# 19 Conclusion

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In *Data Collection in Sociolinguistics: Methods and Applications*, we have explored a primary aim of sociolinguistics: to create and refine methods for the collection of data that reflect spoken and written language in use. As the contributors to this volume have suggested, research is only as solid as the data on which it is built, as sociolinguistic analysis and application depend on the valid and reliable collection of sociolinguistic data. The chapters and vignettes give important texture and insight into the many processes that are often involved in sociolinguistic data collection, from research design and ethical considerations to selecting appropriate methods, establishing archives, and sharing data with communities and other publics.

Several key themes have emerged in this volume. From the outset, a clear research design must be the solid foundation for data collection, as it will provide researchers with the ability to make informed methodological choices when gathering data. Throughout the research process, as several scholars in this volume assert, questions of ethics and how we should represent our research participants must be considered. We must also confront the increasingly pertinent question of how we as sociolinguists can preserve our data and how to provide access to it, whether to other scholars or to public groups. Several contributors further assert that methods of data gathering and data sharing are best seen as interrelated aspects of the same research process, which speaks to the growing concern among sociolinguists that we "give back" to those we study. Finally, the theme of communication is paramount, as scholars in this volume call upon sociolinguists to publicize our research and to share data and findings in ways that maximize our abilities to address research questions of academic and lay interest and to benefit those from whom we obtain our data.

The topic of methods of sociolinguistics data collection is one that is ever pertinent and relevant, and that changes as new methodologies are developed and explored. We continue the conversation about data collection in sociolinguistics on our website, http://sociolinguisticdatacollection.com, where we provide additional resources that accompany, complement, and expand upon the information in this volume and are of interest to those who continue to learn or teach about data collection in sociolinguistics.