

Meeting at the Intersection of Delaware and Chauncy Street: Roseanne Conner as a
Working Class Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the working class character Roseanne Conner—the fictional matriarch of *Roseanne*. Studying Roseanne’s role as a working class protagonist will intersect theories present Sociolinguists and New Working Class to analyze Roseanne’s language in its written and spoken form. Specifically, isolating written occurrences of the variant g-dropping (Fischer, 1958) will facilitate linguistic exploration and how spoken language characterizes working class individuals and the stereotypes embedded in working class speech. Audience Design Theory (Bell, 1984; Bell & Johnson, 1997) will discern if and how circumstances influence Roseanne’s use of careful or casual speech. Theories in New Working Class studies will contextualize the findings by providing historical features shaping the current definition of working class, while encouraging the interdisciplinary approach used in this study. Using other working class protagonist in earlier comedies will draw slight comparisons, ultimately to demonstrate how the protagonist brings agency to her character to present a positive representation of the working class.

Keywords: Roseanne, working class, sociolinguistics

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The award-winning sitcom *Roseanne* entertained audiences for the better part of a decade, taking its viewers through the everyday lives of the working class Conner family in the small town of Landford, Illinois. From its debut in 1988 to its finale in spring of 1997, *Roseanne* exposed mainstream American audiences to working class (WC) culture and its themes. Unlike many of the sitcoms on-air at the time, Roseanne Conner, her husband, Dan, and their three (later, four) children found humor amidst the mundane, everyday trials of life. While *Roseanne* is certainly not the first television show to depict the working class, the series represented working class families unlike other shows before it by providing viewers with realistic accounts of the everyday struggles facing blue-collar life—and audiences laughed with Roseanne and her family, not at them. This project explores the working class language of Roseanne Conner, the fictional matriarch of *Roseanne*; intersecting sociolinguistic analyses with working class theories will demonstrate how the protagonist brings agency to her character to present a positive representation of the working class.

Admittedly, misconceptions about the working class can result from a variety of outside factors, but another cause may be unfamiliarity with the characteristics that define it. The parameters that describe both working class culture and people are rather broad, and recent advances in New Working Class theories have further expanded an already complex concept. Russo and Linkon's (2005) categorization of New Working Class fundamentally as "almost always [beginning] with some combination of the power relations associated with work, political struggle, and lived experience" (p. 11) that analyze "systems of power, oppression, and exploitation" (p. 11). Further, New Working

Class studies take a “multidisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary” (p. 14) approach centering on the lives and the voices of working class people. Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) asserted, “media language does reflect what is going on in language” and “television data can provide interesting and informative sociolinguistic data for study” (p. 280) by isolating specific intensifiers (*really*, *very*, and *so*) and tracing the influence of television in facilitating language change. This project draws inspirations from Tagliamonte and Roberts’ methodology of using television media for data, but as it depicts social class rather than tracks linguistic change.

The framework for this project stems from intersecting New Working Class Theory (Russo & Linkon, 2005) with Bell’s (1984) Audience Design Theory, while drawing influences from Labov (1972), Kroch (1978), and Baugh (1987), et al. The definition referenced in this study combines Leistyna’s theory that the working class consists of interconnected experiences regarding socioeconomic and sociocultural statuses (Jhally & Alper, 2005), while drawing influences from other scholars in the field. Isolating sociolinguistic speech markers, specifically g-dropping (Fischer, 1958), provides a means to examine the spoken language as written, acted, and recorded for specific episodes in the aforementioned series. Conversely, analysis of the prevailing stigmas associated with the working class, which characterizes the WC speaker as inaudible and uneducated (Milroy, 2002), will contextualize the speech acts and speaker agency of Roseanne within sociocultural and sociolinguistic theories (Fischer, 1958; Labov, 1972; Kroch, 1978; Milroy, 1983; Baugh, 1987; Bell 1984; Russo & Linkon, 2005; Heinrich, 2010). Linguistic comparisons juxtaposing Roseanne’s speech with other working class protagonists—specifically Archie Bunker of *All in the Family* and

Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*—will suggest a shared working class lexicon has existed for some time, thus carrying over the negative connotations for decades, while giving viewers a two-dimensional representation of the working class.

Working class stigmatization occurs through various internal and external factors, but televised portrayals of blue-collar life introduced a troublesome lens by representing an already marginalized, oppressed group en masse. Further problematic issues arise when the genre presenting the working class requires someone or something to serve as the comedic device. Beach (2002) articulated the function of comedy, stating: “As a genre, comedy examines and critiques social structures – including those of class – and at certain points in history it has served as an important facilitator or mediator of society’s attempts at self-critique” (p. 3). Assumedly, all media can and should serve as a social criticism of their respective eras, and *Roseanne* stands as not only a reflection of the socioeconomic conditions of the late 1980s into the better part of the 1990s, but also the challenges of transcending one’s class label. Roseanne and her husband Dan reveal the difficulties pervading the everyday lives of the working class built into the weekly exploits of the Conner Family.

Telling a working class narrative requires commentary on the social constraints entrenched in the characters, conflicts, and surroundings. Roseanne’s conflicts mirrored those faced by most individuals regardless of one’s class status, but the principal difference lies in the consequences thereafter. As Beach cautions, “An important component of the culture industry, film comedy responds to the need for what Richard Dryer has described as a ‘utopian’ form of entertainment, an escapist and often ideologically conservative response to the social conditions operative at different

historical moments” (p. 3). In a television show like *Friends* or *Modern Family*, if one of the adults loses his or her job, the audience knows happier, funnier times await because these (arguably) middle class people will soon find better employment; in the interim, they will suffer little, if any, socioeconomic hardships. For Roseanne, being unemployed interrupted her family’s very stability, as there were no savings accounts or extra money with which to sustain their basic needs.

For some viewers, this dynamic contrasted the best version of life as achieved through the American Dream, but served as a reminder of how unobtainable and unrealistic such aspirations can be. If comedy simply meets the viewers’ needs for escapist entertainment, then it suggests something exists from which escape is necessary. For a working class adult, that escape might be from an overbearing boss, physically demanding labor, or the anxiety resulting from monetary shortages, forcing one to choose between keeping on the lights or feeding his or her family.

For those like Roseanne and the Conner Family, difficulties as a member of the working class result from additional hindrances to their social mobility, as language also influences one’s ability to transcend class boundaries. Working class people share a dialect of American English too often engrained with harsh social stigmas, thus characterizing the speaker as inarticulate, uneducated, and otherwise incapable of transcending their social class status. By using the sociolinguistic variant g-dropping (Fischer, 1958) as a base for comparison, this project argues that, while American society may associate particular variants with less-intellectual, less successful individuals, Roseanne’s language represents the strength within the working class and provides viewers with a credible working class matriarch. This initial exploration of *Roseanne*

provides adequate justifications supporting further inquiry into language and its connection to social class as conveyed through media representations.

Exploring language and social class aims at dissecting how and why class operates in the media as it does. Though societal class distinctions have been in-place for centuries (Jones, 1983), since the advent of television, class representations have been of—and mostly for—the middle-class (Moore, 1992; Spangler, 2014) to encourage the possibility of their social mobility within American society. Tagliamonte and Roberts' (2005) study of the popular TV sitcom *Friends* revealed more than the use of intensifiers; it revealed the improbable nature of six white, supposedly middle-class adults, could afford to live in a high-rise apartment in New York City when one-third of the group was intermittently unemployed. Some even estimate the main apartment at \$14,000 per month using comparable units in the neighborhood (Bennet, 2015, January 27, para. 7). Yet, for some viewers, *Friends* may represent a viable middle class lifestyle—rent controlled or not.

The reality of class on television is largely the wealthy disguised as middle class, or working class depicted as middle class, but rarely is class depicted as it truly exists for most, instead opting for an idealized version of the potential within the American Dream. To establish a viable foundation, I posit three research questions to guide my exploration:

1. Is the frequency of Roseanne's g-dropping sufficient in corroborating the existence of a shared linguistic corpus specific to the Working Class?
2. How does the speaker agency of Roseanne compare to other Working Class sitcoms?

3. Does Roseanne truly represent a digression from the long-standing, propagated portrayals of the Working class; how does Roseanne (the actor and the character) perpetuate or deny said stereotypes?

Examining specific working class protagonists on television from a linguistic perspective both establishes a commonality threaded between each series and exposes stigmas often associated with the working class. Further, sociolinguistic theories like Bell's (1984) Audience Design Theory, often referenced as Sociolinguistic Style (Bell & Johnson, 1997), account for the participants, situations, the degrees of social distance between the speaker and the interlocutors. Collectively, this strategy should promote a pre-existing linguistic relationship between working class protagonists, while exposing and exploring language attitudes engrained in working class culture. Audience design will demonstrate how and why each character handles specific situations, ultimately distancing Roseanne from her working class counterparts and the stereotypes therein. Roseanne embodies the triumphs and struggles of a working class individual while challenging both societal misconceptions of class and the traditional TV paradigm, thus providing viewers with a positive, realistic image of a working class trailblazer, who re-envisioned the concept of working class family.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Explorations of Working Class comedies (and television in general) have traced thematic elements over the decades, revealing the inherent relationship between television and institutionalized classist rhetoric. Senzani provided detailed historical context behind working class comedies and their significant contributions to perpetuating and maintaining social misconceptions of class. Three distinct eras—1950s, 1970s, and the 1980s—help frame the transitional periods that saw fluctuating representations of class on TV. Senzani (2010) uses popular sitcoms like *The Honeymooners*, *All in the Family* (and its various spin-off series), *The Simpsons*, and *Married...with Children* to demonstrate, “Working class characters on TV have always constituted a sort of deviance from the norm, taking on the roles of buffoons and lunatics” (p. 233). This covertly reinforces the middle-class, nuclear-family ideal deeply woven into the American Dream, which often escapes attainment by the working class.

The Connors worked in blue-collar professions, earning minimal pay with little job security, similar to Al Bundy, Archie Bunker, and all those who came before them. However, unlike other working class sitcoms, *Roseanne* integrated comedy through Roseanne’s reactions to living a white-collar world and her responses to the absurdity therein. Roseanne’s American Dream was successfully negotiation working class life its everyday obstacles. Butsch (2005), echoing Senzani’s statement (p. 130), argues that despite major social changes in the United States, those shifts “have not dislodged the pattern of class representations that are at the core of more than three hundred domestic sitcoms that have been consumed nightly by the American people” (p. 134). Roseanne never found a mysterious briefcase filled with counterfeit bills, nor did she invest all her

family's money into questionable products designed to fail. This clashed with the familiar working class tropes saturating television and grew stagnant over the years.

Where Roseanne and her family differed was the ways in which they attempted to transcend the societal ladder. What most likely polarized *Roseanne*'s initial audiences was the means with which they carried out their business ventures, which demonstrated the working class as intelligent, effective individuals capable of achieving success. Collectively, the Connors opened two relatively successful businesses: Landford Custom Cycle, a bike shop (Season 4), and The Landford Lunch Box, a loose-meat sandwich restaurant (Season 5). Although both businesses meet their ends, the closures are never the result of Roseanne or Dan's stupidity, but rather economic and circumstantial reasons. Landford Custom Cycle could not overcome the first-year profit loss (culminating in the Season 4 finale, "Aliens"), while Roseanne gave the diner to her business collaborator Leon and Nancy (in episode 15 of the final season, "The War Room"). Viewers accustomed to laughing at their favorite working class TV families' ignorance and failures struggled understanding Roseanne and her brood, who stood out against The Bundy's, The Kramden's, and other working class families.

Social class has been—and continues to be—a widely debated topic, and it originated long before Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explored the subject in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. As Lawson (2014) explains, "Class formation is the result of prolonged struggles by historical actors to define their economic, ideological, and political identity in relation to others (p. 10). The earliest accounts defining class and of class struggles, in the context of proletariat and capitalist disparities, date as far back as the early 1700s, which transitioned into the more-focused radicalism by the end of the

century (Jones, 1983, p. 103). Fast-forward almost three-hundred years, and researchers from a variety of disciplines continue to explore and define social class. Williams (2014) adds, “Development of class in its modern social sense, with relatively fixed names for particular classes (lower class, middle class, upper class, working class and so on), belongs essentially to the period between 1770 and 1840” (p. 61). Given the socioeconomic changes over time, how one defines working class has been subject to many confusing, and sometimes contradicting, classifications. Thus, while some definitions of working class are rather specific, others might outright deny the groups’ existence.

As the definition of social class changes over time, the complexities in drawing class distinctions, particularly with the working and middle classes, becomes a questionable but necessary dilemma: how does one define class with respect to the individuals categorized therein? Lawson (2014) contextualizes the issue: “It’s hard to avoid the sense that, in the airy dismissal of class as a reality and the embrace of it as a theory, the whole issue of exploitation and inequality is being wished away” (p. 11). The working class label once denoted societal value resulting from production, which implied those not identified as working class were lazy and unproductive by default—an assumption then assigned to the middle class (Jones, 1993, pp. 64-65). Over time, the blurring of class distinctions has only increased, thus causing more confusion. Though ambiguity within the definitions of the subordinate classes still pervades, Williams asserts, “The essential history of the introduction of class, as a word which would supersede older names for social divisions, relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited” (p. 65). Thus, the general term *class*

implies one can transcend the classification as *working class* through one's own agentive efforts. Others might disagree, confirming an opportunity exists but arguing the inequality within social classes, as defined by income and success, substantially determines one's upward mobility (Lawson, 2014; Lavelle, 2012). Though the lens used to define the working class may change, its very definition—the notion of working class in context with this project—is inclusive of several factors.

Education and economics influence class status, but additionally, one might categorize class in the sense of powerlessness relating to altering one's social status. Yet the definition remains complex and interwoven with sects and subsects reflecting its inherent diversity. One definition, as provided by Zweig in the documentary *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class*, asserts:

In the United States, about 62% of the labor force are working class people. That is people who go to work, they do their jobs, they go home, they go to another job, but they don't have a lot of control or authority over their work. These are people who are blue collar, white collar, pink collar. That's the working class majority. (Jhally & Alper, 2005)

By Zweig's definition, working class people report to their job, or jobs, where they perform their duties as instructed, which certainly addresses the powerlessness and low-wages accompanying working class people. However, Zweig's subtle—perhaps unconscious—inclusion of gender, classism, and economics reveals the ease with which one overlooks facets built within social classes. Blue collar and pink collar, respectively, adheres to the traditional paradigm of gendered colors; further, blue collar encompasses both men and women, thus invalidating the pink-collar reference. Including the term

white-collar denotes jobs carrying higher societal value resulting from the nature of white-collar professions (e.g., salaried, professional employees in professional attire). With considerations for education, economics, and powerlessness, newer academic disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, have introduced language into the discourse regarding class. In this sense, identifying the working class definition should consider physical geography and speech distinctions along with gender, race, sexuality, and a host of other factors as smaller parts of a larger whole.

Research on dialectal and phonological variations of American Englishes additionally weighs the social ramifications inherently ascribed to an individual speaker (Fischer, 1958; Labov, 1972; Laver & Trudgill, 1979, Huspek, 1994; Labov, 2006; Clopper, 2011; et al.). Two primary categorical methods for dialectal classifications—geography and distinctiveness—determine listeners’ perceptions of a given speaker, with other determiners factoring into the research (Clopper, 2011, pp. 212-213). Geography relates to the regional dialects of a speaker (northern or southern accents) and distinctiveness weighs the corpus of variables in a speaker (urban vs. rural speakers, or males vs. female speakers). Congruently, language attitudes address a lesser-spoken discriminatory practice concerning how one pronounces a given word. As Alford and Strother (1990) assert, “These generalized impressions become stereotypes of the group they are purported to represent and in many cases such stereotypes become part of one’s cultural background—one’s frame of reference” (p. 480). As language and speech factor into culture, it is reasonably acceptable to include these influences into one’s definition of working class. Yet, despite the consulted studies for this project, few pinpoint a concise definition categorizing working class people.

The definition of working class used in this study references Leistyna's, which declares the notion of class as "experienced on three separate but interconnected ways: economic class, political class, and cultural class" (Jhally & Alper, 2005), which is preferred to any singular approach because of its inclusivity of political and cultural influences. For instance, if a middle-aged man makes little more than minimum wage, but works in a profession traditionally associated with middle class, white-collar jobs, then by default, should he not be middle-class, despite low wages and a powerlessness nonetheless? Further, if a young person works as a domestic housekeeper, but makes a substantial yearly salary, does the profession still define him or her as working class? By using a more fluid, broadly-refined definition of the working class, this study will more successfully include outside theories to better align with New Working Class studies, which "almost always begins with work, political struggle, and lived experience" with "attention to discourses of class, whether in popular culture, the arts, or political activism" (Russo & Linkon, 2005, p. 11). The changing landscapes where working class individuals find themselves situated more or less demands it.

Working class theory, however broad (or concise) one may define it, should remain within the praxis of any theoretical analysis of *Roseanne*, as it remains integral to the actor, the character, and the series. Numerous studies regarding media depictions of *Roseanne*, and of other WC sitcoms, emphasize class to varying degrees, but often focus on additional theoretical perspectives during analysis. While some researchers envision *Roseanne* as a progressive comedy (Bettie, 1995; Cantor, 1991; Karman, 1998; Lee, 1991; Senzani, 2010; Spangler, 2010), some comparisons positioning *Roseanne* as a feminist icon, or treating the show as a feminist text, tend to privilege feminist theory

over other intersecting theories. Analyzing *Roseanne* (actor, character, or show) through a feminist perspective is akin to arguing the earth is round or debating whether adding two and two truly equals four: the outcome is valid because these truths are absolute.

Though *Roseanne* remains well suited for such analyses, this strategy is certainly predictable. That is not to discredit feminism or feminist theory, but rather to argue that a feminist perspective of a *feminist* show usually yields similar results, regardless of the context in which it lives. Only a few of the preliminary sources reviewed for this study proportionately blended feminist theory with working class studies. All three of Barr's autobiographies discuss the show in context with both feminism and working class (Barr, 1988; Barr, 1994; Barr, 2012), but the consulted research for this project, at times, ignored the latter. Ironically, analyses of *Roseanne* often overlooked the show's ties to working class culture, despite it being an integral part of the show's premise. *Roseanne* will always come out the victor when contrasted against Archie Bunker-types when done through a feminist lens. Barr (1994) declares one of her earlier life-goals was to "figure out Patriarchy" (p. 43), and for her show, she "wanted to create a real woman/mother on TV—for political reasons, as an activist" (p. 6). *Roseanne* informs feminist scholarship because that was one of Barr's intentions for the series. The bigger issue occurred when analyses and results misrepresented elements within the show.

No criticisms presented here validate or invalidate previous researchers' efforts, as many researchers have successfully employed multiple perspectives in their scholarly analyses of television by and large. Class analysis in itself is complicated, and some studies explore working class culture more successfully than others. One example is Lee's investigation of popular culture and its influence on students. Using their

responses to *Roseanne* and their concepts of working class, Lee (1991) observes, “Popular culture shapes students’ lives and affects how they give meaning to classroom knowledge” (p. 19), and tasks instructors to consider pop-culture to promote students’ learning and comprehension of complex social issues. Lee juxtaposes issues of misogyny, identity, and gender roles with patriarchy, classism, and heterosexism to illustrate *Roseanne* as a form of potential “resistance and social change” (p. 19) against media-driven stereotypes of working class women.

In the study, Lee (1991) asks 35 participants to respond to *Roseanne* and answer a series of questions using what they understood of the show, its themes, and feminist theory, with 31 individuals completing the survey (p. 22). The participants varied in age from “18 to late 50s” (p. 22), but not in race as all were white, and everyone came from either working- or middle- class backgrounds. Though the group was small and somewhat biased (the participants were all females enrolled in a Women’s Studies course taught by Lee), the majority of responses were favorable, with a few notable exceptions. Collectively, 13 percent of the group (or four people) did not enjoy the sitcom, mostly due to their perceptions of the principal character and her poor treatment of others (p. 22). However, the majority of participants (27 out of 31 students) responded favorably to the show because of its relatable themes and “more realistic view of American life” (p. 22). Lee concludes that, at the time of publication, *Roseanne* might not serve as a feminist text. The show was only in its second season at the time of the study, but may serve to acclimate students to feminist theory, but does not represent the social hierarchies of class.

Overshadowing working class theory and its tenets is problematic, but Lee's overtly feminist analysis contorts evidence and reveals issues inherent in the study. In addition to the bias of the participants, two issues appeared later in Lee's work: specifically, the vagueness regarding reported information and the discounting of participant responses. Lee (1991) reported none of the participants announced their lesbianism in conjunction with the study, which Lee assumed, "would speak to their existence" (p. 22); Lee did not provide any substantive reasoning beyond that, nor was the relationship between working class, feminism, and lesbianism explained. The second and perhaps more problematic statement occurred in Lee's seemingly dismissive response to the four students who did not like the show. Lee states, "Of these four, 3 were traditional-aged students (under 25 years old). It seemed that these younger women did not 'get' the ironies of domestic life nor understand the comments and humour that Roseanne uses to show absurdities and inequalities of women's place in society" (p. 22). Lee never mentioned any unfavorable responses after revealing the percentage of students who disliked the show. More importantly, these reactions specifically raise questions regarding Lee's own personal bias, which undermines the study. In an otherwise successful introductory project blending both working class culture and feminist theory, Lee muddled and discredited the very people represented (working class females).

If Lee's undercutting statements tarnish an otherwise useful study, then the study from Cantor throws feminist and working class theories in a metaphorical wood-chipper. The study analyzed television comedy regarding thematic elements of families and their televised portrayals, and presented compelling historical contexts for consideration.

Cantor (1991) stated, “By focusing on just the family shows, it is possible to discern how television reflects both general and society-wide changes in family life that have occurred in the larger society” (p. 208). Cantor’s historical data and summaries are accurate, including her analysis of *All in the Family*’s Archie Bunker and *The Honeymooner*’s Ralph Kramden as stereotypical working class males, stating: “For working class families, husbands and fathers were portrayed as either bumbling or inept, or as upwardly mobile...while the working class wives are usually strong and superior” (pp. 209-10). Cantor’s claims echo stereotypical characterizations of the working class (e.g., Hughes, 1992; Labov, 2006; Linkon, 1999; Russo & Linkon, 2006; Senzani, 2010; Spangler, 2014; Verdi & Ebsworth, 2009) as otherwise incompetent men and capable women, and the insights into both Bunker and Kramden are supportable, if not brief.

Cantor’s misapplications of working class stereotypes, misrepresentations of data regarding race, and broad generalizations of working class are problematic occurrences throughout an otherwise conventional study. For instance, Cantor briefly contextualizes *Roseanne* among the myriad of televised families within the study, but does so inaccurately. Cantor’s (1991) characterizations of Dan Conner, Roseanne’s husband, portrays him as “weak and ineffectual” (p. 211), alongside Archie Bunker, Ralph Kramden, and every other working class TV father. While *Roseanne*’s central focus was always Barr—as she was the star—Dan Conner was not the buffoon made out to be here (concessions here for some degree of subjective interpretations). Busch (2005) specifically highlights Dan Conner for this very reason, citing him as “somewhat of an exception to the traditional stereotype...who, while a bit wild, was also sensible” (p. 123). This is apparent in most of the episodes throughout the series, as Dan shared in the

responsibilities of wage earning and childcare, as well as domestic duties. When Dan could not find work, Roseanne took odd jobs, as the couple continued keeping themselves above the proverbial waters, negotiating the unpredictability of working class life together.

Since one of the fundamental tenets of working class culture is labor-related powerlessness (Russo & Linkon, 2006), Cantor's (1991) claim that Dan Conner "is a 'self-employed (mostly unemployed) construction worker'" (p. 211) dismisses the very struggle the Conner family represent as part of a working class community. In this instance, Cantor exhibits how feminist theory, or any theory, can overshadow working class scholarship. More importantly, Cantor misrepresented Dan Conner in making connections where none existed. In contrast, Senzani (2010) argues, "Dan [Conner] represents a supportive, blue-collar father and companion, who stands out in the tradition of televisual working class male buffoons and inept fathers" (p. 237). It is difficult to assume Cantor's rationale for misrepresenting parts of the study, but it supports the assertion that working class theory tends to lose preference to other, perhaps more prestigious (e.g., buzzworthy) theories.

In analyses of working class television comedies, broad generalizations of the working class disenfranchise an already-disenfranchised group of people. In one example, Cantor (1991) claims that Bunker "was not much different from other male working class television characters who were on the air before him" (p. 210), which might be true if *All in the Family* had not aired in 1971. Leading up to the *All in the Family's* debut, the percentage of working class sitcoms was small, with most facing cancellation after the first season (Moore, 1992, p. 54). In another, Cantor (1991) argues,

“there is no community, no state, no church. The workplace is rarely shown... Characters do not battle for social change” (p. 215). However, in May of 1989 (three years before Cantor’s study), *Roseanne* aired its first season finale, where Roseanne stages a walk-out at the plastics factory that employed her throughout the entire season (McFadzean & Anderson, 1989). In the span of the 23 episodes, viewers witnessed the events leading to the walkout, which contradicts Cantor’s claims. Not only do viewers see community and the battle for change, but they also witness forced overtime, raised quotas, low wages, and little job security, if any. While both Cantor and Lee provide valuable insights for this project through their own research, working class theory can and should be as prominent as feminist, linguistic, or any other theoretical lens, and as such, it requires acknowledgement.

One could attribute the concerns in the aforementioned studies of Lee and Cantor to the data and theories available at the time of the studies, as only a few abovementioned years later, Bettie’s research illustrates a more-comprehensive examination of *Roseanne* as a working class text. In the study, Bettie (1995) uses *Roseanne* as the vehicle to explore popular culture and its imagining of the working class, as well as the show’s influence in altering the “hard-hat stereotype” (p. 128) connecting WC with males, whiteness, and ignorance, and other misconceptions plaguing WC people. Bettie explores prevalent working class themes, including labor, gender, and race, while factoring viewer reception to the series. Critical analysis situates *Roseanne* as an oppressed woman, struggling mother, and displaced worker, with considerations and comparisons to other WC sitcoms and their respective characters, settings, and themes. The purpose of Bettie’s (1995) work was exploring “the androcentric and ethnocentric

biases which underwrite this iconography [to] try to imagine a less exclusionary formulation of class” (p. 126). Bettie provides a comprehensive examination of television portrayals of the working class using the usual qualifiers (identity through labor, race, and gender), but it is the attention to class and the role of the viewer that presents Bettie as a pedagogical precursor to New Working Class studies.

The lives and voices of the working class pervade Bettie’s work, and each subject contextualizes the focus with that of class. For instance, Bettie (1995) intersected feminist theory with economic inequality and industrial labor tribulations within the contexts of the working class stigma, stating, “Without access to male income, many women plummeted into poverty as they became the ‘postindustrial proletariat’ performing low-skilled, low-paying jobs. Within this context, conservative forces succeeded in selling pro-family rhetoric...in which women are economically dependent on men and children are economically dependent on women” (p. 133-4). Bettie structures most of the study similarly by discussing the larger, over-arching issues, then narrowing the focus to incorporate analyses that address the multi-faceted existence of working class people. The framework allows Bettie to transition from broad issues (e.g., race, gender, employment) affecting societal infrastructures to localized concerns shaping individual working class identities, and does so entirely through television analysis.

With limited comprehension and education, one’s interpretation of class shifts accordingly regarding societal class systems. Since *Roseanne*’s debut, the show and the star have been subject to scrutiny from critics and fans alike, and despite its popularity throughout most of its nine seasons, the show remains as divisive with syndicated audiences as it was decades ago. According to Barr (1988), *The Conners* “weren’t all

airbrushed and squeaky clean” like those portrayed in *The Cosby Show*, *Family Ties*, and other middle-class sitcoms on air at the time, but provided an “underdog story...people could relate to in crazy, changing times” (p. 150). Viewer reception is a central to any televised market, as Bettie (1995) stated, because viewer interpretations cannot ignore the social contexts when decoding media as a text, thus, “The reading of a text proffers can never be guaranteed, its framing working to preclude our ability to think otherwise about it” (p. 143). If viewership is as impressionable as Bettie believed it to be, then it is essential to explore working class stereotypes and stigmas in response to their media representations. Analysis of viewer responses exposes “the hierarchy of differential access” (p. 141) considering one’s class identity and experiences as factors influencing one’s interpretation of WC media representations like *Roseanne*.

Humor may be subjective, but the viewer’s inability to understand the humor presented in *Roseanne* stems from different levels of access resulting from “the lack of an available public discourse on class *as class* [which] makes it difficult to understand” (p. 142). While general audiences responded favorably to sitcoms with working class themes, some viewership struggled to understand the humor and situations in *Roseanne*. One could speculate reasons stem from preconceived attitudes disparaging working class culture, but the star contends many viewers’ confusion resulted from the atypical nature of *Roseanne*.

Senzani’s research focused on the humor of the show, analyzed how it represented and affected gender and class conflicts, thus uncovering possible causes behind viewership and critics panning the series. Combining historical and contextual roles of working class comedies with texts, metatexts, and viewer responses, Senzani

(2010) argued, “[*Roseanne*] provided its audiences with critical humor to challenge hegemonic representations of class and gender” (p. 230). *Roseanne*, as an actor, is also a focus, as Senzani’s study intersected public discourse with working class studies to explore humor and its role in mediating gender and class tensions (p. 230).

The juxtaposition of Roseanne Barr with Roseanne Conner demonstrates how, essentially, they are one in the same, despite media critics and tabloid magazines characterizations of Barr as an unruly, angry women (i.e., feminist). Senzani (2010) contends, “[Barr] thereby claims control over her own persona, both as a woman in a patriarchal society and as an artist in the male TV world” (p. 237). Further, Barr (1994) confirms one reason behind her public scrutiny stems from the show’s deviations away from the traditional TV family sitcom:

[Critics] were eviscerating my show, goddamnit [*sic*], they were ostracizing it into the pastel purée that had been spread over the networks for too long now, the same unsatisfying, tasteless, colorless (forget odorless—it stunk) polenta of sitcoms that I couldn’t stomach. (p. 92)

In this sense, deviations from societal norms from both Roseanne Barr and Conner speak to Senzani’s argument that owning both identities removes the barriers between the public and private lives of the ‘viewer,’ referring to both those at home who tuned in every week or those who knew of her public antics through various media outlets. Senzani (2010) observes, “the humor does not target the working class, but rather the social constraints that oppress it. *Roseanne* exposes boundaries between classes; it unveils the linguistic and cultural barriers set in place to distinguish between lower and upper class” (p. 241). The impressionable viewer might not make such a distinction.

In regards to viewership, Senzani referenced the divided dialogues scattered throughout the Internet illustrating how at odds viewers are in terms of *Roseanne* and the show's humor. Most comments from self-identified members of the working class support the show, citing "its depictions of money, work, and children-related problems" while providing narrative accounts of their own in relation to the show (Senzani, 2010, p. 245). Contrarily, negative critics, most who identify as middle-class, pan the series, citing its vulgarity and depiction of "those gritty details of daily lives that are usually sanitized in TV, and man-hating" (p. 245). While audiences' division is clear, what Senzani explores is how humor can help uncover the root of "*Roseanne*-haters" (p. 245) as a derivative of working class prejudices and social distance from middle-class viewership.

A study by Spangler uses working class comedies to explore the current economic crisis facing the United States since the early 2000s, and how they continue to address social mobility—or the lack thereof. Spangler (2014) contends, "Several series throughout television history have addressed social class in a variety of ways" (p. 470), and "that class is very much on many people's minds these days" (p. 471). Spangler speaks to the economic crisis that furthered the gap (or wealth disparity) between the middle-class and the wealthy, which brought issues of class into a discussion many Americans had forgotten existed. As Spangler points out, "Narrative comedy arguably has been the most consistently popular genre in the history of television, reflecting and influencing the mood of its viewers" (p. 471), thus serving as a means to reintroduce class into the socioeconomic discourse. Following the patterns of the above-mentioned

studies (Lee, 1991; Cantor, 1991; Bettie, 1995; Senzani, 2010, e.g.), Spangler differentiates the research in its focus on class mobility.

In Spangler's study, mobility serves as a link between eras in familial comedies, demonstrating how most working class sitcoms idealized the concept, while few ever actually achieved it. Spangler (2014) notes, "Television programs thus discouraged upward social mobility" (p. 474), and instead push contentment for a person's current position in the socioeconomic ladder. Television shows, regardless of genre, demonstrate social class systems in different context, thus encouraging satisfaction in a middle or working class station, as both the poor and the wealthy embody social deviancy (p. 476). Spangler uses working class TV sitcom *The Middle* as the primary source of analysis, but references WC series throughout the last four decades illustrate the rhetoric behind class acceptance and contentment. Further, *The Middle* represents one of only a few WC sitcoms on-air, demonstrating not only a return to invisibility, but also a perpetuation of stereotypes that a good family is the key to happiness—not social mobility. Spangler (2014) suggests, "Situation comedies in the twenty-first century echo many of the lessons previous research has indicated about class on television...that achievement of the American dream is up to hardworking individuals" (p. 476). The message to viewers is simple: work hard and a metaphorical shower of rewards awaits; however, Spangler's study implies the opposite, as the ideology behind the American Dream, at least in this century, seems more illusory than ever before.

If one reads any of Barr's (1994) three books, which a majority of the studies reference (one indirectly references it), she clarifies her intentions behind the creation of *Roseanne*, stating, "I wanted to make television that is not a tool of corporate America,

television that is instead in direct opposition to corporate thinking altogether” (p. 234).

Moreover, Barr asserts:

The *Roseanne* show is a show about America’s unwashed unconscious. Every episode sprouts at least a seed of something banal turned on its ass, something so pointedly “incorrect,” filtered through a working class language that claims every MALE-defined [*sic*] thing from family to economics, to God, as belonging, rightfully, and at last, to the realm of women. (pp. 235)

In the same spirit, Barr (2012) reflects, “I saw my sitcom and my comedy career as: Fighting on Behalf of Working class Mothers” (p. 215). These are but a few of the many examples throughout Barr’s books—which span twenty-four years and feature two written during the show’s production—that illustrate how feminism and working class worked in tandem in the creation and execution of the show.

Every study concerning working class examinations focus on several thematic elements usually assigned to working class culture. While race, class, and gender are undeniably integral components of WC theory, most studies thus far seem to keep within the confines of these categories, assuming working class studies as a foundational part of a larger whole, which contrasts with New Working Class theories expansive and all-inclusive methodologies. Race, gender, and labor, and so forth, are no longer the solitary means with which to explore class relations. In conjunction with traditional analyses of the working class, newer scholarship uses a multi-disciplined approach in working class analyses. Theories in New Working Class studies support the “critical engagement with the complex intersections” of the working class to expand the “on-going debates about what class is and how it works (Russo & Linkon, 2005, p. 19). In my study,

sociolinguistics (Labov, 2006; Baugh, 2009; Preston & Niedzielski, 2011; et al.) provides newer avenues to explore working class using linguistics and regional factors to analyze working class language, geographical influences, and speaker agency; in addition, audience design theory (Bell, 1984) will further contextualize the motivations for changes in one's speech.

Chapter 3: Methods

Establishing the existence of a shared linguistic corpus is integral to determine working class characterizations from a sociolinguistic perspective. As Jones (1993) stressed, “The term ‘class’ is a word embedded in language and should thus be analysed in its linguistic context [*sic*]” (p. 7). As such, suggesting televised WC language has remained stagnant and formulaic for decades requires some degree of confirmation that a shared speech community exists, not only in the individual in-groups featured on *Roseanne*, but across other working class television shows. A speech community, according to Crystal (1997), refers “to any regionally or socially definable group identified by a shared linguistic system” (p. 357), and for the purposes of this study, the concentration is the working class community of speakers. Observing the spoken dialogue between characters in a particular series will provide methodological framework to confirm or refute the shared language commonality for working class protagonists spanning decades of televised programming.

Sociolinguistic analysis weighs Roseanne’s particular language usage (e.g., dialogues) against the working class characteristics like economic powerlessness, class solidarity, and other characteristics ascribed to the working class (Russo & Linkon, 2005). Arguably, research into social class stereotypes as perpetuated through television began not shortly after TVs became a mainstay in American homes. The data discussed in the following segments of this study illustrate the initially broad findings, which eventually concentrated solely on g-dropping (Fischer, 1958). While happy, subservient homemakers of the 1960s became the independent working-women of the 1970s, the bumbling, ignorant working class breadwinner of the 1950s seemed to be the same

ignorant working class man of the 1970s, which insinuates something ultimately problematic within televised portrayals of working class people; thus prompting the exploration of the televised working class stereotypes during eras of social changes.

Using only the protagonists as subjects, episodes reviewed identified the principal dialogues delivered by each actor, under the assumption that each character's popularity exposed viewers to mass stereotypes regarding the working class. As suggested in Lasswell's (1960) brief essay into fictional class distinction within the United States, "the lack of uniformity does not mean there are no regularities" (p. 585) in social class, and mass indicators do exist within a given societal structure (p. 586). Authenticating a linguistic connection between Roseanne, Archie Bunker, and Ralph Kramden showed three specific components creating the primary database: g-dropping with the spoken discourse and the written texts. Supposing the three can successfully interconnect, then the texts and the dialogues should reveal the embedded working class stigmas that potentially contribute to Roseanne's speaker agency.

Reducing the available and applicable data resources helped refine which episodes to view and the qualifications for inclusion in this study. Plots featuring settings and interlocutors aligning with Audience Design and Sociolinguistic Style theories (Bell, 1984; Bell & Johnson, 1997) were of particular interest and remained a focal point while gathering data. Initial classifications included financial issues, interpersonal quarrels, familial conflicts, and work-related disputes. Given the nature of each series, these specific parameters would justify inclusion of almost every episode throughout the respective series. First, the linguistic deviations must be significant enough to warrant the episode's inclusion; second, the episode had to include scenarios where speaker

agency might occur; finally, the correlating script for the episode had to be easily accessible.

After outlining the initial parameters, a two-step process using written and verbal factors helped eliminate unnecessary or inapplicable data from episodes. If the information gathered from episodes lacked transcriptions (of any kind), then it was removed from the dataset. The second disqualifier focused on frequency of spoken deviations; specifically, if most of the characters' spoken dialogue retained a careful, higher-prestige pronunciation, it faced exclusion. In later seasons of *Roseanne*, particularly when the Conner family hits the lottery, the actor drastically reduces the amount of casual language she uses, particularly in the final season. The remaining episodes were viewed chronologically to preserve any ongoing narrative elements.

In my initial research, it was important the language variations carried some deviation of the prestige form of Standard English, which carries a social stigma. Alford and Strother (1990) define Roseanne Conner's prestige form the "midwestern accent because [it is] perceived as more standard, more acceptable [sic]" (p. 482). First, a general analysis of the first season will provide an overview, thus suggesting a dichotomy between Roseanne and the actor's speech acts throughout; this demonstrates a clear digression from the finalized scripts. Following an overall viewing of the first season, sampling included here focuses only the pilot episode from *Roseanne's* first season. Further analysis will explore the sociolinguistic variant g-dropping (Fischer, 1958), the prestige element thereof (Labov, 1967), and compare Roseanne's working class voice to some of her early peers. Viewing of *Roseanne's* pilot episode occurred three times: once listening for spoken variables, a second time noting the variants (and when they

occurred), and a third time cross-referencing the episodes with the accessible scripts. Then, episodes of *All in the Family* and *The Honeymooners* were viewed following same process. The chosen episodes included for analysis were:

- *Roseanne*, Season One, Episode 1 – “Life and Stuff”
- *All in the Family*, Season Three, Episode 1 – “Archie and the Editorial”
- *The Honeymooners*, Season One, Episode 2 – “Funny Money”

Though emphasis has shifted away from in-depth analyses of *All in the Family* and *The Honeymooners*, the data collected from the shows will be used here to draw comparisons to *Roseanne*, while conceding their larger inclusion until securing more reputable scripts.

Each episode explores different struggles aligning with Bell’s Design Theory and uses interlocutors, who act as emotional referees, thus presenting an emotional conflict in both home and outside environments. This takes the characters into situations where they must negotiate language while dealing with a singular theme (powerlessness) throughout. Similarly, unemployment emphasizes the figurative and literal powerlessness resulting from a jobless family struggling to keep their bills current. In accordance with Bell’s (1984) theory, extraneous factors can and do influence speaker agency, which lends to the analyses.

The linguistic component considers the delivered lines of internal or external dialogue, as spoken by the actors within particular episodes of a specific series. As such, continuous viewing of *Roseanne*’s first season, as well as individual episodes in other WC comedies, provided initial auditory documentation of particular sociolinguistic speech variables (e.g., a spoken word susceptible to social context and connotations). Each episode viewing used officially licensed DVDs distributed by Mill Creek

Entertainment and Casey-Werner, LLC (the production company of *Roseanne*) to maintain episodic integrity. Initial viewings employed a broad classification system, including physical, social, and psychological indices determining sociolinguistic speech variants. The primary usage of the term variants applies to the “phonological...idiosyncrasies of pronunciation that serve to individuate [one] within [his or her] social group” (Laver & Trudgill, 1979, p. 5). Since much of humanity fits neatly into metaphorical boxes, in-group language is a common, if not an expected, occurrence. Hence, listening for how the protagonists speak to particular interlocutors provided trackable sociolinguistic markers recorded throughout each televised episode.

As defined by Giles, Scherer, and Taylor’s (1979) study and influenced by others (Abercrombie, 1967; Labov, 1970), speech markers serve two varying-yet-essential roles within a given society. In a fundamental sense, “[speech markers] serve the general function of maintaining the social system by identifying and recognizing members who occupy various roles and hierarchical positions within it” (p. 343). Identification through language analysis allowed for social class differentiations using language pronunciation alone, while considering the embedded stereotypes regarding education, wealth, and other capricious attributes. The more integral function of speech markers, then, is to “permit interlocutors indirectly to communicate important attitudes, beliefs, values, and intentions about their own social states as well as...the emotional significance of the emotional states of others” (p. 344). Concurrently, speech markers seem to both create and perpetuate social stigmas using only spoken language variants to do so, which results in a verbal identification system that easily lends itself to social stagnation.

After finalizing the episodes and identifying trackable sociolinguistic variants, the next step in research was locating the episodes' official scripts. For *Roseanne*, the entire first and second season scripts, along with intermittent episodes spanning the nine-season series, were readily available as PDF files; similarly, unofficial transcripts of the show appear online. Preserving the authenticity of the information took precedence, and as such, data came from official writers' drafts and final shooting scripts for *Roseanne*.

Some restrictions and complications altered script accessibility, specifically for *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family*, which affected the original research plan. Consequently, initial data collected referenced unofficial, corrected transcripts published online. Transcript accuracy was questionable, but simultaneously correcting transcripts while watching the correlating episodes produced a workable source. Subsequently, one episode from *All in the Family* and one episode from *The Honeymooners* factored into this study. In refining the scope of applicable data, and with consideration for the infancy of this study, the initial research includes only the first seasons of *Roseanne*, while the chosen episodes of *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family* were used for sociolinguistic and working class comparisons.

Prior to viewing the selected episodes, referencing various sociolinguistic studies aided in selecting the markers traced within each episode and its script. The first and most obvious marker, g-dropping, came from Fischer's (1958) study on the same subject, which examined the pronunciation of the progressive/gerund form *-ing* [ŋ]. The probabilistic cause for g-dropping depends largely on the speaker, but it is a trait usually assigned to informal verbs and occurs more often in the speech patterns of middle and working class speakers (Wells, 1982, p. 262; Van Herk, 2012, p. 47). To illustrate, one

might pronounce *running* [rən ɪŋ] like *runnin'* [rʌn ɛn], the latter often associated with “lower class and less formal speech” (Wells, 1982, p. 262). Concerning class distinctions, g-dropping is a trait often assigned to stigmatized speakers, though Wells is quick to make a distinction with respect to geographical differences:

In Birmingham, England, it appears that the velar form extends well down into working class speech, while in Birmingham, Alabama, the alveolar form extends well up into middle-class or educated speech. It is safe, though, to make the generalization that where there is an English-speaking working class at least some speakers have [-n]. (p. 263)

Though speaker agency can alter g-dropping, it was a common occurrence in all three sitcoms. All of the characters used a g-dropped pronunciation to varied degrees, and it appeared regardless of the series or the decade when it aired. Interestingly, it was not the only noticeable utterance shared amongst the three TV series. Identifying potential markers became easier after watching the first few episodes of *Roseanne*. Once the markers were reduced and eventually finalized, a system was implemented to contextualize the data further. The episodes were deconstructed using the following criteria, including:

- Setting (or where each scene took place)
- Interlocutor (or with whom the protagonist was speaking)
- Markers (g-dropping or other SAE deviation)

Predicting how significant the setting would be between the three shows was difficult, but surprisingly *All in the Family* was the only show with limited settings, due in part to the show taking place primarily inside Archie and Edith Bunker’s home in Queens, New

York. However, the interlocutor manipulated speaker agency, and depending on with whom the protagonist spoke, pronunciation only changed when speaker agency mandated a higher prestige variant. For instance, when speaking with an employer or otherwise imposing male presence, *Roseanne* may speak carefully, thus using the higher prestige form of speech. In most circumstances, casual speech markers occurred more often when speaking with in-group members than out-group members.

The social variables, be they dependent or independent, originate from Bell's (1984) audience design theory, but account for Crystal's (1997) preferred definition, which "refer[s] to units in a language which are most subject to social or stylistic variation, and thus most susceptible to change in the long term" (p. 408). Though cumbersome to dissect, Bell's Audience Design allows for social contexts to factor into sociolinguistic analyses by considering not only the spoken language, but also the situations where they occur. As Bell (1984) contends, audience design begins with understanding the style present within a given language. Bell explains, "Style is one dimension [of linguistic variation] that has often been measured but seldom explained" (p. 145), which include initiative design and referee design.

While many factors can influence how and why an individual chooses certain phonological pronunciations, both initiative and referee subcategories within Bell's (1984) Audience Design are applicable and noteworthy. Initiative design weighs social norms with speaker agency in conversation, thus determining how a speaker might proactively alter his or her speech either in adherence to or in violation of a particular situational norm (p. 182-184). Speaker agency relates the speaker's ability to dictate how he or she speaks to a particular interlocutor, or person, in a dialogue (Van Herk, 2012).

Referee design considers an absent, third party listener, who may also affect the speaker's language choices—sometimes favoring the absentee listener to the physically present addressee.

Thus, language style functions more appropriately, at least for this study, when factored as audience design, since it provides speculative insights into responsive speaker agency to decode individual motivations for altering one's speech patterns. As Bell concludes, "the basic tenet should be confirmed – that at all levels of language variability, people are responding primarily to other people. Speakers are designing their style for their audience" (p. 197). Using Bell's theory of audience design, this study will discern if particular scenarios shared amongst *The Honeymooners*, *All in the Family*, and *Roseanne* play significant roles in determining the protagonists' responses.

An underlying interest in pursuing this project was discerning Roseanne's speaker agency in a given scenario, as it suggested in early stages of research that the character maintained a more capable persona than other working class characters. The criteria related to speaker agency encompassed spoken dialogues requiring purposeful alterations of the protagonists' speech. Through each episode, it was important that the linguistic variations carried some sort of social stigma that deviated from the prestige form, or the desirable pronunciation, in a similar way to Preston's (2013) "noticing," which brings "conscious or unconscious focus [to] certain language production facts" (p. 95). Calling on the previous defining by Alford and Strother (1990), the prestige variant for Roseanne Conner is the Midwestern accent (p. 482). Similarly, the prestige variant for both Archie Bunker (as a resident of Queens, New York) and Ralph Kramden (of Brooklyn, New York) would be a New England or Northeastern accent, where the postvocalic [r] is in its

proper positioning within a word; for instance, the speaker says a word like *car* as [k^hɑ] (Crystal, 2010). The prestige accent avoids the intrusive [r], as heard in words where the [r] occurs phonetically displaced (e.g., *idea* pronounced *idear*) (Labov, 1970; Labov, 2006; Crystal, 2010). Deviations from American English (AE) included any speech variant with a unique alteration from the speaker.

At first, any deviation from the prestige variant was noted using only auditory perceptions through informal listening. The goal of this exercise was to test for pronounced sociolinguistic markers that were easily identifiable without extensive subject knowledge, so an average listener could theoretically discern the deviation without knowing what categorically differentiates it from standardized pronunciation. Frequency of the variant across each episode was integral, as the purpose of this study is to show consistency in the language used by working class characters over time to illustrate how working class language depicts working class people similarly in media representations.

The most limiting factor influencing this project was script inaccessibility, as only *Roseanne* scripts were easily securable. Copyright protections restricted access to official scripts for both *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family*, and most unofficial transcripts were either illegible scans or inaccurate transcriptions. Strict copyrights, held by Sony Entertainment, Incorporated, and Columbia Broadcasting Systems (CBS) respectively, removed public access provided by many online script-hosting sites. As a result, the data surveyed initially referenced *Roseanne* episodes “Bridge Over Troubled Sonny” and “The Dark Ages,” though official scripts were eventually secured.

Due to the amount of time required to correct a transcript (at an average of four hours), only one episode of *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family* contributed to this study. Deterrents notwithstanding, script incorporation will eventually occur once additional, accurate resources become available. Written inquiries requesting official scripts received no response from either Sony or CBS. However, should Sony or CBS respond to script queries, data from currently excluded episodes will be integrated into this study.

Another limitation resulted from h-dropping, which complicated the scope of this study and was removed. Similar to g-dropping, the next most prominent marker, h dropping, was omitted from this project because of the high frequency with which it occurred across all shows. While comparable to g-dropping, time restrictions forced the removal of the variant, though noteworthy instances included both g- and h- dropping within a single term (e.g., *hitting* ['hɪtɪŋ] became 'ittin' ['ɪtɛn]). While viable and traceable, it complicated an already dense project. The frequency overall provided enough justification to conduct further research using g-dropping and h-dropping to further the findings outlined here.

New Working Class studies encourages intersecting multiple theories facilitating critical analyses of working class culture and discovery of related sociolinguistic factors could apply to the small scope of the surveyed television series. As Preston (1991) confirms, “Mode (speech or writing), genre, participation, setting, and the like are apt to provide enormous arrays of interrelated factors—some interrelationships, doubtless, providing a basis for considerable predictability of linguistic variables” (p. 50). Resulting from Preston’s study, categorizing the data provided different avenues of exploration. In

limiting the scope of traceable markers, addressing lower-prestige language deviations often associated with the stereotypical markers of lower-class people became more manageable. The intentions behind limiting the scope of sociolinguistic variables while expanding influential subcategories was meant to permit multiple perspectives to explore the working class through three of its most prominent televised representations.

A linguistic commonality should prompt discussion regarding the societal effects stagnation has on working class socioeconomic status. Given this statement carries some degree of validity, then considerations for the situational, social variables (Labov, 1972; Bell, 1984; Bell & Johnson, 1997; Labov, 2006) should depict Roseanne as a positive portrayal of working class individuals by comparison. This required math, specifically determining frequency and ratios, which prompted inquiry into mathematics at the displeasure of the researcher. However, establishing ratios as an additional means for analyses helped better contextualize findings, while providing an alternative, comparative method. This proved particularly useful since the traceable variables reduced over time to focus solely on g-dropping. Wray (2002) posits, "Identification cannot be based on a single criterion, but rather needs to draw from a suite of features" (p. 43). To determine ratios, the rate a particular word appears as dialogue for Roseanne, written in Standard American English (SAE), was compared to on-screen spoken dialogue where g-dropping occurred.

However, frequency alone only provided an initial point of analysis, as building the context required some considerations to establish somewhat viable connections meriting further research. Conceivably, if the word *going* appears multiple times throughout one script, and Roseanne chose to g-drop only given certain situations, then

the frequency in this instance applies chiefly to the numeric occurrences—and little else. Therefore, the situations (or scenes) where one’s speech would proactively change were considered.

In order to lay a foundation for future research, this project explored the sociolinguistic specificities found in the pilot episode of Roseanne’s first season, with an emphasis on putting the aforementioned theories into practice. The totals calculate overall instances per category, with differences for the ratios and percentages (which represent medians for each). A more concise breakdown of each column describes each category, specifically:

- **SAE** - Lexical item written in Standard American English
- **IPA [ŋ]** - International Phonetic Alphabet spelling of lexical item
- **Written [n]** - Standard American English spelling (representing g-dropping)
- **IPA [n]** - International Phonetic Alphabet spelling (representing g-dropping)
- **Script Frequency (s)** - How often a particular word appears in the script
- **Spoken (t)** – Frequencies dialogic in nature and *inclusive of the entire cast*
- **Spoken [ŋ]** - How often the protagonist (Roseanne) pronounces the -ing
- **Spoken [n]** - How often the protagonist (Roseanne) g-drops
- **Ratio** - Calculated actual [n]:[ŋ]
- **Percentage** - Calculated score conveying the percentage (Roseanne) g-drops a given word.

To clarify any potential discrepancies, differences between Script Frequency (t) and Spoken (t) occur when a particular word found in the script does not appear in nor have influence on the televised episode. Though some explanations appear within the scripts

in the form of hand-written notes on a given page, other omissions lack any concrete explanation. Though the progressive verb *pulling*, for instance, might appear in the script, and thus figures into the Script Frequency (s), it does not quantify ratios or percentages because the word, in these instances, is a directive and not part of a character dialogue.

Another potential confusion may result from discrepancies between the Spoken (t) column (e.g., totals) and Spoken [η] and Spoken [n] columns because it only pertains to Roseanne. No other cast members factored into the results further than interlocutors. To illustrate, interactions occurred where both speakers (Roseanne and another cast member) use progressive tense verbs:

ROSEANNE: What's *going* on with you?

BECKY: Mother. This is very important. Our school is *having* a food drive for poor people.

Here, both instances could factor into the Spoken (t) for *going* and *having*, as these numbers collect all potential occurrences indiscriminately throughout the script; however, only Roseanne's use of *going* calculates in the Spoken [η] and Spoken [n] columns.

Though considerations may be made in the future, the emphasis here pertains to Roseanne's spoken language in a given episode.

Chapter 4: Results

The first season of *Roseanne* aired 23 episodes during its initial run. Data collected from scripts contained approximately 2,700 occurrences of progressive-tense verbs, gerunds, and any word containing an *-ing* suffix (estimated to account for human error). Of those, more than half—about 1600 variants—were in lines of written dialogue, with the remaining 40% were defined as non-dialogic text (e.g., not part of the televised episode). Non-dialogic text references written directives for the actors in a given scene, which were included in the scripts but not delivered on camera. Excluding all instances of non-dialogic text, the majority of terms appeared in print without any intentional g-dropping, which suggests some degree of middle-class appeal.

Roseanne’s lines made up most of the written dialogue, which suggests some degree for g-dropping to occur, with the remaining dialogues distributed amongst the cast (Table 1).

Table 1

Overview of <i>Roseanne</i> : Season 1					
Spoken (R)	Spoken (%)	Spoken [ŋ]	% of [ŋ]	Spoken [n]	% of [n]
2025	75%	915	45%	1110	55%

Throughout the first season, Roseanne’s written lines of dialogue totaled 2025 potential instances of g-dropping. Of those, approximately 75% were spoken on-screen, though the percentage is a rough estimation due to discrepancies between edited and unedited versions of certain episodes. Of the instances, Roseanne spoke more of her lines retaining the *-ing* [ŋ] pronunciation than she g-dropped [n]. The volume of spoken and written progressive tensed words, though a close approximation, was anticipated at the on-set of this project. As the lead protagonist in the series, Roseanne is in almost every scene, with few instances per season where the character is absent or does not speak;

instead, she shares most scenes with other actors, or interlocutors, which should influence the language choices used by the character.

Table 2

Roseanne, Season 1: Episode Overview						
(#)	Episode Title	Director	Writer	Original Air Date	Run-Time (m)	Run-Time (s)
1x1	"Life and Stuff"	E. Falcon	M. Williams	10/18/1988	21.51	1290.6
1x2	"We're in the Money"	E. Falcon	D. McFadzean	10/25/1988	21.48	1288.8
1x3	"D-I-V-O-R-C-E"	E. Falcon	L. E. Anderson	11/1/1988	21.52	1291.2
1x4	"Language Lessons"	E. Falcon	L. Gelman	11/22/1988	21.5	1290
1x5	"Radio Days"	E. Falcon	L. Gelman	11/29/1988	21.51	1290.6
1x6	"Lovers' Lane"	E. Falcon	D. Jacobson	12/6/1988	22.16	1329.6
1x7	"The Memory Game"	E. Falcon	G. McKeane	12/13/1988	21.49	1289.4
1x8	"Here's to Good Friends"*	E. Falcon	D. Jacobson	12/20/1988	21.52	1291.2
1x9	"Dan's Birthday Bash"	E. Falcon	G. McKeane	1/3/1989	21.49	1289.4
1x10	"Saturday"	E. Falcon	D. McFadzean	1/10/1989	22.31	1338.6
1x11	"Canoga Time"	E. Falcon	D. McFadzean	1/17/1989	21.51	1290.6
1x12	"The Monday thru Friday Show"*	E. Falcon	D. Jacobson	1/24/1989	21.5	1290
1x13	"Bridge Over Troubled Sonny"	E. Falcon	L. Gelman	1/31/1989	21.49	1289.4
1x14	"Father's Day"	E. Falcon	L. E. Anderson	2/7/1989	21.51	1290.6
1x15	"Nightmare on Oak Street"	J. Pasquin	G. McKeane	2/14/1989	21.51	1290.6
1x16	"Mall Story"	J. Sgueglia	L. Gelman	2/21/1989	21.5	1290
1x17	"Becky's Choice"	J. Sgueglia	L. Gelman & D. Jacobson	2/28/1989	21.53	1291.8
1x18	"The Slice of Life"	J. Sgueglia	L. E. Anderson & D. McFadzean	3/7/1989	21.51	1290.6
1x19	"Workin' Overtime"	E. Falcon	B. Pentland	3/14/1989	21.54	1292.4
1x20	"Toto, We're Not in Kansas Anymore"*	J. Sgueglia	G. McKeane	3/28/1989	22.26	1335.6
1x21	"Death and Stuff"	J. Sgueglia	B. Pentland	4/11/1989	22.22	1333.2
1x22	"Dear Mom and Dad"*	J. Sgueglia	D. Jacobson	4/18/1989	21.21	1272.6
1x23	"Let's Call It Quits"	J. Sgueglia	D. McFadzean & L. E. Anderson	5/2/1989	21.51	1290.6
Totals					21.62	1297.28

*Denotes unofficial, corrected transcript

Substantiating the collected information first required technical specifications regarding the premiere season of *Roseanne*, as well as access to official (and some unofficial) scripts and the related episodes. Data gathered from the scripts—including the original date of public broadcast and the run-time, broken down by minutes and seconds—authenticated information erroneously attributed through online sources (see Table 2).

Data verification using archived schedules from TVGuide.com, ratings provided by the Nielsen Company, and liner notes included in the DVDs, which further corroborated most of the information listed in Table 2. Precise running times—initially estimated at 22 minutes per episode—were determined through timed viewing, though there was a slight, initial margin of error resulting from the array of mediums available to view certain episodes. For instance, online streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu round the episode lengths, omit introductory scenes with dialogue, or preemptively end before the credits, which often included post-episode dialogues. As such, manual verification of the times was necessary for accurate representation regarding of the episodes' running time—both for this study, and for future research.

Accurate representation of the run times of each episode helped determine two integral factors for this project: frequencies and ratios. Frequency regarding potential g-dropping helped identify and discern variances in the data while collecting and analyzing Roseanne's spoken dialogues. Careful and casual speech, which calls for the speaker to use higher or lower prestige language (Fischer, 1958; Robinson, 1979; Bell, 1984; Preston, 1991; Wray, 2002), was first identified using the frequency of a word within a script and how often Roseanne replaced [ŋ] with the g-less [n].

Along with frequency, determining the ratio of term pronunciations required closer analysis of the scripts before viewing televised episodes. Ratios helped draw comparisons between not only Roseanne's speech acts, but also the speech acts of other interlocutors potentially influencing Roseanne's language. The ratios functioned congruently with frequency to better contextualize the speech patterns within a given scene, as Roseanne g-dropping occurs more than half the time at 55%, at an estimated

ratio of 5:4 (specifically 74:61). As Wray (2002) suggests, ratio measurements “take [into] account the need to juxtapose the frequency with which a particular item occurs within a given pattern and its overall frequency in the corpus. This procedure reveals the flexibility of that item relative to its context” (p. 29). Consequently, run-times, lexical frequencies, and the given ratios factored into generating workable ratios and percentages to analyze Roseanne’s working class language more accurately.

Table 3

SAE	IPA [ŋ]	IPA [n]	Script Frequency	Spoken [ŋ]	Spoken [n]	Ratio
going	['gō-iŋ]	['gō-en]	12	5	4	4:9

For instance, Table 3 illustrates collected information from the pilot episode of Roseanne, “Life and Stuff,” using the progressive tense verb *going* (IPA [ŋ]). The term appears in scripted dialogue 12 times, while Roseanne g-drops the tensed verb 4 times, but retains SAE pronunciation on 5 occasions (Spoken [ŋ]); this produced a ratio of 4:9, respectively, meaning she used careful speech and spoke the higher prestige form of the word. For the overall episode, Roseanne says the word *going* more than any character, but drops the final consonant less than originally projected. One cause can be the interlocutors, as Roseanne often used casual speech when speaking with authoritative figures, particularly in later seasons, or when she was asserting an authoritative parental role with her children (or husband). In “Bridge Over Troubled Sonny,” Roseanne and Dan catch their middle child, Darlene, smoking. Their conversation, taken from the script, follows:

ROSEANNE: Of course. Dan, you know what's gonna be the best part about Darlene smoking?

DAN: What, dear?

ROSEANNE: Watching her teeth turn yellow.

The manner Roseanne employs to communicate with Darlene, although sarcastic, is a slower-paced articulation of the written dialogue. Roseanne's tone denotes her displeasure with Darlene, but the manner in which she controls her speech retains her authoritative presence, while asserting her dominance. Interestingly, Roseanne is the lead in this confrontation, with her husband supporting and reacting to Roseanne.

Analysis of the episode "Life and Stuff" isolated 22 specific terms by using the scripts, noting frequencies, SAE deviations, and SAE adherences (Table 4). Then, analysis of the dialogue as extracted from the script contextualized the occurrences therein. Terms with the highest frequencies throughout the episode were *going*, *thing*, *everything*, *getting*, and *barking*. The last term, *barking*, is specific to the pilot episode, and does not appear again throughout the first season, but most of the terminology isolated in the first episode appears later with relative frequency. Eleven applicable terms appear only once throughout the episode, and of those, 9 of the 11 are spoken with the [n] ending. Further, four of those words contain more than three syllables, while the majority contains two or less. It appears that Roseanne does not g-drop words as often if they contain three syllables (e.g., *everything* has a g-drop frequency of 0 out of 5 possible instances). While syllabic factors show some significance here, the theories reach far beyond the scope of this project; however, it is worth mentioning, since it denotes a trend for further exploration.

Results from the pilot episode laid essential groundwork to move forward and revealed the extent to which Roseanne altered her character's speech in the interim between final script and taping. In "Life and Stuff," there were 73 written words

containing *-ing* suffixes, but only 64 of those appear in the televised portion of the scripted episodes. Of those, Roseanne spoke 55 words, or 86 percent (85.93%), of the total lines of dialogue.

Table 4

G-Dropping in <i>Roseanne</i>									
Season 1, Episode 1: Life and Stuff									
SAE	IPA [ŋ]	Written [n]	IPA [n]	Script Frequency (f)	Spoken (t)	Spoken [ŋ]	Spoken [n]	Ratio	Percentage
going	[ˈgō-ɪŋ]	goin'	[ˈgō-en]	12	11	5	4	4:9	44%
thing	[θɪŋ]	thin'	[θɪn]	7	5	3	2	2:5	40%
everything	[ˈev-rē-θɪŋ]	everythin'	[ˈev-rē-θɪn]	6	6	5	0	0:5	0%
getting	[gɛt-tɪŋ]	gettin'	[gɛt-tɪn]	6	5	0	5	5:0	100%
barking	[ˈbɑr kɪŋ]	barkin'	[ˈbɑr kɪn]	5	5	2	1	1:3	33%
something	[ˈsəm(p)-θɪŋ]	somethin'	[ˈsəm(p)-θɪn]	4	4	2	2	1:1	50%
talking	[ˈtɔkɪŋ]	talkin'	[ˈtɔk-en]	4	2	1	1	1:1	50%
morning	[ˈmɔr nɪŋ]	mornin'	[ˈmɔr nɪn]	4	4	3	0	0:3	0%
running	[ˈrʌn ɪŋ]	runnin'	[ˈrʌn ɪn]	3	2	1	1	1:1	50%
anything	[ˈɛn i θɪŋ]	anythin'	[ˈɛn i θɪn]	3	3	1	0	0:1	0%
nothing	[ˈnə-θɪŋ]	nothin'	[ˈnə-θɪn]	3	3	2	0	0:2	0%
driving	[ˈdraɪ vɪŋ]	drivin'	[ˈdraɪ vɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
fighting	[ˈfɑɪ tɪŋ]	fightin'	[ˈfɑɪ tɪn]	2	1	0	1	1:0	100%
looking	[ˈlʊkɪŋ]	lookin'	[ˈlʊk-en]	2	1	0	1	1:0	100%
doing	[ˈdū-ɪŋ]	doin'	[ˈdū-en]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
exciting	[ɪkˈsaɪ tɪŋ]	excitin'	[ɪkˈsaɪ tɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
helping	[ˈhel pɪŋ]	helpin'	[ˈhel pɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
sewing	[ˈsoʊ ɪŋ]	sewin'	[ˈsoʊ ɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
taking	[ˈteɪ kɪŋ]	takin'	[ˈteɪ kɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
turning	[ˈtɜr nɪŋ]	turnin'	[ˈtɜr nɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
quilting	[ˈkwɪl tɪŋ]	quiltin'	[ˈkwɪl tɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
visualizing	[ˈvɪz u ə laɪzɪŋ]	visualizin'	[ˈvɪz u ə laɪzɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
washing	[ˈwɒʃ ɪŋ]	washin'	[ˈwɒʃ ɪn]	1	1	0	1	1:0	100%
sickening	[ˈsɪk ə nɪŋ]	sickenin'	[ˈsɪk ə nɪn]	1	1	1	0	0:1	0%
trembling	[ˈtrɛm bəlɪŋ]	tremblin'	[ˈtrɛm bəlɪn]	1	1	1	0	0:1	0%
Totals (25 terms)				73	64	27	28	6:1	51%

At a ratio of 6:1, Roseanne used the lower-prestige variant of a word 86 percent of the time (85.71%), while delivering only 1 in every 7 lines of dialogue as originally written by Williams (6:1 ratio). Further, Roseanne's decision to use casual speech more often than careful speech suggests that Roseanne's speech alterations were purposeful to some extent, but requires further substantiation.

To factor Audience Design (Bell, 1984; Bell & Johnson, 1997) in the pilot episode, each particular instance where a variant [n] might occur was isolated, and upon each viewing, recorded (Table 5). Highlighted text denotes a word written using the less

prestigious form of the correlating word written in the script (*getting* written as *gettin*). These occurrences were rare, but represented the only form of stylized language in the script. Following identification and classification of each term, a focus on the scenario (or situation) and the interlocutor were considered. Interestingly, the first occurrences of *morning*, spoken to her husband, retained the prestige [ŋ] form.

Table 5

"Life and Stuff" Breakdown by Scene							
Act 1		Scene 1		Act 1		Scene 3	
INT. KITCHEN 7:30AM (DAY 11)				INT. CLASSROOM 3:30PM (DAY 1)			
SAE	Time	Spoken [n]	Interlocutors	SAE	Time	Spoken [n]	Interlocutors
morning	1:30	NO	Dan	going (+to)	11:30	NO	Ms. Crane
morning	1:35	NO	Dan	barking	12:07	NO	Ms. Crane
morning	1:38	NO	Dan	Act 2		Scene 1	
going	1:48	YES	Becky	INT. KITCHEN			
getting	2:40	YES	Caller (for Becky)	SAE	Time	Spoken [n]	Interlocutors
things	3:04	NO	Darlene	barking	13:51	YES	Darlene
nothing	3:06	YES	Darlene	want (+to)	13:57	NO	Darlene
going	3:40	YES	Dan	barking	14:12	NO	Darlene
sickening	3:43	NO	Dan	going (+to)	14:27	NO	Becky
everything	5:00	NO	Dan	doing	16:03	YES	Dan
going (+to)	5:50	YES	Dan	going (+to)	16:08	NO	Dan
getting	5:58	YES	Dan	everything	16:54	NO	Dan
going	6:21	YES	Dan	running	17:04	YES	Dan
Act 1		Scene 2		taking	17:05	YES	Dan
INT. LUNCH ROOM/FACTORY 8:00AM (DAY 1)				talking	17:09:01	YES	Dan
SAE	Time	Spoken [n]	Interlocutors	everything	17:09:03	NO	Dan
got (+to)	6:59	NO	Booker	nothing	17:11	NO	Dan
got (+to)	7:10	NO	Booker	everything	17:47	NO	Dan
quilting	7:30	YES	Booker	washing	18:08	YES	Dan
kind (+of)	7:45	NO	Booker	helping	18:36	YES	Dan
sewing	7:48	YES	Booker	getting	18:37	YES	Dan
looking	7:53	YES	Booker	Act 3		Scene 1	
give (+me)	7:54	NO	Booker	INT. GARAGE - TWILIGHT (DAY 1)			
something	8:05	YES	Crystal	SAE	Time	Spoken [n]	Interlocutors
exciting	8:08	YES	Crystal	trembling	20:45	NO	Dan
fighting	8:35	YES	Crystal	getting	20:56	YES	Dan
him	9:00	YES	Crystal	turning	21:26	YES	Dan
got (+to)	9:02	NO	Crystal	<i>Notes</i>			
rid (+of)	9:03	NO	Crystal	<i>It was predicted that Roseanne would use casual speech in scenes 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1, and use careful speech in scenes 1.2 and 1.3.</i>			
something	10:33	YES	Jackie, Crystal				
visualizing	10:39	YES	Jackie, Crystal				
getting	10:50	YES	Jackie, Crystal				
driving	10:54	YES	Jackie, Crystal				

Though one could speculate about this occurrence, such as network politics or the actor's anxiety, Roseanne's delivery of the lines where the variant occurs follows suit with other instances where the character asserts herself, in this case, patronizingly so: "In the fifteen years we've been married, has there ever been one morning when there wasn't coffee?" (Williams, 1988, pp. 4-5). In the first two minutes of the pilot episode, though Roseanne could g-drop four times (Table 4), she does so only after the kids leave for school. In addition, when she is asserting herself (with *morning*), the children are present, which places Roseanne in a situation where the higher prestige form may preserve her parental image and authority.

Figure 1 represents three parts of the collected data: the actual times g-dropping occurred (A [n]), the probability of [n] based on script data (P of [n]), and the average of g-dropping throughout the episodes (Linear (P of [n])). In its entirety, the pilot episode had 22 distinct variants recorded and traced across the duration of the show, and revealed differences in the spoken g-dropped words (Actual [n]) and the word retaining their prestige, SAE form (Diff [n]), which warranted further investigation (Figure 1). Scenes

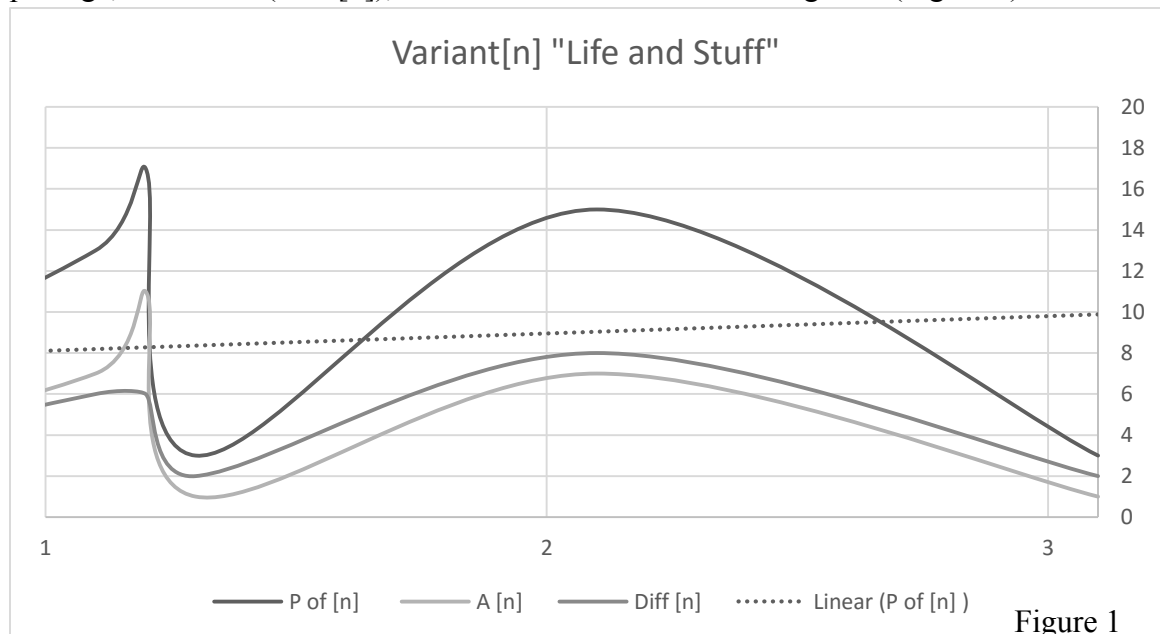


Figure 1

explored included Scene 1.2, which had the highest rate of g-dropping, and Scenes 1.3 and 3, which had the lowest (Figure 1). Scene 3 was later eliminated because it occurred during the end-credits of the show, which had a run-time of only 55 seconds, and Roseanne only had 34 spoken words (compared to Dan's at 84). Scene 1.2 occurs at Wellman's Plastics Factory, where Roseanne works all season, and Scene 1.3 is the impromptu parent-teacher conference at Darlene's school.

Upon further research, some noticeable differences prompted further inquiry into the two scenes. In Scene 1.2, there were 17 opportunities for g-dropping to occur, which had an actual rate of 11; conversely, scene 1.3 had a ratio of 1:3, which denotes a higher usage of the prestige form spoken therein. Though these numbers may lack statistical significance, they do share some common traits: both scenes occur outside the home, both scenes involve professional interlocutors, and both scenes involve some form of conflict resolution involving said interlocutors.

During the initial dialogue between Roseanne and her boss, Booker, the first two instances where a variant could occur do not, as evidenced in Table 5. Instead, Roseanne uses careful speech when speaking to Booker to request time off. This aligns with Audience Design Theory (Bell, 1984; Bell & Johnson, 1997), or sociolinguistic style. Bell and Johnson (1997) explain, "Speakers have a fine-grained ability to design their style for a range of different addressees, as well as for other audience members," which derives "from the underlying association of topics or settings with typical audience members" (p. 3). Roseanne alters her speech initially (6:59, 7:10 time markers), but once faced with workplace rhetoric and jargon, reverts to casual speech (7:48, 7:53 time markers), until making a final plea to leave an hour early from her shift using careful

speech (7:54 time marker). Referencing Tables 5 and 6, the yellow portions of the tables relates to sociolinguistic variants not applicable to the large context of this study.

However, these instances were necessary to illustrate Roseanne's language change when speaking to her boss. The blue highlighted portion, where Roseanne is listed as the interlocutor, references Booker's own digression into casual speech. A partial transcript of the exchange follows:

ROSEANNE: Booker. I've *got to* get off an hour early today.

BOOKER: I can't do it. We're two hundred cases behind on that Gelman order.

(BOOKER CROSSES TO THE TIMECARDS. ROSEANNE FOLLOWS)

ROSEANNE: I've *got to* Booker. It is really, really important.

In this instance, Roseanne articulates herself slowly, and her pitch reflects the desperation of the scenario, as evidenced by the time between instances (approximately 11 seconds, including travel time). After a brief exchange, Booker responds to Roseanne's request with traditional workplace rhetoric:

BOOKER: Roseanne. Here at Wellman Plastics we are a team, and I'd like to make us a winning team. All the players are equally as important. The running backs are no more important than the pulling guards. The pulling guards are no more—

Note Booker's rehearsed response, which does not drop despite the opportunities; instead, Roseanne gets an answer she may have heard before (though it is not clear). Her response to Booker's rationale immediately reverts to casual, less prestigious speech.

ROSEANNE: Yeah, I got it, I got it. It's like the big old *quilting* bee.

BOOKER: A what?

ROSEANNE: You know. Where all the barefoot women on the prairie get together you know, and they all stitch this one really incredible quilt. And no one patch is any more important than any other patch *kinda* thing, you know.

Roseanne's use of casual speech can consider setting, interlocutor, referees (e.g., other employees or the factory owners), but there might be a more calculated reason behind Roseanne's choice to revert to casual speech, as the conclusion of the exchange reveals:

ROSEANNE: Well, the woman *sewing* this patch *has to* get off an hour early today, Booker.

BOOKER: Look, Roseanne...

ROSEANNE: I'm *looking*, Booker. Come on. *Give me* a break.

BOOKER: All right. I'll give you half an hour. And it's *comin' outta* your check.

ROSEANNE: Well, there goes the Porsche.

Roseanne use of casual speech may result from realizing elevated speech of Booker would not garner the desired outcome. Once the borrowed prestige of Booker's middle-class vernacular proves ineffective, she reverts to less-prestigious linguistic forms in an attempt to relate to the blue-collar nature of working in a plastics factory—which proves more successful, despite only getting a half-hour leave and lost pay. More interestingly, though, is Booker's deviation, albeit brief, in his own speech. Despite Booker's authoritative presence, Roseanne adjusts her speech in response to the discourse between them. The strategy worked, and she uses it several times with Booker throughout the first season, with similar results.

Intersecting Working Class Protagonists using the aforementioned process for analyses, attention turned to previously successful working class sitcoms *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family*. These explorations were casual, and focused on one episode of each series, with the intent on isolating similar speech variants found in *Roseanne*, then discerning if a shared working class lexicon existed between the three shows. There were three specific episodes meeting the necessary criteria (access to actual scripts or transcripts being the only qualification): *The Honeymooners* “Funny Money” and *All in the Family*’s “Archie and the Editorial,” which used corrected transcripts as a means for analysis. These results were compared to the pilot episode of *Roseanne*, particularly because of the depth with which the episode had been reviewed. Between the three viable episodes, frequency and ratios determined the overall variables for each episode. In total, there were 120 unique instances of linguistic variant (g-dropping) of the 216 potential instances of g-dropping spoken by the protagonists (see Table 7).

Table 7

Protagonist	Script Frequency (s)	Spoken (t)	Spoken [ŋ]	Spoken [n]	Ratio	Percentage
Ralph Kramden	50	35	10	25	5:2	71%
Archie Bunker	96	79	8	71	17:2	90%
Roseanne Connor	70	64	28	24	6:1	51%
Totals	216	178	46	120	28:5	71%

Initial review of data suggests stark differentiations between the three lead characters’ speech pattern. Specifically, Archie Bunker’s language uses less of the prestigious form than Kramden and Roseanne. Omitting immediate considerations for extenuating influences like the plot, setting, and context there in, Kramden’s lack of g-dropping did not influence this disparity as much as on-screen time. Preliminary results

connected Kramden with Roseanne more so than Bunker, whose deviations from SAE influence almost every spoken line of dialogue, due in large part to the amount of time each spends featured in their episodes. This revealed an emerging trend in the data with relation to the protagonists' screen time, as it was disproportionate between the three.

The Honeymooners Kramden—despite having the second-longest run-time per episode of the three—actually spent less time interacting with supporting cast members than either *All in the Family*'s Bunker or *Roseanne* (Figure 2).

<p><i>The Honeymooners</i>: "Funny Money"</p> <p>Episode Cast: 13</p> <p>Run-Time: 25:10</p> <p>On-Screen: 21:10</p>	<p><i>All in the Family</i>: "Archie and the Editorial"</p> <p>Episode Cast: 10</p> <p>Run-Time: 25:36</p> <p>On-Screen: 24:15</p>	<p><i>Roseanne</i>: "Life and Stuff"</p> <p>Episode Cast: 13</p> <p>Run-Time: 21:51</p> <p>On-Screen: 19:20</p>
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Figure 2

In the episode "Funny Money," *The Honeymooners*' Ralph Kramden appears in 21 minutes and 10 seconds of the 25:10 episode length. Though the show has 13 total cast members, only a few share lines of dialogue with Kramden because the narrative of the story causes many supporting characters, such as the criminals who produced the counterfeit money, have scenes sans Kramden. Roseanne appears on-screen for 19 minutes and 20 seconds of the episode "Life and Stuff," which carries a 21 minute and 51 second runtime. Roseanne interacts with every character on-screen and remains the focus throughout the episode. By comparison, the on-screen time of *All in the Family*'s Bunker (at 24:15 of the episode's 25:36 run-time) outnumbers those figures, especially when coupled with the amount of spoken interactions by Bunker to the supporting cast (Figure 2). Archie Bunker appears in every scene, and during his televised editorial segment, delivers a 1 minute and 7 seconds monologue with minimal interruptions.

As such, Kramden's lack of screen time and reduced interactions with supporting characters correlated with the reduced occurrences of both g-dropping (25 total). Conversely, Archie Bunker more than doubled instances of g-dropping when compared to both Roseanne and Kramden (see Table 7). Roseanne also features a large principle cast but barely surpasses *All in the Family* regarding total spoken lines, while Gleason's *The Honeymooners* touts an equally largest cast with speaking parts (between the four stars and nine guest roles). On-screen interactions may be more frequent in numbers, but less so concerning individual spoken lines. Kramden's regular cast may be the smallest of the three, with only four principle cast members sharing slightly less or equal time on-screen, but Kramden interacts with more guest actors than the other three shows.

Archie Bunker used spoken [n] equal to 90% of his spoken lines of dialogue, compared to Kramden's 90% and Roseanne's 51%, respectively (Table 7). During Archie Bunker's total time on-screen, Bunker g-drops at a ratio of 17:2 (and it is worth noting that every spoken line delivered by Carrol O'Conner, the actor portraying Bunker, had multiple instances of linguistic deviations). The frequency of Kramden's spoken [n] is due in part to Gleason's adlibs creating repetitious delivery of his lines. Often, he would repeat the same word, like *starting*, successively in a single line, despite it not being included in the transcript, identified in parentheses:

Ralph: Oh, you're startin' right in, (huh? Startin' right in) with the insults! No warmin' up in the bullpen or nothin', huh? (Startin' right in!) I remember when you used come over, you used to start slow with a couple of "Hello, Stupids" and stuff like that! Now, I don't even get that, anymore, huh? Well, let me tell you somethin', (and

get this into your head!). This is my home, and when you come in here, treat me with respect, and address me with a civil tongue!

Further, there were only a few instances where g-dropping occurred with such frequency, most notably in Kramden's use of the word *something*, which he consistently avoided SAE pronunciation. The most-spoken words in *The Honeymooners* "Funny Money" stems from proactive repetition: specifically, *something*, *starting*, and *going*. The higher frequency, because of assumed ad-libs by Gleason, increased the overall statistics for the show regarding g-dropping.

Bunker has more occurrences of g-dropping than Rosanne and Kramden combined, but as previously mentioned, this results from excessive screen time and dominating lines of dialogue, which neither Kramden or Roseanne demonstrate. Bunker is the only one of the three who consistently g-drop, regardless of external circumstances that might require a prestige variant of the words. This might also stem from regional dialects of New Yorkers, as Labov and other linguists have study the language of New Yorkers due to its distinct characteristics. Bunker's consistent g-dropping gives the character more linguistic variables by comparison. If this study factored in shared speech, the amount of verbal variation would drastically increase, as most of Bunker's spoken language has some form of linguistic variable. Overall, g-dropping appears more than any other marker in a similar manner of Archie Bunker, but additional time would be necessary to accurately identify and trace all those occurrences.

Archie:

What the hell is this, the Christian Science Reading Room?

Edith:

I didn't expect you home so soon

Archie:

Oh, no, think (think) nothing of it, Edith, (think nothing of it). Jesus, I can
get jollier welcomes down at the morgue.

In this scene, Bunker's insertions into the script (noted in parenthesis) occurs at the beginning of the episode, and continues throughout the episode. Overall, *Roseanne's* "Life and Stuff" shares common lexical and phonological traits with both "Funny Money" and "Archie and the Editorial," at least in an auditory sense. The amount of ad-libbing across the three scripts/transcripts is high, and with Archie Bunker, more frequent than either Roseanne or Ralph Kramden. Specifically, 71 occurrences of g-dropping appeared throughout the duration of the episode "Archie and the Editorial," with eight instances matching the transcript, which supports the intentional deviations from the transcript. Further, Bunker speaks most, if not all, of his dialogic interactions using deviated speech pronunciations, including mispronunciation of more complex words (e.g., saying *perverts* like *preverts*). In the pilot episode of *Roseanne*, the character deviates from SAE 24 times, which is on par with the 36 instances traced across other episodes in the first season, such as "Bridge over Troubled Sonny" and "The Dark Ages." The data from *Roseanne* correlates more closely to Kramden's, but only in frequency (30 occurrences within the timeframe of the episode).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Though the American Broadcasting Network (ABC) billed *Roseanne* as a working class comedy, the differentiations present from the final scripts to the televised episodes of *Roseanne* suggest the writers might have struggled characterizing the working class on paper. Final drafts of the scripts included few lexical deviations from Standard American English (SAE). Instead, writers relied on salient indicators to represent working class language in *Roseanne* such as elided terms and colloquialisms. As Beach (2002) maintains, “Comedy has traditionally been a mode that uses language to examine and critique existing social structures, including those governing the construction of class” (p. 3). While past working class sitcoms criticized the socioeconomic infrastructure of their eras, it was usually at the expense of the protagonist and his or her interactions with others. The characters became the very jokes the audiences looked forward to each week, so any social commentary was delivered through a satirical lens some viewers might have overlooked.

Archie Bunker appealed to many viewers who laughed at O’Connor’s delivery of some rather absurd societal critiques. What audiences might have overlooked was the reality behind the character’s stagnated worldviews. In one interview, O’Connor revealed the troublesome nature of Archie Bunker’s appeal, stating, “He never laughed at anything himself, Archie. The world was a painful place to him. And because it was painful to him, it was funny to you. You got a kick over watching a guy who was constantly in pain over things you take for granted” (Du Brow, 1994, para. 12). Similarly, Ralph Kramden’s character is perpetually angry with someone or something in his life, be it his wife, his wealthy mother-in-law, or a wealth of other life-related factors.

Where Barr (2012) differed was in the desire to overcome the hardships of working class life, as she revealed, “In my TV family, the Conner kids went through some tough life passages, but the family was tight in its own way and they muddled through” (p. 144). Instead of being a victim to life’s obstacles, Roseanne found the laughter hidden in overdrawn checking accounts, delinquent utility bills, and forced overtime at Wellman’s Plastic Factory.

The problem arises when writers rely on longstanding character tropes to illustrate their notions of class, as many of the writers in the first season were wont to do. The writers often retained the higher-prestige form of SAE progressive tenses throughout—including verbs, nouns, and adjectives—as evidenced by inclusion of *-ing* endings of words and the selective inclusion of certain stylistic language (e.g., *ain’t* and using double negatives like *don’t no one*).

The 23 reviewed scripts for *Roseanne*, written by 6 different writers, often-depicted working class through instances of elided language, rather than writing a term including g-dropping or other sociolinguistic variants. This might assume the writers’ one-dimensional view of working class people, or it could be resulting from limited exposure to examples of the working class beyond the Archie Bunkers and Ralph Kramdens of the world. The writers’ preference for the elided terms, like *going to* (scripted as *gonna* [ˈgənə]) and *what are you* (scripted as *whatcha* [ˈ(h)wəCHə]), lacks exclusivity for any particular character in *Roseanne*, and also functions as one of the few phonetic terms used consistently to differentiate Roseanne and her family from other middle and upper class interlocutors in the show.

By comparison, most words written with an *-ing* ending appeared lexically intact, with very few instances of g-dropping included in the pilot script. Instead, occurrences of g-dropping appeared on-screen chiefly through Roseanne's own agency within the show, but often caused discord between the actor and the staff behind the scenes. In the controversial *New York Magazine* article, Roseanne (2011, May 11) detailed a four-hour standoff between the show's producers and a line the actor deemed an uncharacteristic representation of a working class person, which resulted in lawyers, executives, and a handful of writers exiting from the show (p. 3). She recalled, "The line was a ridiculously sexist interpretation of what a feminist thinks—something to the effect of 'You're my equal in bed, but that's it' (p. 4). Though Roseanne never revealed the specific episode where the dialogue appeared, astute readers can gather the line exists somewhere in-between the fifth episode and the thirteenth, when Williams exited the show (p. 4). Through this account, the actor demonstrated the severity of the dissention between the writing staff and the actors in *Roseanne*.

Roseanne goes on to describe some of her involvement in the writing process for the series, which she has claimed ownership of since the show's inception (Barr, 1988; Barr, 1994; Barr, 2012). At the time, head writer and (credited) series creator Matt Williams' public dispute with Roseanne (Barr, 1994; Finke, 1989) resulting from creative differences ended with Williams' departure from the series (Finke, 1989, January 25). Roseanne (1994) has gone on record regarding her distain for the first season's writing, and of Williams in particular, asserting, "My character was totally passive, like just about every other woman on TV. I was not 'Roseanne' and it wasn't pretty...I took a meeting with Marcy Carsey and Tom Werner [Producers], with Matt Williams sitting in for

ballast” (p. 3). The constant struggle between Williams and Roseanne’s vision for the working class and put the pair at-odds, until he resigned later that year (Finke, 1989, January 25). Be it network politics, backstage drama, or ignorant writers, the missing working class language in *Roseanne*’s scripts might explain why, at the end of the first season, most of the writers were no longer working for the show (Barr, 2011; Lorre, 2012).

The practice demonstrated throughout inconsistent scripting speaks to a long-standing incongruity devaluing working class language through underlying preferences of careful, higher-prestige speech (Huspek, 1994, p. 91). Despite any specific written instances of g-dropping, the probability for sociolinguistic speech variants was high simply because most, if not all, inflected *-ing* words appeared standardized to SAE. Press (2009) attributes the purposeful scripting of working class speakers through middle-class language as a trend featuring the middle as an all-encompassing group within the spectrum of the wealthy and the poor: “The commercial nature of television dictated that it feature a middle-class ambiance... taming the earlier independence of television’s domestic women” (p. 141). While Roseanne remained the star and retained the highest amount of lines per episode, her scripted lines were written evoking careful speech more than the salient *gonna*, *gotta*, *wanna*, and others. In the pilot, Roseanne has more opportunity than any other character to g-drop, but very few instances of the aforementioned salient variables; the terms were, however, included in dialogue for every character described as the working class.

Avoidance of written SAE deviations might suggest an aversion to lower-prestige language behind the scenes. Laver and Trudgill (1979) correlate formal speech—present

in the sample of *Roseanne* scripts—with certain social markers existing within a given speech community, arguing: “Speakers who use a high percentage of *-ing* (rather than *-in ’*) suffixes will be perceived as middle class” (p. 21). Conversely, speakers using lower-prestige forms of language, such as g-dropping, denote stereotypical linguistic attributes ascribed to one’s working class status (pp. 20-21). While scripts suggest the writers favor higher-prestige language despite the working class nature of *Roseanne*, they managed to use *gonna* [ˈgɒnə] 151 times within the samples, and in some cases, *gonna* is the only term distinguishing Roseanne’s dialogue from any other TV mother on-air at the time.

Challenging the working class lexicon, if not entirely omitting it, may only confirm for some what might be obvious for others: representing working class through language must acknowledge its existence. Evoking elided forms of language certainly does not substantiate any of the writers’ opinions towards the working class or their language, but might insinuate a subconscious bias through their archetypal choices. But, as Preston (1991) asserts, “nonlinguists have long associated upper-class forms with formal use and lower-class forms with casual use” (p. 34), and as evidenced in the written scripts, many of the writers retained higher prestige forms of a given word, whereas *Roseanne* more often than not went off-script. The show’s written dialogue suggests the writers’ ignorance towards accurately representing the working class speech communities, which were integral to establishing and maintaining *Roseanne*’s long-term success, at least according to the actor and co-creator (Barr, 1994; Barr, 2011; Barr, 2012; Barr, 2014).

Further inquiry revealed a noticeable trend regarding prestige, speaker agency, and Roseanne: as the season progressed, the disparity between written and spoken language increased. Connections can be drawn from the pilot script, where Roseanne g-drops at a ratio of 6:1. Conversely, the height of g-dropping occurred in the nineteenth episode, “Workin’ Overtime,” where the ratio changed to 7:1, while the thirteenth episode reflects a decrease at 3:1, due in part to a supporting character monopolizing much of the spoken dialogue. The fluctuating instances of dialogue suggest the influence of external factors including interlocutors, but not discounting the emotional subtext in a given plot, the primary setting where the episodes occur, and even the relationship between Roseanne and the writer of a given episode.

To illustrate, in episode 13 “Bridge Over Troubled Sonny” (written by L. Gelman), Roseanne’s neighbor Crystal (played by actor Natalie West) deals with the sudden loss of her husband. Considering the sensitive nature surrounding the episode, specifically dealing with a loved one’s death, it is not surprising Roseanne uses careful speech more than casual speech. In its entirety, West speaks 57 times throughout the episode, compared to series regular Laurie Metcalfe, who played Roseanne’s sister Jackie, with only 20. Between the six regular actors on the show and the variety of guests per episode, Roseanne’s dialogues containing any likelihood of g-dropping reduced substantially. Whether intentional or not, Roseanne’s linguistic deviations seem representative of, not degrading to, working class culture. Dialogue from episode thirteen, “Bridge Over Troubled Sonny,” demonstrates the differences between the written product and Roseanne’s execution (Figure 3).

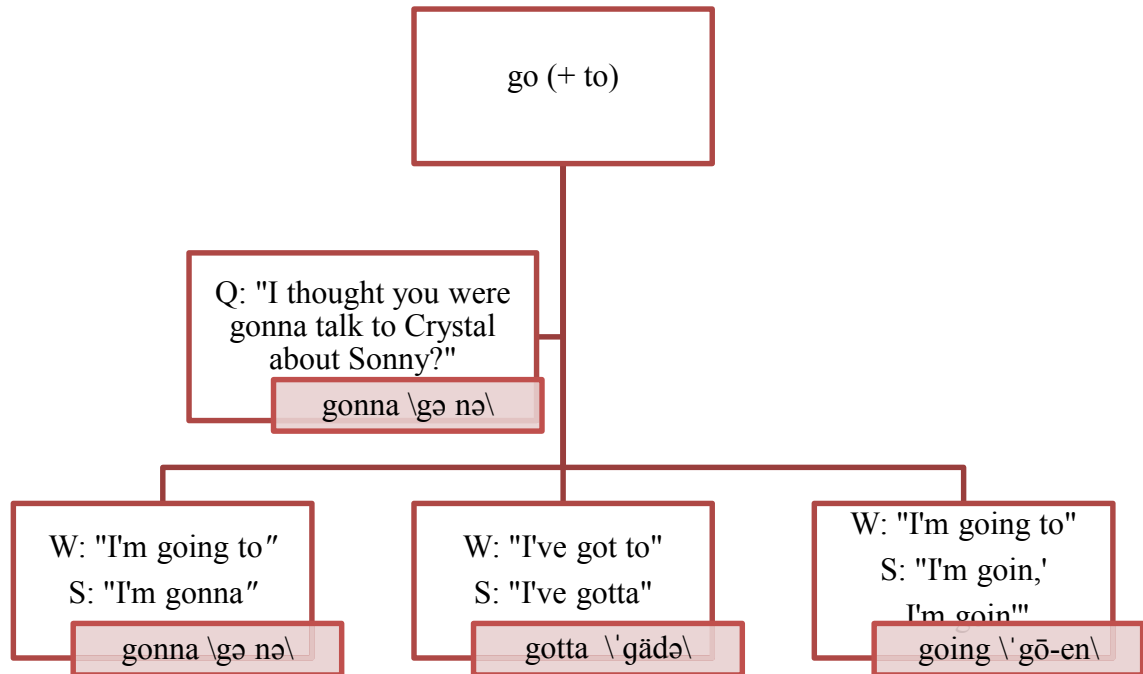


Figure 3

In Figure 3, the abbreviation *W* represents the line (or excerpt), as Gelman originally wrote it, while *S* represents Roseanne's on-screen delivery of the line. Notice in Jackie's question, Gelman included the term *gonna*, but in each of Roseanne's responses, which happen in succession, Gelman wrote the careful form of each verb. Given the setting where this particular scene occurs—Roseanne and Dan's bedroom—and a familiar interlocutor in Jackie, and the nature of the conversation, it is not surprising that Roseanne uses the casual variants in each response despite Gelman's final script. Another point of interest is the jovial nature of the scene, as both Roseanne and Jackie were laughing in this scene, thus further suggesting the likelihood of using casual speech.

Though this particular example does not suggest Gelman was biased or ignorant to the working class and their struggles, it does align with other writers in the series, who used careful and casual speech interchangeably, and with little regard for the

circumstances surrounding the dialogues and the prestige variants associated with it. As Baugh (1987) explains:

When a politically dominant dialect is well established, such as standard English, it is common for many to assume that the ‘educated’ dialect is indeed superior to similar nonstandard dialects, while the language of lower-class tends to be diminished and termed lazy, vulgar, or illogical. These naïve notions about linguistic superiority and inferiority reinforce common stereotypes and conceal the political foundations of sociolinguistic domination. (p. 236)

In the three instances in Figure 3, Roseanne (1994) purposefully deviates from SAE pronunciations to better portray the character yet never sacrifices the character’s capacity or intellect. The actor revealed, “By [episode 6] I was rewriting everything and naturally not getting the credit for it” (p. 94). Though g-dropping is commonly an associated sociolinguistic attribute of working class language, Roseanne employs it without adhering to the misconceptions embedded within the language that working class individuals are unmotivated and uneducated people. Though resistance to working class language seems evident in the scripts, Roseanne embodied her own form of resistance in her demands regarding the character’s portrayal.

Over ten years following *Roseanne*’s series finale, the actor revealed the opposition to both the character Roseanne and the show itself originated from an unlikely, yet unsurprising, source: the American Broadcast Company (ABC) who aired the show. In a recent interview for the National Geographic series *The ‘90s: The Last Great Decade?*, Roseanne describes the primary issue behind the scenes, revealing: “There wasn’t resistance to having a show about a working class family on television;

there was resistance to have a show about intelligent working class people on television [sic]" (Barden, 2014). This connects to other accounts detailing the strife amongst the cast, the crew, and the production company Casey-Werner. In the previously mentioned *New Yorker* article, Barr (2011) recalled the gift she received when *Roseanne* beat *The Cosby Show* in the ratings to become the most watched prime-time show—a cake. While the ABC network gave their male actors expensive sport cars, the cast of *Roseanne* got a chocolate cake, much to the chagrin of the actors who made the show a success (p. 4). Though no evidence can confirm the writers worked under directives from the network to make *Roseanne* more appealing towards middle class viewers, one might look to Matt Williams follow-up hit *Home Improvement*, which Williams hired many of the unemployed *Roseanne* writers, to draw their own conclusions.

Though later episodes begin to represent working class language more accurately than the initial episodes, *Roseanne*'s initial language deviations seemed to be a methodical act of preservation attempting to retain her vision of a working class, feminist matriarch. By comparison, the differentiations through impromptu changes to the script preserve the working class character. *Roseanne* (1994) explains:

So now [the writers] had a divining rod that helped them locate the nature of the show and they all knew what 'working class' meant. This was their idea of working class: They were up there in their production office in what I called 'the big house,' on my money, eating broccoli and asparagus and rare steaks for lunch while we had a bowl of potato chips and some M & Ms. And they knew what working class meant. (p. 108)

Subsequent viewings of the unedited, televised episodes revealed both Roseanne's deviation from the script through last-minute revisions substantiated by the actor. In her second autobiography, Roseanne (1994) details one instance of revision: "After scrapping the first draft, Matt [Williams], in rapid succession, turned my show into the little boy's story (told from a child's point of view) and then the Dad's" (p. 5). Further, Roseanne claimed the lackluster scripts forced revisions, stating, "I rewrote it, rewrote every scene, taking stuff from my act, wrote the sister's part, punched up the daughter's part [*sic*]" (p. 5). Roseanne's ownership of her character, as well as her family, further suggests the agency of the actor in representing the working class through a realistic, affirmative lens.

Indiscriminate use of stereotypical language, which meant to depict the Conner family as working class, ultimately aimed at hiding them within the traditional middle class vernacular. Though characters like Archie Bunker or Ralph Kramden used stylized language, it served more as a comedic device for audiences, while often the supporting cast uses the higher prestige language usually associated with the middle class. As Metzgar (2005) argues, disguising or removing working class representations "hides the working class (by including it within the ubiquitous middle) and then forgets it's there" (p. 198), and that the working class needs to be seen as "different from, not less than, the professional middle class" (p. 198). Similarly, Roseanne's integrated g-dropping tied to her socioeconomic background, while never becoming the joke, thus showing millions of viewers a working class family who refuses to adhere to middle class norms and expectations. As evidenced in the script-to-screen process, alterations displayed through Roseanne's performance metaphorical mirror the struggle of working class recognition. Metzgar (2005) contends:

The current vernacular consistently overlooks the working class, a pattern we can trace back to the 1950s, when we declared ourselves “a middle-class society.”

But the vernacular has never been entirely consistent, and if you are referring to factory workers or other clearly recognizable “blue-collar” folks, you can use the forbidden term and everybody will know what you mean and a host of associations and connotations will arise. (p. 200)

More often than not, Roseanne deviated from the script, thus altering the middle-class language (and perceptions) to reflect the star’s vision for both the character and the show. As the inspiration for the character was the actor’s life as a working class mother, then stand-up comic, Roseanne (1994) felt no one understood the character quite as she did. She explained, “I’m not gonna [*sic*] give away my character after it took my whole goddamn life to build it” (p. 4). While Roseanne had the most spoken lines per episode, her character’s language retained a familiar, higher-prestige pattern across the scripts, which Roseanne often changed during production.

Structurally, the shared lexicon meant to represent the working class Conner family did little to distinguish themselves as unique from one another—at least in print. The star’s claims regarding the writing seem somewhat valid: several instances use repetitive dialogue and devices interchangeably between Roseanne and the rest of the cast:

Dan (Episode 1.1, “Life and Stuff”): Aw, come on, Roseanne...

Jackie (Episode 1.2, “We’re in the Money): Ah, Come on. Let’s go see...

Roseanne (Episode 1.3, “D-I-V-O-R-C-E”): Ah, come on. It 's so obvious...

Becky (Episode 1.4, “Language Lessons): Ah, come on you guys. You know...

Though this represents a small sample, the writers duplicate the sentence structure (exclamation + phrasal verb) across all 23 episodes with almost every character, despite having a larger pool of writers for each episode and sporting a sizable cast. The trend, appearing less in latter episodes of the first season, appears prominently in the first half of the season until Williams' departure. *Ah, come on* is not the only repeated language, as the previously mentioned and purposefully misspelled *gonna* (along with *gotta* and *whatcha*) appeared excessively in each episode and spoken by every character at different times throughout the series. While resonating with fans, some might consider the familiar language used in working class sitcoms as a covert admission of writers' unfamiliarity with who comprises the working class at large.

Though stifled, ignored, or disavowed, working class voices speak to the mass appeal emerging from the narratives therein. From *The Honeymooners* in the 1950s, to *All in the Family* in the 1970s, to *Roseanne* ending the 1980s and maintaining a pop-culture presence throughout the 1990s, the existence of working class families on TV might have been limited, but impactful nonetheless. Each show, despite the controversies surrounding them during their respective televised runs, was a certified success in their decades (Ozersky, 2003), thus providing an indispensable platform for working class visibility. Press (2009) explained television programming's shift away from the "mainstream majority," to include in recent decades the "increasing cultural recognition of the true diversity...that constitutes our culture" (p. 140). The challenge, then, is to connect the culture to the language across the decades and illustrate the formulaic approaches used to portray working class through Kramden, Bunker, and Roseanne.

Between the three characters, the distinctiveness of the characters' spoken language resonated with fans, as each protagonist embodied stereotypical speech patterns often associated with the working class—namely g-dropping, which spans decades. This echoes Alford and Strother's (1990) sentiment, "U.S. Culture is saturated with caricatures of various ethnic and regional peoples" (p. 480). Admittedly, most fictionalized television portrayals exaggerate the characters they represent, but Roseanne resonated with audiences because of the accuracy with which she embodied a working class individual. In demonstrating her agency both behind and in front of the camera, Roseanne fought to secure her depiction of the working class in the United States. The actor used the language meant to hide, blend, or otherwise disenfranchise the working class to not only challenge the writers who draft the scripts, but bridge the gap between the fictionalized account of her life and the reality that inspired it.

Conclusions

What followed from this study was the revelation that sociolinguistics has a place within New Working Class theory, but perhaps requires a deeper analysis than provided here. Though g-dropping alone was not sufficient in substantiating a common working class corpus shared between fictionalized characters, the frequency in g-dropping led to insights into speaker agency and audience design theory. Further exploration using additional variants such as h-dropping and consonant blending might help better accomplish the goals set forth here.

One interesting finding resulting from analyzing g-dropping was the degree to which Roseanne—both as an actor and as the fictionalized character—employed her speaker agency through script deviations. In certain respects, Roseanne’s speaker agency alluded to the actor’s commitment to the series and to the character. In certain regards, Roseanne influenced the perspectives of an entire generation of viewers regarding the working class. Though there were slight instances throughout supporting the idea of a shared linguistic corpus, independently *Roseanne* contrasted *All in the Family*, *The Honeymooners*, and other working class sitcoms by presenting a character capable of navigating obstacles and negotiating the social institutions meant to repress her. Though there were no statistically significant relations between Roseanne and other working class TV sitcoms, to some degree the findings suggest further exploration of the topic.

If nothing else, this study brought sociolinguistics into the evolving practices of New Working Class studies. Though unable to substantiate the existence of a shared working class language, which subsequently perpetuates the WC stereotypes, it has provided enough insights into the various methods scholars, academics, and students

might employ as a means for interdisciplinary analysis. While linguistically, the results regarding speaker agency and audience design proved more beneficial, as Roseanne's use of language is largely dependent on the interlocutor(s) and the scenario. Frequency is important in gaging the speech patterns for the protagonists, and in the future, incorporating additional variants might help better intersect sociolinguistic analysis with working class theory. Further, while simple auditory perceptions can denote dialect, accent, and other spoken deviations from Standard American English, the findings here demonstrate Roseanne uses language in a given situation—as a tool—rather than simply using casual speech as a means of characterization.

Roseanne's agency is both in the character and in the actor, as her purposeful deviations helped elevate Roseanne as a capable individual stuck in the confines of Working Class stigmatization. Echoing Lawson (2014), "It's one thing to see individual class actors performing in a social space, but those performances need to be connected to the social whole, and to shift patterns of interest and calculation informing wider social struggles—not only over seeming and being—but over the increasingly conflict-laden allocation of economic resources, opportunities, and rewards" (p. 12). The unfortunate reality is that the working class has not been featured prominently since *Roseanne* aired its series finale and *Friends* dominated the Nielsen ratings. Though other working class sitcoms have aired since, none have gained the popularity reached by *Roseanne*, which exists for many as one of the last working class sitcoms to show a positive embodiment of the an often misrepresented group.

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