables (adapted from Martinet (1970: 118): pair *rat ~ ras*

Ma	Mm	Mj	D	R
Paris				
83	90	84	38	11
Fnm				
70	72	64	38	

Clearly here, figures 7.2 and 7.3 show a steady progress of the merger in both environments, although the drop is sharper in open syllables. Again here, the sudden and

sharp drop between Deyhime's and Reichstein's figures is explained by Martinet in terms of the late acquisition of the distinction.

To summarise the findings of the above three studies, it seems that the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ merger dates from the post-war period in Paris but started earlier in the provinces. The general trend reported in the literature is thus a neutralisation of the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition in favour of the front variant of the phoneme. It seems that open syllables were affected before closed ones and to a greater extent. Similar findings (not all based on self-reported speech) are consistently reported in the literature and need not be discussed here in detail; the reader is however referred to Léon (1973), Walter (1976), Peretz (1977), Lennig (1978), and Mettas (1979). What needs to be more fully discussed are the possible linguistic and social motivations for this merger.

7.3.0 Historical background of the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ distinction

7.3.1 Linguistic factors

The present lack of variation in /A/ is all the more surprising in that variation in the archiphoneme is a very ancient phenomenon in French, although this variation did not always consist in a distinction between /a/ and /ɑ/. The first reference to a difference in vocalic quality in /A/ is found in the 18th century, in the work of Boindin (1709: 3-4). Until that date, variation in /A/ had solely been described by grammarians in terms of vowel length. Walter (1976: 47) states that different historical accounts suggest a significant degree of variation in /A/ across speakers at the time and that a difference in length was generally accompanied by a difference in quality. However, it is length which was noted as a contrasting feature for /A/ at that time.

According to Walter (1976: 44), this difference in quality might have appeared as early as the 12th or 13th centuries. She argues (1976: 45-7) that two distinct vowel realisations in /A/ might even have preceded the dropping of syllable-final consonants and postulates the existence of [ɑ] in old French in contact with /s/. Her argument is that in *ancien*

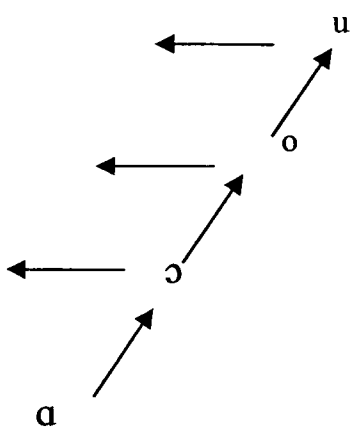
français the sibilant was not a pre-dorso-alveolar as it is today but an apico-alveolar /s̻/, closer to the hissing / hushing variant found in Modern Greek or Castilian Spanish. This detail is of importance, for /ś/ tends to prompt the backing of the articulation of most open vowels, hence /a/→ [ɑ]. In the 12th and 13th centuries, when affricates were simplified and lost their plosive segment, /s/ retained the pre-dorso-alveolar articulation which affricates required. In turn, this new realisation of /s/ prompted the articulation of a front /a/. Two realisations of /s/ could thus be distinguished: an apico-alveolar /ś/ entailing a back /ɑ/ and a pre-dorso-alveolar /s/ prompting a front /a/. Walter (1976: 46) concludes that this linguistic distribution of /A/ explains in part the phonemisation of the two variants which later took place.

Mettas (1979: 89) also refers to the dropping of syllable-final /s/ as a reason for the backing of /a/, but adds that several further linguistic factors might have played a similar role. Among such factors, she cites the contraction of two vowels into a hiatus (e.g. eage / âge, gaagne / gagne), the simplification of geminate -rr-, and the denasalisation of /a/ before intervocalic nasal consonants. She concludes by stating that the different phonetic factors listed above affected /A/ at different periods of time.

Although Lennig (1978: 138) agrees with Walter that length distinction in /A/ might date back from the 12th century, he suggests (1978: 139-40) that the qualitative distinction in /A/ probably emerged in the late 17th. He adds (1978: 135-41) that the raising and backing of /ɑ/ was part of a general counter-clockwise chain shift which prompted a centralisation of the back vowels as illustrated on figure 7.4 below:

Figure 7.4

Schematic representation of the counterclockwise chain shift (adapted from Lennig 1978: 139)



Lennig concludes (1978: 139-40) that the chain shift illustrated above "probably continued to advance in the 18th and 19th centuries". Lennig adds that besides this chain shift explanation for the backing and raising of /A/, social reasons must also be taken into account. We now discuss these.

7.3.2 Social factors

The sociolinguistic marking attached to /A/ variants was noticed by grammarians as early as the 16th century. Nevertheless, it is the closing and fronting of /a/ into /E/ rather than the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction which seems to have first conveyed social marking. Mettas (1979: 92) quotes Tory, who in 1529 states that

> les Dames de Paris, en lieu de A pronuncent E bien souuent, quant elles disent. Mon mery est a la porte de Peris, ou il se faict peier. En lieu de dire. Mon mary est a la porte de Paris ou il se faict paier.

This account, indicating that /E/ realisations of /A/ were associated with Parisian upper-class speech, is depicted as being led by females from an aristocratic background (Estienne 1578 cited in Mettas 1979: 92). More interestingly, this trend seemed to have resulted from a conscious desire on the part of the upper class to differentiate themselves from the lower-class Parisian peuple, who pronounced "Piarre pour Pierre, guarre pour

guerre, etc." (Mettas 1979: 92). In the 17th century, /E/-realisations of /A/ appear to have been adopted by the intermediate strata of Parisian society. It is likely that the social prestige associated with the linguistic feature was responsible for this change from above, in a city with developing bourgeois economy and influence132.

The closed and fronted realisation /E/ for /a/ remained associated with middle- and upper-class speech for a significant period of time and did not spread to the classes populaires of Paris until the late 19th century and early 20th. Unsurprisingly, around the same period of time a negative social marking was progressively associated with this very variant.

Mettas (1979: 96) suggests that the diffusion of the closed and fronted realisation of front /a/ might have occurred conjointly to an "exagération de ce que prononçait la 'bonne société' parisienne de l'époque", this probably both in terms of quality and frequency, hence explaining its later rejection by the higher social circles133. These realisations firstly became marked as 'exaggerated' (Walter 1976: 55) and were subsequently associated with working-class speech. Mettas (1979: 102) states that the "glissement de a vers e, à la fin du XIXe siècle, dans un langage qui se voulait gracieux, devint, au début du XXe siècle, l'une des caractéristiques du langage populaire". This exaggerated character of /a/ was probably reinforced by the fact that in lower-class speech, the distance between the front and back variants was often accentuated through the rounding of back /ɑ/ into [ɔ], notably before /R/ (Lodge: personal communication).

Whilst the fronted and closed variant of front /a/ diffused to the lower strata of society, a trend towards the neutralisation of the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction seems to have emerged, this as early as the mid-19th century. Indeed, Dupuis (1836: 100) notes that

> [à] l'époque où nous vivons, on aperçoit une disposition générale à adoucir les voyelles, disposition qui tend visiblement à la décadence des sons [...]. C'est ainsi, par exemple,

---

[132] See Lodge (1993: 169-70) for a description of Paris socio-economic characteristics at the time.
[133] This point of view is shared by Delattre (1966: 205) and Straka (1952: 45).

> que dans âme, âne, pâte, nation, éducation, passage, château, dome, drôle, je pose, et beaucoup d'autres, on s'habitue à prononcer *a-me, a-ge, patte, nacion, éducacion, paçage, cha-teau*, c'est à dire qu'on supprime l'accent et qu'on donne aux voyelles *a, o*, toute la douceur et la mollesse dont elles sont susceptibles.

Although the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction remained relatively stable in educated Parisian speech (Walter 1976: 55) and was still found at the end of the 19th century134, its merger was thus in progress.

Another factor which may have influenced the neutralisation of /A/ was the provincial immigration to the French capital. Indeed, in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, an increase in geographical mobility prompted a massive influx of provinciaux, especially after the First World War. Walter (1976: 55) states that:

> il en est résulté une adaptation des prononciations aux besoins de la communication entre les Parisiens de Paris, qui faisaient la distinction, et les Parisiens de Province qui ne la faisaient pas, d'où le rapprochement des timbres.

What is more certain is that the progressive neutralisation of the /a ~ ɑ/ distinction before the Second World War has had the consequence of socially stigmatising those who still maintained it135. For Gadet (1992: 33)

---

[134] See Delattre (1952: 208-09) who analysed recordings of the speech of the phonetician Paul Passy. Passy was born in Paris in 1858 and was the son a *sénateur*, thus giving a relatively reliable illustration of upper-middle-class educated speech.

[135] It is likely that the maintenance of back [ɑ] was negatively marking in linguistic environments which had undergone neutralisation in standard French. As discussed in 7.1 above, standard French only maintains the /a ~ ɑ/ opposition in few linguistic environments and in lexical pairs such as *patte ~ pâte*; a native speaker who makes the distinction in such items is thus seen as 'educated' in France, probably on the account of the fact that so few items have maintained back [ɑ] in standard French that they are generally learnt at school.

> Le a antérieur tend vers [ɛ], surtout devant [r], d'autant plus que la classe sociale est plus basse; [mɔ̃mɛrt] pour *Montmartre*. Le maintien de l'opposition entre [a] et [ɑ] distingue la prononciation populaire des autres prononciations parisiennes, en conservant une distinction devenue archaïque.

This is quantitatively confirmed by Peretz (1977) in her sample of 71 Parisian speakers: although she notes a reduction in the distinction across three generational groups, she observes differences across her informants according to social class. It is her highest social grouping (classe 1 or supérieure, mainly consisting of educated people, involved in trade, diplomacy, etc.) which shows the highest neutralisation rates. In contrast, speakers of the lowest social grouping (classe 4, or working-class) are more conservative and tend to maintain the distinction, although it is sharply decreasing in the younger working-class informants. Interestingly, Peretz also notes sex-differentiated behaviours, with males scoring higher rates of back [ɑ] variants than females (1977: 453). Lennig adds a geographical dimension to the maintenance of two distinct /A/ sounds, stating that "a backer pronunciation of /A/, being typically Parisian, is motivated by a subconscious desire for local identity on the part of the speakers" (1978: 136).

To summarise, variation in /A/ is a very old phenomenon in the history of French. /A/ variants have long been class indicators in the French society, and specifically in Paris. It seems that a phenomenon which started in the upper class in the 16th century (the closing and raising of front /a/ into [e] or [ɛ]) underwent a progressive top-down diffusion from the 17th century. When it reached the lower classes, the distinction between the back and front variants was exaggerated by a further rounding and raising of back [ɑ]. This exaggerated distinction became heavily stigmatised in the upper and middle class as early as the 19th century which in turn prompted the neutralisation of the distinction in favour of a single front [a] realisation136. This neutralisation seems more advanced in middle-class speakers (to the point of a complete merger in the speech of younger upper middle-class women according to Lennig 1978: 167); the presence of

variation and indeed the use of back [ɑ] is thus heavily stigmatised (a significant amount of evidence shows that the variant is deemed archaic and is associated with Parisian males of working-class background). This low-status stigma explains its decline among the younger working-class population as observed by Peretz (see directly above).

This brings us back to the remark made at the beginning of this chapter: if the presence of variation in /A/ is currently decreasing (even among the working class), why were such high rates of [ɑ] impressionistically observed during the present study fieldwork? Our own quantitative results suggest that some of the speakers of the 1998 sample may be in the process of bringing this variant back, similarly to the young Martha Vineyarders discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.1.4 above. Coincidently to the patterns observed in Chapters 5 and 6, the informants who are leading this trend appear to be, again, young speakers of immigrant origin who have close links with the street-culture. We now examine the evidence.

7.4.0 /A/ in the 1998 data

7.4.1 Linguistic constraints

With the above discussion in mind, the first issues to investigate are where variation is found in our data and whether this variation is constrained by linguistic factors. Where appropriate, we will compare our results with findings from some of the studies mentioned above.

7.4.2 Quantification and analysis of /A/ realisation in 1998 sample

/A/ was solely analysed in terms of its front vs. back variants. It was felt that distinguishing all different realisations of back and front /A/ (as in Mettas's 1974 or Peretz's 1977 studies, for instance) would require experimental rather than purely auditory analysis. Walter (1976: 59) and Peretz (197: 412) both note that the range of /A/ realisation in their data is very great. Peretz for example, distinguishes between up to 13 variants, which makes it impossible to characterise the distinction by a pair of linguistic features. In our case, what was intuitively thought was that is was the binary

[136] It will be recalled from section 7.2 above that the neutralisation first affected open syllables.This

back vs. front polarity which induced social marking and was likely to reveal some degree of sociolinguistic patterning.

All occurrences of /A/ in interview style were counted for all our 32 informants. Phatic-type expressions such as bah, ah were however discarded. Owing to the time constraints on the study, a limit of three data sheets (representing a minimum of 450 occurrences of /A/) per informant was considered sufficient to reveal sociolinguistic patterns in /A/.

Occurrences of /A/ were analysed in the following linguistic contexts (these are adapted from Mettas 1979: 104-05):

a) open and closed syllables;
b) final and non-final syllables;
c) stressed and unstressed syllables.

The first distinction is of importance as previous studies (see section 7.2 above) have reported higher rates of back /ɑ/ in closed syllables. The distinction between final and non-final syllables also seems to be significant as all studies which have investigated this distribution report higher rates of back /ɑ/ in final than in non-final syllables (see notably François 1974: 176137; Peretz 1977: 403; Mettas 1979: 121-23). Finally the influence of stress was also investigated in our corpus. This is because Mettas (1974: 116-17) notes that /A/-realisation is related to stress in her sample of 30 upper-class Parisian speakers. In word-final syllables, she distinguishes between the syllables which are actually stressed (i.e. pre-pausal syllables) and those which are not (non-prepausal). She notes higher back [ɑ] rates in non-prepausal positions (which she calls pause

---

explains why back [ɑ] is more common in closed syllables.

[137] François (1974) studies the idiolect of a working-class male living in Argenteuil (situated in the North of the Paris region) within a structuralist framework. She notes that the distinction is maintained in all syllabic positions by her informant, although [a] is always more frequent than [ɑ].

virtuelle) but higher rates of velar [â] 138 in pre-pausal positions (called pause réelle). We now present the distribution of /A/ variants in the 1998 data according to the three linguistic contexts listed above.

7.4.3 Syllabic distribution of /A/ in the 1998 data

Table 7.3 below displays the syllabic distribution of back [ɑ] in the whole 1998 sample according to the nature and position of the syllable. Monosyllabic items have been counted as final syllable tokens. The influence of word length on /A/ is discussed below in 7.4.5.2.

Table 7.3

[ɑ] by syllable distribution and structure in the 1998 data

Word-final				Non word-final			
Open syllable		Closed syllable		Open syllable		Closed syllable	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
960	6.1	956	9.8	960	3.5	621	7.6

It should first be noted that all syllabic contexts demonstrate variability. Word-final position is most favourable to the occurrence of back [ɑ] in the 1998 data, with an average of 7.3% versus 4.8% for non word-final position, when scores for both open and closed syllables are aggregated. In both final and non-final positions, back [ɑ] appears less frequently in open syllables (with an average of 4.1%) than in closed ones (with 8%). Results need to be interpreted with caution as the overall distribution does not achieve significance ($p = 0.08$). Nevertheless, the trends observed here tend to confirm findings from previous studies (see above, in 7.2).

[138] Velar [â] [138] is according to Mettas a variant distinct from back [ɑ] and typical of upper-class speech. The difference between the two variants is admittedly difficult to distinguish here. Nevertheless, the fact that stress can constrain /A/-realisation needs to be investigated in our data.

What is surprising in table 7.3 above is that overall, back [ɑ]-use seems very low in every position (less than 10%). As mentioned in several instances above, it was felt that back [ɑ] was widely used during the fieldwork. The results here contradict this impression and even suggest a further reduction in back [ɑ]-use when compared to previous studies. Were our impressionistic observations during the fieldwork incorrect? Table 7.4 below displays the distribution of [ɑ] in a sub-sample of four informants selected on the basis of their higher back [ɑ]-use.

Table 7.4

[ɑ] by syllable distribution and syllable type: four informants

Word-final				Non word-final			
Open syllable		Closed syllable		Open syllable		Closed syllable	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
30	6.6	30	36.6	30	10	17	11.7
30	20	30	33.3	30	20	8.0	25
30	23.3	30	53.3	30	36.6	25	24
30	3.3	30	23.3	30	3.6	17	5.8
120	13.3	120	36.6	120	17.5	67	16.6

Table 7.4 confirms the impression that back [ɑ]-use among some informants at least is relatively high, reaching scores of 53.3% in closed word-final syllables for one speaker (the distribution is significant here at $p = 0.05$). The behaviour of the above four informants is atypical of the sample as a whole, however. Again, [ɑ] is more likely to appear in closed syllables than in open ones (24.9% vs. 17% on average), and is also favoured by final position. The extra-linguistic characteristics of these four speakers will be investigated below but in any event, results from both tables suggest that back [ɑ]-use is constrained by stress and segmental factors. We now examine the extent of that influence.

7.4.4 Influence of stress in /A/

Table 7.5 presents the influence of stress on the occurrence of back [ɑ] in the 1998 data. Only final syllables have been considered here, as stress is generally found only in word-final position in French[139].

Table 7.5

[ɑ] by syllable distribution and stress position in the 1998 data

Open syllable				Closed syllable			
Stressed		Unstressed		Stressed		Unstressed	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
906	21.1	960	3.1	464	12	922	9.0

Table 7.5 shows that overall in our sample, pre-pausal stress tends to favour the occurrence of back [ɑ] in open syllables, but has less influence in closed ones. This distribution is highly significant at $p = 0.0004$.

[139] In working-class speech and in the vernacular of interest, stress can also be found in penultimate position (see Gadet 1992: 31 and 1998: 19) and is usually accompanied by a vocalic lengthening. However, in the present sample, such occurrences were rarely found.

Table 7.6

[ɑ] by syllable distribution and stress position: four informants

Open syllable				Closed syllable			
Stressed		Unstressed		Stressed		Unstressed	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
30	26.6	30	0	17	29.4	26	34.6
30	73.3	30	3.3	10	50	26	23
30	80	30	13.3	10	60	30	53.3
30	20	30	3.3	15	13.3	30	26.6
120	49.9	120	4.9	52	38.1	112	34.3

The distribution in table 7.6 is significant at $p = 0.04$. When the four high-[ɑ] users are considered in isolation, the pattern observed in table 7.5 is more clearly marked, with [ɑ] rates affected greatly by stress position in open syllables, and to some extent also in closed ones. It is also noteworthy that in stressed position, open syllables show higher rates of back [ɑ] use than closed ones (49.9% vs. 38.1%) for these four speakers. This is a surprising finding, given that all previous studies report less back [ɑ] use in open syllables.

To summarise these first results, it seems that two different types of behaviour can be observed in the sample: the first type seems to confirm the trends recorded by previous studies, i.e. that the use of back [ɑ] is decreasing, and that its decline is more advanced in open syllables than in closed ones. The second type of behaviour, although it affects a small sub-sample of our informants, seems to reverse this trend showing high back [ɑ] use and, in stressed position, more back [ɑ] variants in open than in closed syllables. The conjunction of word-final position and pre-pausal stress can even result in back [ɑ] rates as high as 80%. These dramatically different types of behaviour suggest that extra-linguistic factors are also at play, which we address in section 7.5 below. Firstly

however, we need to investigate the possibility that other linguistic factors may be introducing bias into the results obtained for the four apparently anomalous informants.

7.4.5.0 Lexical constraints in /A/ realisation

7.4.5.1 Influence of spelling and phonemic contrast

Let us thus concentrate on the group of four informants selected above. It was mentioned in section 7.1 that in standard French, the distinction was maintained in a very limited amount of lexical items for phonemic contrast. Furthermore, it can be noted from Léon's table (table 7.1 above) that in standard French, the majority of back [ɑ] items corresponds to spelling -â- or indicate phonemic contrast, as in the minimal pair patte (front /a/) vs. pâte (back /ɑ/). Walter (1976: 62, 66, 89) also notes the strong influence of spelling in her sample of standard French speakers, who score very high rates of back [ɑ] when the lexical item is spelt with a circumflex accent.

Our sample has hitherto displayed a different trend. Indeed, it seems that, at least for the four informants of interest here, back [ɑ] realisation is heavily constrained by stress and syllable position. This suggests that spelling or the necessity of showing phonemic contrast are of lesser importance. To investigate this in our sub-sample, we focus on lexical items where spelling suggests a back realisation of /A/.

Table 7.7 below shows the percentage of back [ɑ] realisation in three lexical items with a -â- spelling, i.e. pâle, pâte and mâle in our sub-sample. Items pattes and mal have been included to allow the study of phonemic constraint within phonemic pairs patte / pâte and mal / mâle. For obvious reasons, only tokens in the reading styles (reading texts and word list styles) have been considered here which explains the low token numbers (N).

Table 7.7

Influence of spelling and phonemic contrast in 5 lexical items: four informants

Word	N	%
pâle	5	100
pâte	7	100
patte	5	60
mal	5	40
mâle	4	75

The first striking pattern here is the relatively high percentage rates of back [ɑ] occurrences in all items (an average of 75%). In the three words where back [ɑ] is signalled by spelling, this rate reaches an average of 91.6% versus 50% in items *patte* and *mal*. This suggests, as in Walter's study, that the presence of a circumflex accent exerts a certain degree of influence on /A/-realisation.

However, in the minimal pairs *patte* / *pâte* and *mal* / *mâle*, although the phonemic contrast is generally maintained (with higher percentage rates of back [ɑ] in *pâte* and *mâle* than in *patte* and *mal*) this is not categorically the case for all informants. Indeed, as in Léon's (1973: 65) and in Walter's (1976: 62, 89) results, items traditionally pronounced with a front [a] in standard French, show here high percentages of back realisation. As Walter (1976: 55) suggests, this pattern indicates confusion between the two phonemes on the part of the informants and signals the neutralisation of the phonemic contrast.

To summarise, spelling seems to exert a strong influence on the utterance of a back variant. However, the influence of spelling does not explain the high rates of back [ɑ] observed above in 7.6 for interview style. As noted in previous studies, variation in /A/ does not convincingly seem to be prompted by phonemic contrast as some words generally pronounced with a front [a] are also uttered with back [ɑ] by our four

informants. In contrast, stress, syllable structure and position seem to be more influential in the presence of variation in our data. Yet further linguistic factors may also play a constraining role here.

7.4.5.2 Influence of word length

Walter (1976: 60) observes an interesting lexical constraint in /A/ in the speech of her 17 informants, all middle-class educated speakers. She notes a higher frequency of [ɑ] realisations in monosyllabic words (56% on average), this in both closed and open syllables. In multi-syllabic items, this percentage rate drops to 23.5%. She notes (1976: 99) that word-length correlates with /A/-realisation, in the sense that an increase in length tends to prompt higher rates of /A/-fronting. Let us verify this in our sample.

Table 7.8 below displays the percentage of back [ɑ] variants according to word length (one, two or three syllables) in non word-final position. Only our sub-sample of four informants is considered here. To increase the number of tokens and thus the statistical regularity of the results, both interview and reading styles have been considered.

Table 7.8

Back [ɑ] variants by word length

3 syllables		2 syllables		1 syllable	
N	%	N	%	N	%
19	58.3	80	63.7	366	59.3

The figures in table 7.8 represent 76 lexemes, a list of which can be found in table 3.a in Appendix 3 below. No clear pattern emerges from the results here. It seems that in contrast with Walter's findings, two-syllable items seem more favourable to the utterance of a back [ɑ] than monosyllabic items. However, the significantly higher number of tokens in monosyllabic items might easily have lowered the scores of back [ɑ]. Moreover, figures for preposition à are included in the monosyllabic items figures.

This very frequent grammatical item is almost never realised as [ɑ] (2.6%). When à is not taken into account, the back [ɑ] rate for monosyllabic items reaches a score similar to that of two-syllable items at 60.5%.

When a further breakdown of results is undertaken, i.e. when differences between closed and open syllables as well as differences between final and non-final syllables are taken into account, a similar patterning (or lack of one) emerges. They have for this reason not been displayed here. Three-syllable items show slightly lower back [ɑ] rates, while two-syllable and monosyllabic items display relatively similar scores. The occurrence of [ɑ] thus seems to be relatively unconstrained by word-length. Stress and syllable position therefore remain the principal factors constraining the occurrence of [ɑ]. Let us now examine segmental constraints in our sub-sample.

7.4.6.0 Segmental constraints

In her corpus, Walter observes that the occurrence of [ɑ] is principally influenced by the phonemes /ʀ/ and /w/. She notes 18% of [ɑ] in context _/ʀ/, but 68% of [ɑ] in context /ʀ/_ and 60% of [ɑ] in context /w/_. She adds (1976: 65) that in context /w/_/ʀ/, the influence of /ʀ/ is stronger, as illustrated in the following comparative example (adapted from Walter 1976: 66; figures represent the number of realisations for each word in the speech of her 17 speakers):

foie	5 /a/	12 /ɑ/
foire	15 /a/	2 /ɑ/

soi, soie	7 /a/	10 /ɑ/
soir	12 /a/	5 /ɑ/

Walter (1976: 66) also finds the back variant used in 61% of cases in contexts _/s/ and _/z/. Segmental constraints in our own sub-sample are shown in table 7.9 below.

Environments are listed in ordinal order, to show the hierarchy of consonantal environments favouring back [ɑ] in our sub-sample. We will concentrate mostly on the influence of the following segment, as most assimilative processes in French tend to be regressive.

Table 7.9

[ɑ] by following consonant

Environment	N	%
_/f/	1	100
_/n/	1	100
_/ʀ/	127	62.2
_/t/	29	62
_/s/	17	58.8
_/d/	9	55
_/v/	15	53.3
_/l/	39	51.2
_/ʃ/	4	50
_/ʒ/	7	42.8
_/z/	5	40
_/j/	10	40
_/b/	11	27.2
_/k/	12	25
_/g/	4	25
_/ɲ/	8	25
_/p/	17	17.6
_/m/	6	16.6

Results for environments _/f/, and _/n/ should be considered with great caution here as they only represent one token each. Generally, the results in table 7.9 do not contradict those of Walter's above, but they are nevertheless relatively puzzling. It is unsurprising

that uvular /ʀ/, which is articulated at the very back of the oral cavity should prompt higher rates of back realisation. This can be understood as being motivated by the articulatory process of assimilatory anticipation. However, how can the low rates of [ɑ] before velars be explained in these terms? One might expect that velars, being articulated at the back of the mouth might act similarly to /ʀ/ on /A/-realisation; this is clearly not the case here. Again, stress, syllable position and structure appear to offer more powerful constraining on /A/-realisation.

The use of a back [ɑ] variant for the purpose of the ease of articulation, or at least for articulatory assimilation seems more relevant in pre-rhotic environments. Furthermore, when comparing numbers (N) of _/ʀ/ tokens to those of all other environments, it appears that the _/ʀ/ context is very frequent in the present sub-sample (and indeed in French generally, see 6.2.0 above). This high frequency has an interesting consequence: if a speaker shows a high back [ɑ] rate in this context, it is likely that her / his audience will perceive her / him to be using back [ɑ] very often. We now examine the influence of /ʀ/ in more detail.

7.4.6.1 Further segmental constraints involving uvular /ʀ/

Table 7.10 below displays percentage rates of [ɑ] in all the segmental structures involving /A/ and /ʀ/ in the sub-sample described above. Again, only items where at least one [ɑ] was found have been considered:

Table 7.11

Influence of uvular /ʀ/ on the occurrence of [ɑ]

_/ʀ/		/ʀ/_		/ʀ/_/ʀ/	
N	%	N	%	N	%
127	62.2	18	44.4	3	33.3

It appears from table 7.11 that the following segment favours the back realisation more than the preceding ones, although results for segmental structure /ʀ/_/ʀ/ have to be considered with great caution, as only three tokens were found and represent three instances of the same lexical unit *rare*. Walter (1976: 65) notes that the influence of /ʀ/ is particularly strong in context /w/_/ʀ/. Let us examine this in our sub-sample. Table 7.12 below shows the difference in [ɑ] rates for structures (C)_/ʀ/ and (C)/w/_ /ʀ/.

Table 7.12

Frequency of [ɑ] in contexts (C)_/ʀ/ and (C)/w/_ /ʀ/

(C)_/ʀ/		C)/w/_ /ʀ/	
N	%	N	%
91	63.2	34	86.4

Clearly, a preceding /w/ favours the occurrence of a back [ɑ] in the sequence _/ʀ/. This confirms Walter's finding. The very high percentage score of [ɑ] in sequence (C)/w/_ /ʀ/ is undoubtedly also influenced by the strong phonetic influence of the uvular, as shown in table 7.9 above. This double linguistic influence explains why (C)/w/_ /ʀ/ is the segmental structure most favourable to [ɑ] in our sub-sample. We now consider the influence of segment /w/ when it is considered independently.

7.4.6.2 Further segmental constraints involving approximant /w/

Open and closed (C)/w/_ sequences are relatively frequent in the present sub-sample and show very high rates of [ɑ] variants, as illustrated in table 7.13 below.

Table 7.13

[ɑ] after /w/ in non-final and final syllables

All /w/_ contexts		/w/_ in final position		/w/_ in non-final position	
N	%	N	%	N	%
138	71.3	130	74.3	8	36.6

Results suggest a strong influence of the approximant on vowel /A/, especially in final position, and explain the high percentage score of [ɑ] observed above in sequence (C)/w/_ /ʀ/ (86.4%). Qualitative and quantitative examination of the lexemes involved reveals another interesting pattern, as illustrated in table 7.14 below:

Table 7.14

Frequency of [ɑ] in lexical items involving /wA/

Word	N	%	Word	N	%
avoir	8	75	obligatoire	4	75
boîte	2	100	poids	2	100
couloir	3	100	poisse	5	40
croivent[140]	1	100	quoi	18	72.2
doit	2	50	s'asseoir	4	75
droit	2	50	toi	10	40
droite	3	33.3	toit	5	60
fois	1	100	trottoir	5	100
histoire	5	80	voir	5	100
moi	25	44	vois	14	50
mois	3	66.6	loisir	3	33.3
noir	2	100	toilette	5	40
noix	1	100			

It is clear from table 7.14 that /wA/ sequences are found in a number of high-frequency lexical items in spontaneous interaction (avoir, moi, toi, vois, quoi). Two interesting points emerge here: firstly, items vois and quoi are very often used in pre-pausal position, which means they are likely to be stressed: indeed quoi141 and vois (in expression tu vois: you know) are usually used to punctuate a sentence or hold the floor during a discussion. When remembering the predominant role of stress in back [ɑ] utterance observed earlier, it is likely that speakers who often use quoi and tu vois will have high back [ɑ] realisation rates. Secondly, given the high frequency of items such as

[140] This form does not exist in prescriptive standard French. The standard third person singular of the present tense for the verb *croire* is usually *croient*. The form *croivent* is however often heard in non-standard varieties of French and possibly results from a morphemic rule-generalisation process modelled on other verb forms such as *devoir* > *ils doivent*.

[141] *Quoi* can be considered as the French equivalent for sentence-ending *then* in British English (e.g.: "you're coming, then?"). It usually invites a confirmatory response from the interlocutor.

avoir, moi, toi, vois, and quoi in spontaneous conversation, a speaker who uses a back variant in such items will be perceived to use back [ɑ] consistently. With this in mind, it seems likely that these types of items can be used at least unconsciously by speakers to signal sociolinguistic marking. We suggested above in Chapter 6 that the high frequency of a phoneme made it a more potent locus of sociolinguistic variation, especially if the phoneme was found in positions of pre-pausal stress. Although this remains tentative, this may be of importance for the speakers in our sub-sample.

The preliminary patterns we have observed in our data both confirm and contradict findings reported in previous studies. When the whole 1998 sample is considered, it seems that very little variation in /A/ realisation is found. The neutralisation of the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ distinction seems well advanced and one could conclude that it is nearing completion. However when looking at certain individuals in the sample, a contrasting trend can be observed. Back [ɑ] rates of up to 80% are found in certain linguistic contexts. These high back realisation rates are seemingly not prompted by the need to mark phonemic contrast, but by stress, positional and structural factors in the syllable. It seems that the combination of pre-pausal stress, final syllable position, and open syllable structure results in very high rates of back [ɑ] variant use. The fact that open syllables show higher back [ɑ] rates than closed syllables in this context is very surprising. Indeed all previous studies report a contrasting pattern and show that the /a/ ~ /ɑ/ merger first started in open syllables.

Clearly, the fact that we are in the presence of two completely different types of linguistic behaviour concerning /A/ suggests that extra-linguistic factors are at play here. We saw earlier that back [ɑ] was predominantly a working-class Parisian feature. Is this the case in our data? Why do the sub-sample informants display such high back [ɑ] rates when compared to the rest of the sample? These questions will now be investigated.

7.5.0 Extra-linguistic factors

We shall first try to identify the speakers who seem to be leading this 'innovative'[142] behaviour in the 1998 sample. It was noted in section 7.3 above that back [ɑ] realisation was generally associated with working-class Parisian French, and especially with working-class males. Let us examine this correlation in our sample.

7.5.1 Social correlates of variation in /A/: social class

To minimise the influence of spelling observed in section 7.4.5 above, results will generally be based on tokens collected in interview style in this part of the chapter. Scores for open and closed syllables in all positions are aggregated here. Table 7.15 below displays the distribution of back [ɑ] realisations in the 1998 sample according to social class.

Table 7.15

[ɑ]-realisation by social class

III		IIB		IIA		I	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
656	14.6	1096	3.5	1200	4.4	545	9.1

Clearly, when the entire sample is considered, back [ɑ] rates remain a lower working-class phenomenon, this distribution achieving significance at $p = 0.02$. It is however slightly surprising to observe relatively higher rates in Group I. We will return to this question below in this section. Let us first consider the issue of age combined with social class. It was mentioned above in 7.3.2 that although back [ɑ] was a working-class feature, previous studies had reported that its use was decreasing in the speech of young working-class speakers and that it was deemed to be archaic. Table 7.16 below shows

[142] It is acknowledged that *innovative* does not mean the use of back [ɑ] is new in French, but that the high back [ɑ] rates found in the speech of some informants of the 1998 sample contrast with observations made in previous studies.

the use of back [ɑ] in all syllable positions according to age and social class. We give the number of informants (x inf.) in each cell.

Table 7.16

[ɑ]-realisation by age and social class

	III		IIB		IIA		I	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15-25	423 (4 inf.)	19.8	420 (4 inf.)	3.08	771 (7 inf.)	4.9	100 (1 inf.)	16.6
30-50	233 (2 inf.)	4.07	676 (6 inf.)	3.7	429 (4 inf.)	3.6	445 (4 inf.)	7.2

Although results did not achieve significance here, table 7.16 shows a generational increase in back [ɑ] use in Groups III, IIA and I. This pattern contrasts sharply with what has been observed in previous studies. The age-grading pattern is particularly clear in Group III. As noted for every variable studied in the present study, it is the younger age group from lower working-class background who seems to have the highest rates of the non-standard variant.

Table 7.16 also shows some light on the pattern observed above in table 7.15, i.e. the higher back [ɑ] rates of Group I. This high rate is largely attributable to the significantly higher score of the younger Group I. Results for this 'group' must be taken with caution as they represent the score of only one informant. It may, however, be significant that this one speaker is male and from an immigrant background. Is there a link between back [ɑ] use, sex and ethnicity? Let us first examine the influence of sex.

7.5.2 Social correlates of variation in /A/: sex

Again in table 7.17 below, results for both open and closed syllables in all positions have been aggregated. Only tokens found in interview style have been considered here.

Table 7.17

[ɑ]-realisation by sex

All males		All females	
N	%	N	%
1773	11.3	1764	2.2

Clearly, the sex variable is very influential here, this result being highly significant at p = 0.001. This result suggests that back [ɑ] is a predominantly male variant (it is nearly six times more frequent in male than in female speech). This confirms Peretz's finding (cf. 7.3.2 above). Table 7.18 below plots results for the four age and sex groups of the 1998 sample, thus showing the interaction between the two extra-linguistic variables.

Table 7.18

[ɑ]-realisation by age and sex

	Younger group		Older group	
	N	%	N	%
Males	848	14.3	885	8.3
Females	866	3.5	898	0.9

Table 7.18 clearly shows interaction between age and sex, with young males showing greater use of back [ɑ] (the distribution in table 7.18 is highly significant at p = 0.003). Sex seems to have more influence on [ɑ]-use than age, since male speakers from the older group score higher [ɑ] percentages than females from the younger group.

What is also noticeable is the very low use of [ɑ] by older females (0.9%). This again echoes findings from previous studies carried out in the 1970s which report a near-merger situation in /A/ towards [a], especially among young female speakers. These

young female speakers of the 1970s would now correspond to the older speakers in our sample. If we tentatively compare female speakers in our sample to those of Peretz (1977) and Lennig (1979) for instance, it is not unreasonable to think that the merger has further advanced in the speech of female speakers who were adolescents in the 1970s. If this was the case, results plotted in table 7.18 suggest a slight age-grading effect that sees young female speakers favouring back [ɑ] to a slight degree (the score for this group is still very low at 3.5%).

Overall, back [ɑ] thus seems to be associated with young males and with the working class. How can we therefore account for the higher back [ɑ] use of the young Group I speaker in table 7.16 above? Results presented immediately below suggest that ethnicity could equally play a role in this adoption.

7.5.3 Social correlates of variation in /A/: ethnic background

Table 7.19 below displays results for the distribution of [ɑ] across the three ethnic backgrounds previously distinguished. Again, scores for all environments have been aggregated, and only tokens found in interview style have been considered.

Table 7.19

[ɑ] by ethnic background: 32-speaker sample

Metropolitan		Other		North African	
N	%	N	%	N	%
1318	3.3	1002	8.5	1177	9.0

Results did not achieve significance here and must therefore be considered with caution. However, it seems from table 7.19 that speakers from immigrant backgrounds do use higher rates of back [ɑ] than metropolitan speakers, (although percentages are low overall). Speakers of metropolitan origin are the lowest users of the back variant, to the

extent that their [ɑ] rate is one third that of the two other groups. We attempt an explanation of this pattern below in this section in 7.5.5.

In contrast to what was observed in dental and velar plosives and in /r/, no particular difference in back [ɑ] scores can be observed between the two groups of non-metropolitan origin. To see whether a finer analysis by age shows clearer patterning regarding ethnicity, we show in table 7.20 the distribution of [ɑ] according to ethnic background and age.

Table 7.20

[ɑ] by ethnic background and age

	Metropolitan		Other		North African	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
15-25	535	3.6	441	14.7	738	9.4
30-50	783	3.1	561	4.3	439	8.4

Although the distribution in table 7.20 did not achieve statistical significance, two interesting points emerge. Firstly, in the older age group, back [ɑ] use seems primarily associated with speakers of North African origin. This suggests that although back [ɑ] is traditionally reported as Parisian and working-class in the literature, it also exists to some extent in North African French. Lanly (1962), in his detailed description of North African French confirms that this variety of French comprises a back [ɑ] variant. He states (1962: 313) that "[l]e a nord-africain reste un a vélaire, tandis que par exemple le a parisien est palatal et tend vers o." He also emphasises (1962: 313) the back characteristic of /A/ when the phoneme is preceded by /w/. This echoes results presented above in this chapter, where it was shown that the presence of /w/ tended to trigger very high back [ɑ] scores. We return to this point below in this subsection.

The second point of interest in table 7.20 above is the higher score of the young group of 'other' immigrant origins when compared to that of the young beurs. In view of what we mentioned immediately above about the older North African group, the young beurs group might be expected to display the highest rates. Table 7.21 below sheds light on this somewhat surprising pattern by showing the distribution according to ethnic background and sex in the younger age group. The number of informants per cell (x inf.) is provided.

Table 7.21

[ɑ]-realisation by ethnic background and sex: younger group

	Metropolitan		Other		North African	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Males	210 (2 inf.)	4.5	333 (3 inf.)	16.0	305 (3 inf.)	19.1
Females	325 (3 inf.)	3.0	108 (1 inf.)	10.6	433 4 inf.)	0.8

Table 7.21 shows that the young group of 'other' origin scored higher than beurs in the previous table because of the two groups' difference in female scores: female beurs have very low back [ɑ] rates. Female beurs tend to behave towards /A/ very similarly to the older female group as a whole (cf. above in 7.5.2). The younger female group of other origin only represents one speaker, which calls for caution when examining its back [ɑ] rate of 10.6%. What is also apparent in table 7.21 is that when sex is taken into account in the younger age group, it is young male beurs who seem to be have the highest back [ɑ] scores. The distribution in table 7.21 above does not achieve significance ($p = 0.9$), making firm conclusions hard to draw. We now examine the role of sex and ethnicity in the whole sample to see whether greater statistical robustness produces clearer results.

Table 7.22

[ɑ]-realisation by ethnic background and sex

	Metropolitan		Other		North African	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Males	552	5.4	668	11.0	513	17.5
Females	766	1.8	334	3.5	664	2.0

Clearly here, when the entire sample is considered, North African males have the highest back [ɑ] rates (results in table 7.22 are highly significant at $p = 0.003$). The predominant role of male speakers from North African background in back [ɑ] use is thus confirmed. Albeit tentatively, this pattern suggests that the change in behaviour towards /A/ realisation observed in our sample may be originating amongst the young male speakers of this group.

To summarise the different sociolinguistic patterns observed so far, it seems that high back [ɑ] rates are associated with young working-class males of immigrant origin. In each social grouping, a generational increase emerges from the data. This constitutes a reversal of trends reported by previous studies. According to our figures, it seems that this reversal is led by young male beurs. Yet again for this linguistic variable, this group seems to be at the forefront of 'innovative' linguistic behaviours. When the linguistic constraints observed above in this chapter are considered, another factor seems to point towards a North African origin for this trend. It has been noted that in North African French, a /w/_ sequence was particularly favourable to a back realisation of /A/[143]. It is thus unsurprising to find that this type of environment shows particularly high back [ɑ] rates in our sample. Although this result remains tentative and needs confirmation by further studies, it is not unreasonable to argue that the reversal of the merger in /A/ realisation started in /w/_ sequences and that it might be gaining other environments

[143] See 7.4.6 above.

through a process of rule generalisation (see Aitchison 1991: 76-88). Our results suggest that this new trend started first in open syllables and in pre-pausal (thus stressed) position.

Although it is seemingly young speakers from immigrant backgrounds (especially male beurs) who seem to be leading this apparent 'renaissance' in back [ɑ] use, it is clear from our results that younger females use this variant significantly less than young males. Indeed, it seems that generally for the whole population sample, back [ɑ] is strongly associated with male speech. Why is there such a difference in the behaviour of males and females, especially in the younger group? To investigate this, let us examine the stylistic and socio-ethnological marking of back [ɑ] realisation.

7.5.4 Social correlates of variation in /A/: style

As explained in Chapter 5, section 5.5.5 above, results for both reading and word-list styles have been aggregated and constitute the scripted style, as opposed to interview style which represents the unscripted style. Table 7.23 below displays the degree of stylistic variation observed in the sample across sex groups.

Table 7.23

[ɑ]-realisation by sex and style: 32-speaker sample

	Males		Females	
	N	%	N	%
Interview style	1733	11.3	1764	2.2
Reading style	1635	8.9	1547	2.2

When the overall sample is considered, a very low degree of style shift is found. Table 7.23 not only shows that males have higher back [ɑ] rates than females in both styles but also that back [ɑ] use is somewhat negatively marked in males. The female group,

whose back [ɑ] rates are very low, does not shift between reading and interview styles. This distribution is highly significant at p = 5.5-5 here. A similar pattern is observed in the younger age group, as illustrated below in table 7.24.

Table 7.24

[ɑ]-realisation by sex and style: younger age group

	Males 15-25		Females 15-25	
	N	%	N	%
Interview style	848	14.3	866	3.5
Reading style	805	11.2	801	3.2

Results are highly significant here at p = 9.3-19. They suggest that back [ɑ] use is not overtly prestigious and that speakers (especially males) reduce their use of the variant when reading. In the female group, almost no style shift is again observed.

Although it is apparent from both tables that back [ɑ] variants are not overtly prestigious, it is still not clear why the female speakers in our sample (especially the younger ones) are so reluctant to use this form. Is it solely to distinguish themselves from males? We now turn to the distribution of back [ɑ] use according to street-culture score.

7.5.5 Social correlates of variation in /A/: street-culture index

In Chapters 5 and 6, it was noted that high street-culture scores generally corresponded to a high use of non-standard variants. In Chapter 4, it was shown that the younger groups from immigrant backgrounds had higher street-culture scores, which meant that they were more integrated into life in the street and had more close-knit social networks. It was also noted that younger females had weaker ties in the street community than young males and were thus less influenced by it in their linguistic behaviour. Table 7.25 below displays the correlation between street-culture index and back [ɑ] use. Individual

street-culture scores have been collated into broader groupings for clarity as above (see 5.7.6). Only interview style has been considered here.

Table 7.25

[ɑ]-realisation by street-culture index

Index Score	N	%
1-2	570	0.1
3-6	2500	5.7
7-10	427	21.0

The distribution in table 7.25 is very significant at $p = 0.002$ and shows a very clear sociolinguistic pattern. Again, it seems that being integrated into (or at least identifying with) the street-culture influences our informants towards a higher use of back [ɑ]. Back [ɑ]-use thus appears to be closely associated with street life and its close-knit social networks. As young females have weaker social network ties and are less integrated into street life, it is unsurprising that they show lower back [ɑ] rates. This also explains the lower back [ɑ] use of the young speakers of metropolitan origin noted in 7.5.3 above, as this group has a street-culture score similar to that of young females (see table 4.9 in 4.5.11). Using street-culture scores here thus helps to reveal a pattern not apparent from patterns of style-shift.

Although the sex differentiation pattern in [ɑ] use is explicable in terms of different behaviour towards street life, the factors which prompted the selection of back [ɑ] by youth of the cités in the first place remain somewhat puzzling. In the light of the two previous chapters, one can however offer a tentative explanation. The three linguistic variables which have been studied above have one sociolinguistic feature in common: they appear to be variables which signal allegiance to a sub-culture as well as social exclusion from the dominant model of society.

Historically, the various realisations of /A/ have been socially marked in France (see 7.3.0 above). Back [ɑ]-use is, since the 20th century, reported as typically Parisian and working-class. The increase in back [ɑ] use in the speech of the younger age group outlined in section 7.5.1 above indicates that banlieues youngsters (at least those in our sample) have selected this traditionally working-class variant and made it part of their cité accent. According to the patterns of stylistic variation observed in 7.5.4 above, this might result from a conscious effort on the part of cités youth to symbolise their working-class status. Propitiously in the case of back [ɑ], the variant is also traditionally found in North African French. This has thus the double advantage of signalling social and ethnic difference simultaneously.

7.6 Conclusion

The results presented in this chapter seem to some extent to contradict what has been reported in previous studies regarding /A/-realisation in contemporary French. While a lack of variation in /A/ and a predominance of the front variant were expected, high rates of the back variant were in fact noted in the speech of some of our young informants. These high rates were not prompted by phonemic contrast, but rather by phonetic factors, with stress and open final syllable position being particularly favourable to [ɑ]. High rates of [ɑ] usage also appear linked to extra-linguistic factors. As was the case for palatalised stops and some non-standard realisations of /r/, it is the young lower working-class males from immigrant backgrounds (especially those of North African origin) who seem to be leading this reversal of the general trend in /A/-realisation. It was suggested that high back [ɑ] rates are associated with the Parisian working-class but also with North African French. Similarly to Labov's young Vineyarders who adopted and diffused remnant local forms as a statement of their locality (see 3.1.4 above), the youth living in the grands ensembles might have selected back [ɑ] as a sociolinguistic indicator symbolising their social exclusion ([ɑ] is a low-status variant) and their membership of a local sub-culture (close-knit street-groups, immigrant background).

Is this pattern indicative of a linguistic change in progress towards [ɑ] use? The sociolinguistic distribution of the variant suggests this is very doubtful. Low back [ɑ] scores in the speech of young females, middle class speakers and young informants of metropolitan origin, who all represent weak ties in our sample, make the social diffusion of the variant somewhat unlikely. Furthermore, the present association of the variant with the 'street' (see 7.5.5 above), together with the more long-established perception of /A/ as a social marker tend to bring back [ɑ] use to the level of conscious awareness. It is thus more likely to be met with strong resistance by the strong standardising forces of the French mainstream society. We return to this point in the concluding chapter below.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

In the introductory chapter of the thesis, two principal objectives were set out: to reveal interesting and potentially innovatory patterns of sociolinguistic variation in contemporary French *banlieues* while making some contribution to our understanding of linguistic diffusion and change. We now assess the extent to which these objectives have been met.

8.1 Assessment of results

8.1.2 The choice of variables

Firstly, this study has shed new light on a widely studied variable of French: /A/-realisation. While all previous quantitative studies have reported a decreasing level of variation in /A/ (prompting a near merger situation towards a categorical front realisation of the phoneme), a generational increase of back [ɑ] pronunciation was observed in the speech of all social groups. Particularly high rates of back [ɑ] (up to 80% in some phonetic environments for one informant) were found, specifically in the speech of the young lower working-class group from immigrant backgrounds. It seems that this reversal of the trend in /A/-realisation is led by young male *beurs*.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the study is the light it has cast on variants which have never been quantitatively studied within metropolitan France (e.g. affricated stops) or even reported by other sociolinguistic studies (glottalized [ʁʔ]). We have quantitatively shown that these variants were not only present but frequent in the variety of metropolitan French of interest. We have also isolated the population with which they are associated: the young lower-working class groups from immigration backgrounds. The possible diffusion of these variables is discussed below in 8.2.

8.1.3 Discussion of the main sociolinguistic findings

The selection of La Courneuve and Fontenay-sous-Bois as research sites has proved a fruitful one. Undoubtedly owing to the relative geographical, social and ethnic exclusion of some of our informants, the study has shown that innovative linguistic forms and behaviours are developing in the speech of the young lower-working class population of the Paris *banlieues* selected. Although not all have achieved statistical significance, results have consistently shown that it is the young males of immigrant origin, and especially the young lower working-class *beurs,* who are leading the use of most of the non-standard linguistic features studied here.

The proposed explanation for these patterns is that *beurs* and youngsters of other immigrant origins (especially lower working-class males) are more strongly integrated into the street peer-groups and are more influenced by the street-culture. They are therefore under more pressure to adopt and maintain vernacular norms. Indeed, as it has been shown in previous studies, a strong degree of integration into close-knit social networks acts as an enforcement mechanism for vernacular norms. Solidarity to the peer-group clearly outweighs standardising pressures exerted by the mainstream model of society. The adoption of non-standard variants thus seems to have a double symbolic function for the *cités* peer-groups: it creates social cohesion at the group level and represents a statement of social and ethnic exclusion.

However, this does not provide any information about the origin of these forms, nor does it explain the selection of particular non-standard forms rather than others. The sociolinguistic patterns observed here point in a plausible direction. It seems that the variants which are being adopted have three common characteristics:

a) they are all variants which already exist in non-standard varieties of French to some extent; by this we mean that these forms are little used but nonetheless available to speakers in informal speech styles. They can be restricted to the sociolect of a particular community or social class, or to some specific linguistic contexts. They are thus 'latent'

within the system, rather like the obsolescent centralised vowels whose decline and renaissance in Martha's Vineyard were reported by Labov.

b) They seem to have emerged through a situation of dialect contact between the Parisian working-class and the Maghrebi immigrants; it is interesting to note for instance that palatalised stops and back [ɑ] are traditionally found in working-class Parisian French. It is probably significant that these forms are also found in North African French (Lanly 1962: 311, 313). The case of /r/ may not be different: we have related in Chapter 6 a strong tendency in the vernacular of interest to drop, shorten or pharyngealise final /r/ in French. Correspondingly, Lanly (1962: 316) relates similar realisations in North African French.

Three other reasons point towards the Maghrebi immigrants as providing a superstrate influence on the working-class Parisian dialect substrate: firstly, they are one of the first immigrant communities to have settled *en masse* in the Paris *bidonvilles* in post-war France; secondly, they settled in greater numbers than any other immigrant populations (Algerians for instance are now the largest foreign population in France, Hargreaves 1997: 9); thirdly, the North African groups seem to use the non-standard forms of interest at consistently higher rates in our data.

c) These forms have all been adopted and exaggerated (in terms of frequency and phonetic quality) by one particular group living in this area of dialect contact. Judging by their consistently higher use of *banlieue* forms in our data, it seems that the young *cités beurs* have exaggerated forms which were present (although to a more limited extent) both in the speech of their parents (the Maghrebi migrants) and in that of the Parisian working-class. Let us consider some evidence.

Although it has nearly disappeared in the speech of the intermediate social groups of the sample, the young working-class *beurs* make a comparatively high use of back [ɑ]. By exaggerating their use of back [ɑ] in terms of frequency, they simultaneously state their

working-class status and their Maghrebi identity. A similar explanation is applicable to the presence of palatalised and affricated stops in the vernacular of the *cités*. These stops can be found in both North African French and Parisian working-class French. Affricated stops are palatalised stops which have been exaggerated: during the articulation of a palatalised stop, affricates consist of a larger and longer contact between the articulators which creates friction (see Chapter 5, section 5.1.1). Again, this explanation applies to /r/ realisations: [χ] is a strongly fricative and strident uvular, which exists in standard French in a less exaggerated form. The case of glottalized [ʁ̞ʔ] is particularly interesting, as it seems to combine the short and explosive characteristic of final /r/ in Northern African French (see Lanly 1962: 316) with the far back articulation of laryngealized [V̰], historically associated with working-class Parisian French (cf. above in 6.5.8).

A very similar phenomenon seems to be developing elsewhere. Recent research (Docherty and Foulkes 1999, 2001, Milroy and Milroy, Docherty, Foulkes and Walshaw 1999) in Britain relates the linguistic diffusion of [ʊ], /l/-vocalisation, [f] and [v], as respectively non-standard variants of /r/, /l/, /θ/ and /ð/. These variants, which are all typical south-eastern and London variants, seem to be diffusing northwards and westwards into cities as far apart as Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Derby. Three interesting aspects emerge from these consonantal changes: firstly, it seems that in all cases, the use of non-standard forms is initiated by young working-class males144. Secondly, according to Docherty and Foulkes (2001: 39) the changes are "developments away from the forms used in the standard accent" and are therefore "examples of covert prestige". Thirdly and perhaps most interestingly, these variants "may in fact have a contributing source within those varieties which are adopting them" (Docherty and Foulkes 2001: 39). Making an analogy from the field of virology, the contamination of a dialect by an innovative variant depends on the original presence or absence of this

---

[144] The diffusion of these consonantal forms is, according to Docherty and Foulkes (2001: 36-37), distinct from other levelling-type changes currently emerging in vowels in Britain, (e.g. the diffusion of supra-local monophthongs [o:] and [e:] for diphthongs [ʊə] and [ɪə] in the GOAT and FACE lexical sets (see

variant in the 'host dialect', e.g. in a limited number of linguistic contexts (to continue further with the analogy, these forms would be at a 'dormant' state). Docherty and Foulkes (2001: 39) remark that

> In Derby, for instance, glottals are widespread and go unnoticed in pre-consonantal positions (e.g. *buttons*[145], *get ready*). What we perceive to be an abrupt change is therefore more correctly an expansion to the territory held by a particular form, under the influence of an external variety with a similar pattern, rather than a wholly new feature entering the accent.

As evidence for this explanation, Foulkes and Docherty cite the example of /l/-vocalisation which is developing in Derby but not in the Tyneside dialect. This is because "there is no local source for this since Newcastle /l/ is not velarised in any phonological context and is therefore not subject to vocalisation" (2001: 40). This perfectly illustrates the concept of the exaggeration of a 'dormant' form (in terms of its frequency, quality or spread through linguistic contexts) that we mentioned above for banlieue French. It would be very interesting to replicate a similar study to that of Foulkes's and Docherty's and investigate the diffusion of the banlieue features studied here in a dialect area which does not have these forms in any phonological context (in the oc area of France for instance).

This 'exaggeration hypothesis' is also fruitful when considering linguistic diffusion and change at the social level. Indeed, the fact that it applies to all the variables in the study is reminiscent of what Labov observed in Martha's Vineyard. As was the case in the island, a part of the young population living in the banlieues (here beurs) has selected and exaggerated its use of localised forms in order symbolically to exclude outsiders, reconstruct social cohesion at the micro-level and state their social difference. In a second phase, these linguistic features are adopted through the street-culture by other youngsters of different immigrant origin. The features are subsequently adopted by

---

Watt and Milroy 1999). The vocalic changes, in general, seem to be led by the middle class and females, while the consonantal changes discussed above are predominantly male and working-class phenomena.

[145] Although the orthography indicates a vowel sound after /t/ here, the word *button* is generally realised as ['bʌtn] in RP and represents therefore an example of pre-consonantal environment.

young speakers of metropolitan origin, but at a lower rate. It is likely that the latter group adopts these features more slowly because they are faced with more standardising pressure at home than the youngsters whose parents may not have French as a first language. According to our results, we can tentatively propose the following model of linguistic diffusion, at least with regard to affrication, non-standard [ʁ̞] and [χ]146:

North African origin > other origin > metropolitan origin

Although comparisons between the social isolation of Vineyarders and that of banlieusards must remain tentative, the similarity between sociolinguistic patterns is at least intriguing and calls for further investigation.

8.2 Vernacular forms of the *cités*: linguistic change in progress?

Although the age-grading pattern discussed above evidently requires confirmation by other sources, (specifically by studies "in real time"), its consistency across all three variables may prompt one to wonder whether this marks the birth of a new Parisian vernacular. From the amount of evidence we have gathered so far, this seems doubtful. The emergence of palatalisation, affrication and non-standard variants of /r/ in other parts of France (e.g. Grenoble and Perpignan) in similarly mixed populations suggests that these forms are not localised but supra-local. What is more plausible is that cités-based supra-local forms may be developing in French. As discussed above, their diffusion shares some characteristics with that of Estuary English in Britain.

The cités variety of French is also closely related to français populaire since it inherits many features of français populaire . This point leads one to doubt whether the cité vernacular is a variety wholly distinct from français populaire. Gadet is of the opinion that this is not the case, arguing (2003: 85-8) that the differences are principally located at the lexical level. Furthermore, as pointed out above, français populaire and working-class Parisian speech are often synonymous with non-standard French. Whether cités

[146] The case of back [ɑ] fits with more difficulty into this model as it was shown that high rates of [ɑ] use

forms are innovative youth forms of français populaire or constitute a variety of their own, it is undeniable that, at the phonetic level, French is undergoing important changes and deserves further investigation, as Carton (2001: 21) suggests.

When we turn to predicting the impact of the linguistic variants of interest on contemporary French, it appears that not all have the same potential for wider diffusion. Although this remains speculative, three of the variants studied here seem less likely to spread because they are more heavily stigmatised:

a) back [ɑ] has traditionally been associated with the working-class. We have shown that it was associated with males from immigrant backgrounds. On average in the sample, back [ɑ] scores are relatively low.

b) [ʁ̥ʔ] sounds somewhat alien to the native French ear. Although glottal stops can be used to mark a pause (e.g. il est parti [ʔ] et est revenu), glottalisation is not widely used in French as it is in British English for instance. Besides, it is associated with males from immigrant backgrounds and with a high street-culture index. For that reason perhaps, a higher degree of style shift than in the other variants can be found even within the young working-class group.

c) Although it seems to have diffused from the working-class to the lower middle-class group, [V̥] is strictly limited to males. We have argued that physiological factors limit its adoption by females. Scores for both sexes are in any case very low.

According to sociolinguistic theory, linguistic changes are more likely to be adopted and spread by weak social network ties and intermediate social groups. In the sample, weak ties are more amply represented amongst female informants, amongst middle-class speakers and generally across informants of metropolitan origin. Clearly, [V̥], [ɑ] and [ʁ̥ʔ] do not show sociolinguistic distributions favourable to diffusion in the present data.

---

were, to a large extent, limited to the young males from immigrant backgrounds.

In contrast, affrication and strongly fricative [χ] are more clearly in process of being adopted by individuals with weaker ties to the street-culture. The presence of [χ] in the speech of our young female speakers and of affrication in that of the lower middle-class speakers of both sexes has been noted. From a phonetic point of view, [χ] appears less alien to the French ear than [ʁ̞ʔ] for instance and remains relatively close to standard French [ʁ̞] or [x]. Affrication is a recurrent phenomenon of French and of the Romance languages in general, motivated by an assimilatory process, which facilitates articulation. For all these different linguistic and extra-linguistic reasons, these two forms seem more likely to diffuse and perhaps introduce change.

Our results therefore tend to both confirm and contradict Kroch's theory of linguistic change (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.9). What fits into Kroch's model is that in our data, the lower classes seem to be the instigators of several linguistic changes. They appear to be leading a bottom-up adoption of phonetically conditioned forms (i.e. affricated stops) as well as forms which do not sound alien to the native ear (e.g. [χ]). However, our results also show several important contradictions with Kroch's model: the middle-class groups tend to adopt simplified forms (affricated pronunciations) while rejecting features which sound somewhat foreign to the native ear (e.g. [ʁ̞ʔ]). Kroch's argument, which explains the upper classes' resistance to forms that are economical in articulatory terms as the result of ideology (i.e. as a desire to set themselves apart from the lower classes), thus seems applicable here to a very limited extent.

Trudgill's (1995a) re-interpretation of Kroch's model of change appears to be more appropriate to our findings. As explained in 3.1.9 above, Trudgill argues that linguistic change and its typology are not ideologically motivated as Kroch suggests, but rather dependent upon the degree of isolation between populations speaking different varieties as well as the structure of the social networks found in these populations. Trudgill (1995a: 8) argues that isolated and close-knit groups are more prone to develop less phonetically motivated linguistic forms, while in groups where a high degree of external contact is found, more simplification-type changes take place. He illustrates this point

with Faeroese, a dialect which evolved from an Old Norse substrate and developed amongst the close-knit communities of relatively remote islands. This dialect presents more complex linguistic forms (such as /kigv/ from earlier /ku:/ "cow" and /nudž/ from earlier /ny:/ "new") than other Old Norse-based languages such as Danish or Norwegian, which developed in more high-contact situations and within less close-knit populations.

We suggest that the geographical isolation which favoured the development of phonetically complex forms in Faeroese is not limited to remote islands, but that it may also apply to the socially and geographically peripheral populations of our Western cities. Trudgill's model explains why the complex or alien-sounding forms observed in our corpus are restricted to the low-status speakers of the isolated grands ensembles, living in the close-knit peer-groups of the street. This model also accounts for the diffusion of the simplified and less alien-sounding forms through the weaker ties of our sample. This tentative explanation calls for confirmatory work in similar urban settings.

8.3 Concluding remarks

While a vast distance, both in geographical an social terms, separates the Paris *banlieues* from Martha's Vineyard, Belfast or Philadelphia, this study has demonstrated that the methodology employed in those settings can profitably be applied in a French context, and that similar processes of change may be at work. We have been able to identify changes at an incipient stage and drawing on conclusions from other studies, predict the direction they may take. Observing and analysing these developments in real time in the years to come offers fruitful and exciting avenues for further research.

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK MATERIAL

1.1 Interview questions

The questions listed below were principally designed to interview adolescents, but the same framework was used for adults, as the necessary adaptations (e.g. the use of *vous* forms instead of *tu* forms, work-oriented instead or school-oriented questions, etc.) were easy to make 'on the spot'. At the bottom of each cell, a link to other themes was provided to ensure a relatively good and natural flow of conversation. In certain cases (less talkative informants, group interviews), the *debate questions* were used. These link up to the general framework.

ID	MARIAGE	FAMILLE
-Age / prenom -Décris moi là où tu habites -As-tu toujours habité ici? -Sinon, où? -Parle moi de ta famille (emplois, habitation, etc.) -Moyen de transport? -Quel a été ton parcours scolaire / professionel?	-Cela représente quoi pour toi? - Que penses-tu du divorce? - Frères et soeurs mariés? - Souhaites-tu te marier? Pourquoi?	-Important? C'est quoi pour toi? - Veux-tu avoir des enfants? Pourquoi? - Quel futur imagines-tu pour eux? - En quoi trouves-tu qu'il y a des différences entre générations?
AMIS-MARIAGE – RELATIONS	RACISME – RELIGION-FAMILLE	TRAVAIL - ECOLE
AMIS	RELATIONS	RACISME
-Combien as-tu d'amis? -Où habitent-tils? -Comment les as-tu rencontrés? -Tu les vois souvent? -Vous faîtes quoi quand vous êtes ensemble? -Avec qui tu es le plus proche? Pourquoi? -Es-tu un "leader" du groupe? Qui prend les décisions?	- Sors-tu avec quelqu'un en ce moment? Raconte ! - Comment rencontre-t-on les filles / garçons ici As-tu du succès? Tes copains? - T'imagines-tu avec quelqu'un dans le futur? - T'imagines-tu marié? - Les filles / garçons se battent-ils souvent ici?	- Les gens de différentes origines se mélangent bien par ici? - Tu as des amis blancs / beurs / noirs - Qu'est-ce que tu penses de Le Pen et de la montée du racisme en France?
ACTIVITES – BAGARRES – RELATIONS	FAMILLE – BAGARRES – RACISME – MARIAGE	MARIAGE – AMIS FAMILLE – POLITIQUE

LOISIRS - Fais-tu du sport? Quoi? Où? Pourquoi? - Quelle musique écoutes-tu? - Ton opinion sur le hip-hop en France? - Tu connais des groupes de rap locaux? - Raconte-moi ton film préféré - Quel(le) est on acteur / actrice préféré(e)? Pourquoi? - Que penses-tu des films violents? RELATIONS – AMIS BAGARRES	BAGARRES - Tu t'es déjà battu(e)? Raconte ! - Y a-t-il beaucoup de violence / bagarres par ici? -Fais-tu des arts martiaux? -Tu connais des clubs? - Les gens sont-ils armés? AMIS – FILLES – GARÇONS	ECOLE - Quel a été ton parcours scolaire? - Que penses-tu de l'école? - Quel sorte d'élève es-tu? - Quel est ton prof / matière préféré(e)? Pourquoi? - La réussite: passe-t-elle par l'école? - Tes amis sont dans le même collège / lycée? RELATIONS – LOISIRS – TRAVAIL
RÊVES - L'argent: c'est important pour toi? - Tu gagnes au loto demain: tu fais quoi? - Si tu pouvais changer le monde, que ferais-tu? - Quel serait ton pire cauchemar? POLITIQUE – TRAVAIL	TRAVAIL - Quand tu étais petit, tu voulais faire quoi? - Et maintenant? - Le chômage te fait-il peur? - Comment / où tu te vois dans 20 ans? LOISIRS – ECOLE - REVES	LANGAGE - Parles-tu comme tes parents? - Tu crois qu'il y a un accent parisien / des banlieues? - Tes parents corrigent-ils ton langage? - Utilises-tu un langage particulier avec tes amis? - Utilises-tu beaucoup de verlan? - Et tes frères / soeurs? - Les filles parlent-elles comme les garçons? RELATIONS -FAMILLE - ID - BAGARRES - LOISIRS
POLITIQUE -As-tu confiance dans les politiciens / la politique		

- Tu rencontres Chirac dans la rue demain, tu lui dis quoi? REVES - TRAVAIL

QUESTIONS DEBATS	
- Avortement - Le Pen et la démocratie - Le voile islamique - Le service militaire - Les grands ensembles - La polygamie - La peine de mort - L'euthanasie	- Un monde sans argent: possible? - Comment réduire le chômage? - Faut-il croire en Dieu? - Guerre civile: possible en France?

1.2 Interview texts

1.2.1 "Devoir de CM2"

Tout à l'heure, le jeune homme va prendre le train. Il part. Il ne sait guère ce qui l'attend. A la gare, sur le quai, des cantines, des sacs militaires, des valises sont entassées pêle-mêle. Il rêve à l'été dernier quand il ramassait les meules de foin. Le soleil baignait la campagne d'une lumière dorée, et çà et là, des bouquets de saules offraient une ombre au bétail. Dans le ciel bleu, de petits nuages roses à perte de vue. Les prairies étaient parsemées de coquelicots et des tâches jaunes de pétales de boutons d'or. Un festival de fleurs. Tout semblait naturel dans cette France rurale. "Je me demande ce qu'est devenue cette bonne vieille rosse, Rosette, qui tirait seule le tombereau" se dit-il, en pensant qu'une nouvelle tâche l'attend, plus dangereuse.

1.2.2 "Conversation"

- Tu sais, hier, comme c'était la fête de ma mère, j'ai essayé ta recette de l'an dernier. C'est simple comme bonjour, je ne peux pas nier ça. J'ai fait un caramel bien brun dans la casserole. J'y ai mis une belle couche de mie de pain et j'ai versé la pâte toute faîte dessus. Il faut mettre au frigidaire une heure. Alors, j'ai démoulé au milieu du plat de service et j'ai décoré avec des fraises. C'était très joli, vite prêt et très bon. Avant, j'avais fait des filets de soles à la normande et de l'onglet grillé avec des pommes anglaises. Mais je parle, je parle et toi?

- Moi, j'ai été près de la Baule, à l'abbaye de Saint-Laudun-des-Prés. Tu connais? C'est d'une beauté! Mais complètement en ruine: on dirait qu'une horde de sauvages a tout pillé. La vigne et le lierrre ont envahi l'escalier extérieur du grenier, un saule dépasse du faîte du toît. On a failli s'assoir sur un nid d'abeille. Elles étaient cachées dans un lion en pierre qui était tombé de son pilier. Elles se sont jetées sur le panier de pique-nique. On n'avait plus rien à se mettre sous la dent: le jeûne obligatoire. Encore heureux, au parking, on vendait des sandwichs à 5 francs et un breuvage infect. Danielle, la copine qui m'accompagnait, n'arrêtait pas de grogner: elle se cognait partout, le front, les pieds; pourtant elle était si heureuse de cette promenade!

J'en avais ras-le-bol! Mais elle est éreintée: elle a travaillé comme une dingue pour son brevet ou son diplôme, je ne sais plus. Je ne comprends plus rien aux examens depuis la réforme d'Edgard Faure. Oh zut! J'ai filé mon bas tout neuf, avec ces souliers sans bout... Et puis dans ton quartier, les trottoirs sont dans un drôle d'état.

- Tiens! Voilà Azor; attention, il va souiller ta robe avec ses pattes sales, pleines de boue. Veux-tu arrêter Azor! Il va tout déchirer avec ses crocs. Bats-le ou il n'en finira pas. Il me fait perdre le fil. Ah! J'ai oublié de te ramener le livre que je t'avais emprunté il y a un mois; tu sais celui que tu avais pris au club des jeunes pour ta fille: le chat botté, un conte de fée.

- Oh! Il n'y a pas le feu!

1.3 Word lists

parking	Saint Etienne	malin
j'ai mal	vigne	campagne
je suis vert	sotte	lent
un animal	endormir	en haut
l'herbe	coeur	le saule pleureur
il est jeune	ma soeur	mettre
souple	race	bac
Marie-Chantal	rare	bar
chanter	quatre	alors
je suis allé au cinéma	les haricots	franc
qu'est-ce que tu veux	menteur	des pâtes
bonté	blond	d'abord
toi	guerre	un mâle
ça va pas	j'ai pas peur	je me le demande
bariton	une patte	arrestation
marmelade		

tu as le teint tout pâle
consommer
la feinte
fer
camarade
peuple
Catherine
beignet
rasta
crèpe
du beurre
copine
un peu
le vent
comme ça
marteau
marmiton

encore
il est intelligent
habiter
batard
seigneur
armure
arlésienne
moi
bleu
poids
faut voir
loisir
la paume
celui-là
l'heure
du feu
Marseille

loi
derrière
malle
front
déjà
hache
allons
le sol
poignet
la poisse
il jeûne
commence
brassage
armurier
du pain
t'es dur
rituel
divorcer

---

c'est intérieur
c'était aux Indes
quel beau teint
Tintin
tu fais le plein

c'est antérieur
c'était aux Andes
quel beau temps
c'est tentant
tu fais le plan
non, maintenons

quel beau blond

c'est tonton

il ronge tout

non, maintenant

il est bon ton blanc

il range tout

APPENDIX 2: PALATALISATION

The results shown in the different tables of Appendix 2 are all based on a sub-sample of 12 informants from the younger age group (15–25). These informants are equally distributed across each of the ethnic backgrounds. The four informants with the highest palatalisation rates in each ethnic group were selected. The symbol - was used in environments where variation does not occur or when no tokens were found.

2.1 Palatalisation in velar plosives: detail per vocalic environment

Table 2.a

Palatalisation by stress position, following-vowel environment and syllable distribution: voiceless velar plosives

	Stressed position						Unstressed position					
	Initial		Final		Inter-vocalic		Initial		Final		Inter-vocalic	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
ki	53	20.7	58	41.3	47	31.3	263	11	-	-	14	7.1
ky	-	-	20	40	38	42.1	29	17.2	-	-	23	34.7
ku	54	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
kj	16	6.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
kɥi	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	38	-	-	-	-
ka	57	8.7	50	28	17	5.8	211	12.7	-	-	54	9.2
kɛ	37	27	20	15	50	18	165	5.4	-	-	-	-
ke	-	-	-	-	43	9.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
kɔ	231	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
kɛ̃	-	-	17	29.4	67	11.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
kɔ̃	-	-	35	28.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
kə	63	28.5	-	-	199	2.5	170	4.7	-	-	-	-
kœ	25	28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.2 Palatalisation across ethnic groups: detail per vocalic environment

Vocalic environments where variable palatalisation did not occur in any syllable position do not feature in the tables.

Table 2.b

Palatalisation of dental plosives by ethnic background: stressed position

	Initial syllable			Intervocalic		
	Stressed syllable					
		N	%		N	%
Metr.	ti	-	-	ti	104	24
N.Af.		-	-		111	75.6
Other		-	-		79	51.8
Metr.	ty	9	44.4	ty	25	36
N.Af.		13	46.1		41	100
Other		4	50		14	35.7
Metr.	tu	94	4.2	tu	-	-
N.Af.		89	0		-	-
Other		85	0		-	-
Metr.	tj	8	37.5	tj	-	-
N.Af.		3	66.6		-	-
Other		2	50		-	-
Metr.	di	64	15.6	di	12	25
N.Af.		105	56.1		9	44.4
Other		85	58.8		5	60
Metr.	dy	7	28.5	dy	3	0
N.Af.		10	90		9	66.6
Other		10	80		7	28.5

Table 2.c

Palatalisation of dental plosives by ethnic background: unstressed position

	Initial syllable			Intervocalic		
		N	%		N	%
Metr.	ti	13	15.3	ti	37	16.2
N.Af.		2	100		21	66.6
Other		7	42.8		23	21.7
Metr.	ty	96	15.6	ty	15	20
N.Af.		108	69.4		12	75
Other		82	36.5		11	54.5
Metr.	tu	134	0.7	tu	-	-
N.Af.		109	0		-	-
Other		81	2.4		-	-
Metr.	di	81	2.4	di	8	0
N.Af.		89	28		7	28.5
Other		53	32		4	0
Metr.	dy	74	9.4	dy	2	0
N.Af.		60	50		5	40
Other		65	43		6	16.6

Table 2.d

Palatalisation of velar plosive /k/ by ethnic background: stressed position

	Initial syllable			Word-final			Intervocalic		
		N	%		N	%		N	%
Metr.	ki	17	5.8	ik	23	47.8	ki	18	11.1
N.Af.		15	40		20	60		19	57.8
Other		21	19		15	6.6		10	20
Metr.	ky	-	-	yk	6	16.6	ky	20	30
N.Af.		-	-		5	60		11	72.7
Other		-	-		9	44.4		7	28.5
Metr.	ku	15	0	uk	-	-	ku	-	-
N.Af.		16	6.2		-	-		-	-
Other		23	0		-	-		-	-
Metr.	ka	23	8.6	ak	18	11.1	ka	4	0
N.Af.		15	6.6		23	43.4		6	16.6
Other		19	10.5		9	22.2		7	0
Metr.	kɛ	14	0	ɛk	13	0	kɛ	21	23.8
N.Af.		9	44.4		4	50		10	30
Other		14	42.8		3	33.3		19	5.2
Metr.	ke	-	-	ek	-	-	ke	9	0
N.Af.		-	-		-	-		15	20
Other		-	-		-	-		19	5.2
Metr.	kɔ	104	0	ɔk	1	0	kɔ	-	-
N.Af.		63	3.1		2	50		-	-
Other		64	0		3	0		-	-
Metr.	kɛ̃	-	-	ɛ̃k	5	40	kɛ̃	30	6.6
N.Af.		-	-		9	33.3		12	25
Other		-	-		3	0		25	12
Metr.	kɔ̃	-	-	ɔ̃k	25	24	kɔ̃	-	-
N.Af.		-	-		4	0		-	-
Other		-	-		6	66.6		-	-
Metr.	kœ	8	0	œk	-	-	kœ	-	-
N.Af.		7	42.8		-	-		-	-
Other		10	40		-	-		-	-
Metr.	kə	25	24	ək	-	-	kə	81	4.9
N.Af.		16	56.2		-	-		49	2
Other		22	13.6		-	-		69	0

Table 2.e

Palatalisation of velar plosive /k/ by ethnic background: unstressed position

	Initial syllable			Intervocalic		
		N	%		N	%
Metr.	ki	121	4.9	ki	5	0
N.Af.		61	36		7	14.2
Other		81	1.2		2	0
Metr.	ky	12	8.3	ky	13	23
N.Af.		7	28.5		8	62.5
Other		10	20		2	0
Metr.	kj	4	0	kj	-	-
N.Af.		5	60		-	-
Other		2	0		-	-
Metr.	kɥi	3	0	kɥi	-	-
N.Af.		13	53.8		-	-
Other		5	20		-	-
Metr.	ka	70	0	ka	14	7.1
N.Af		94	23.4		22	13.6
Other		47	10.6		18	5.5
Metr.	kɛ	64	3.1	kɛ	-	-
N.Af.		54	12.9		-	-
Other		47	0		-	-
Metr.	kɛ̃	2	0	kɛ̃	-	-
N.Af.		4	50		-	-
Other		3	0		-	-
Metr.	kə	75	5.3	kə	-	-
N.Af.		43	9.3		-	-
Other		52	0		-	-

Table 2.f

Palatalisation of velar plosive /g/ by ethnic background: stressed and unstressed position

	Initial syllable			Intervocalic		
	Stressed syllable					
		N	%		N	%
Metro	ga	5	0	ga	18	5.5
N.Af		17	5.8		10	10
Other		13	0		9	0
Metro	gɛ	8	0	gɛ	-	-
N.Af		9	22.2		-	-
Other		12	8.3		-	-
	Initial syllable			Intervocalic		
	Unstressed syllable					
		N	%		N	%
Metro	ga	5	0	ga	8	25
N.Af		10	10		10	10
Other		4	0		9	11.1

APPENDIX 3: /A/ REALISATION

3.1 Lexical influence on [ɑ] realisation

3.1.1 Word length

Table 3.a

Influence of word length on [ɑ]-realisation: all lexical items

Word	N	%	Word	N	%	Word	N	%
camarade	4	25	Avoir	8	75	bac	4	50
festival	3	33.3	Batard	4	50	bar	4	100
mytomane	1	100	Campagne	7	14.2	boîte	2	100
obligatoire	4	75	capab(le)	2	50	casse	1	100
promenade	2	50	Chômage	3	66.6	croivent	1	100
cinéma	4	25	Couloir	3	100	droite	3	33.3
habita	1	100	Dépasse	4	100	grave	2	50
	19	58.32857	Histoire	5	80	hache	4	50
			Malade	3	100	mal	5	40
			Normal	3	33.3	mâle	4	75
			Patates	1	100	marche	3	66.6
			Plupart	1	100	marre	1	100
			Regarde	2	50	match	1	100
			s'asseoir	4	75	noir	2	100
			Sauvage	4	25	pâle	5	100
			Travail	5	60	par	4	75
			travaille(nt)	5	20	parle(nt)	11	36.3
			Trottoir	5	100	part	3	100
			Etat	5	20	pâte	7	100
			Rasta	5	20	pattes	5	60
			Sida	1	100	phrase	2	50
				80	63.7	place	4	50
						poisse	5	40
						quat(re)	6	33.3
						rap	6	16.6
						rare	3	33.3
						sac	8	12.5
						sale	3	33.3
						voir	5	100
						à	38	2.6
						bas	12	25

ça	35	20
doit	2	50
droit	2	50
fois	1	100
là	16	37.5
moi	25	44
mois	3	66.6
noix	1	100
pas	47	36.1
plat	6	16.6
poids	2	100
quoi	18	72.2
ras	2	50
toit	5	60
toi	10	40
va(s)	13	23
vois	14	50
	366	59.3

REFERENCES

AITSISELMI, F. (2000) *Black, Blanc Beur: Youth Language and Identity in France.* Interface: Bradford Studies in Language, Culture and Society 5.

ARMSTRONG, N. (1993) A study of phonological variation in French secondary school pupils. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

ARMSTRONG, N. (1998) La variation sociolinguistique dans le lexique français. *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 114/3: 462–95.

ARMSTRONG, N. (2001) *Social and stylistic variation in spoken French: a comparative approach.* Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

ARMSTRONG, N. and BOUGHTON, Z. (1998) Identification and evaluation responses to a French accent: some results and issues of methodology. *Revue Parole*, 5/6: 27-60 [published 1999].

ARMSTRONG, N. AND UNSWORTH, S. (1999) Sociolinguistic variation in southern French schwa. *Linguistics* 37/1: 127-156.

ASHBY, W. (1981) French liaison as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. In Cressey, W. W. and Napoli, D. J. (eds.) *Linguistic Symposium on the Romance Languages* (9th). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown university Press. 46-57.

ASHBY, W. (1984) The elision of /l/ in French clitic pronouns and articles. *Michigan Romance Studies* 1(11): 1-19.

BACHMANN, C. AND BASIER, L. (1984) Le verlan : argot d'école ou langue des Keums ? *Mots* 8 : 169-187.

BACHMANN, C. AND BASIER, L. (1985) Junior s'entraîne très fort, ou le smurf comme mobilisation symbolique. *Langage et Société* 34 : 57-68.

BACHMANN, C. AND BASIER, L. (1989) *Mise en images d'une banlieue ordinaire.* Paris: Syros/Alternative.

BARNES, J. A. (1954) Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish. *Human Relations* 7/1, (cited in L. Milroy 1987a).

BATTYE, A. AND HINTZE, M.-A. (1992) *The French language today.* London: Routledge.

BAUCHE, H. (1920) *Le Langage populaire.* Paris: Payot.

BAZIN, H. (1995) *La Culture Hip-Hop.* Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

BELL, A. (1984) Language style as audience design. *Language in Society* 13: 145-204.

BENTO, M. (1993) Les affriquées des langues romanes. Etude bibliographique et applications à des parlers franco-québécois et français. Unpublished PhD thesis, Université René Descartes, Paris.

BERRUTO, G. (1983) L'italiano popolare e la semplificazione linguistica. *Vox Romanica* 42: 38-79.

BILLIEZ, J. (1979) Analyse des besoins du public francophone en langues et cultures d'origines des populations migrantes (application au contexte médico-hospitalier). Unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Grenoble III.

BILLIEZ, J. (1985a) Les jeunes issus de l'immigration algérienne et espagnole à Grenoble : quelques aspects sociolinguistiques. In A. Tabouret-Keller (ed.) *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 54: 41-56.

BILLIEZ, J. (1985b) La langue comme marqueur d'identité. In Y. Charbit and A. Perotti (eds.) *Générations Nouvelles, Revue Européenne des Migrations internationales*. 1/2 : 95-105.

BILLIEZ, J. (1992) Le 'parler véhiculaire interethnique' de groupes d'adolescents en milieu urbain. In Des langues et des villes. Paris: Didier Erudition. 117-126.

BILLIEZ, J. (1996) Poésie musicale urbaine : langues et identités entrelacées. In C. Julliard et L.-J. Calvet *Les politiques linguistiques: mythes et réalités, l'actualité scientifique*. Aupelf-Uref. 61-66.

BILLIEZ, J., KRIEF, K., LAMBERT, P., ROMANO, A., TRIMAILLE, C. (2003) *Pratiques et représentations langagières de groupes de pairs en milieu urbains*. Rapport de recherche pour l'Observatoire des Pratiques Linguistiques et la Délégation Générale à la Langue Française et aux Langues de France.

BINISTI, N. (2000) Les marques identitaires du 'parler interethnique' de jeunes marseillais. In L.-J. Calvet and A. Moussirou-Mouyama (eds.) *Le plurilinguisme urbain*. Paris: Didier Erudition. 281-299.

BLANCHE-BENVENISTE, C. and JEANJEAN, C. (1987) *Le français parlé: transcription et édition*. Paris: Didier.

BODY-CENGROT, S. (1993) *Ville et violence: l'irruption de nouveaux acteurs*. Paris: Presse Universitaires de France (cited in J. Menanteau 1994).

BOINDIN, N. (1709) *Remarques sur les sons de la langue.* Paris. 3-4 (cited in Walter 1976).

BOISSEVAIN, J. (1974) *Friends of friends: networks, manipulators and coalitions.* Oxford: Blackwell (cited in L. Milroy 1987a).

BOLIVAR, T. and LOVERA, A. (1982) Les quartiers de "ranchos" dans la croissance urbaine de Caracas. In M. Imbert, and P. H. Chombart de Lauwe (eds.). 69-86.

BOTT, E. (1971) *Family and social networks* (rev. edn.). London: Tavistok (cited in L. Milroy 1987a).

BOYER, H. (ed.) (1997) Les mots des jeunes : observations et hypothèses. *Langue Française*, 114.

BRANDIS, W. (1970) An index of social class. In W. Brandis and D. Henderson *Social class, language and communication.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 130-6.

BURTON, F. (1978) *The politics of legitimacy-struggles in a Belfast community.* (Appendix entitled 'Theory and methodology in participant observation'). London: Routledge (cited in Milroy 1987b).

CALVET, L.-J. (1994) *Les voix de la ville : introduction à la sociolinguistique urbaine.* Paris: Payot.

CANNON, S. (1997) Paname City rapping: B-Boys in the banlieues and beyond. In A. G. Hargreaves and M. McKinney (eds) *Post-colonial cultures in France.* London: Routledge. 150-66.

CARTON, F. (ed.) et al. (1983) *Les accents des Français.* (Book and Cassette). Paris: Hachette.

CARTON, F. (2001) Quelques évolutions récentes dans la prononciation du français. In Hintze et al. (eds.). 7-23.

CHAMBERS, J. K. and TRUDGILL, P. (1980) *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHARBONNEAU, R. (1955*) La palatalisation de T/D en canadien-français : étude expérimentale*. Publications de la section de linguistique, philologie & phonétique expérimentale 2/3. Montréal : Université de Montréal.

CHARBONNEAU, R. and JACQUES, B. (1972) [ts] et [dz] en français canadien. In A. Valdman (ed.) *Papers in linguistics and phonetics to the memory of Pierrre Delattre*. The Hague and Paris : Mouton. 77-90.

CHAUDENSON, R. (1979) *Les créoles français*. Paris : Nathan.

CHESHIRE, J. (1982) *Variation in an English dialect: a sociolinguistic study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CHEVROT, J.-P., et al. (1983) Les parlers des adolescents. Dossier manuscrit, UV de sociolinguistique. Université Grenoble III.

CIRAL (website): http://ciral.ulaval.ca/phonetique/phono/r42.htm

CLERMONT, J. and CEDERGREN, H. (1979) Les 'r' de ma mère sont perdus dans l'air. In P. Thibaut *Le français parlé: études sociolinguistiques*. Edmonton, Alberta: Linguistic Research Inc. 13-28.

CONEIN, B. and GADET, F. (2000) Français populaire? Français des banlieues? In F. Aitsiselmi (ed.) *Black, blanc, beur: youth language and identity in France.* University of Bradford: Interface, Bradford Studies in Language, Culture and Society. 39-49.

CORNEAU, C. (2000) An EPG study of palatalisation I French: cross-dialect and inter-subject variation. *Language Variation and Change* 12: 25-49.

COVENEY, A. B. (1989) Variability in interrogation and negation in spoken French. PhD Dissertation, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

COVENEY, A. (1996) *Variability in spoken French: a sociolinguistic study of interrogation and negation.* Exeter: Elm Bank Publications.

COVENEY, A. (2001) *The sounds of contemporary French.* Exeter: Elm Bank Publications.

DABÈNE, L. and BILLIEZ, J. (1986) Code-switching in the speech of adolescents born of immigrant parents. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 8: 309-325.

D'AN, A.-M. (1968) *Le créole d'Haïti.* The Hague: Mouton.

DAUSES, A. (1973) *Etudes sur l'e instable dans le français familier.* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

DELATTRE, P. (1944) A contribution to the history of 'r grasséyé'. *Modern Language Notes.* 562-564. Reprinted in P. Delattre 1966.

DELATTRE, P. (1966) *Studies in French and comparative phonetics.* The Hague: Mouton.

DEMOLIN, D. (2001) Some phonetic and phonological observations concerning /R/ in Belgian French. In H. Van de Velde and R. van Hout (eds.). 63-73.

DESROSIERES, A. (1984) La nouvelle nomenclature des professions et catégories socio-professionnelles. In A. Fouquet (ed.) *Données sociales* (5th edn.). Paris: Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques.

DEYHIME, G. (1967) Enquête sur la phonologie du français contemporain. *La Linguistique*. 1: 97-108 and 2: 57-84.

DOCHERTY, G. J. and FOULKES, P. (1999) Derby and Newcastle: instrumental phonetics and variationist studies. In P. Foulkes and G. J. Docherty (eds.). 47-71.

DOCHERTY, G. J. and FOULKES, P. (2001) Variation and Change in British /r/. In Van de Velde, H. and van Hout, R. (eds.). 27-43.

DORAN, M. (2002) A sociolinguistic study of youth language in the Parisian suburbs : verlan and minority identity in contemporary France. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University.

DOUGLAS-COWIE, E. (1978) Linguistic code-switching in a Northern Irish village: social interaction and social ambition. In P. Trudgill (ed.). 37-51 (cited in L. Milroy 1987b).

DUMAS, D. (1972) Le français populaire de Montréal: description phonologique. Unpublished MA dissertation, Université de Montréal.

DUPUIS, S. (1836) *Traité de prononciation*. Paris (cited in Mettas 1979).

ECKERT, P. (1988) Adolescent social structure and the spread of linguistic change. *Language in Society* 17: 183-207.

ECKERT, P. (1989) *Jocks and burnouts: social categories and identity in the high school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

ECKERT, P. (2000) *Linguistic variation as social practise*. Oxford: Blackwell.

ECKERT, P. (2003) Language and adolescent groups. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 22: 112-18.

EDWARDS, V. (1997) Patois and the politics of process: Black English in British classrooms. In N. Coupland and A. Jaworski (eds.) *Sociolinguistics: a reader and a course book*. Modern Linguistic Series: St Martin's Press, INC. 408-15.

EDWARDS, W. F. (1992) Sociolinguistic behavior in a Detroit inner-city black neighborhood. *Language in Society* 21: 93-115.

ENCREVÉ, P. (1983) La liaison sans enchaînement. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 46: 38-66.

ENCREVÉ, P. (1988) *La liaison avec et sans enchaînement*. Paris: Seuil.

FASOLD, R. and SHIFFRIN, D. (1989) *Language and variation: current issues in linguistic theory*. Series 4/52. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

FISCHER, J. L. (1958) Social influences on the choice of a linguistic variant. *Word* 14: 47-56.

FÓNAGY, I. (1989) Le français change de visage? *Revue Romane* 24: 225-54.

FOUGERON, C. and SMITH, C. (1993) French. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 23: 73-6.

FOULKES, P. and DOCHERTY, G. J. (1999) *Urban voices: accent studies in the British Isles*. London: Arnold.

FRANÇOIS, D. (1974) *Le français parlé: analyse des unités phoniques et significatives d'un corpus recueilli dans la région parisienne*. Paris: SELAF.

FRANÇOIS, D. (1985) Le langage populaire. In G. Antoine and R. Martin (eds.) *Histoire de la langue française de 1880 à 1914*. Paris: Editions du CNRS. 295-327.

FREI, H. (1929) *La grammaire des fautes*. Genève: Slatkine.

GADET, F. (1992) *Le français populaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaire de France.

GADET, F. (1995) Variabilité, variation, variété: le français d'Europe. *Journal of French Language Studies* 6: 75-98.

GADET, F. (1997) *Le français ordinaire*. 2nd edition. Paris: Armand Colin.

GADET, F. (1998) Des fortifs aux técis: persistances et discontinuités dans la langue populaire. In D. Marley et al. (eds.) *Linguistic identities and policies in France and the French-speaking world.* London: AFLS and CILT. 11-26.

GADET, F. (2003) Youth Language in France : forms and practices. In E. Neuland (ed.) *Jugendsprachen-Spiegel der Zeit, Internationale Fachkonferenz 2001 an der Bergischen Universität Wuppertal*. Bern : Peter Lang. 77-89.

GASQUET-CYRUS, M., KOSMICKI, G. and VAN DEN AVENNE, C. (eds.) (1999) *Paroles et musique de Marseille : les voix d'une ville*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

GAUCHAT, L. (1905) L'unité phonétique dans le patois d'une commune. *Aus Romanischen Sprachen und Literaturen : Festschcrift Heinrich Mort.* Halle : Max Niemeyer : 175-232.

GENDRON, J. D. (1966) *Les tendances phonétiques du français parlé au Canada.* Quebec : Presses Universitaires de Laval.

GEORGE, P. A. (1982) A propos de l'usage du terme banlieue: la pauvreté dans les villes de pays sous-développés. In M. Imbert. and P. H. Chombart de Lauwe (eds.). 17-24.

GÖSCHEL, J. (1971) Artikulation und Distribution der sogenannten Liquida r in den europäischen Sprachen. *Indogermanische Forschungen* 76: 84-126.

GOUDAILLIER, J.-P. (2001) *Comment tu tchatches! Dictionnaire du français contemporain des cités*. Paris : Maisonneuve et Larose.

GRANOVETTER, M. (1973) The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360-80 (cited in Milroy and Milroy 1992).

GREEN, J. N. and AYRES-BENNETT, W. (eds.) (1990) *Variation and change in French*. London: Routledge.

GREEN, J. N. and HINTZE, M.-A. (1990) Variation and change in French linking phenomena. In J. N. Green and W. Ayres-Bennett (eds). 61-88.

GREEN, J. N. and HINTZE, M.-A. (2001) The maintenance of liaison in a family network. In M.-A. Hintze et al. (eds.). 24-44.

GRICE, H. P. (1989) *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press .

HALL, R. (1948) French. *Language* 24/ 3: 3-56.

HALL, T. A. (1997) *The phonology of coronals*. Philadelphia, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

HANSEN, A. B. (1991) The covariation of [ə] with style in Parisian French: an empirical study of 'E caduc' and pre-pausal [ə]. *Proceedings of the ESCA Workshop: 'Phonetics and phonology of speaking styles: reduction and elaboration in speech communication'* Barcelona, 30 September - 2 Oct., 1991. 30: 1-7.

HANSEN, A. B. (1997) Le nouveau [ə] prépausal dans le français parlé à Paris. In J. Perrot (ed.) *Polyphonie pour Ivan Fónagy*. Paris: L'Harmattan. 173-98.

HENTON, C. and BLADON, A. (1988) Creak as a sociophonetic marker. In L. M. Hyman and C. N. Li *Language, speech and mind: studies in honour of Victoria A. Fromkin*. London, New York: Routledge.

HARGREAVES, A. G. (1996) A deviant construction: the French media and the banlieues. *New Community* 22/4: 607-18.

HARGREAVES, A. G. (1997) *Immigration and identity in beur fiction: voices from the North African community in France*. Oxford: Berg.

HARGREAVES, A. G. (2000) Violent Changes: the beurs and the banlieues. In F. Aitsiselmi, F. (ed.). 11-5.

HINDRET, J. (1687) *L'art de bien prononcer et de bien parler la langue françoise*. Paris.

HINTZE, M.-A., JUDGE, A. and POOLEY, T. (eds.) (2001) *French accents: phonological and sociolinguistic perspectives*. London: CILT.

HORNSBY, D. C. (1996) Dialect shift: the example of a French mining community. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

HORNSBY, D. C. (1998) L' émergence de nouvelles variétés urbaines: les cas de Butträsk (Suède) et d'Avion (Pas-de-Calais). In J. M. Eloy, (ed.) *Evaluer la vitalité: variétés d'Oïl et autres langues, Actes du Colloque International "Evaluer la vitalité des variétés régionales des domaines d'Oïl"*, 29-30 Nov. 96. Amiens: Centre d'Etudes Picardes. 185-94.

HUME, E. (1987) The realisation of /R/ in Canadian and standard European French. In Ferrara et al. (eds.) *Linguistic change and contact, Proceedings of the Annual Conference on New Ways of Analysing Variation*. Austin, TX.: University of Texas. 143-51.

IMBERT, M. and CHOMBART DE LAUWE, P. H. (1982) *La banlieue aujourd'hui*. Colloque de réflexion pluridisciplinaire organisé par le Centre d'Ethnologie Sociale et de Psychosociologie (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales et CNRS) et le CAC (Centre d'Action Culturel) et la Maison Populaire de Montreuil, Jan. 28-30 1981. Paris: L'Harmattan.

JALOWIECKI, B. (1982) Banlieue et croissance urbaine en Pologne. In M. Imbert and P. H. Chombart de Lauwe (eds.). 87-102.

JUILLAND, A. (1965) *Dictionnaire inverse de la langue française*. The Hague: Mouton.

KAPFERER, B. (1969) Norms of the manipulation of relationships in a work context. In J. C. Mitchell (ed.) *Social networks in urban situations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 181-244 (cited in Milroy 1987a).

KROCH, A. S. (1978) Towards a theory of social dialect variation. *Language in Society* 7: 17-36.

LABOV, W. (1963) The social motivation of sound change. *Word* 19: 273-307.

LABOV, W. (1966) *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

LABOV, W. (1972a) *Language in the inner city: studies in the Black English vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

LABOV, W. (1972b) *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

LABOV, W. (1975) *What is a linguistic fact?* Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press. NewYork: Humanities Press.

LABOV, W. (1980) *Locating language in time and space*. New York: Academic Press.

LABOV, W. (1981) Field methods used by the project on linguistic change and variation. *Sociolinguistic Working Paper* 81. Austin, Texas: South Western Educational Development Laboratory.

LABOV, W. (1982) Building on empirical foundations. In W. Lehman and Y. Malkiel (eds.) *Perspectives on historical linguistics*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia : John Benjamins. 17-92.

LABOV, W. (1994) *Principles of linguistic change: internal factors*, (vol. 1). Oxford : Blackwell.

LABOV, W. (2001) *Principles of linguistic change : social factors*, (vol. 2). Oxford : Blackwell.

LADEFOGED, P. (1971) *Preliminaries to linguistic phonetics*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

LADEFOGED, P. and MADDIESON, I. (1996) *The sounds of the world's languages*. Oxford: Blackwell.

LAKS, B. (1977) Contribution empirique à l'analyse socio-différentielle de la chute de /r/ dans les groupes consonantiques finals. *Langue Française* 34: 109-125.

LAKS, B. (1980) Différentiation linguistique et différentiation sociale: quelques problèmes de sociolinguistique française. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Paris VIII-Vincennes.

LAKS, B. (1983) Langage et pratiques sociales. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 46: 73-97.

LANLY, A. (1962). *Le français d'Afrique du Nord*. Paris : Bordas.

LASS, R. (1984) *Phonology: an introduction to basic concepts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LAVANDERA, B. (1981) Sociolinguistics. In R. Posner and J. N. Green (eds) *Trends in Romance linguistics and philology. 2: Synchronic Romance Linguistics*. The Hague: Mouton. 129-228.

LEFEBVRE, A. (1991) *Le français de la région lilloise*. Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne.

LENNIG, M. (1978) Acoustic measurement of linguistic change: the modern Paris vowel system. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania.

LÉON, P. (1966) *La prononciation du français standard*. Paris: Didier.

LÉON, P. (1973) Modèle standard et système vocalique du français populaire. In G. Rondeau (ed.) *Contributions canadiennes à la linguistique appliquée*. Montréal: Centre Educatif et Culturel. 55-79.

LÉON, P. (1993) *Précis de phonostylistique: parole et expressivité*. Paris: Nathan.

LEPOUTRE, D. (1997) *Coeur de banlieue: codes, rites et languages*. Paris: Editions Odile Jacob.

LINDAU, M. (1985) The story of /r/. In V. Fromkin (ed.) *Phonetic linguistics: essays in honor of Peter Ladefoged*. Orlando: Academic Press. 157-68.

LIOGIER, E. (2002) Quelles approches théoriques pour la description du français parlé par les jeunes des cités ? In *Argots et argotologie, La linguistique* 38. 41-52.

LODGE, R. A. (1989) Speakers' perceptions of non-standard vocabulary in French. *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*. 105 (5/6): 427-44.

LODGE, R. A. (1993) *French: from dialect to standard*. London: Routledge.

MACAULAY, R. K. S. (1977) Language, *social class and education: a Glasgow study*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

MALDEREZ, I. (2000) L'analyse de la variation phonétique de corpus en français parlé: problème méthodologiques. In H. Andersen and A. B. Hansen (eds.) *Le français parlé: corpus et résultats*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press. 65-87.

MALÉCOT, A. (1975) The glottal stop in French. *Phonetica* 31: 51-63.

MARCEAU, J. (1977*) Class and status in France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MARCHAL, A. (1980) L'affrication de /t/ et /d/ en français de Montréal. *Travaux de l'Institut Phonétique d'Aix* 7: 9-99.

MARCHAND, B. (1993) *Paris, histoire d'une ville: XIXe-XXe siècle*. Points: Histoire. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

MARCUSE, P. (1982) Développement urbain et crise fiscale aux Etats-Unis. In M. Imbert and P. H. Chombart de Lauwe (eds.). 153-78.

MARTINET, A. (1945) *La prononciation du français contemporain*. Paris: Librairie Droz.

MARTINET, A. (1958) "C'est jeuli, le Mareuc!". *Romance Philology* 11: 345-55. (Reprinted in A. Martinet 1974).

MARTINET, A. (1962) *A functional view of language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MARTINET, A. (1970) Les deux A du français. In T. G. S. Combe and P. Rickard *The French language: studies presented to Lewis Charles Harmer*. London: Harrap. 115-122.

MARTINET, A. (1974) *Le français sans fard*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

MÉLA, V. (1988) Parler verlan : règles et usages. *Langage et Société* 45: 47-72.

MÉLA, V. (1991) Verlan ou le langage miroir. *Langages* 101: 73-94.

MENANTEAU, J. (1994) *Les banlieues*. Paris: Le Monde, Editions Marabout.

MERABTI, N. (1991) Pratiques bilingues et réseaux personnels de communication : enquête auprès d'un groupe d'adolescents issus de l'immigration algérienne dans la région grenobloise. Unpublished PhD thesis, Université Stendhal Grenoble III.

MERLE, P. (1997) *Argot, verlan et tchatches*. Les Essentiels Milan. Toulouse : Les Editions Milan.

METTAS, O. (1979) *La prononciation parisienne : aspects phoniques d'un sociolecte parisien (du Faubourg Sait-Germain à La Muette)*. Paris : SELAF (special issue 8).

MILBURN, P. (1992) Les problèmes des jeunes dans le grand ensemble de La Courneuve en vue d'actions de prévention. Rapport 2. Association RESSCOM. Conseil Général de Seine-Saint-Denis, Aide Sociale à l'Enfance.

MILROY, J. and MILROY, L. (1985) Linguistic change, social network and speaker innovation. *Journal of Linguistics* 21: 339-84.

MILROY, J. and MILROY, L. (1992) Social network and social class: toward an integrated sociolinguistic model. *Language in Society* 21: 1-26.

MILROY, L. (1987a) *Language and social networks* (2nd edn.). Oxford: Blackwell.

MILROY, L. (1987b). *Observing and analysing natural language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

MILROY, L., MILROY, J., DOCHERTY G.J., FOULKES, P. and WALSHAW, D. (1999) Phonological variation and change in contemporary English: evidence from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Derby. *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa* 8: 35-36.

MONSEN, R. B. and ENGEBRETSON A. M. (1977) Study of variations in the male and female glottal wave. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 62: 981-93.

MORSLY, D. (1983) Diversité phonologique du français parlé en Algérie: réalisation de /r/. *Langue Française* 60: 65-72.

OSTIGUY, L. and TOUSIGNANT, C. (1993) *Le français québécois: normes et usages*. Montréal: Guérin Universitaire.

PASSY, P. (1913) *The sounds of the French language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

PERETZ, C. (1977) Les voyelles orales à Paris dans la dynamique des âges et de la société. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Paris V-Sorbonne.

PICKLES, M. W. (2001) La mère de mon père est née à Grenade. In Hintze et al. (eds.). 128-47.

PICKLES, M. W. (forthcoming) Phonological aspects of the French of teenagers in Perpignan. PhD Thesis in progress, Lancaster University.

PIERRE-ADOLPHE, P. et al. (1998) *Tchatche de banlieue*. Paris: Mille et Une Nuits.

PINSON, D. (1992*) Des banlieues et des villes: dérive et eurocompétition*. Collection Portes Ouvertes. Paris: Les Editions Ouvrières.

PLÉNAT, M. (1995). Une approche prosodique de la morphologie du verlan. *Lingua* 95, 1-3: 97-129.

POOLEY, T. (1996) *Chtimi: the urban vernaculars of France.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

POOLEY, T. (2001) By their a's shall ye know them: variety contact and changing perceptions in the life cycle of two northern features. In Hintze et al. (eds.). 165-95

POPE, M. K. (1952) *From Latin to modern French, with especial consideration of Anglo-Norman.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

POSNER, R. (1996) *The Romance languages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

POSNER, R. (1997) *Linguistic change in French.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

PRICE, G. (1984) *The French language: present and past.* London: Grant and Cutler.

REICHSTEIN, R. (1960) Etudes des variations sociales et géographiques des faits linguistiques. *Word* 16/1: 55-95.

ROMAINE, S. (1984) *The language of children and adolescents.* Oxford: Blackwell.

ROMANO, A. (2003) Etude phonétique de quelques éléments des pratiques langagières intra-groupales de jeunes grenoblois. In J. Billiez et al. (eds.). 44-49.

ROSSET, T. (1911) *Les origines de la prononciation moderne.* Paris: Colin.

SANKOFF, G. BLONDEAU, H. and CHARITY, A. (2001) Individual roles in a real-time change: Montreal (r → R). In H. Van de Velde R. van Hout (eds.). 141-58.

SANTERRE, L. (1979) Le R apical montréalais en régression rapide. *Prothée.* 117-32.

SANTERRE, L. (1981) Matrices phonologiques individuelles et variables. In D. Sankoff and H. Cedergren (eds.) *Variation omnibus*. Edmonton, Alberta: Linguistic Research Inc. 209-114.

SCHMIDT, V. A. (1990) *1949- Democratizing France : the political and administrative history of decentralization*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

SÉGUIN, B. and TEILLARD, F. (1996) *Les céfrans parlent aux Français*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

SOULIGNAC, F. (1993) *La banlieue parisienne: cent cinquante ans de transformation.* Paris: La Documentation Française.

STRAKA, G. (1952) La prononciation parisienne: ses divers aspects. *Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasboug*. 10/ 5: 212-25, 10/6: 239-53.

STRAKA, G. (1965) *Album phonétique*. Québec: Presses de l'Université de Laval.

TAYLOR, J. (1996) *Sound evidence: speech communities and social accents in Aix-en-Provence*. Berne: Peter Lang.

TÉTRAULT, C. (forthcoming) Adolescent subculture and language practices in a French cité. In J. Sherzer, D. Sherzer, and K. Blyth (eds.) *On-line Proceedings of the 'Language and (Im)migration in France, Mexico and the United States' Conference*, France-UT Institute : University of Texas, Austin.

THIAM, N. (1995) Un vrai 'borain': aspects sociolinguistiques du français parlé dans le borinage. *Langage et Société* 74: 71-92.

THIBAULT, P. (1983) Equivalence et Grammaticalisation. Unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Montréal (cited in A. Coveney 1996).

THRASHER, F. (1963) *The Gang*. (1st edition 1927). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

THUROT, C. (1966) *De la prononciation française.* (Vol. 2). First published 1881-3. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints.

TOUSIGNANT, C. (1987) *La variation sociolinguistique: modèle québécois et méthode d'analyse*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

TOUSIGNANT, C. SANKOFF, D. and SANTERRE, L. (1989) New results on Montreal French /r/. In R. Fasold and D. Shiffrin (eds.). 85-94.

TRASK, R. L. (1997) *A Student's dictionary of language and linguistics*. London : Arnold.

TRIMAILLE, C. (1999a) De la planète Mars...Codes, langages, identités : étude sociolinguistique de textes de rap marseillais. Mémoire de DEA, Université Stendhal Grenoble III.

TRIMAILLE, C. (1999b) Le rap français ou la différence mise en langues. In J. Billiez (ed.) *Les parlers urbains*. Lidil 19. Grenoble: Lidilem. 80-98.

TRUDGILL, P. (1974) *The social differentiation of English in Norwich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TRUDGILL, P. (1978*) Sociolinguistic patterns in British English*. London: Arnold.

TRUDGILL, P. (1988) Norwich revisited: recent linguistic changes in an English urban dialect. *English World-Wide* 9: 33-49.

TRUDGILL, P. (1989) Contact and isolation in linguistic change. In L. E. Breivik and E. H. Jahr (eds.) *Language change: contributions to the study of its causes*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

TRUDGILL, P. (1995a) Dialect typology: isolation, social network and phonological structure. In G. R. Guy, C. Feagin, D. Schriffrin, J. Baugh (eds.) *Towards a social science of language: papers in honor of William Labov. Variation and change in language and society* 1. 3-22.

TRUDGILL, P. (1995b) *Sociolinguistics: an introduction to language and society*, (rev. ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

VAN DE VELDE, H. and VAN HOUT, R. (2001*) R-atics: sociolinguistic, phonetic and phonological characteristics of /r/*. Etudes et Travaux. Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles.

VEILLARD-BARON, H. (1996) *Les banlieues*. Paris: Flammarion.

VERSTRAETEN, B. and VAN DE VELDE, H. (eds.) (2001) Socio-geographical variation of /r/ in standard Dutsch. In H. Van de Velde and R. van Hout (eds.). 45-62.

VINAY, J.-P. (1950) Bout de la langue ou fond de la gorge? *French Review* 23/6: 489-98.

WALKER, D. C. (1984) The *pronunciation of Canadian French*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

WALTER, H. (1976) *La dynamique des phonèmes dans le lexique français contemporain*. Paris: France Expansion.

WALTER, H. (1982) *Enquête phonologique et variétés régionales du français*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

WATT, D. J. L. and MILROY, L. (1999) Patterns of variation and change in three Tyneside vowels: is this dialect levelling? In P. Foulkes and G. J. Docherty (eds.). 25-46.

WIESE, R. (2001) The unity and variation of (German) /r/. In H. Van de Velde and R. van Hout (eds.). 10-7.