

## ON THE USE OF THE MODULES

1. The order of modules is not fixed: they are to be arranged to form a network which you will traverse in different ways for speakers of different ages and social types, following the principles laid out in Labov 1984. The following principles should guide you in establishing this network and the order for traversal:
  - a. Language and formal topics come last or close to the end.
  - b. Some topics are specifically designed to lead others and form natural sequences which should be preserved whenever possible. For example: DANGER OF DEATH – FATE – PREMONITIONS.
  - c. The network should be entered with a topic which advances your chances of achieving the three conditions for promoting the flow of conversation: maximizing shared knowledge, minimizing your authority, and minimizing consequences.
2. Items marked \* must be included in one form or another in all interviews. Items marked \*\* must be introduced with exactly the wording shown.
3. CL indicates “check list:” after asking for a salient items one can quickly mention a list of other items to see if they are recognized or promote interest. Check lists are not to be entered ponderously.
4. Then a module is entered, you should be particularly alert to signs of **interest** on the part of the speaker: pay attention to posture, eyes, and general muscle tone as well as the volume of speech he or she gives you in addition to the minimal response. Abandon topics that produce no response or produce signs of uneasiness, unless they are marked \* or \*\*.
5. Remember the principle of tangential shifting: *whither thou goest, so go I*. Follow the subject’s choice of topic no matter what
6. Your questions should never take more than 5 seconds to deliver. Your own contributions to the conversation—stories, opinions—should be as short as possible and still be real contributions.
7. A Module needs practice: you should be thoroughly familiar with the questions and their order. Never read, but have it on hand for reference, preferably folded up in an informal fashion.

## REFERENCE

Labov, William 1984. Field methods Project on Linguistic Change and Variation. In J. Baugh & J. Sherzer (eds.), *Language in Use*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.