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## A Study of Unsolicited Advice

## A STUDY OF UNSOLICITED ADVICE<sup>1</sup>

Dana Boatman

### Introduction

The differences between the speech of women and that of men have been the focus of many studies in recent years. In her study of men's and women's speech patterns in a Mayan community (1980), Penelope Brown found that a frequent correlation between higher status<sup>2</sup> and the male sex influences and distinguishes the speech of men from that of women. Robin Lakoff describes women's speech as "more polite" than that of their male counterparts (1973). Women's speech has also been characterized as less obtrusive than the speech of men and marked by the frequent use of tag questions and compound request forms which signal "weakness" and "uncertainty" (Lakoff 1973). In effect, the speech patterns of men appear to reflect a form of culturally legitimated authority not present in the speech of women (Thorne, Kramarae & Henley 1983).

The solicitation of advice, as a speech act, is based on the assumption that the advice-giver possesses information or knowledge needed by the advice-seeker. That is, advice is generally solicited from one who is believed to have knowledge. This knowledge is a basis of the advice-giver's status, which in turn legitimates his/her giving of advice. Considering this, and in light of the frequent correlation

between the male sex and higher status, we can hypothesize that men will give more solicited advice than women and that their advice will be directed to women more often than to other men.

Unsolicited advice, however, does not entail a show of status recognition from the advisee, since the sharing of knowledge has not been requested. Nonetheless, in giving unsolicited advice the advice-giver appears to presume that his/her authority will be accepted by the advisee. Such a signal of authority would correspond well to the patterns of male speech described above. We can, then, further hypothesize that men will give more unsolicited advice than women, and that this unsolicited advice will be more frequently directed to women than to other men.

The following study was undertaken to determine the relative effects of variables gender and status on the giving and receiving of unsolicited advice by members of a residential hall on a university campus. The site studied is of particular interest because the positions of highest status are held by women. The study will attempt to determine the influence of the conflicting variables, gender and status, on a variety of speech situations.

However, before the effects of gender, or any other variable, on the "structuring of speech acts" can be described, it is first necessary to study the societal context in which the language is used (Henley 1977). That language reflects societal norms is an assumption underlying the work of much research in the field of sociolinguistics (Hymes 1974, Wolfson 1983). Hymes suggests that an individual's ability

to communicate with other members of the same speech community depends on a shared set of interactional norms. A description of the norms associated with a particular speech act, such as unsolicited advice, can only be obtained through an analysis of the language in the situation in which it occurs (Hymes 1974). In order to determine which surface structures are chosen by students to convey advice, in what situations they are used, and to whom this advice is addressed, it will be necessary to describe the underlying rules of speaking governing the use of students' speech (Wolfson 1983). A comprehensive ethnography of interactional norms should take into account a variety of participants and settings, providing the researcher with a range of perspectives from which to analyse the speech community to be studied (Wolfson 1983). Wolfson suggests that the wider the range of data collected from the community, the more complete one's analysis of the speech community will be. In the present study, therefore, the speech patterns of several groups of individuals living on one dormitory hall will be studied in a variety of settings both inside and outside the dormitory. While the students whose speech patterns will be analyzed are all native speakers of English, this does not imply, as Wolfson has pointed out, that the norms of interaction which they bring with them to verbal interactions in the dormitory will, initially, be the same. Intracultural variation cannot be overlooked as a source of miscommunication within a monolingual community (Wolfson 1983).

Therefore, within the broader question of the influence of gender and status on advice-giving, we must consider the following questions

as well: What are the community values which are reflected in the giving of unsolicited advice? What are the functions which unsolicited advice serves within the dormitory? How does social distance affect the status of the advice-giver? What is reflected in the patterns of advice-giving, or in the responses of community members to advice-giving? First-year students bring with them the norms of interaction developed in their previous speech communities. As students adapt to the environment of the dormitory, we would predict that new norms of interaction will develop. Since the hierarchy of dormitory staff is established prior to the arrival of first-year students, it is possible that some norms of interaction will already be in effect. It is then of interest to determine how these pre-established norms are recognized and assimilated by first-year students. Will first-year students acquire pre-existing norms of interaction, replace existing norms of interaction with newly developed ones, or modify existing norms by incorporating them into a framework of newly developed norms of interaction? While the limitations of this study prevent all of these issues from being addressed, questions of this type serve specifically to structure the analysis. In more general terms, questions of this type must be foremost in the mind of the ethnographer striving for a comprehensive ethnography of speaking (Hymes 1974).

### Research Site

The research site is one hall of a co-ed dormitory on a university campus. The hall is comprised of fifteen first-year students: eight males, seven females. Three staff members also live on the hall and serve in advising capacities. All the rooms on the hall are segregated according to the sex of the occupants. Nine of the rooms are single rooms; there are three double rooms and one triple room on the hall. The other living spaces which are shared by members of the hall are the wash facilities, which are also sex-segregated, and a dining facility, which is used by all students.

The residential hall under study is one of eight halls forming a dormitory. The dormitory is comprised of 176 first-year students. There are seventeen staff members living in the dormitory, supervised by a head resident. Other than the residential staff, all students who live in the dormitory are first-year students. Each of the halls in the dormitory has a residential advisor and a freshman advisor. The presence of a graduate fellow on the hall under study is the only factor which distinguishes it from any of the other seven halls within the dormitory.

### Population

The eighteen hall members are middle class native speakers of American English. While they come from a variety of geographical backgrounds, eleven of the students are from the northeastern part of

the United States. The fifteen first-year students are all eighteen or nineteen years old. None of the students has ever lived away from home before coming to the university. While a majority of the hall members are enrolled in a liberal arts program, two students are in an engineering program and one student is in the business school of the university.

The hall staff consists of a residential advisor, a graduate fellow, and a freshmen advisor. The role of the residential advisor, a female third-year student, is to facilitate the students' arrival on campus and their adjustment to dorm life. Residential advisors schedule academic and social programs for the first-year students, as well as advise them and administer whatever discipline is required to ensure that the dormitory rules are upheld.

The graduate fellow is a female graduate student. Her role is restricted by and large to academic advising. She arranges educational programs and holds scheduled advising hours, during which students can solicit help with papers, courses or other academically related topics. The graduate fellow also refers students to other resources on the campus. Disciplining students is usually not a requirement of her job.

The role of the freshmen advisor, a male second-year student, is to serve as an assistant to the freshmen; he is a predefined "friend" to whom they can go for advice, usually of a social nature. He frequently socializes with first-year students and monitors their adjustment to the new environment. For example, he will generally be



the first to notice a particularly depressed student, or one who is having inordinate difficulty with a subject. In addition, all hall staff members are instructed by the university to be generous in their advice-giving and not wait for students to solicit advice from them, but rather try to predict the needs of the students.

#### Definition of terms

Throughout this paper, advice will be defined operationally using those forms which appeared most frequently in the data collected from interactions among students on the hall. One advice form which emerged the most frequently in the data (52%) is also recognized by Lynn D'Amico Reisner (1983) in her work on disapprovals:

"You + should + (do) + verb"  
(NP + {modal} + (do) +VP).

Examples of this advice form taken from the data include the following: "you should go see your professor about getting an extension"; "you should definitely use a word-processor or at least a typewriter in doing your final papers for his course"; "you should do Jazz class with us"; or "you should never use soap on your face; it's too drying".

The second format for advice-giving which emerged in 31% of the data is the following form:

"If I were you, I would (do) + verb"

Examples of this advice form are: "If I were you, I'd just forget about him," or "If I were you I'd stop worrying about getting my laundry done and start studying for exams."

The third and less frequent form of advice which appears in only 14% of the data collected is the

"Never + verb"

form. Examples of such advice include "Never let a paper go until the night before", or "never take an exam on an empty stomach." The remaining 3% of the data consists of advice forms such as "you might think about...", or "I recommend that...". However, as these forms comprise so little of the collected data, the paper will focus on the first three forms.

Unsolicited advice is distinguished from solicited advice by a lack of either a preceding request for advice, such as "can you help me?", a statement of need such as "I need help with this assignment", or complaints about too much work and too little time, which generally result in the elicitation of advice from the listener. Thus unsolicited advice is not a reactive speech act (Coulmas 1981) in that it does not serve as a response to a request for acknowledgement.

The status of the dormitory staff on the hall is defined by the larger organization of the university and is attributed to staff members on the basis of their prior experience of the institution and their broad knowledge of its workings. The university institutionalizes this status by virtue of the fact that the advisors are paid for performing their advising duties, by the authority it grants them to recommend disciplinary action against students in enforcing school policies, and by the formal training they are given in a series of workshops. In addition, they are presented to incoming

freshmen specifically as sources of advice and information to help the freshmen function better in their new environment.

Differences in status between the staff members are based on the amount of their prior experience in the university setting. The residential advisor and the graduate fellow, each with two years' experience in the university, hold the highest status positions on the hall, followed by the freshmen advisor, who has only one year's experience.

#### Methods of Data Collection

In her forward to Sociolinguistics and language acquisition (1983), Hatch recommends that different methodologies be used in data collection (e.g. questionnaires, role plays, and natural performance data), in order to provide the researcher with as wide a range of perspectives as possible and to compensate for the limitations of the researcher's role within the community and his/her biases as a native speaker. With this recommendation in mind, the present study incorporated three different data collection methods: hand-written field notes which record face-to-face interactions, interviews conducted by the researcher, and observations based on the researcher's role as participant observer. 197 tokens of unsolicited advice were collected over a period of three months. With each entry the settings and the identities of the participants, as well as the topic and subsequent responses, were recorded.

As a participant in the community studied, I lived and worked on

the hall as the graduate fellow. I was able to record conversations and interview members of the hall noting occurrences of unsolicited advice-giving which might not have been accessible to an outside observer (Hymes 1974; Spradley 1980). The data collected from interactions on the hall were analyzed for type of advice form used, setting, gender and status of interlocutors. Percentages of the total number of data collected were derived for the different categories of status and gender.

The data were collected from a variety of interactional situations. In addition to those exchanges in which I was an interlocutor serving in the role of academic advisor, I also had access to interactions which took place on the hall of the dormitory. I participated in some of these verbal exchanges, and observed others. On several occasions I had meals with the students or staff and recorded data from these interactions. Dormitory functions and hall meetings were another source of data, as well as recounted exchanges by first-year students or staff on the hall.

Four of the hall members were interviewed using a seven-item questionnaire (see appendix). The interviews provided information otherwise unavailable due to my position as a participant in the community. In this way it was possible to become aware of and obtain speech data which, as Hymes has noted, might otherwise have been overlooked (Hymes 1974). The interviewees included two of the students on the hall, one male and one female, the residential advisor of the hall, and the freshmen advisor. Each subject was interviewed

separately. Data from the questionnaire was not combined with data collected from hall interactions, but rather was used for purposes of comparison with the data collected. The questionnaire served to elicit subjects' knowledge of their use of advice forms (Neustupny 1985). Three of the questions involved role play to solicit subject responses to a given situation in order to provide as wide a range of data types as possible (Hatch 1983).

#### Analysis of the Data

Of the 197 tokens of unsolicited advice collected from interactions among students on the hall, 48% of the tokens were produced from among the fifteen first-year students [see Figure 1]. The freshmen advisor alone accounted for 22% of the unsolicited advice gathered, and 21% of the tokens were produced by the residential advisor. The remaining 9% of the tokens were given by the graduate fellow. These figures would seem to bear out the fact that one of the main duties of the staff members is to anticipate the needs of the students and offer unsolicited advice where appropriate.

Several specific trends emerge when the data is analyzed according to groups of advice-givers: 92% of the unsolicited advice given by first-year students was given to other first-year students. The remaining 8% of the advice collected from interactions involving the first-year students as advice-givers was directed to individuals of higher status. Unsolicited advice given by first-year students to individuals of higher status appeared to be constrained by topic,

whereas that given to those of equal status was not topic dependent.

Thus, a first-year student might advise another first-year student:

"You should go see your TA."

or

"If I were you, I'd caulk around the windows  
now instead of waiting till it's freezing."

These forms of unsolicited advice differ from those given by first-year students to individuals in higher status. For example:

"You should get the new Talking Heads tape; it's great."

There are no recorded examples of unsolicited advice on academic topics given by first-year students to individuals of a higher status.

Gender as well as topic seems to influence who gives unsolicited advice to whom [see Figure 2]. Female first-year students frequently gave each other unsolicited advice, accounting for 41% of the total amount of unsolicited advice given by first-year students. Examples of such unsolicited advice include:

"You should leave the curlers in longer."

"If I were you, I'd spend less time on Art  
History and more on Calculus."

Although there are a few examples of first-year female students giving unsolicited advice to first-year male students, these account for only 5% of the unsolicited advice collected from first-year students. This type of advice most often takes the following form:

"If I were you, I'd..."

With only one exception, first-year female students did not give unsolicited advice to the freshmen advisor (male). Only 6% of the

N=197 tokens of unsolicited advice.

Unsolicited Advice produced by	Number of speakers	% of total number of tokens
Freshmen	15	48%
Freshmen Assistant	1	22%
Residential Advisor	1	21%
Graduate Fellow	1	9%

Figure # 1

Figure # 1 depicts the percentage of unsolicited information requests produced by the various status individuals (or groups) represented on the dormitory hall studied.

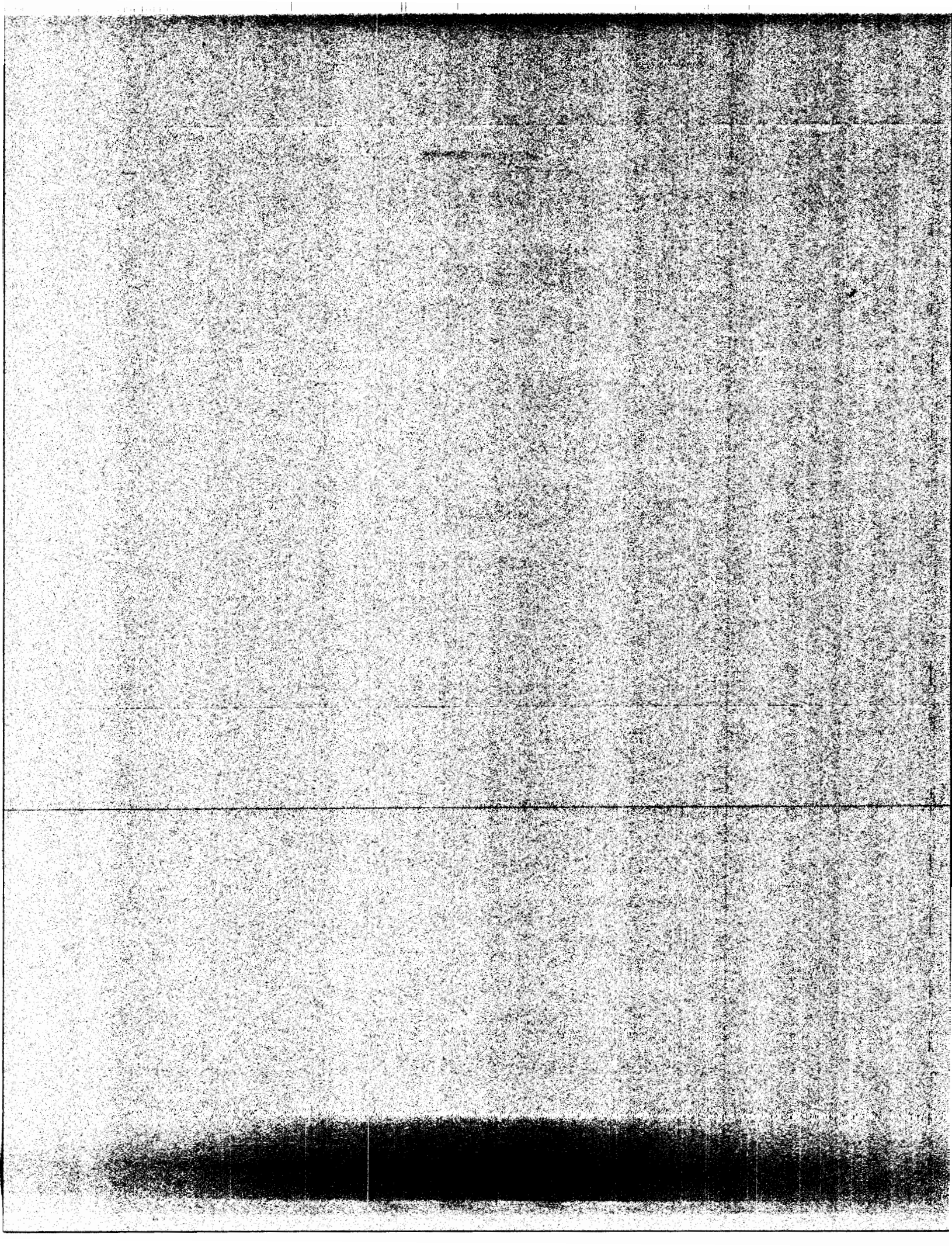
N = 94 tokens of unsolicited information requests produced by first-year students:

Gender of producer of unsolicited advice*	Gender of addressee*	% of unsolicited advice directed to addressee	# of tokens produced
Male	Female	27%	25
Female	Male	5%	5
Female	Female	41%	39
Male	Male	27%	25

Figure #2

\* speakers were all first-year students.

Figure # 2 depicts an analysis by gender of the unsolicited information tokens produced by first-year students and addressed to other first-year students. The number of unsolicited advice tokens produced by first-year students is 94, or 48% of the total number of unsolicited advice tokens collected.





unsolicited advice was given by female first-year students to the residential advisor. And, only one first-year student gave unsolicited advice to the graduate fellow, thereby accounting for three tokens of unsolicited advice. Thus, first-year female students appear to be sensitive to status both within and across the gender variable.

The unsolicited advice-giving behavior of male first-year students is noticeably different from that of the female first-year students. Male students gave more unsolicited advice to females of a higher status than did their female counterparts: 12% of the advice they gave was directed to the residential advisor, as opposed to the 6% given by the first-year female students, and 6% to the graduate fellow, as opposed to the 1% given by female students. First-year male students generally used the "you should..." form of giving advice while occasionally using the "If I were you I'd..." form. It is interesting to note that first-year male students rarely gave unsolicited advice to the freshmen advisor on the hall: only one such token is recorded. Male students, like first-year female students, frequently gave each other unsolicited advice accounting for 26% of the tokens collected from first-year students. This advice was generally of the "you should" form. A striking difference exists between the unsolicited advice-giving behavior of male and female students with regard to the amount of unsolicited advice they give each other: male students frequently gave female students unsolicited advice, accounting for 26% of the data collected from first-year students; however female students only gave their male counterparts unsolicited advice 5% of the time.

Thus, first-year male students do not appear to be as sensitive to the gender variable as their female counterparts when giving unsolicited advice, nor do the male students appear to be as constrained by the variable of status in the giving of unsolicited advice to females. Female students, on the other hand, appear to be constrained by both sex and status in the giving of unsolicited advice.

The freshmen advisor frequently gave unsolicited advice to the residential advisor, accounting for 30% of all the unsolicited advice which he gave. He also gave unsolicited advice to the graduate fellow on the hall, although less frequently, accounting for 11% of his unsolicited advice. His unsolicited advice generally took the "You should (do)..." form. When interviewed, the freshmen advisor said that he gave more unsolicited advice to the first-year female students on the hall because the male students on the hall felt "more comfortable asking him for advice" while the female students would often "want advice" but not feel comfortable asking him for it specifically. He explained that he gave first-year female students unsolicited advice to obviate the difficulty they had asking him for advice. Analysis of the data collected confirms his view that more of his unsolicited advice was given to female students (41%) than to male students (16%). However, although the freshmen advisor also claimed to use the "If I were you, I'd..." form in giving advice to both male and female first-year students, this claim was not borne out in the data collected. 82% of his unsolicited advice took the "you should (do)..." form.

Thus, the freshmen advisor does not appear to be influenced by status in the giving of advice to females of any status. However, due to the fact that there are no males on the hall of a higher status than the freshman advisor, it is not possible to determine the effect of status on his advice-giving behavior with respect to status within the male sex.

The residential advisor, whose job it is to give advice to both male and female first-year students, said in an interview that she generally gave more advice, both solicited and unsolicited, to female students than to male students. This was explained by the fact that she had more contact with the female students than with the male students on the hall. Her explanation is supported by the data which indicate that 26% of her unsolicited advice was given to male students, while a total of 46% of her unsolicited advice was given to female students.

The residential advisor gave less unsolicited advice to the freshmen advisor on the hall (19%) than to the first-year students despite the fact that the freshmen advisor is directly responsible to her. During an interview, the residential advisor, who was aware of this pattern, explained that because the freshmen advisor solicited advice from her when he needed it, she generally did not feel it necessary to give him unsolicited advice. Nor did she feel that such advice was necessarily welcomed by him.

The residential advisor only very rarely gave the graduate fellow

unsolicited advice: only 7% of the unsolicited advice collected from her. When unsolicited advice was given to the graduate fellow by the residential advisor it generally took the form of: "If I were you, I'd...". For example: "If I were you, I'd call the main office to have your heater fixed." The topics of her unsolicited advice were generally of a non-academic nature such as maintenance, upkeep of clothing, or food preparation.

The graduate fellow's role is strictly one of academic advising. Therefore, of the three staff members on the hall, she was the most solicited for advice related to academic topics. She was in contact with the first-year students primarily when they solicited advice from her on academically related issues, including course selection, distributional requirements, proof-reading, or advice on selecting a major. A majority of this contact with students was pre-arranged, which explains the low number of advice tokens collected from her.

Unsolicited advice from the graduate fellow was generally given to students on her hall who had solicited her advice on academic subjects in the past. More of the female students on the hall had solicited academic advice from her than male students; therefore, she generally directed her unsolicited advice to the first-year female students on her hall. Her advice most frequently took the "You should (do) verb" form: "You should get in touch with your TA for an extension" or "You should call IBM's trouble-shooting 800 number and tell them what's wrong."

### Discussion

The amount of unsolicited advice given does not appear to have increased significantly over the course of this three-month study. However, at the beginning of the academic year, when the study began, there was a much higher occurrence of solicited advice than at the conclusion of the study. This suggests that either the length of residence or degree of acquaintance with the university system may affect the soliciting of advice, but does not seem to affect the giving of unsolicited advice.

A second and somewhat surprising trend is that in the data collected during the third month of study, a pattern of unsolicited advice given by first-year students to individuals of all status positions begins to emerge. This suggests that status is not as strong an influence on the giving or receiving of unsolicited advice as originally predicted. The fact that this is a later-developing pattern also suggests an evolution in the norms of interaction among members of the hall.

The influence of topic on the giving of unsolicited advice does not seem to have changed over the three-month period. For example, one hears "You should get some sleep, you look really tired" said by individuals regardless of their status or the status of their advisee, and such examples are found in the data collected from all three months. Yet, unsolicited advice of the form "You should really talk to your TA about that" is rarely ever given by first-year students to

anyone of a higher status. Thus some topics seem to cut across the status lines which were initially drawn at the beginning of the year.

Individuals of one sex appear to be conscious of status in giving advice to members of the same sex. For example, first-year females give unsolicited advice to other first-year females (ie. "You should wear your hair up more often" which also serves as a compliment), but not to females in higher status positions. First-year male students, however, give unsolicited advice to females regardless of their status, while females rarely give unsolicited advice to males of the same status and, with only one exception, never to males of a higher status.

The factor which seems to constrain male students from giving unsolicited advice to another male is status. However, due to the fact that only one higher status male is represented in the data, it is not possible to determine with any certainty whether status, as opposed to some other variable, is the inhibiting factor. The factors which inhibit females from giving unsolicited advice are both status and gender.

Social distance appears to reinforce the constraints which gender and status place on the sex-status boundaries initially established, while a lack of social distance seems to cut across these two.

1. Although first-year female students rarely give unsolicited advice to the male freshmen advisor, the one exception is a first-year female student with whom he has developed a close relationship. She

demonstrates a different status with respect to her female counterparts by giving unsolicited advice to the freshmen advisor.

2. Although first-year female students are inhibited by status in giving unsolicited advice within the female sex, which means that they rarely give advice to either the graduate fellow or the residential advisor, there was one first-year female student with whom the graduate fellow had been working since the beginning of the semester who occasionally gave her unsolicited advice, usually in a joking tone of voice. Her unsolicited advice took one of two forms: "Now don't work too hard." or "You should do your own work now." This student's use of a different key to give unsolicited advice suggests that she was aware of the status difference between them, yet the type and length of their acquaintance overrode the status difference. Thus, in some instances, type of relationship seems to cancel out the inhibiting factors of sex and/or status in the giving of unsolicited advice.

Setting as a variable also seems to play a role in the giving of unsolicited advice. When the graduate fellow accompanied five first-year students to the dining center where she rarely ate, and where they ate two to three meals a day, they gave her a number of pieces of unsolicited advice in violation of the status constraint:

"You should try the ice cream."  
"If I were you, I wouldn't eat that."

Their familiarity with and control of the environment provided them the authority to give unsolicited advice to a higher-status female.

The two forms of advice-giving, "you should (do)..." and "If I were you, I'd", were originally defined without any distinction of markedness. However, an analysis of the data confirmed by the interviews reveals that some distinction is made by certain speakers. First-year female students use "If I were you, I'd..." (with falling intonation on the 'I') more often to male students (72%) than to other female students (28%). In an interview, the freshman advisor stated that he used the "If I were you, I'd..." form more frequently than the "You should..." form when giving unsolicited advice because he had learned that people responded better to that form. It should be noted that, from the data and from interviews with two students, it was found that the freshman advisor in fact used the "you should..." form more than the "If I were you..." form, emphasizing once again that native speakers' intuitions about the way they speak are not always accurate (Wolfson 1983).

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say that the variable of gender is a constraining influence on the female students' giving of unsolicited advice, while gender does not appear to influence the giving of unsolicited advice by male students or by the freshman advisor. The variable of gender does not come into conflict with that of status for female students. However, gender not only conflicts with status in speech situations involving male students, but in fact overrides it. This results in first-year male students giving unsolicited advice to a female of higher status.



A decrease in social distance between hall members of different status may also result in the giving of unsolicited advice to the individual of higher status, thereby overriding the sex/status boundary. As noted above, a pattern had developed by the third month in which first-year students began offering unsolicited advice to higher-status members. This suggests that length of residence influences social distance, which in turn affects speech patterns. One would predict that this pattern shift would continue to be evident in data collected throughout the year, resulting in a higher number of occurrences of unsolicited advice given to individuals of higher status than was found to be the case in the present data.

Wolfson's Bulge Theory may provide one explanation for the difference in styles of advice-giving chosen by the interlocutors (Wolfson 1985). This theory attributes certain differences in speech patterns to social distance. Social distance, in turn, may be represented by a continuum of intimacy. According to the Bulge Theory, one would predict that the newly-acquainted first-year students would be more likely to use the "If I were you..." form of advice, and other forms of elaboration to mitigate the directive quality of unsolicited advice. This prediction is borne out in the data by the presence of "justification tags" appended to advice forms and used by students of all status and gender at the beginning of the academic year. Examples of justification tags include:

"You should stop doing your laundry and start studying for the mid-term; (advice form) it's only two weeks away, you know." (justification tag)

Other justification tags include:

Advice form + "I've found it's easier that way."  
Advice form + "I always do it that way."  
Advice form + "I learned the hard way."

As length of residence increases and social distance decreases, the use of justifications with advice forms diminishes. The use of justifications serves to mitigate the concept of status associated with the giving of advice in just the same way that choice of the "If I were you" form produces a less directive form of unsolicited advice-giving than the directive advice form of "you should (do) + verb".

It is necessary to note the other functions which the advice-forms "you should" have served in recorded interactions between hall members. One such function is the request for action, "You should turn your music down", which if produced by a higher status hall member will generally result in the desired response. However, if this form of request is used among first-year students, the response may be a challenge: "Who are you to tell me to turn my music down?" (This response also indicates the respondents interpretation of the "advice-form" as a request.) Thus, unsolicited advice-giving may be face-threatening to the advisor if his/her authority or status as an advisor is not accepted (Scollon & Scollon 1983).

The use of a different key may also result in an advice form serving a different function than that of advice-giving. For example, the form "You should really try to make a little more noise next time coming up the stairs-- we didn't hear you this time.", does not appear to be an offer of advice. The use of a sarcastic tone of voice

transforms the advice form into a request for a more quiet entrance.

The aim of this paper was to begin to describe the norms of interaction associated with the speech act of unsolicited advice-giving through the interplay of two variables--gender and status--in a specified environment. Descriptions of this sort can serve to aid the non-native speakers' acquisition of those norms of interaction which function within the second-language community. However, descriptions of speech acts are not only helpful to non-native speakers, but provide the native speaker with an awareness of the rules of speaking which influence and color even the simplest everyday conversational exchanges within his/her own speech community.

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1. This paper was written as a final project report for Prof. N. Wolfson's seminar, Cross Cultural Variation in Language Use.
  2. Throughout this paper, the term "status" is used in the sense of rank or position within an informal hierarchy.

## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

1. Can you remember giving unsolicited advice to anyone on the hall recently? If so, what did you say?
2. Who do you give the most unsolicited advice to?
3. Is there someone on the hall who you never give unsolicited advice to?
4. If you wanted to give a first-year (a. male, b. female) student on the hall unsolicited advice, how would you phrase it?
5. How would you give unsolicited advice to the freshman advisor? Have you ever given him unsolicited advice?
6. How would you give unsolicited advice to the residential advisor? Have you every given her unsolicited advice?
7. How would you give unsolicited advice to the graduate fellow? Have you ever given her unsolicited advice?

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