

## **Mysteries of Uniformity: Perspectives from Less Commonly Studied Speech Communities**

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In regions like the U.S. Inland North, Labov observes the “mysterious uniformity” of the Northern Cities Shift and its abrupt discontinuity at regional dialect borders (2008, 2001:515, 2010:368, 2012). Labov states, “How such nation-wide commonalities are transmitted (among children) or diffused (among adults) is a pressing matter for current research” (2010:368). Likewise, large-scale patterns recently observed in New England await answers to these questions of uniformity, transmission, diffusion, and incrementation.

To fully answer these questions, it may be helpful to explore diverse new field sites beyond the Western world, including small indigenous communities. This study compares field data from underrepresented language varieties (Sui and Zhuang in China, Hmong in the U.S., and Native American English) with more well-known speech communities (Eastern New England English), as well as computational agent-based modeling of dialect patterns. The results suggest new perspectives on uniformity in speech communities and new ways of handling the theoretical tension between large-scale and small-scale research approaches.

### Selected References

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