Traditional field methods for quantitative sociolinguistics were, for the most part, developed with adult populations in mind. As more sociolinguistic work has focused particularly on younger populations (children, younger adolescents, and adolescents), sociolinguists have had to reconsider and, in many cases, alter certain field methodologies to suit the particular needs of these populations. This workshop is meant to serve as both a workshop-like tutorial as well as an open discourse on the issues that sociolinguists who are working with younger populations should consider in project design. A discussion of practical tips in working in the field will be a point of focus for this workshop.

The organization of this workshop has three parts. First, a review of classic sociolinguistic field methods, such as the sociolinguistic interview, are considered. Issues in the practical application of such methods to younger populations, and, if any, issues that need to be addressed for younger populations will be raised. Where there are participants who have successfully navigated the use of the stimuli, alterations in the methodology will be discussed.

Second, a presentation of newer methodologies that have emerged as a result of closer examination of younger populations will be presented. In particular, we will explore more qualitative field methodologies and the ways that ethnographic field methods can be used to further expand our sociolinguistic work.

Third, there will be a preliminary discussion looking at the next steps in a research project focusing on younger populations. The analysis of linguistic data, particularly sociophonetic data is an ongoing research question for those who want to examine acoustic data for younger speakers, both for projects that focus on younger speakers, but particularly in projects that consider age groups across the lifespan. For studies that are not sociophonetic, there are analytic questions raised as well. For those researchers who wish to examine discursive features, for example, particular care must be taken when establishing what the linguistic repertoire of the speakers is and what sorts of data can be used and expected in elicitation. For those who are working on morphosyntactic (or any other sort of variant, really) features and the very young, strong consideration of language acquisition must be addressed in the research design of the project, as well as taking care of the social needs and available registers of the speakers in this population. An additional point of discussion will be navigating the needs of younger speakers as a protected population by most IRBs. Although IRB requirements vary, depending on institutional affiliation, examples that illuminate the sensitivity in which wording in permission slips, etc. will be given.

Younger populations represent a robust and fruitful avenue of inquiry for sociolinguists. This workshop hopes to raise awareness in the ways that we can alter and create new field methodologies that address both social and linguistically-driven questions that will help us make this enterprise more streamlined, efficient, and effective for research agendas that include these special populations.