

## 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 affecting studies in the field of language variation and change (LVC). A consequence of such bias is that the literature on variation and change tends to be clustered around particular varieties [Trudgill and Watts \(2002\)](#). Bias like this can lead to gaps in the data and hence casts doubt on broader conclusions drawn about the principles of variation and change. This paper sets out a novel methodology aiming to understand some of the possible biases present in our approach to researching specifically varieties of English spoken in England.

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 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, 1982](#)) and 2019, and studies studying sociophonetic change in apparent time, will be included.

We are aware that even in these questions we are focussing on a very small subset of LVC research, but present this as a methods paper hoping to open a discussion of bias in the field in general, and that others will adapt our methods for studies of bias in other related research.

## References

Trudgill, P. and Watts, R. J. (2002), *Alternative histories of English*, Routledge.

Wells, J. C. (1982), *Accents of english*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press Cambridge.