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Title: The Language Ideology of Vermont High School Students

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Using the sociolinguistic-interview method, which entails a 15-30 minute period during which a set of prepared questions are asked in order to prompt the subjects, the study comprises data collected from 32 students from Spaulding High School/Barre technical Center in Barre, Vermont. The students represent a socially diverse cross section of the speech community at the school. The study focuses on the language ideologies of high school students, and analyzes and compares them according to their academic track. It is hypothesized that a correlation exists between negative attitudes towards Vermont speech and college-bound tracks. Such a correlation could demonstrate outward reaching behavior, meaning that students could be associating certain kinds of, often called "standard English," with higher levels of education, the future, wealth, prosperity, and opportunities.

The proposed project will provide crucial information about the attitudes surrounding the possible disappearance of the Vermont dialect, which surfaces as subtle features imbedded in adolescent speech. The study is also significant because the adolescent population is often understudied, making it necessary to take them seriously as speakers and social beings. In the process of gathering this type of information, an innovative method of measuring social class will be used. Among other rubrics for measuring social class and class-like divisions, linguists have used income, profession, location of residence, and level of education attained. This study, however, uses aspirations, a relative status, as a measure of social class. Though its utility is yet unknown, a correlation between academic track and linguistic attitude would provide a new way of reflecting social divisions through language. The results of the study will also reveal what implications the attitudes have for the future of the Vermont dialect.