CHAPTER CONTENTS

11 Speech Community: Reflections Upon Communication

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From Hymes (1962) onward, communication scholars, anthropologists, linguists sociolinguists, and scholars in ethnic studies have not only used the term *speech communities*, but have extended its significance. The purpose of this review is to examine the ways various authors have defined and used the term, in order to understand its evolution Speech community boundaries have been defined by demographic features, such as place or space, shared language use, and shared meanings. Each condition is explored and analyzed in turn. The review raises four issues: Labels used to describe speech community refer usually to specific demographic features of the community itself, rather than features of communication; the composition of a speech community is usually defined a priori; the idea of a speech community as a homogeneous entity does not exist; and researchers often focus on member codes as the key component of a speech community Given these issues, consideration should be given to refining speech community as a unit of analysis so that it remains a meaningful construct to study.

> No one would claim that there is a one-to-one relationship between languages and social systems, yet we continue to think of speech communities as discrete, culturally homogeneous groups whose members speak closely related varieties of a single language (Gumperz, 1969/1971, p. 230).

Communication scholars examine what people say to one another and the consequences. When they seek to examine the patterned ways people communicate, then they focus either on universal communication use or on particular ways that specific groups of people use communication. The latter focus is often referred to as cultural, intercultural, or cross-cultural communication. The ways specific groups communicate is also the specific purview of researchers in the ethnography of communication tradition. Those who conduct research in this

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tradition vary in how much they emphasize the group composition itself over the practices examined. Even though many make the claim that how people communicate indicates who they are (e.g., group identities), there are variations among ethnography of communication (ethnocomm) reports regarding how the identity of the group under investigation is defined. That is, how one delineates who is being studied is still a pressing research question.

Fitch (1994) has argued persuasively to consider ethnography of communication as a productive way to examine traditional areas within the discipline, such as interpersonal communication. In the past 10 years, several researchers have examined interpersonal communication through an ethnography of communication perspective. The boundaries implied by the term *speech community*, often considered to be the basic unit of analysis, have surprisingly not been used in many studies. To take Fitch's (1994) call to include an ethnocomm perspective seriously, and even extend it to other traditional areas within the discipline (e.g., organizational communication, rhetoric and public debate, the area formerly known as mass media, or other mediated forms of communication) is to pause to consider the starting place of this research.

This review comes in the midst of several ongoing debates and tensions: between scholars regarding the questions of who counts as a member of a community and who remains outside of those boundaries, and between those who argue for the cohesiveness of any particular community and those who argue for recognizing the multiplicity of memberships that any particular member of a community can claim. Within these two camps, scholars also find different ways of conceptualizing communication. In the first, they examine communication rules and norms and foreground the codes through which participants come to make sense of their habitual actions. In the second camp, multiple identities constructed by multiple labels for who one is and what one does are foregrounded. Here communication itself is often understood to be a vehicle for expressing these differences.

Given these tensions, it behooves scholars to examine a unit of analysis that is often associated with the stable sense of a group. This unit of analysis is speech community and has a history of use by communication and other language scholars. By examining the ways that researchers have employed the term, one begins to explore the very tension between commonality and differences that is a central concern within the communication discipline. Delineating a particular moment in time about which to make a meaningful claim about a group of people is challenging because communication itself is understood as a living process that never quite seems to sit still.

Needless to say, the literature about speech communities has broad-reaching implications for the field of communication. From Hymes (1962) onward, many of the journals in the field have not only used the term, but extended its significance. The idea of speech communities has been shaped further by writings in other fields, particularly linguistics, sociolinguistics (Bowie, 2001; Lo, 1999; Milroy, 2002), anthropology (Hill, 1992; Kroskrity, 1993), and ethnic studies (Chaston, 1996; Dyers, 1999; Saohatse, 1998; Smitherman, 1997), to name a few.

This review examines the ways communication scholars have defined the speech community under investigation. This examination will yield two outcomes: a compilation of studies that demonstrate the attention given to community boundaries, as well as a refinement of the term itself as it has been used by a community of scholars.

The utility of speech community as a unit of analysis is indicated by the way researchers presently report about its function in their analyses. Some of the questions that will be addressed have both theoretical and methodological implications for examining communication practices within communities: (a) Are researchers employing the term speech community as solely a data collection technique? (b) Are researchers using the term theoretically and not methodologically? and (c) Are researchers using the notion of speech community as a predefined research tool primarily rather than discovering how members of communities label and enact community?

This review will not catalog all studies that claim to be ethnographies or ethnographies of communication in order to try to determine who is being studied. Only authors who claim to be speaking about a speech community explicitly in their title or article's key words have been chosen. Some studies that do not fit these search criteria have been included because they are programmatic pieces, or the topic under investigation is primarily a speech community.

It is important to characterize the way the term community is employed by communication researchers in general; therefore, a brief review of additional articles from communication journals that refer to community in their title or key words will be included. Within this group of articles, the current study inquires about the particular features that make this group a community. For example, when an author refers to the *Chicano community* or the *homosexual community,* what communication patterns are present that help the author make the claim that these groups of people are in fact communities? Further, what unifies or binds a group to suggest a sense of community? Finally, whereas an author may make research claims about a group that suggests that it constitutes a community, is it also the case that members of such groups self-identify as a particular type of community?

The search criteria described above yielded approximately 70 studies that have used the term speech community. In order for an item to be included, it met the following criteria: (a) The author characterized the group or target of study as a speech community; and (b) the author focused on one or more aspects of the language use of the speech community. Before undertaking a review of current literature, a chronological history of the term from some programmatic statements will be explicated.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF SPEECH COMMUNITY

Hymes (1962, 1964a, 1964b, 1972, 1974) is often cited as the founder of the project initially called ethnography of speaking and subsequently refined to

ethnography of communication. The cornerstone of ethnographic studies was, and remains, the group of speakers described as a speech community. Hymes (1964a) gave credit to Bloomfield for his comparative method and early descriptions of the term speech community. Bloomfield (1933) defined a speech community broadly as "a group of people who interact by means of speech" (as cited in Murray, pp. 123–142). Murray (1998) described Bloomfield's definition as including all members who speak a language, such as Russian, while noting the difficulty that bilingualism brings to the boundaries of any such speech community.

The group of speakers itself primarily composed the speech community. While drawing on the way that the notion of speech community, and similar terms, were then employed, Hymes (1964a, 1964b) sought to create a more specific definition for the purposes of a "new project" that combined linguistics with anthropology. The idea that ethnography of communication should take the community as its starting point, rather than "linguistic form, a given code, or speech itself" (p. 3), was an argument that Hymes (1964b) needed to make in order to draw attention away from research in linguistics primarily that makes language as central and focuses instead on the anthropological notions of a group of people that *situates* and makes *meaningful* any language practice. It was in this way that Hymes (1964b) argued that communication, rather than simply language, was the most important focus.

Hymes (1964a) cited Gumperz (1962) as being among users of the familiar term linguistic community. Gumperz (1962/1971) defined a linguistic community as

> a social group which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication. Linguistic communities may consist of small groups bound together by face-to-face contact or may cover large regions, depending on the level of abstraction we wish to achieve. (p. 101)

Gumperz (1962/1971) is recognized as having employed a specific definition of linguistic community; however, in his own article, Gumperz (1964/1971) frequently used the two terms speech community and linguistic community interchangeably.

Hymes (and Gumperz) wanted to draw attention to the way that sociality and language were related. This refocusing became not so much about making universal claims about a language's speakers but rather became a way for investigators to examine how different groups who use a similar language are able to use language distinctly. These distinctions were both a way to mark the group itself (e.g., who counts as a member is someone who can use language in such a way) as well as to mark the particular ways of language in use. A speech community, according to Gumperz (1968/1971), is comprised of human aggregates who regularly and frequently use shared signs and are set apart from other human aggregates by their particular use of language. Previously Gumperz (1964/1971) had included "over a significant span of time" (p. 151) in this basic definition. The focus is on language use, rather than language rules per se. Hymes (1972) described the

speech community as comprised of people who share "rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (p. 54).

Another significant component of the definition pertained to the group of speakers themselves. Hymes (1964b) noted that speech communities are "dynamic" and "complex" rather than "monolithically uniform" (p. 5). Hymes (1964b) stated: "[W]hat seems like variation and deviation from the standpoint of a single linguistic code, emerge as structure and pattern from the standpoint of the communicative economy of the group in whose habits the code exists" (p. 3).

Following Hymes' (1962) programmatic essay, speech community has continued to retain its central position of the ethnography of communication. Hymes (1964b) argued for a change of emphasis from what had been traditionally examined within linguistics and anthropology to a recognition that "the place, boundaries, and organization, of language, and other communicative means in a community . . . be taken as problematic" (p. 11). Further, Hymes (1964b) wanted his new research program to focus on the "cultural consequences of a community" (p. 12). He stated that

> the starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communicative habits of a community in their totality, determining what counts as communicative events, and as their components, and conceiving no communicative behavior as independent of the set framed by some setting or implicit question. (p. 13)

This "totality of communicative behavior" was echoed in Gumperz (1964/1971) to distinguish his approach from homogeneous language research. To highlight the variety of speech within a given system, Gumperz (1966/1971) defined a "linguistic or verbal repertoire" as "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed within the community in the course of socially significant interaction. Repertoires in turn can be regarded as consisting of speech varieties, each associated with particular kinds of social relationships" (p. 182).

In seeking out patterned ways of speaking, Hymes (1974) sought to create a systematic methodology for comparing different speech communities. He believed that unless researchers made note of similar characteristics across groups by using comparable means to study them, it would be difficult if not impossible to make comparisons between these groups and specific cultures.

The framework Hymes (1972, 1974) developed was based upon the theoretical premise that, to understand general features of language, researchers should systematically compare how its different components are used in specific contexts. The examination of situated language use allowed for the unearthing of patterns that otherwise would not be readily identified within some of the more traditional frameworks. Within his framework, Hymes (1974) stated that "the starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communication conduct of a community" (p. 9). He proposed basic units that can be applied to the communication styles of a variety of different cultures (Hymes, 1974). The framework included several social

units (e.g., speech community, speech situation, speech event, communicative act, communicative style, and ways of speaking); however, speech community was the first and primary unit of analysis.

Arguing for a more robust use of the term speech community, Hymes (1964a) maintained that often a speech community is assumed by the researcher. Further, he stated that when the features of a particular community's composition appear very obvious, or homogenous, perhaps that community may not seem to warrant the rigor of defining its community boundaries because they are taken for granted. The problem with these unlabeled, assumed groups may occur later, as people question the distinctions within the group, or the political reasons for making such an assumed grouping (e.g., such arguments have been waged against using the term *Americans* as a label for everyone living in the United States because of the diversity of groups within this population). These arguments led Labov, Cohen, Robins, and Lewis (1968) to undertake research that explicitly examined different forms of spoken English in the largest, most diverse city in the United States, New York. By labeling some of the speech they encountered nonstandard English (NSE), Labov et al. demonstrated that language use, even when considering the same language, is not as homogeneous or standard as was often assumed.

Within this early research program, the definition of speech community included a group of speakers—who shared situated communication practices that are made meaningful by examining language in use and its socializing function—and, although variation may exist within any given speech community, the language practices themselves, which have cultural consequences that can only be compared by using an analytically rigorous framework.

Thereafter, three distinct strands of research emerged from these early theorists. Roughly speaking, Hymes's work led to ethnocomm (and education research not covered here), Gumperz led to sociolinguistic research, and Labov (1964) led to more linguistic research. After Hymes (1962) began the program of ethnography of speaking, with the primary unit of analysis as speech community, there emerged a number of researchers who heeded his call and developed research studies that focused on this unit.

Speech Community in Communication Studies

Within the field of communication, Philipsen's (1975) landmark essay about Teamsterville in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* ushered in the speech community unit of analysis and the program of ethnography of communication. In this essay, Philipsen (1975) described a speech community in "Hymesian terms" as those who are "privy to understandings shared by members" and who "have access to the culture" (p. 14). This description focused on the way members of a community share common resources. By beginning the report with a description of the speech community, Philipsen (1975) echoed Hymes's and Gumperz's call to focus on communication practices within a situated community. By drawing together particular ways of speaking within this "Teamsterville" speech community, Philipsen (1975) [illegible] communication to community

The most prominent features of the speech community as described by Philipsen (1975) included gendered ways of speaking (e.g., speaking like a man) and the location or places where such speech was more likely to occur versus the places where it was deemed socially inappropriate for men's speech. Philipsen (1992) has since described the way by which he came to understand a speech community as not only a place, but a place alive with significance and meaning for its participants.

> When I first entered Teamsterville, the community appeared to me as merely a series of *unconnected streets, buildings, people and activities*. By the time I left it over three years later, it was, for me, not just a setting, but a scene, a place suffused with activity, with meaning, with significance, not only for me, but more importantly for those who had grown up there and those who lived there permanently. As a student of community, what eventually struck me most about Teamsterville and my experiences in it was that one way to think about this community was as a *speech community, a universe of discourse with a finely organized, distinctive pattern of meaning and action*" (p. 4). [italics added]

Philipsen's (1992) research emphasized how a speech community is a unit of analysis that is important both to the researcher and to its members or participants as a keenly felt and lived-in place. What began for the researcher as a geographic location, or a site of investigation, became meaningful through people's descriptions of it, their manifest relation with it. Group identity was based upon the places members frequented—their homes, their streets—and it was these different aspects of location that were embodied in everyday conversations. The meaningfulness of the term speech community relates to both the way that researchers define the patterned use of language as a speech community as well as the bounded sense of what counts as important to the people in that community. A speech community, then, is clearly not defined solely or even primarily in terms of its geographic boundaries. As Philipsen (1992) stated, it is when places are spoken of as meaningful in a consistent and patterned way by a group that the interaction between geography and speech community becomes intertwined.

Philipsen (1992) stated that he was drawing upon Hymes (1974) when he described his project as one that considered speech communities to be comprised of diverse patterns that form a recognizable system. These patterns, Philipsen (1992) believed, are easiest to recognize when one steps into a different society and hears sounds that are not readily accessible from one's own speech community.

For Philipsen, then, the very term speech community was descriptive of the particular patterned ways that communities use communication. Further, Philipsen (1992) included in his definition of speech community structured language practices. Even though he incorporated diverse speaking instances, he argued that, combined, they formed a system for organizing the structure of speech production. In this definition an important distinction is made between a social community and a speech community. Seemingly similar in many ways, they also contain important differences.

Philipsen (1992) pointed out that "[i]n every speech community there is a social

speech activity of a community. And there is a cultural ideology—that is, a system of beliefs and prejudices about communication" (p. 13). Philipsen also addressed the way that people make sense of speech as further refinement of the idea of a speech community. This sense making also seems to be related to shared beliefs within any such speech community.

According to Philipsen (1992), it is also important to distinguish between a culture and social community. He defined culture as "a system of meanings, an organized complex of symbols, definitions, premises, and rules" (p. 14). Philipsen stressed that what makes a culture is not a geographic location but a shared code. For Philipsen, then, a community "consists of a group of people who are bound together in some relation of shared sentiment and mutual responsibility" (p. 14). The code itself is made meaningful by the community that enacts it. The code itself both constrains and enables communicative action.

For Philipsen, then, speech communities radiated meanings following Hymes. They were comprised of members who shared access to culture, common resources, and ways of speaking. Speech communities could begin to be defined by place, but that sense of place became deeper as an investigator began to understand the patterned practices that comprised the social system of members' beliefs, also known as their cultural code.

Following in Philipsen's Footsteps

Following the line of research begun by their mentor, Carbaugh and Fitch have applied the ideas of the speech community concept to a broader range of groups as well as extended its use. Both in theory and methodology, these researchers have commented on the relationship between communication and speech communities.

Based on Philipsen's ideas of community members sharing a common culture, Carbaugh (1993, 1996) juxtaposed community with notions of the individual. In his book review in *QJS*, Carbaugh (1993) described the work of four ethnographies of communication, Basso (1990), Goodwin (1990), Katriel (1991), and Johnstone (1990). He discussed the way in which the authors decided whether or not to position the group under investigation as a speech community. He suggested that each author under review investigated "situated communication practice in its local place, explicating the general way in which communication is patterned by a social group, within its own context" (p.101). According to Carbaugh (1993), the social group under investigation by Basso was the "Western Apache;" for Katriel it was "contemporary Israel" and Israeli children; for Goodwin, the research focused on a "particular speech community of peers" (p. 106) that was designated as the "Maple Street children's group and their neighborhood of inner-city Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" (p. 106). Finally, Carbaugh described Johnstone's speech community as "Fort Wayne people." In each of these communities, communication practices are examined.

Carbaugh's attention to the communication patterns presented by each author, such as Johnstone's description of the connection between stories and places for

constructing personal and communal identities, marked the importance of relating the speech community to its members' practices. By reiterating Goodwin's recommendation to ground communication inquiry in "social groups, speech communities, or peer groups" (p.108), Carbaugh (1993) reified its importance.

In other work, Carbaugh (1996) described social relationships as part of the context for communication, but did not specify the boundaries of a speech community. Instead, his research attended to shared patterns of speech on a cultural level. Following Philipsen (1992), Carbaugh (1996) found within the project of ethnography of communication a way to talk about various tensions felt by individuals acting within particular cultural scenes. Carbaugh (1993, 1996) does not specifically use the term speech community in his own ethnographic investigations. He created instead another term, cultural discourses, and described these as, at least partially, related to the practices of a community (see Carbaugh, Gibson, & Milburn, 1997).

By contrast, Fitch (1994) argued for the use of ethnography of speaking in interpersonal communication research and highlighted the value recognizing features that distinguish speech communities bring to interpersonal studies. To combat long-held assumptions of universality, Fitch (1994) detailed the specific features of what constitutes a speech community. She drew specifically on the idea that "each cultural system should be studied on its own terms to discover the ways of speaking that are meaningful within the speech community" (p. 115). Within each community, members use shared symbols to communicate. Fitch's (1994) claim that "meaning is negotiated through language use within a speech community" (p. 118) is significant in that meaning is not already assumed, but constructed through the process of speaking. This idea was a departure from Philipsen's description, whereby shared meaning is an assumed part of the speech community's resources for interpreting specific symbols. The unifying features in Fitch's (1994) definition of speech community include "shared valued ways of speaking" (p. 118) and the ability to negotiate meaning.

On the other hand, she drew on Philipsen (1992) when she claimed that "the relationship of persons to a speech community is a matter that may be empirically established by familiarity with, as well as use of, the ways of speaking that define the group" (Fitch, 1994, p. 119). In reality, not all research that purports to examine a speech community does this. Finally, Fitch (1994) highlighted two key features when discussing speech community: the material practices (i.e., discourse) and the "specific definition of members and boundaries of the social group(s) whose messages influence the perceptions and experiences of persons" (p. 130). These features are applied to and used as evidence of a speech community within communication studies.

More recently, Fitch (1999) has offered a compelling comparison among three groups of researchers, among them Hymes, Carbaugh, and Philipsen, who she claimed employ the term speech community in slightly different ways. Fitch (1999) argued that Hymes (1974) left the boundaries and membership of speech communities intentionally vague. She further asserted that as "the term *ethnography* has

been applied to an ever wider range of qualitative research" the types of groups or interactions that might be considered a speech community have little consistency. She outlined three definitions of what counts as a speech community:

> 1. A group of people whose members have contact with one another and through their interaction develop shared practices and symbols (the Hymesian view).
> 2. A network of people who have something significant in common (such as geographical location or age) and thus share a language space, but may have cleavages between them (such as race, class or gender) such that some members have no contact with some others (a sociological oriented view).
> 3. A string of people who share a symbolic code of speaking practices and meanings for those practices, although they may be separated by distance as well as race, class, gender, age, and so forth (a Philipsen/Katriel/Carbaugh view). (Fitch, 1999, p. 46).

Fitch (1999) established these distinctions in order to argue that an Internet listserv may count as a speech community, even if participants interact infrequently or never, because members brought "certain shared resources for interaction" to the list from which a "shared code might be constructed" (p. 47). The distinctions she made are useful for categorizing research about speech communities.

It is important to underscore that the boundaries of a speech community are frequently designated by researchers rather than delineated by the participants/members of such a community. This is one element Fitch's (1994, 1999) categorization of speech communities does not address. How people come to see themselves as members of any particular community and differentiate between their (or researchers') community as opposed to any other community is an area that has received scant attention in recent research on speech community. Increasingly important is research tracing the ways that participants label themselves as members of a particular community, describing the boundary conditions of such a community (often using geographic or container metaphors), and accounting for actions as occurring both within and for such a community, as well as those actions being held accountable from other delineated members of the community.

In order to address the literature that stems from this lineage, the following articles provide additional instances of the way to which speech communities are referred and how the concept is employed. This is similar to the method of finding a native term (Carbaugh, 1989b) within the ethnography of communication tradition. As such, how the authors represented the speech community they made claims about is the central concern of this next section. This method of investigation follows a model proposed by Katriel and Philipsen (1990), in which they determine what participants mean when they use the term communication. Along these lines, this review examines talk (or writing) about speech communities to determine what the authors mean when they use the term.

Instances of talk about speech community are cataloged following in the ethnography of communication research tradition. Once the instances of such communication are identified, their context, or in what realm they co-occur, helps

to determine the meaning(s) of such a term and its importance to the participants who use such language. If such a community identifies itself by such terms, then this community will be so labeled. When no such references were present, the label applied to this speech community follows norms proposed by the methodology itself. This may seem to indicate a tautological position; however, there are three reasons to employ such a methodology here. First, it seems the clearest way to validate or to legitimize a research method is in its use. Secondly, when one attends carefully to the method in an article, one refines its features for subsequent use. Thirdly, examining a body of literature for signs of a speech community, as Fitch (1994) called our attention to in her review, can help us to examine specific features to compare and evaluate future research.

CURRENT USES OF SPEECH COMMUNITY: PLACE, LABEL, CODE

Out of the current literature, roughly three categories seem to capture the use of the term. In the first of the three categories, the authors place primary emphasis on the place in which their study was undertaken. Most often, place is described as a geographic location, such as a country, region, or municipality, or place is described as a physical location such as a front stoop (such as Philipsen, 1975) or particular building. The second category includes articles that refer mainly to the in-group labels given to the group. For these authors, the use of members' terms that connote their community is most important. The third group treats a speech community as comprised of a cultural code. In this set, the authors foreground the beliefs and values demonstrated in particular speaking practices. Each of these categories are defined and described below.

Place and Space

One of the unquestionable contributions to the definition of speech community made by Philipsen (1976) was the attention paid to participants' use of, and meaning attributed to, the spaces and places they frequent. Others have subsequently attended carefully to this feature in their examination of particular cultural groups (also see Carbaugh & Berry, 2001). How members use their spaces and places in meaningful ways is clearly tied to their sense of identity as a community. The next set of articles (Aleman, 2001; Braithwaite, 1997a; Saohatse, 1998; Shue & Beck, 2001; Tagliamonte & Hudson, 1999) call attention to the defining features of place for particular speech communities. The specifics of place are detailed to convey a sense of how place itself is made in, and makes meaningful, the communicative practices of each speech community.

In the first article, Shue and Beck (2001) focus on the importance of the physical space of the dance studio in creating the speech community. They described the environment or learning site of the classroom and dance studio. This context indicates the importance of the physical space, which remains an implicit component

of the speech community. For example, the dance instructors encouraged members to express freely their creativity and emotions by making suggestions about how to interpret each dance, and by addressing one another through family metaphors, such as little sister. The confidence of body image and self-expression, however, is often in conflict with messages present in the physical space of the studio, where wall-to-wall mirrors are often used as a means for evaluating how one looks and performs in relation to others.

Aleman (2001) also took seriously the concept of place in the definition of speech community in an analysis of a retirement community. She used ethnography of communication as her framework for conducting participant-observation research. In defining speech communities, she suggested that public spaces were a defining feature of the particular speech community under investigation. Given this definition, the author employed the speech community concept to describe the relationship between residents and the physical space of a hotel in which they lived, focusing on their use of public and private space areas. The author clearly related a way of speaking, in this case described as complaining, as it occurred in relation to the space (e.g., dining halls) and the meaning that the practice of complaining enacted, such as loss of control over surroundings and the strain of social living.

Saohatse (1998) uses the term speech community as it referred to the talk that occurred within the physical setting of a hospital. As this talk emerged in multiple languages, the implication was that a speech community is comprised of those who participate in interaction regardless of whether they share a way of speaking. That participants shared institutional tasks included in giving and receiving care became the key component of a speech community for this author. These shared practices in the hospital, then, indicated the presence of a speech community. The author also discussed the diverse composition of languages present in the larger, geographic community, which would seem to conflict with the hospital community because the patients were drawn from this region. The common experience of being in a hospital, however, facilitated communication because the relationship among members is so task oriented.

Several authors have described much larger physical boundaries of a speech community. For instance, a country was the situated place that bound members for Matsumura (2001). He suggested that investigators examine linguistic competence in one's home country before being immersed in a second language, or target, speech community. On the other hand, Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999) discussed the limitations of countries as significant boundaries of speech communities. They suggested that it is the demographic category of age that binds members more firmly to a speech community, where a particular style of speaking extends geographic limits. Similarly, Dubois and Melancon (1997) argued that physical region cannot be used solely to define a speech community. Additionally, Braithwaite (1997a) described how the speaking patterns of one Native American tribe transcended the boundaries of a particular community college and extended to the broader, tribal cultural practices.

Even though it is often the case that features of a particular space or place are significant and meaningful to participants, there are also several instances that demonstrate how speech community membership transcends place. Several researchers begin with a geographical or physical location as their primary means for identifying a speech community. Some reflect more on the relationship between the physical location and the speaking practices of the group in question more than others.

An emerging line of investigation has focused on the economic conditions of the participants. For instance, when pinpointing the features of the speech community under investigation, Linnes (1998) began with a geographic location of the city of Houston, but then further refined it to a particular neighborhood in the city. Next, the idea of participants' socioeconomic status is foregrounded as participants are described as part of the middle-class community. Additional evidence is found in the work of Huspeck and Kendall (1991), who described the lumber industrial workers, and Huspeck (1994), who described the working class community of the Pacific Northwest.

Another aspect of the space/place paradigm is the way ethnicity and race are described and situated in geographic locales. For instance, Chaston, (1996) described the Chicano speech community comprised of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Linnes (1998) included race in his description of a speech community who demonstrated the importance of talking Black or talking White depending upon the topic of conversation. Linnes then compared this to another speech community residing in the same city, the German community comprised of bilingual German-English speakers.

Within this set of articles, the prominent reference to speech community has been that of place or space. The physical or geographic region of speakers not only describes a prominent feature of a speech community, it is also the primary way some speech communities create their sense of identity and community. Additional features of these speech communities include economic opportunities (or lack thereof) as well as ethnic features of members that are frequently described as bound to a place.

Researcher Labeling of Speech Communities

Even though the main feature of a speech community discussed thus far has been the place or geographic location of participants, these boundaries have been most frequently delineated by researchers rather than members themselves (see Dubois & Melancon, 1997, for an exception). There are a variety of researchers (e.g., Baumann, 1996; Fought, 1999; Jacobs, 1998; Milburn, 2002; and Smitherman, 1997) who are taking very seriously the labels that members give to their own communities. These researchers use member labels as the prominent feature of their descriptions of the speech community.

Smitherman (1997), for example, referred to the hip hop nation, which she claimed specifies urban youth culture that is mostly Black but also includes Latinos. She also uses the labels African American speech community and Black speech

community to refer to the same speech community. The distinctions, however, became somewhat blurred as she referred to hip hop nation as part of the larger Black speech community when focusing on the linguistic practices employed by members. These practices also have various labels, including African American language (AAL), Black English, African American vernacular English (see Labov et al., 1968, and Linnes, 1998, above), and Ebonics. With these various labels, the speech practices of this speech community functioned both as a resistant language and as a linguistic bond of the culture (Smitherman, 1997). She stated: "As we move to the 21st century, it is clear that African America continues to constitute itself as a distinct speech community, with its own linguistic rules and sociolinguistic norms of interaction" (Smitherman, 1997, p. 9). Even though Smitherman described various labeling practices, she did not discuss how the various researcher-generated labels were used by participants or informed their communicative practices.

In their article about the Cajun community, Dubois and Melancon (1997) described the difficulty of defining the Cajun community based on the old categories of geography, race, religion, ancestry, region, or surname. In this article, the authors cited Labov primarily for his definition of speech community. They explained that Labov (1966, 1969, 1972a, 1972b) "showed that a speech community is defined through any homogenous usage of forms and elements" (p. 64). They also refer to the way that Hymes (1972, 1974) "added" the notion that members share "strong feelings of belonging to a local territory" (p. 64). Further, these authors recognized the various ways speech community has been employed in other sociolinguistic research: from groups that share common ways of speaking to groups that interact within a geographic area.

The definition of a true Cajun or one who can claim membership in the Cajun speech community was based upon the requirements that one either be fluent or semifluent in the Cajun language or have Cajun ancestry. By asking members directly about the labels they prefer and the requirements for membership, the authors were able to find some unique responses. For instance, Dubois and Melancon (1997) reported that "a few, largely younger respondents felt that the notion of a Cajun community consisted only of such abstractions as *la joie de vivre*" (italics in original, p. 87). Whereas the authors consider this phrase an abstraction, it also seems to indicate that there is a native term for being captured by the language. The idea that members of a particular community can self-identify how boundary conditions are made, rather than be defined by a team of researchers, is one of the most appealing conclusions of this work.

In her article about Chicano English, Fought (1999) explicitly discussed the idea that the community itself should define what features are relevant to consider it a speech community. Fought (1999) described the way that Eckert (1989) used the member terms *jocks* and *burnouts* as labels for their speech communities. She noted that researchers would not know about these labels unless they were discovered through ethnographic investigation. Fought (1999) then discussed the importance of gang membership for many groups (as far back as Labov), and particularly salient in the Los Angeles area under investigation. Initially paying particular

attention to member labels, the author nonetheless continued by describing her research as an examination of a minority community. Even though there are some inconsistencies with her use of member labels, Fought (1999) employed several native terms in her research. For instance, speech community members used the phrase "low income' to describe those members who live in apartments, as opposed to those who lived in houses. This member label referred back to the importance of place as well as economics as prominent features of the linguistic practices that define speech community.

Similarly, Jacobs (1998) discussed the use of "queer" among the lesbian and gay community of Toronto, Canada. The use of a particular label and the variety of reasons for the acceptance of the queer label is explored. When Jacobs referred to the lesbian and gay community as part of the larger speech community, it becomes unclear whether the terms are member labels or author labels. For instance, it seems clear that the author switched from an emphasis on member labels by introducing the concept of the dominant culture's speech community, clearly a researcher label. This inconsistency highlights the tenuous hold of member labels as a primary unit of analysis in the hierarchy of research terms.

Research by Carbaugh, Gibson, and Milburn (1997) and Milburn (2002) described the way participants employ the term community when referencing in- and out-group members. Specifically, Puerto Rican Center members use the self-label (i.e., our community). This label plays a significant role in determining who is able to claim "legitimate membership as a participant in 'our community'" (Carbaugh, Gibson, & Milburn, 1997, p.11). The community is the label used by members to refer to those who are outside the boundaries of the particular speech community. By focusing on participants' language use and speaking practices, Milburn, like Dubois and Melacon (1997), privileged member labels of their own community.

Another researcher who made this point is Baumann (1996), who attended quite carefully to member's descriptions of their speech communities. For example, in Baumann's ethnographic investigation, he spoke with, and listened to, residents of one geographically marked location in London called Southall. It was from this geographically defined place that he came to study and describe community. He argued that he did not take as given the existence of a unified culture nor a unified community. He did admit to making the initial assumption that there might be a culture or community found in a physical locale. As he listened to their talk, these residents labeled multiple communities and delineated the boundaries of each according to a variety of features, many of which included ethnic distinctions. Consequently, Baumann used residents' own language to describe and refer to the Afro-Caribbean community, the Muslim community, the Hindu and Sikh communities, and the White community, which was distinguished by its lack of clear designating labels or unifying features. In addition to ethnicity, he found that religious, migratory, and labor labels were used by residents to differentiate communities and subcommunities. By demonstrating the multiple ways that residents referred to one another and distinguish one group from another, Baumann helped preserve the way that a term will serve a variety of different purposes according to how it is

employed by participants. Further, Baumann contested the adequacy of the term *culture* as meaningful, given the extremely varied composition and discourses of Southallians.

Considering the diverse groups living within a geographic area, the boundaries of community can be found by attending to members' labels and other boundary practices. What constitutes culture and the relationship between its boundaries and those of a particular community are often not clearly designated. Perhaps researchers are hastily suggesting that cultural features of discourse are present when, in fact, they are merely describing community practices specifically.

Given the various ways that members seem to self-identify, it is also informative to examine more specifically the labels researchers use to describe the specific speech community under investigation. For instance, as mentioned previously, Fitch (1994) argued that culture and conversation are key aspects of speech community. The particular speech communities she cited were referred to by either (a) geographic location, such as continent (Africa or North American), country, or region/city, (b) ethnicity or race, or (c) both—rather than labeled by researchers based on features of speaking or communication practices themselves. Fitch (1994) seemed to raise this issue of labeling by advocating a closer examination of the "communication style of African Americans at the level of speech communities," for instance, in order to show "the variability of meaning attached to particular ways of speaking as those relate to the shared experiences and resulting premises of different groups of people" (p. 129).

Some researchers have paid particular attention to members' labels when defining the speech community under investigation. These same researchers also seem to utilize location and other demographic characteristics to refer to the speech community itself. A focus on situated communication practices within speech communities, rather than demographic markers such as age, class, or geographic origin, should prompt future researchers to use either member labels for their group or their communication practices.

Cultural Codes

The final way that speech communities have been defined is according to its members' use of particular codes. By focusing on the way communication is coded, researchers with this focus are able to acknowledge the multiple communities in which people may have membership while paying particular attention to instances in which the use of language, through a particular code, is made to represent membership in a specific community. In this section, the articles under review (Braithwaite, 1997b; Coutu, 2000; Fitch, 1994; Hastings, 2001; Lo 1999; Sequeira, 1993) reveal how cultural codes create speech communities.

Sequeira (1993) provided a model by which researchers can use the concept of code as part of their definition of the speech community under investigation. In this article, Sequeira discussed terms of address use in an American speech community. When she described the "social meaning" of address term use, Sequeira

noted that there was a "commitment to *community*" (p. 279, italics in original). She further claimed that "understanding 'community' is knowing which address forms carry public, interpersonal force" (p. 279). Further, she noted how the use of familiar address terms set this community apart from outsiders who might even have found the practice offensive. The communication practices formed part of the boundaries for this group of speakers and provided certain options that may seem to constrain or predispose members to select among certain forms of address over others. Sequeira, however, insisted that the speech community did not determine members' particular choices.

By reflecting upon how the moral code, values, and norms create a sense of member identity, Sequeira (1994) recognized how these features function to bind members to the speech community. Sequeira initially lauded the importance of defining a speech community through reference to their codes; however, she referred to the group itself as a Christian community or community of believers rather than using a label related to their speaking practices.

Fitch (1998) investigated the way code is conducted in conversations by detailing interaction between some members of a middle-class, urban Colombian speech community and another speech community labeled the southern United States. In order to describe the prominent codes members used and oriented to in their conversation, Fitch referred to one conversational participant, J, by noting that his practices were sensible from within his speech community. While claiming to analyze the selected conversations to determine the cultural codes of communication to which participants oriented, Fitch (1998) reverted to the familiar sense of place as a designator of what constitutes speech community membership. As Fitch (1998) noted, she was once a member of the same speech community as J, but does not live there now.

Braithwaite (1997b) offered another example of the way speech community is created through the use of a common code. Code may be displayed in the process of enacting particular communication rituals. Braithwaite established three criteria for evidence of a speech community. Members either share (a) aspects of linguistic variation, (b) communication rules for speaking, or (c) shared meanings for interpreting speech. When members overtly state their goals as creating and enacting a sense of community, they employ specific forms of communication. Specifically, this study described and analyzed one particular ritual form (called a *ritual of legitimacy*) where the topic of conversation among participants often referred to members' need to create a sense of togetherness or community among all Vietnam veterans. Analysis of this particular form of interaction, Braithwaite claimed, revealed much about the communicative world of Vietnam veterans, and about how speech was used explicitly to form a sense of communal identity.

Lo (1999) argued that because no community is linguistically homogenous, researchers should focus on the way conversational participants *codeswitch* to determine speech community membership. As there are degrees of membership in any speech community, members also have degrees of shared orientations towards norms. She further argued that different speakers' beliefs about what kinds of

speaking practices are permissible relate to their acceptance of comembers. Within any conversation, participants need to assume that they share certain norms for speaking in order to understand when and why conversational participant codeswitch. As a result, the practice of codeswitching itself can be said to be indicative of comembership. Any given act of codeswitching can help position participants as socially validated group members who share a common identity.

Lo (1999) explained that there may be some speech communities for whom members do not reciprocate codeswitching, but that the practice itself potentially creates and affirms shared speech community membership. Lo did claim that when one encounters an instance where codeswitching is not reciprocated, that provides an opportunity to examine how speech community membership is negotiated in the process of conversation. For example, Lo described the way three people codeswitched during a conversation and the role this codeswitching played in helping participants understand to which speech community any given speaker might belong: "For Chazz, his participation in this Korean American community is his way of being maximally authentically Chinese, in fact, more Chinese than if he were to be an active participant in what he considers to be degenerate contemporary Chinese American culture" (p. 475). She noted that Chazz's choice of code helped determine whether his conversational participants understood and allowed him to use such a code in mixed code-preferring company. The article clearly demonstrated how speech community membership is an interactional achievement based upon how participants use and interpret codes.

Like Lo, Coutu (2000) called attention to the existence of competing codes in any community. She began with a published nonfiction text to argue that its discourse is part of a particular speech community. By not conforming to the usual boundaries of place, Coutu gave little credence to that as a necessary or sufficient condition for speech community membership. Coutu used speech community specifically as part of her methodology to situate the codes of its members. Her examination of the competing, coded practices within the American speech community under investigation helped Coutu to argue that several top government officials, McNamara in particular, did not share a code with the larger group. Implicit within this article, is the claim that it is to speech communities that any one member must account about his or her actions. Communicative actions, then, take place within an evaluative system, whereby any particular member's actions may be held accountable by other members. When members recognize the communication codes of shared beliefs and values that comprise the speech community, then they also recognize the obligation to account for untoward actions properly to continue to be counted as a member.

Coutu concluded by reiterating the presence of competing codes within speech communities and urging for recognition that the conflict between codes is an area that can be fruitfully examined to learn how members make sense of any particular code. Coutu suggested that future research follow Hymes's (1962) call for comparative work in the ethnography of communication based on how similarities and differences of code use by individual members is accomplished and evaluated by each speech community.

Hastings (2001) also discussed the importance of examining cultural codes when defining speech community membership. She, however, referred to the specific, local place surrounding the speech community under investigation. Hastings described the emergence of a speech community that she labeled Indian strangers comprised of graduate students in a college town in the United States. She focused her definition of this speech community on those persons who share both origin (i.e., Asian Indian) and certain normative and code rules for speaking. She summarized these rules as (a) be who you are and (b) be interdependent. These rules created the distinctions among this new speech community and other communities. Even though Hastings did not focus explicitly on the tension between a unified speech community and a speech community comprised of various members who communicate based upon various rules, she did display individual members' tensions as they engaged in social dramas, whereby those who were members ridiculed those persons who could be considered members based on the loose affiliation requirement of being Asian Indian, but did not act in socially sanctioned ways. That particular actions should be understood as able to count as valid and preferable (rather than permissible) tended to favor the unified perspective of speech community. How members used rules for communication to enact and evaluate speech community membership was skillfully displayed.

The way codes create speech communities is perhaps most evident in different forms of mediated communication. Several authors (e.g., Al-Khatib, 2001; Sawyer, 2002; and Spitulnik, 1997) described the way code is enacted based on the communication channel used and how the channel helped to create a particular sense of speech community.

In her discussion of mediated communities, and in particular radio use in Zambia, Spitulnik (1997) described the limitations of defining a speech community as comprised of people who share linguistic knowledge and frequently interact. She focused on the way people in large, urban societies rely upon mass-mediated forms of communication to learn the common codes. Spitulnik suggested that speech communities should be examined for *frequency* (i.e., in the rate of consumption of the same media as others) and *density* (i.e., in terms of large-scale exposure to such common forms of communication). These key features, she argued, provide "common linguistic reference points" (p. 163) and should be considered the key features of speech communities.

Similarly, Sawyer (2002) addressed the use of television texts to argue that a speech community is comprised of people who share similar practices. Sawyer described the practice of making references to television in speech as one that functions to "create a sense of community or shared identification between people who share a 'common pop-cultural landscape'" (p. 5). She further pointed out that the practice is not so much of a particular speech community, but that, through its use, participants actually create a sense of community. Sawyer also described the

practice of telereferencing as operating through a restricted code (citing Bernstein, 1972), which works to create a sense of community because the knowledge of particular meanings are restricted to the few who have access to a set of common texts.

Even though participants' codes figure prominently in the relationship between speech communities and forms of mediated communication for the previous authors, Al-Khatib (2001) discussed the language-switching process itself in three television programs designed for different Arabic audiences. The author described how participants in a Jordanian speech community modified their speech not based upon what their audience could understand, but upon what their audience expected to hear. Similarly, Neethling (2000) described the code switching that occurs within speech communities based on new codes being promoted by sports teams and advertisements.

COMMUNITY REFERENCE IN COMMUNICATION JOURNALS

After reviewing of articles that employ the concept of speech communities, a comparison will be made with articles that refer to groups as communities rather than speech communities. This comparison helps determine how authors describe the relationship between communication and community when they do not use the unit of analysis speech community. Several articles from communication journals between 1991 and 2001 were selected because they use the key words *speech* and *community* or *language* and *community*. The articles selected were not written from an ethnography of communication perspective (nor within the tradition of speech communities); however, they each covered the same areas as those previously mentioned, such as the place, label, or communication practices of a given community. Within any given article, community itself was described by a combination of these features interchangeably. Each category proposed above (i.e., geographic, member labels, and cultural codes), therefore, will be used to make comparisons within this set of articles.

First, several articles refer to the geographic region of the community under investigation. Pousada (1991) examined east Harlem, New York; Cortes-Conde (1994) investigated a community located in the Buenos Aires, Argentina; Robinson and Varley (1998) discussed a language community in Africa; and Dyer (2002) referred to Scotland as the site of her research. Of these, only east Harlem is a narrow geographic location. Of the others, three made claims about entire countries, and the final one is a largely populated city in a large country. There are, however, other articles that use the notion of place more specifically. Of these, Aden (1995) and Marshall (2001) are exemplary.

Aden (1995) discussed the idea of community as a place and the way that such a community relates to its members' identity. The author explored the relationship between work communities and residential communities through a discussion of how economic changes affected baseball players or workers and those who

attended baseball games. The economic changes, including the increased importance placed on players' salaries and the effects of unionization, altered the identities explored. The author described the way people make sense of their communities as interpretive communities that are located in particular places, particularly homes. The importance of place and a sense of home put this definition of community in concert with Philipsen's (1975) early definition of speech community as enacted in a particular place.

Similarly, Marshall (2001) argued that communities are defined by a sense of place affected by economic conditions in her article about the changing conditions within fishing communities. The members of the particular community she examined all practiced fishing as a form of livelihood. Given changing economic conditions, however, the community itself was in the process of being redefined. Marshall suggested that communities are engaged in a continual process of reworking, or reimagining themselves. Her findings seem to indicate that communities are bound by a sense of connectivity and connections; however, she also noted the tensions that exist among members between the desire for mobility (to seek more favorable economic conditions) and the value of rootedness and familial lineage. Finally, this author described the spatial-bound parameters and place-bound relationships as no longer forming such tight boundary conditions.

In these articles, then, communities selected for research are often done by geographic location. At the same time, those who make claims about the strength of these communities also note that the changing economic conditions of a certain place alter its composition and communication patterns.

In relation to the notion of member labels, several articles ascribe a label to the group under investigation. Pousada (1991) used the label the Puerto Rican community of east Harlem, as well as a poor, working class community, as a more specific descriptor; Cortes-Conde (1994) used the label Anglo Argentine community and the Spanish-speaking community more specifically; Lee (1995) labeled a particular community a small town; Brookey (1996) discussed the homosexual community; and LaWare (1998) referred to the Chicano community in Chicago. These authors all refer to the group under question by a variety of features, including geography (as mentioned above), ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality.

This group of authors also used different researcher labels for the type of community under investigation. These labels included *interpretive community* (Aden, 1995), *language community* (Robinson & Varley, 1998), and *dialogic community* (Zoller, 2000). Given that the group of articles did not make use of the research term speech community, it is interesting to note that the terms in use share similar features. The interpretive community referred to the way members create shared meaning of events and places. The language community (although recognizably sharing roots with speech community in the early work of linguists) referred to the decisions about which language to use that are made by determining what language members have in common in a geographic region comprised of multiple languages. The dialogic community, likewise, indicated that participants in a new community had to create for themselves not only their community label, but also

the definition and boundaries of such a community. This process was aided by trainers (one label for one participant group) and initiators or charterers who helped begin the new community.

Finally, some features of a cultural code, athough never used explicitly by any of these authors, seem to be present in these authors' findings. Particularly salient are notions of values and beliefs of particular communities. For instance, Pousada (1991) indicated that the strong belief in education motivates the community to approach the school (noted as a different community by label and speech practices). Cortes-Conde (1994) discussed the practice of codeswitching and preference for the use of English or Spanish as being related to larger cultural practices. Lee (1995) argued that the small town community, although demonstrated in speech patterns such as sluggishness, also contains very clear values and beliefs such as a desire to appear respectable. Brookey (1996) discounted the existence of a real homosexual community but did suggest that members of such a community nonetheless retain distinctness even though they share some common substance. LaWare (1998) argued for the importance of including a community's preference for the medium of communication (in this case, visual mural artwork) as a way of expressing identity. Finally, Marshall (2001) discussed the ways communities are constantly in the process of reimagining themselves while valuing rootedness and familial lineage. These articles all focus on communication practices; how these practices are patterned and how they relate to and are valued by the community itself are the key features of the methodological term, speech code.

What these articles describe are various ways to conceptualize community. They each raise an issue that is prominently dealt with in the previously described definitions of the basic unit of analysis, speech community. These issues include (a) the geographic and economic features of the community; (b) the ethnic or racial features members orient to when interacting with members their community; and (c) the specific language use and ways various media affect its use in particular communities. What this set of articles does not do as well is to describe language use with reference to the common code used by participants of the communities under investigation. The relationship between community and communication is closely examined by these authors; however, it remains unclear why they do not use the unit speech community in their analyses.

Even if the term speech community is not employed, there are strands of the concept present here strikingly similar to those investigated under the rubric of speech community. Perhaps one suggestion is that these authors are not claiming to belong to the Hymes' program of investigation, ethnography of communication. This may be true for several of these authors, but there are two inconsistencies. The first is that several of these authors do cite Labov, who was among those early investigators of the basic unit. Secondly, even among those who claim they are committed to the program of research of ethnography of communication, not all consistently employ the term speech communities. As mentioned above Carbaugh (1989a, 1994, 1996), for instance, did not use the term speech community in his descriptions' communication codes, but rather referred to the communal function

of language that bound members together. In fact, because of his shared commitments to the program of ethnography of communication, his research is often cited for its contribution to the definition of the basic term speech communities (see Fitch, 1999). One is therefore left asking: What utility value does the unit of analysis speech community hold for future communication researchers?

DISCUSSION

This review has raised roughly four issues. First, authors since Hymes and Gumperz have often used descriptive labels for the speech community under investigation that refer to specific demographic information (e.g., most frequently race or ethnicity, geography, income or socio-economic status, gender, age, or sexuality). The labels researchers use to designate particular community groups seem to indicate the relative importance of these demographic features over the speech practices that such group members employ. (The only exception is Smitherman, 1997, who refers to the speaking practice in the speech community labeled hip hop nation.). The emphasis on demographic features in our labeling has important research implications: By emphasizing demographics we run the risk of stating demographics as facts rather than constructs that are made meaningful through the communication practices that we are examining.

The second related finding relates to how researchers define the composition of a speech community. In most of the studies examined in this review, the composition of a particular speech community had been defined a priori. One cannot label a speech community in advance without such a label being directly tied to the different ways in which it is enacted through conversations. That is, one can only designate a speech community as such when the features that define it have been revealed by one's research.

The third finding is that the idea of a speech community as a homogeneous entity does not exist. A widely held assumption is that a speech community is defined by a particularly salient and consistent pattern of communication. What emerges, however, is great variation in how the pattern is enacted by the members of the speech community. Scholars often describe competing or conflicting ways of speaking within and among communities. What makes any one group cohesive enough to earn the label of speech community may upon closer examination prove to be areas of tension and contradiction within that group. In fact, members of the speech community may themselves be in an ongoing process of determining if and how they remain part of the same speech community. This reflects the dynamic (i.e., nonstatic) nature of communication (see Lo, 1999, for an excellent discussion of this point.) This area also needs additional research.

The fourth issue is the prevalence of a focus on member codes as the key component of a speech community. These codes have been variously defined (see Bernstein, 1972; Carbaugh, 1994, 1996; Fitch, 1994, 1998, 1999; Huspeck, 1994; and Philipsen, 1987, 1992, for further elaboration). Some researchers define codes

by the rules governing language use. Others define code as the beliefs and values that help determine meaningful practices among members of a speech community. The latter is preferable because it emphasizes the meaning that members create through interactions as opposed to their being an assumed set of meanings that are mechanically ascribed to one language or another.

An implication of these four issues is the question of how we might refine speech community as a unit of analysis so that it remains a meaningful construct to study. There are similarities between how researchers have used the terms community and speech community. Are the two terms in essence referring to the same thing, or is there something to be gained by using the term speech community? The difference lies in how the term speech community makes evident the inseparable relationship between speech and community. Furthermore, the concept of speech community tends to stress the importance of what members themselves find meaningful about their communities and their communication practices.

In sum, after closely examining several different uses of speech communities and considering several organizational schemes (particularly Fitch, 1994, 1999), three categories seem to encompass its recurrent uses in the literature:

1. Speech communities are bound by the significance of their geography or place. Locations are described as containing communicative action or fostering particular modes of being a member (Basso, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Philipsen, 1975, 1989; Schegloff, 1971).

2. Participants consider themselves members of a "community" that they label as such (Carbaugh, Gibson, & Milburn, 1997; Fitch, 1999; Gumperz, 1968; Hymes, 1972, 1974). Participants may also use labels for their distinct communicative practices and for persons whom they deem outsiders.

3. Coded practices are what forms a community, regardless of geographic region, shared space, or label (Fitch, 1994). Conversational participants may use a code from any number of communities in which they are a part. However, the use of any such code helps interactants to recognize particular speech community membership(s) (Braithwaite, 1997b; Coutu, 2000; Lo, 1999; Hastings, 2001; Sequeira, 1993). Implied within the concept of code are the beliefs and values of particular actions. Communicative actions are undertaken by speech community members, so the speech community is the entity that holds individual actors accountable (Buttny, 1993; Coutu, 2000; Hastings, 2001; Scott & Lyman, 1968). Speech communities form part of a system of meanings that can be used to evaluate any particular action.

CONCLUSIONS

This review has been undertaken to determine the way current researchers have employed the term speech community. Historically, this unit of analysis was used in the formation of one specific program of research, ethnography of speaking,

and it is clear that it remains a cornerstone upon which many researchers base their claims.

It is important to reiterate that Hymes's and Gumperz's starting places for their unit of analysis, speech community, stemmed from concerns similar to those today. One primary concern remains that careful and consistent use of analytic terms, particularly a term like speech community, can help make more precise the descriptions of communication practices of particular groups, both in terms of their boundaries and their own labels. Speech communities began as a complex unit. Not only did the term refer to the particular group of speakers under investigation, it also referred to the variety of ways they used language and the continuity in their language use according to rules and norms enacted situationally. Furthermore, the term described the cultural resources that community members drew upon to make sense of their communication practices. It may seem that this complexity has been forsaken, as many of the authors reviewed here seemed to refer mainly to the features of place, label, or cultural code. Still, another perspective on the articles reviewed is that, by choosing such a particular focus, they actually help refine some of the most significant features of the term. Speech communities are fruitfully explored by attending to the sense of space or place, member labels, and the cultural codes by which they make their practices meaningful to one another.

Another issue today is how to build community or communities. In this regard, the speech community research is almost solely concerned with communities already in existence. It is important, however, to appreciate the way communities have come to exist and the function(s) of communication within them. Furthermore, how particular individuals partake in a community, or come to have a sense of community is most apparent in the ways members come together (in a shared space or place), in the way they choose to label their group, and in the cultural code shared by participants.

Many people seem to belong to several heterogeneous groups with overlapping boundaries and group memberships. In this regard, it is of vital importance to recall early research that sought to examine the ways communities are set apart by their language use. When one person's community constitutes the fringe of another person's membership, we begin to recognize the ever-widening (or narrowing) set of community relationships that are increasingly complex and difficult to define. One community may encompass another or many others, determined by individual need or circumstance. Researchers need to recognize these seemingly fluid boundaries and take seriously the way communication operates in their formation or dissolution: People speak intercommunally, rather than just interculturally.

The future of speech community as a research unit lies in how scholars foreground membership. That is, it is not enough to locate persons who seem to form a cohesive unit, but how particular persons create membership or community identities in any talk is extremely important (see Hester & Elgin, 1997). By carefully examining interaction, one can begin to understand how conversational participants identify members and determine who counts as a member (see also Weider &

Pratt, 1990). This echoes Rudd (1995) as he advocated for reformulating the concept of speech community as having multiple identities within any given community, rather than "as if it produced one collective identity" (p. 220).

Today, there is a greater recognition of the multiple impacts upon speech communities, from uncertain and changing economic conditions to issues of sexuality to different forms of mediating communication. Given each of these impacts, the position of place, not just as a geographic or physical proximity concept, but the way members construct a sense of place as a communal location (as an actual space or metaphor for the boundaries of community) remains a primary concern. As groups are less and less defined by proximity and more and more defined through mediated forms of communication, the speech community continues to be a necessary and useful term because it helps identify the ways members use local knowledge (Morgan, 2001) to make sense of what is happening around them. The primary way this is done is through communication. With all of these changing impacts, it is increasingly important to continue examining speech communities to learn more about how members incorporate these conditions into their definitions and meanings of their community membership.

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CHAPTER CONTENTS

11 Speech Community: Reflections Upon Communication

TRUDY MILBURN

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From Hymes (1962) onward, communication scholars, anthropologists, linguists, sociolinguists, and scholars in ethnic studies have not only used the term *speech communities*, but have extended its significance. The purpose of this review is to examine the ways various authors have defined and used the term, in order to understand its evolution. Speech community boundaries have been defined by demographic features, such as place or space, shared language use, and shared meanings. Each condition is explored and analyzed in turn. The review raises four issues: Labels used to describe speech communities refer usually to specific demographic features of the community itself, rather than features of communication; the composition of a speech community is usually defined a priori; the idea of a speech community as a homogeneous entity does not exist; and researchers often focus on member codes as the key component of a speech community. Given these issues, consideration should be given to refining speech community as a unit of analysis so that it remains a meaningful construct to study.

> No one would claim that there is a one-to-one relationship between languages and social systems, yet we continue to think of speech communities as discrete, culturally homogeneous groups whose members speak closely related varieties of a single language (Gumperz, 1969/1971, p. 230).

Communication scholars examine what people say to one another and the consequences. When they seek to examine the patterned ways people communicate, then they focus either on universal communication use or on particular ways that specific groups of people use communication. The latter focus is often referred to as cultural, intercultural, or cross-cultural communication. The ways specific groups communicate is also the specific purview of researchers in the ethnography of communication tradition. Those who conduct research in this

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