VERDOÏA, Sarah
University of Paris V, René Descartes
Sociolinguistics Laboratory
12 rue Cujas
75230 Paris Cedex 05
FRANCE
sarahverdoia@hotmail.com

THE VARIATION OF A SOUTHERN SWEDISH DIALECT:
LINGUISTIC FORMS AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCES

The linguistic diversity of a southern Swedish dialect, the *Skånska*, in its social context forms the subject matter of our research.

On the other hand, in its urban environment this dialect shares most of its lexical, morphological, syntactic and grammatical features with the standardized Swedish, while, on the other hand, it developed some peculiar phonetic features.

These phonetic features are submitted to variation and, this variation, when frequent, is highly structured, both linguistically and socially. Once elicited the linguistic structure of the variation, we correlated this variation with the social structure of the community in which it takes place.

Thus, we investigated two native families from Helsingborg by observing speakers using every-day speech in interaction. This experiment revealed the great complexity of co-variation between linguistic variables and social variables. First, we notice that one and the same phonetic variant can cover not only one but many social significances, and then, that even in homogeneous networks - like families - the social variables such as social class, age, and sex, can only partly explain the patterns of variation.

We are convinced that the most determining factor of variation is the attitude of a speaker towards his/her dialect that is, here, the feeling to be or not a genuine member of the city and the fact of claiming or not this membership.
Starting from the point of view that it is the individual that embodies the language, we may have to put the speaker back into the heart of the matter of language structure and heterogeneity.

Hence, we could try to answer some questions of the urban sociolinguistics: what are the significances of such-and-such linguistic product? And, since we have an obvious discrepancy between norms and values, how should a community be defined through its speech?