

- Title: Social determinants of individual sound change in a laboratory setting
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Sound change on an individual level has been observed on very short time frames in laboratory tasks (Babel, 2010) as well as in interactive tasks (Pardo, 2006). Together with observations of phonetic drift over long periods of time (Harrington, Palethorpe, & Watson, 2000), this seems to reflect a causal chain from individual behavior to sound change. An open question, however, remains what can influence the direction of this change. The current experiment takes as a starting point an anecdotal observation. Speakers tend to change their phonetic targets if they move to a different dialect area within their native language. In that situation, they are "surrounded" by a consistent majority of speakers using other phonetic targets. This resonates with an observation in social psychology that one tends to agree overtly with a consistent majority in a paradigm now named the Asch conformity paradigm (Bond & Smith, 1996).

To test the possibility that listeners are more likely to align with a consistent majority, participants were engaged in a "cloze task" (i.e., Stimulus: "In fantasy movies, silver bullets are used to kill ..." Response: "werewolves") with either one or four interlocutors. To control the speech style of the interlocutors, their questions and answers were pre-recorded in either a formal or a casual speech style. The stimuli's speech style was then manipulated between participants and was consistent throughout the experiment for a given participant. Surprisingly, participants aligned less with the speech style if there were multiple interlocutors. This may reflect a "diffusion of responsibility": Speakers may find it more important to align when they interact with only one person than when they interact with a larger group, because they feel more accountable when conversing with only one speaker.

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- Pardo, J. S. (2006). On phonetic convergence during conversational interaction. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 119, 2382-2393.