

D'Arcy, Alexandra and Sali A. Tagliamonte. 2010. Prestige, accommodation, and the legacy of relative 'who'. *Language in Society*, 39, 3:383-410

### Abstract

"who", a prestige form, shows the enduring effects of grammatical ideology.

### The WH forms: An Abridged Historical Background

-Wh- was imposed from above, to copy Latin and French, which have morphology (case marking) on their nouns.

-It didn't replace the pronoun system in English, just squished it.

-Earliest incidence of "who" was in 1426.

-There was a clear lag time between written (earlier) and spoken (later).

-There was a sociolinguistic component from the beginning.

### Methodology

-Toronto English Archive (Tagliamonte 2003-2005). Used Labovian interview methods on 82 speakers

-Studied restrictive clauses only, following the methods outlined by Tagliamonte et. al. 2002:151-152

### Linguistic Results

-The only relative markers of any consequence were "that" (55.6%), "Ø" (26.7%), and "who" (17.2%).

-But, "who" wasn't used equally by all speakers.

-9 speakers never used "who" (older men, not educated, non-professionals).

-Others used "who" very frequently.

-"who" alternates with "that" in subject position.

- "Ø" alternates with "that" in nonsubject position.

-The paper mainly looks at "who" in the subject position.

- "that" is used for things, collectives, and animals.

- "who" is used for humans and people.

- We'll mostly look at subject humans.

- A linguistic reason why some speakers used "who" so much is because they were talking about human subject relatives.

### Sociolinguistic Results

- "who" turns out to be highly marked sociolinguistically.

- There is a difference in usage across lifetimes.

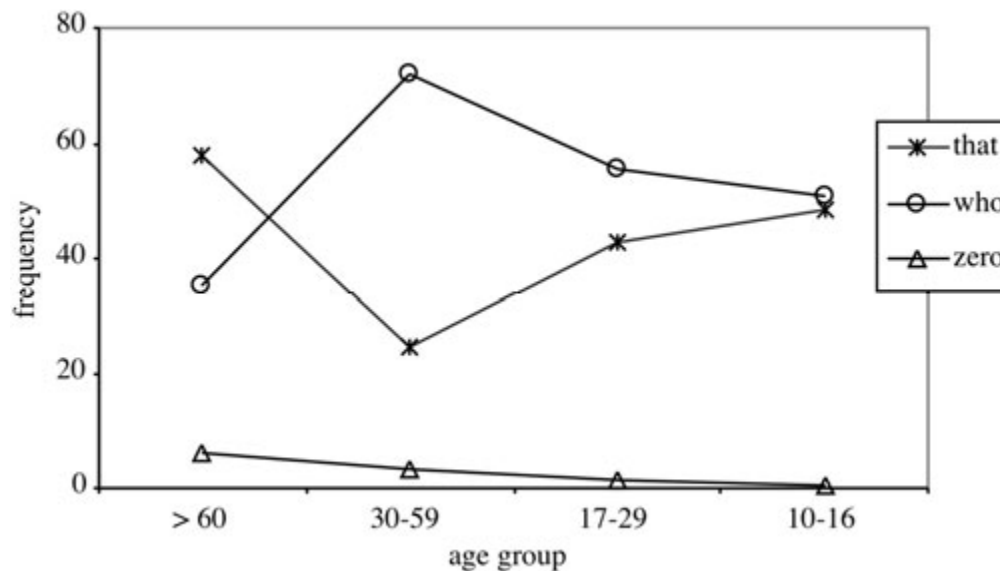


FIGURE 3. Distribution of SUBJECT-restrictive relative pronouns across apparent time, human.

--Figure 3 is an expected **stable, age graded variable** "Less prestigious variants [are] used more frequently by younger members, and also by older speakers, with the prestige variants used relatively more frequently by middle-aged speakers." (Cheshire 2005:1555)

- Generally, one variable correlates with women and higher socioeconomic indicators, while the other correlates with men and lower socioeconomic indicators.

- All women didn't use "who" more. Only women who were highly educated and professionals.

## Summary

1) The variation between "who" and "that" is constrained by age (30-50), education (higher than grade 12), and occupation (professional).

2) Most seen in women who have the above characteristics.

## Interactional Consequences

-Is the social context (i.e. the interviewer) affecting the outcome?

-To test, they did a dyad, ½ were interviewed by males, ½ were interviewed by females.

-When interviewed by a man, women used "who" at the same rate as men.

-When interviewed by a woman, women (educated ones, but not uneducated ones) used "who" at significantly greater rates than men.

-The educated women make an upward "responsive shift" (Bell 1984) based on the social membership of their audience.

-With "that" versus "Ø", the opposite is true.

-Women use standard "that" when talking to the opposite sex, and the vernacular "Ø" when talking to the same sex.

-Why? There is no functional need. In group norms are already maintained by the strong use of "who" in human subject positions.

-So, the ways in which speakers perform depends on context.

## Grammatical Ideology

### "who" vs. "that"

-“Since its earliest attestation in 1426 to the early 2000’s, nearly 600 years later, the relative "who" continues to be localized to the specific linguistic context and social groups where the pressures of the standard model are most influential on the spoken vernacular”

-Prescriptive norms can be significant.

### "that" vs. "Ø"

"that" became standard because it is clearer than "Ø".

## Conclusion

-We inherit historical patterns of sociolinguistic conditioning.

-The present use of "who" can be explained both synchronically and diachronically.

## Critique

I found this article to be well written, clear, and interesting. I found it remarkable to learn that "who" had existed more or less unchanged in its usage for 600 years. The term "change from above" became much clearer to me after discussing how it applies to the relative "who". Another interesting term which the article clarified was "age graded variant". It was interesting to see her prove that "who" was used less frequently by children and older people. The middle aged people had apparently been the ones using "who" most, for 600 years.