

## Minority Report

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There is bias in all science. Some forms of bias are universal across disciplines, and some are specific problems for specific disciplines. Here we propose an attempt to assess some sources of bias which may be effecting studies in the field of language variation and change (LVC).

The literature on variation and change in native varieties of English is wide-ranging, but tends to be clustered around particular varieties [Trudgill and Watts \(2002\)](#). Even Wells' [Wells and Wells \(1982\)](#) volume on Accents of the British Isles has only one chapter on the entirety of the North of England, with specific sections on only Merseyside and Tyneside English. This paper sets out a novel methodology aiming to understand some of the possible biases present in our approach to researching native varieties of English.

The proposed research question is: which of the following factors affect a variety's likelihood of being studied?

- geographical distance from a university with a Linguistics department
- presence of a locally focussed corpus
- association with higher or lower social/income status
- whether the area it is associated with is suburban, metropolitan, or rural

To answer this question, systematic literature searches will be used to estimate the frequencies of studies on different native English varieties (dependent variable). Independent variables will be measured using systematic online searches and online geographical measurements. Studies returned from searches will be assessed for their relevance, and only studies published between 1982 [Wells and Wells \(1982\)](#) and 2019, and studies studying sociophonetic change in apparent time, will be included.

We present this as a methods paper hoping to open a discussion of bias in LVC research, and that others will adapt our methods for studies of bias in research on other language groups.

## References

- Trudgill, P. and Watts, R. J. (2002), *Alternative histories of English*, Routledge.
- Wells, J. C. and Wells, J. C. (1982), *Accents of english*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press Cambridge.