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The Strong Island Sound: Sociolinguistic Evidence for Emerging American Ethnicities.

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation presents evidence for the usage of New York City English (NYCE) out on Long Island, NY. Many residents on this 118-mile long island are descendents of the European immigrants who moved to NYC around the turn of the twentieth century—mainly Italians, Irish, and Polish. When these groups moved out to the suburbs of Long Island half a century later, they brought their NYCE with them. Today, this ancestral connection, as well as age and gender, serves as a motivation for Long Islanders’ continued usage of NYCE.

The data come from sociolinguistic interviews conducted over two years with local residents of Suffolk and Nassau counties on Long Island. Participants were interviewed about their personal histories and asked to read a word list. A discourse analysis of the personal history interviews informed the categories used for multiple regression analyses to ensure the coded categories matched onto speakers’ self-identification practices. The discourse analysis also provides evidence for the attitudes Long Islanders hold about themselves as “real New Yorkers”, about their own language usage, and about the language spoken by “people from the city”. Multiple regression analyses fit with mixed effects models were run to demonstrate
the state of NYCE as it is spoken on Long Island. Results are presented for the long ingliding vowels (raised-*/oh/ and the split short-/*a system), the long upgliding vowels, and r-vocalization.

Although some younger speakers are using fewer traditional NYCE features, those who identify with their families’ ancestral immigrant pasts tend to prefer the traditional NYCE features, retaining a “Strong Island” sound to their speech.
Acknowledgments

I owe a great deal to many people who have supported my in my endeavor into the field of linguistics.

First and foremost, I would especially like to thank the participants in this study. Participants ranged from my life-long best friend to strangers I met in public libraries. Each one shared with me the stories of their childhoods and what it meant to them to be from Long Island. Not only did they share their stories, but they generously offered their voices for analysis. I am happy to share their stories with you in this attempt to sociolinguistically describe what it is to be from “Strong Island”.

I could have never put together a project of this magnitude without the guidance of my dissertation committee. Nancy Niedzielski served as the chair of my committee and was my advisor throughout my studies at Rice. She was with me every step of the way and helped this dissertation grow out of a term paper I wrote for her Sociolinguistics class in my first semester. Her advice and moral support kept me going when I was struggling. Robert Englebretson inspired me to study Long Islanders’ construal of identity through discourse analysis in his Discourse and Identity seminar taught in the Spring of 2010. He provided thoughtful feedback on the entire dissertation (especially Chapter 3) and helped me to connect the dots and see the bigger picture. Jenifer Bratter served as the outside reader on the dissertation committee. I audited her Social Statistics course in the Sociology Department to gain a better understanding of how to incorporate statistical
analyses into my work. Additionally, I attended events throughout the years organized by Dr. Bratter as the director of the Program for the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture (formerly Race Scholars at Rice). These discussion groups, invited lectures, and conferences have helped to shape my views on race and ethnicity in a profound way. Thank you all for inspiring this thesis.

I would also like to thank some Long Islanders who helped me recruit participants for the second round of interviews. They are Lauren Gilbert at Sachem Public Library, the staff at the Patchogue-Medford Public Library, Gino’s Pizza, the baristas at Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Company in Patchogue, Dolci Momenti Italian Bakery in Holbrook, and Bagel Brothers in Holbrook.

Finally, my family has provided me with so much love and support over these past years, I cannot thank them enough. My partner, Brenden Shaw, pushes me to be a better person every day. He has probably discussed the speech of Long Islanders way more than he ever dreamed possible when he first met me, but he has been a huge support as well as my biggest fan. I owe another thanks to my brothers Paco and Tony. While they couldn’t protect me from the heartache of grad school, they always rooted for me. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Sandy and Tony Olivo. My parents taught me to be a critical thinker from a young age and fostered in me a love of learning, giving me the ability to learn new things passionately and thoroughly. Thank you!
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Credentials from a home locality are indispensable for anybody who dares talk aloud about Long Island or the highly proprietary old-time Long Islanders. (Cushman Murphy 1964:3)

I was born and raised on Long Island, and I still consider it home. As a child, I never heard my own accent or heard one in my parents’ or grandparents’ language. It wasn’t until high school when the director of a play I was in instructed me to get rid of my accent. For the remainder of high school and throughout my experience as an undergraduate student in Buffalo, NY, I desperately tried to rid myself of the accent I hadn’t known I had.

I was fairly successful in that most of my peers were surprised to learn I was from Long Island. That is, until I uttered a sentence ending with a word with word-final /iy/. The following exchange occurred more often than I’d like to admit:

“Be right back. I have to pee.”

“You have to pay what?”

“No. I just have to pee. I’ll be right back.”

As much as I tried, I couldn’t hear my lowered pronunciation of this vowel and, needless to say, it was very frustrating for a phonetics student. Especially since
I thought I had done such a great job of “correcting” all the other stigmatizing New York features in my speech!

My perspective changed during a cocktail party on Long Island in 2007 in which all guests were Long Islanders from the same community. Two guests, one male, one female, both 22 at the time, were discussing the NYC subway system. At one point, the young woman said, “I hate the G [dʒi],” with an extremely lowered vowel nucleus, to which her interlocutor responded, “The J?” “No,” she clarified, “The G [dʒi],” reaching a higher target with the nucleus of the vowel. Phonetically, the lowered nucleus in the vowel of her first production is the cause of the misunderstanding and I had finally “heard” it.

I started to think about why this woman pronounced it this way. I believe that the female interlocutor used an extreme version of the lowered variant of the newly discussed NYCE variable lowered- /iyF/ in order to demonstrate her intimate knowledge of the NYC subway system and therefore affirming her self-identification as a New Yorker. However, in this case, she reached a target so low, that her male interlocutor perceived the vowel as /ey/.

The two interlocutors were engaged in a conversation about something having to do directly with New York City—the NYC Subway System. One of the stereotypes held in the region is that Long Islanders claim to be New Yorkers, while residents of the city consider Long Islanders tourists and not New Yorkers—something that Long Islanders take great offense to. One of the contributing features leading to the classification of Long Islanders as non-natives is their inability to
navigate the subway system. In this example, there were only Long Islanders present. I believe that the female interlocutor’s use of the extremely lowered token was brought about by her desire to demonstrate her insider knowledge of the subway system—insider enough to even have particular lines that she does not like taking—and accordingly her assertion that she is an authentic and tough New Yorker. In this instance, she overshot her target and was consequently misunderstood.

This miscommunication sparked the idea that turned into this dissertation. I became interested in not only how Long Islanders sounded in comparison to the city, but also why they sound the way that they do.

Besides the sense of accomplishment that most graduate students feel when they complete their theses, I now feel more comfortable “in my own accent”. Exploring the boundaries of place and ethnicity has taught me as much about myself as it has about the island I grew up on. I now know what “Strong Island” really means.
Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation combines quantitative and qualitative methods for sociolinguistic investigation. I describe the variety of New York City English (NYCE) spoken on Long Island, NY and provide an analysis of the motivation for the continued use of this dialect by Long Islanders. By using an ethnographic approach to investigating identity, I do not impose pre-fabricated identities on participants; rather, I use discourse analysis to uncover what the relevant social categories are for Long Islanders. These social categories, along with phonetic measurements, are incorporated into multiple regression analyses to describe the state of NYCE on Long Island.
1.1. Theoretical orientation

1.1.1. Regional Variation—New York City and Long Island English

The field of Variationist sociolinguistics was born in New York City with the work of William Labov. In his famous 1962 Department Store Story (reported in Labov (1972b)), he investigated the correlation of post-vocalic (r)\(^1\) and socioeconomic status, finding that r-lessness correlated with a lower socioeconomic status. This served as the pilot study to what would later become Labov's (1966) work, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*.

The New York City dialect region has been the subject of linguistic investigation since the middle of the nineteenth century. NYCE is one of the most recognizable dialects of North American English. Kurath and McDavid (1961) described the metropolitan New York dialect region as contained within Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, interestingly omitting Queens. Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) also pointed out that Raven I. McDavid presented a paper at the International Linguistic Association prior to 1974 in which he stated that the NYCE dialect area coincided with the British occupation of New York City during the war of 1812.

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\(^1\) This dissertation utilizes the Labovian transcription system in the Variationist tradition. Conventions are located in Appendix B.
After 50 years of continuous research on the area, Labov (2007) describes the NYCE dialect area as confined to the city boroughs (the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island) and several cities in Northern New Jersey, as the movement of New Yorkers into surrounding suburbs such as Westchester County, NY and Bergen County, NJ has not had any effect on the dialects of those places. However, he mentions, ‘The eastward line of demarcation in Long Island has not been well defined in any recent studies’ (356).

The only documentation in the older literature on the speech of Long Islanders specifically was presented in Robert Cushman Murphy’s book *Fish-Shape Paumanok*: *Nature and Man on Long Island*. Cushman Murphy, a self-proclaimed “fourth-generation inhabitant of fish-shape Paumanok” and ornithologist, gave the Penrose Memorial Lecture at the meeting of the American Philosophical Society in 1962. In the lecture (and corresponding book), he provided anecdotal evidence of a distinguishable Long Island vernacular (Cushman Murphy 1964). He described the speech of Long Islanders he knew in the 1890’s as being “enriched by a host of archaisms, both of landsmen and of mariners, nearly all traces of which are gone from the conversation today” (1964:50). Other distinguishable features noted were the use of *hisn* and *hern* for third person singular possessive pronouns and repetition of affirmations and negations (e.g. *yes-yes, no-no*) in emphatic contexts. The local speech of Long Islanders then went unstudied for over 40 years until

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2 An allusion to Walt Whitman’s famous poem “Starting from Fish-Shape Paumanok” found in his collection of poetry *Leaves of Grass* (1855).
Bakht (2010) studied the use of quotatives and intensifiers on East End Long Island within the confines of a middle school community of practice. She reported on the persistence of some Western New England dialect features in the community; however, her work did not focus on making regional dialectal distinctions.

### 1.1.1.1. Features of New York City English

In the Atlas of North American English (ANAE), Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) linked the Mid-Atlantic dialect region with NYCE by their use of raised /oh/ and a split short-a system. However, they described the NYCE dialect region as being distinguishable from other Mid-Atlantic varieties of English by “its specific version of the short ‘a’ split... and the vocalization of /r/, which continues as the dominant form of every-day speech” (2006:233). The vocalization of /r/ affects the entire vocalic system. Furthermore, they categorized New York City as part of the greater North as demonstrated by “its conservative treatment of the back upgliding vowels /uw/ and /ow/... and the front upgliding vowels /iy/ and /ey/” (234). The short vowels [ɪ, ɛ, æ, a, ʌ, ʊ] remain stable and do not undergo any shift like those seen in the Northern Cities Shift and Southern Shift and respondents’ vowel spaces showed little overlap in these vowels.

### 1.1.1.2. The long ingliding vowels
Besides the ingliding /aeh/ (described below), Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) also included a description of /oh/ (“long open-o” or [ə]) and /ah/ (“broad-a” or [e]). They found that /oh/ and /ah/ both rose along a peripheral track and both vowels range from upper-mid to high position within speakers’ vowel spaces. Furthermore /ah/ and /o/ (“short-o” or [a]) have merged in most North American European American dialects. In the TELSUR interviews conducted with New Yorkers, they found few words in spontaneous speech exhibiting the raised /ah/.

The broad-a word class is centered around the production of father. Additionally, there are a few words that exhibit word-final /ah/, such as ma, bra, and spa, and words with vocalized /l/, such as calm, balm, and almond. Furthermore “foreign a” words such as pasta, macho, salami, and karate retain /ah/ (ibid: 14). Since people tend to use their most formal speech in a wordlist setting, they found that most speakers from NYC merged /ah/ and /o/ completely, even if they still exhibited the split in spontaneous speech. The same was true for raised /aeh/; it was consistently lowered to /ae/ in the wordlists, demonstrating the linguistic insecurity New Yorkers are famous for (Labov 1966). It should be noted that the dialect typically described as “New York City English” is the variety spoken by the European American community, although some features, such as raised-/oh/, are common in other metropolitan New York communities.

3 Some North American dialects use /ae/ for these words (Boberg 2000 [as cited in Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006]).
1.1.1.3. The NYCE split short-a system

Almost all dialects of North American English demonstrate some kind of split short-a system (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006). Split short-a systems all demonstrate phonetic conditioning either on a continuum or broken into a tense/lax system, which may be accounted for based on a set of rules, but this is not always the case (Labov 2007). In complex systems where there is a phonemic split, such as the system found in NYC, short-a (æh) is considered to be tense /æh/ in certain environments (Labov 2007, Becker and Wong 2010). This variant is raised and fronted in comparison to /æ/. In the NYC system, in closed syllables, tensing occurs before voiceless fricatives (gas [ge’s], half [heʃ]), voiced stops (bag [beɡ], bad [be’d]), and front nasals (ham [he’m], hand [he’nd]). The lax counterpart is found elsewhere (back [bæk], bat [bæt], hang [hæŋ]). Labov (2007) noted that there was substantial variation before voiced fricatives and affricates in words such as magic, jazz, and imagine presumably caused by different syllabifications used by different speakers (e.g. magic could be pronounced either [mæ.dʒɪk] or [me’dʒ.ɪk]). These codas are summarized in Figure (5.1), reproduced from Labov (2007). Additionally,

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4 To anecdotally support this notion, I can attest that as a child I parsed the tense and lax pronunciations of jazz ([dʒe’z] and [dʒæz]) into separate lexical items. Tense [dʒe’z] was the style of dancing seen on Broadway à la Bob Fosse and lax [dʒæz] was the popular genre of music.
there are specific conditions governing other tense productions. These conditions described in Labov (2007) are summarized in Table (5.1) below.

![Figure 1.1: The codas that trigger tensing of short-a. Reproduced from Labov (2007).](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lax /æ/</th>
<th>Tense /æh/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function-word constraint</td>
<td>function words with simple codas are lax while corresponding content words are tense.</td>
<td>an I can had</td>
<td>Ann tin can hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-syllable constraint</td>
<td>short-a is lax in open syllables</td>
<td>Spanish hammer planet</td>
<td>span ham plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Inflectional-boundary closing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inflectional-boundary closing</th>
<th>inflectional boundaries “close” syllables</th>
<th>staff, staffer plan, planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial condition</td>
<td>initial short-a that occurs with a coda that normally produces tense is lax, except for words with high lexical frequency</td>
<td>aspirin(^5) asterisk affluent ask after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>short-a is lax in nicknames</td>
<td>Babs Cass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical exceptions</td>
<td></td>
<td>average savage avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned words</td>
<td>late-learned words have lax short-a where tensing normally occurs</td>
<td>carafe alas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1.1.1.4. (r)-vocalization and its effect on vowels

One of the most recognizable features of the NYCE dialect is *rlessness* or *r-vocalization*. Being recognizable also makes it one of the most stigmatized features. Given New Yorkers’ linguistic insecurities, it is surprising that many speakers interviewed for the ANAE still remained *r-less* (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006). They reported that there is a slow shift toward *r-fullness*, especially among younger and more educated speakers.

\(^5\) My native pronunciation of this is tense.
The rhotic (whether articulated or not) affects the quality of the vowels in this system. /ihr/ (as in hear or fear) remained in its own space. On the other hand, /eyr/ (as in hair or fair) merges with tense /aeh/ (as in mad or pass). Similarly, /ahr/ is raised and merges with /oh/ so that park, card, and hard are pronounced with the same vowel as in bought, law, and hawk.

Within the dialect region, native intuition suggests that /oh/ with and without /r/ were homonymous so that words like source and sauce are pronounced the same. Labov (1972) discovered that although native speakers perceive the two classes the same, there was a slight (but significant) difference in production means (479 Hz for /ohr/ and 520 Hz for /oh/; \(p<0.025\)). While this difference is interesting, it doesn’t appear to do much for native speakers 40 years later. For example, when I moved to Houston, my parents came along to help the transition and catch up with some relatives we have in the area. This homonymy was brought to light when my mother at one point concluded, “There are so many [pʰɔn] shops in this city!” My cousins exploded with laughter, as they perceived the word ‘porn’ while my mother intended to say ‘pawn’.

1.1.1.5. Current Research on NYCE

Some research shows that split short-a systems are beginning to lose their currency among some groups in the Mid-Atlantic region. For example, there is
evidence that minority speakers do not produce split short-\(a\) systems in areas where the Anglo\(^6\) majority do, such as African Americans in New York (Labov 1966) and Philadelphia (Labov 1994; Henderson 1996), and Chinese Americans in New York (Wong 2007). Becker and Coggshall (2008) found that both Anglo and African American speakers in New York City were not producing the traditional NY split. In other words, words that would be pronounced with the tense variant /æh/ in the traditional NYCE split system, such as gas, were being pronounced with the lax variant /æ/ instead.

Becker and Wong (2010) provided an update on the NYCE split-a system by comparing young white speakers to older white speakers as well as young African American, Latino, and Chinese American speakers. By comparing the height of (æh) in words that are tense in the traditional system, they found that the white speakers were patterning with the other young speakers in that they had more instances of /æh/ being lowered and produced as lax /æ/, suggesting a move towards a less complex nasal system governed by phonetic processes rather than the complex phonemic system governed by specific rules as outlined in Table (1) above. Their research reiterated Labov’s (2007) question of transmission and diffusion in language change in that it is unclear whether the young white NYCE speakers are losing the transmission internally—a failure of transmission from one generation to the next—or if they are being influenced by their ethnic minority peers—a case of

\(^{6}\) In much of the current research done in NYC, all white participants are labeled “Anglo” regardless of their ancestral connection to England.
cross-ethnic diffusion. They stress the need for more ethnographic measures to be able to answer this question.

Furthermore, Becker’s (2010) dissertation reported that the youngest NYCE speakers in the Lower East Side were becoming more r-full. It seems that young people in NYC in general are not using the traditional features Labov found in his original survey.

### 1.1.1.6. Upgliding vowels in NYCE on Long Island

Olivo and Koops (2013) investigated the state of the upgliding vowels in NYCE as spoken on Long Island. After finding significant differences in the production of /iy/ among speakers of different ages, genders, and ethnicities (Olivo 2012), we expected to find similar patterns among the other three upgliding vowels—/ey/, /uw/, and /ow/. We predicted that all upgliding vowels would be lowered in syllable-final position. This prediction was borne out for the mid vowels in that younger speakers exhibit more of a split between syllable-medial (/vC/) and syllable-final (/vF/) allophones, but the high vowels appear to be following a different trajectory, namely that their allophones appear to be merging closer together among younger speakers.

We conducted a regression analysis using mixed effects models for the normalized F1 of each allophone. Fixed effects included age, gender, ancestry,
education, and the use of other traditional NYCE variants (raised /aeh/ and raised /oh/). Both speaker and word were included as random effects.

1.1.1.6.1. High upgliding vowels

The split among the allophones in the high vowels is decreasing in apparent time, as demonstrated in Figures (1.2) and (1.3) below. The split in /iy/ was most significant among older male speakers who use other traditional NYCE features. Male speakers preferred a higher /iyC/ (p<0.05). A lower /iyF/ was preferred by both older speakers (p<0.05) and speakers who exhibited a traditional NYCE split short-a system and raised-/oh/. Figure (1.2) shows the apparent time plot for /iy/ where the two allophones are merging as age decreases.
/uw/ followed a similar pattern in apparent time, as demonstrated in Figure (1.3) below. Men and more educated speakers preferred higher /uwC/ (p<0.05, p<0.05) and older, more traditional speakers exhibited a lower /uwF/ (p<0.05, p<0.01). The allophones of the high vowels are merging in apparent time. For the oldest speakers, the allophones are farther apart, and as age decreases on the x-axis, the allophones get closer together.
1.1.1.6.2. Mid upgliding vowels

The split among the allophones in the mid vowels is increasing in apparent time, as demonstrated in Figures (1.4) and (1.5) below. Although we expected to see lowering among the syllable final allophones (/vF/), we did not find any evidence of that. Instead, we did see a general raising of the syllable-medial allophones (/vC/).

Figure (1.4) below show younger speakers were found to have a much higher /eyC/ than older participants (p<0.05) and age was slightly offset by education (p<0.05). Most importantly, there was a strong negative correlation of the use of a
higher /eyC/ with the use of the traditional NYCE variants (p<0.001). This split in apparent time is demonstrated by the fact that older speakers have the allophones in closer proximity and the youngest speakers have a much larger split.

Figure 1.4: /ey/ in apparent time.

Similarly, younger speakers preferred a much higher /owC/ (p<0.01). The only other significant factor for this allophone was ancestry, with speakers of Caucasian descent preferring a higher /owC/ (p<0.01). The split in apparent time is shown below in Figure (1.5).
Another interesting observation is that it seems that /ey/ began splitting before /ow/. As shown in Figure (1.5) above, CB, an 82-year-old Italian female, is the only participant who shows both allophones for /ey/ in close proximity. In contrast, the next oldest participants, GC, a 78-year-old European American male, and CS, a 59-year-old Italian male, both exhibit a great split in these allophones. The fact that the regression lines do not meet suggests that previous generations had also exhibited some degree of split in these allophones. The plot for /ow/ in apparent time (Figure 1.5 above) shows that these older speakers all have a split allophonic system. More interestingly, however, is the fact that the regression lines
for each allophone meet right in front of the oldest speaker in the sample. This suggests that CB and her generation are the first speakers to exhibit this split.

We found the results interesting because as Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) stated in the ANAE, NYCE is defined by “its conservative treatment of the back upgliding vowels” (234). Instead we found that the upgliding vowels are following different trajectories—namely, the split in the high vowel is weakening whereas the split in the mid vowels is expanding. One possible explanation for these patterns is that younger Long Islanders are participating in the Mid-Atlantic raised- /ey/ that we see in Philadelphia (Labov 1994). As younger speakers tend to disprefer the traditional NYCE system as a whole, it isn’t surprising that their language would start varying in a different direction.

Furthermore, we concluded that while /iy/ and /uw/ should be considered as part of the traditional NYCE system, /ey/ and /ow/ are millennial variants. It is unclear whether these variants are specific to only Long Island or the greater NYCE dialect region as a whole. We posited that the high vowel splits are demonstrative of the “traditional” or “classic” NYCE and the splits in the mid vowels are demonstrative of a millennial variety of NYCE at least as it is spoken on Long Island.

1.1.2. Ethnic Variation
Wölck (1984) investigated the use of Northern Cities Shift features among different groups in Buffalo, NY. He discussed the difficulty in teasing apart ethnicity from neighborhood associations:

Furthermore, because of the formerly very strong concentration of some ethnic groups in particular neighborhoods, a natural and early correlation and connotation or association of ethnic group and neighborhood developed in Buffalo; e.g. West Sider usually meant Italian, East Sider Pole. With the gradual thinning out, overlapping and redistribution of older groups and the arrival and accommodation of new ones, neighborhood is becoming a more important and more reliable factor than ethnic origin; the accent seems to be more locally and less ethnically bound (21).

Johnstone (2003) said, “regional and ethnic variability can function as a strategic resource in discourse” (68). Much research has solidified this claim. For example, Chun (2001) found that among a group of young Korean Americans, use of African American English (AAE) was meant to signal ethnic differentiation from the European American majority. Cutler (2001) studied European Americans’ use of AAE to signal urbanness. In both cases, speakers are not trying to pass for African American; rather, AAE carries covert prestige and speakers use these features as a social commodity to signify their disalignment with the white suburban majority.

Other research has shown that not all members of an ethnic group will be a part of the same ethnic speech communities. For example, Labov (1972) found that the “lames” among a group of African American adolescents in NYC used fewer AAE features than the rest. Mendoza-Denton’s (1997, 2008) work on Latina youth gangs showed, for example, that for the variable (-ING), gang girls favor use of the [in]
variant while the Latina jocks tended to use [ɛn] or [ɛn]. These studies demonstrate that membership within an ethnic group does not necessarily correlate with linguistic variation, and perhaps that ethnic groups can be further subdivided based on other social factors.

Bakht et al (2010) presented data showing that the youths on MTV’s reality series Jersey Shore were using NYCE dialect features to demonstrate their Italianness, regardless of their hometown or ancestry. For example, one cast member, Nicole “Snooki” Polizzi, is of Chilean descent but was adopted by Italian American parents who raised her in Poughkeepsie, NY, which is outside the NYCE dialect region. She uses NYCE features, such as (r)-vocalization, although young people in the NYCE dialect region tend to disprefer this variant. This is an example of a performative approach to identity.

Jersey Shore was not the first example of the conflation of white ethnic identity and NYCE in popular media. New Yorkers and their accents in the past were portrayed in the media as belonging to residents of New York City. In the 1970’s, the American sitcom Happy Days, which was set in 1950’s Milwaukie, featured the New Yorker greaser character “Fonzie”, famously portrayed by Henry Winkler. Winkler, himself a Jewish New Yorker, does not use his everyday speaking voice; rather, he “lays it on pretty thick” for his tough-guy character. Twenty years later, on the American T.V. show Friends, which was based in New York City in the 1990’s, the only character on the show who dons a New York accent is the Italian American
goofball “Joey”. Matt LeBlanc, who is of Italian and French-Canadian ancestry and from Massachusetts, played the character.

More current portrayals of the New Yorker are found on reality television. These new reality series, however, are often set outside the city boroughs. MTV’s *Jersey Shore*, as described above, is the most well known example. The Style Network’s *Jerseylicious* follows the drama that unfolds in a New Jersey salon. Even the Cooking Channel has a show that is revolves around a “tough-cookie” attitude towards food, music, and life in general. *Nadia G’s Bitchin’ Kitchen* is hosted by Nadia Giosia, an Italian-Canadian comedian who dons a retro pin-up girl style and what seems to be a New York accent, although her attempt is not very successful.

Most currently, a new reality show from Bravo features twenty- and thirty-something Long Island women, entitled *Princesses: Long Island*. Many of the women on the show are of Jewish descent and come from upper-middle class families. The show follows these women’s lives as they continue to live at home and date until they marry. The fact that the entertainment industry continues to churn out these programs demonstrates that the general public is still entertained by and interested in New Yorkers. Interestingly, in order to find this kind of New Yorker, they have moved out into the suburbs of New Jersey and Long Island.

1.1.2.1. White ethnic identities and the Italian Americans
Ethnicity research in the past 30 years has been moving towards more fluid and integrative approaches. In the field of linguistics, the term *European American* is used in place of *white* in many contexts. However, Alba (1994) described the emergence of new “European-American” ethnicities:

What is novel in the emerging European-American ethnic identity is a perception of ethnic commonality among individuals on nominally different European ancestries, a perception founded upon a sense of shared family experiences of immigration and social mobility... European-American ethnicity is found among the large number of whites for whom particularistic ethnic backgrounds hold little social relevance but who continue to identify themselves in terms of ethnic labels (at least on some occasions) and to express such an identity in symbolic ways. It is thus illustrated in the lives of many young persons belonging to the third and later generations of the Irish, Italian, Polish, and a variety of other European backgrounds. (21-22, quoted in Boscia-Mulè (1999))

Waters (1990) investigated how white Americans do ethnic self-identification by means of interviews using the “snowball” sampling technique. She intended to discover “the meaning or lack of meaning of ethnicity to people in the last stages of assimilation—people for whom ethnicity is an option rather than an ascribed characteristic” (Waters 1990: 12). She asked participants how they would answer the ancestry question on the census and found that most participants had a mixture of ethnicities in their ancestry, but most closely identified with one of them. In some cases where a particular ethnicity was denied, it was either “selectively forgotten” or dismissed by those claiming, for example, “I'm already this mishmash,
don’t tell me that I am anything else too” (Waters 1990: 23). Other times their choices were based on stereotypes transmitted from the parents. For example, one participant, a 46-year-old woman of Italian and Irish descent explains:

Q: When you were growing up did you consider yourself ethnic?
A: Yes, I was very strongly Italian, because the Irish...whenever I was in a bad mood, that was the Irish in me. So I always related the Irish with the bad things and the Italian with all of the good things.

Q: Why?
A: I guess because every time I would do something bad, my mother would say, 'Oh, that's those Irish eyes. That's the Irish from your father.' The good things, like if I cleaned my room, she would say, 'Oh, look, you are a Rosio,' which was the Italian. So I thought all the Irish were hotheads and all the Italians had clean houses and good food (25).

Alba (1985) stated that the Italian Americans were on the verge of “the twilight of their ethnicity” (159). This metaphor meant to capture that white ethnic boundaries could only be perceived in a vague outline. He added, “Despite the image of the American consciousness of an intense, family-centered Italian-American culture, the group’s cultural distinctiveness has paled to a feeble version of its former self” (159). He made these claims based on data on the Italian Americans compared to other European Americans from the Census Bureau and the NORC General Social Survey, 1975-1980.

Jacobson (1999) discussed the evolution of race in America and the experience of the white ethnic groups who immigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century. He wrote, “White ethnics may indeed be white, but their history is severed from the broader, structural history of whiteness in America,” while at the same time warning of white ethnic groups’ eagerness to distance themselves from the white Anglo majority (278). He stated, “Rather, it is my hope
that in recognizing the historical fabrication, the changeability, and the
contingencies of whiteness, we might begin to look in a new way upon race, the
power relations it generates, and the social havoc it wreaks” (280). Jacobson (1999)
stressed the importance of recognizing the fluidity of race and the socio-cultural
surroundings of who is considered “white” at the time.

More recent work demonstrates that although Italian American ethnicity has
changed from what it once was, it still meaningful to members of the community.
However, their assimilation and acculturation indicates that it may no longer be a
significant factor in defining social groups. Richards (2009) recounted the
movement of the Italian Americans out of their Little Italys into the surrounding
suburbs as part of their desire to assimilate into the American majority. He claimed
that because of this, they experienced a, “withdrawal from public discourse” which
“privatized the issue of their identity, rendering their protesting voices and
perspectives on Italian American identity unspoken and unspeakable” (192). This
means that for the Italian Americans to become fully assimilated, they had to tone
down the markers of ethnicity. However, within the confines of small communities
made up of large extended families, they remain culturally distinct from the Anglo
majority. For example, Italian American women today seldom wear a chapel veil to
curch like they did 50 years ago, but Italian Catholic traditions are maintained in
the home, such as the Feast of Seven Fishes on Christmas Eve.

Discourse studies have reinforced that Italian ethnicity does still exist in the
American context. For example, De Fina (2008) explored the negotiation of Italian
American identity within the context of an Italian American card-playing club in the Washington, D.C. area. In this context, she found that speakers tended to orient towards three types of “Italian Stories”: travel narratives, ‘heritage’ narratives about parents and grandparents, and narratives about Italian stereotypes (424). This kind of cultural transmission is important to the whole as the group decides their collective identity through light conversation over a game of cards. Additionally, she argued that these storytelling events are important to and reflective of social processes in the global context.

1.1.3. Approaches to identity

Goffman’s (1959) approach to identity was concerned with “the presentation of the self”. In his approach, one’s self is not something static; rather, it must be constructed within interactions. This approach, while well received and respected, was not of much use for the first wave Variationist sociolinguists in the 60’s in 70’s. A fluid approach to identity does not facilitate categorization. In order to conduct statistical analyses, they needed (and still need) to label participants into fixed categories. In this approach, participants are often grouped according to traditional categories of age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, etc. These categories are then fit into a statistical analysis to determine correlations between linguistic and social variation.
The results of these early studies paved the way for many avenues of sociolinguistic research. These results are sometimes interpreted according to an essentialist view of identity—one in which one’s identity is theorized according to pre-set terms and is often viewed as a static, essential part of what makes a person distinct. In contrast, other integrated approaches to identity within linguistics took an approach in which identity is constructed in relation to others. This social view of identity looks at one’s identity as it relates to social groups or categories. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998) applied Lave and Wegner’s (1991) theory of the ‘Community of Practice’ to sociolinguistics. In this approach, identity is not an essential attribute of a person. Rather, people are constantly re-establishing their identities within conversation depending on the context and interlocutors. For example, one of the Northern Cities Shift variables that Eckert (2000) analyzed was the use of raised (ay) in conversation among high school students in suburban Detroit. She found that students who raised this nucleus were more likely to orient towards a local identity, connected to willful participation the school system—the “jocks”. The students who did not usually raise this variant—the “burnouts”—reserved use of this variant for particular occurrences, like in conversations about getting in trouble. In this way, rather than relying on static, traditional social categories like age, gender, and socio-economic status, Eckert (2000) employed ethnographic methodologies to capture a more realistic picture of how speakers define social boundaries.
Johnstone (2003), as another example, explained how speakers might use regional and ethnic features of a particular group in a strategic way within natural discourse:

American dialectology was traditionally oriented to the description and documentation of older forms of folk speech, and the people who were most likely to be studied in projects like the dialect atlas surveys were likely to live in fairly homogeneous communities and to be relatively immobile socially and geographically. This meant that speaking in a particular dialect could easily be seen as a more or less automatic consequence of being from a certain place and being born into a certain ethnic group. Now, in the context of increasingly visible social and geographical mobility and economic and cultural homogenization, dialectologists and sociolinguists are becoming more and more attuned to the ways in which ways of speaking associated with region and ethnicity can function as strategic, rhetorical resources for constructing and expressing relationships and identities (81).

Traditionally, it was thought that all members of a region would speak the same way just as they thought all women would follow particularly feminine patterns. Johnstone (2003) highlighted the fact that while there are features associated with particular groups, the members of these groups do not need to use these features all the time and, in fact, may use differently socially-marked variables for different reasons within a conversation.

In discourse analytic approaches, identity is never assumed, but instead must be negotiated within the interaction. As Benwell & Stokoe (2006) put it, “Discourse-based approaches generally describe identity as a fluid, dynamic and shifting process, capable of both reproducing and destabilizing the discursive order, but also one in which people’s identity work is analyzed in talk” (35). This approach is partially based on conversation analysis (CA) developed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson in the 60s and 70s (c.f. Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974), which has its roots in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967).
Identity is also theorized as a type of performance. Similar to Goffman’s (1959) theories about the “presentation of the self”, other researchers focus on the performativity of identity. In Butler’s (1990) work on gender, she focuses on the performative aspect of gender. In her words,

To claim that gender is constructed is not to assert its illusoriness or artificiality, where those terms are understood to reside within a binary that counterposes the “real” and the “authentic” as oppositional. As a genealogy of gender ontology, this inquiry seeks to understand that discursive production of the plausibility of that binary relation and to suggest that certain cultural configurations of gender take the place of “the real” and consolidate and augment their hegemony through that felicitous self-naturalization. (32-33)

She makes clear that theorizing gender as a social construct does not deny the fact that biological differences between men and women exist. One’s biological sex does not necessarily determine one’s gendered performance. This is related to a constructivist view, which also contrasts with an essentialist view. In Morning’s (2011) work on how race is theorized and discussed among professors and students in several large American universities, she described the basic difference between these two theoretical constructs: “If essentialism posits that social categories simply reflect natural, stable differences between human groups, then constructivism counters that such categories are artificial or ‘man-made’ through a process of ‘social construction’” (13-14). Her interviews focused on professors and students in anthropology and biology classes to see how the professors talked about race and how the students learned about and conceptualized race. Surprisingly, although many professors taught about race from a constructivist point of view, most students still left classrooms holding essentialist beliefs about race. Thus, her research shows that for many people, these social categories are often viewed as
static, unchanging, and subject to biological and other essential parts of people. Furthermore, her findings support the notion that researchers must take into account the categories that are important to the people in the study rather than force them into pre-determined theoretical categories.

Local communities and groups of people share traits that can be seen as a collective identity. Social and cultural processes important to the collective identity of the local community are reflected through “small stories” within the personal history interview context. These small stories are not major life histories; rather, they are interactionally generated short narratives. As Bamberg (2004a) put it, small stories are “the ones we tell in passing, in our everyday encounters with each other, and which I considered the ‘real’ stories of our lived lives [Bamberg 2004b]” (367). The context of the personal history interview allows respondents to convey in a more ideological way their views on topics such as the local community and ethnicity. Van Dijk (2006) stated, “Ideologies are expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse” (115).

In this dissertation, I take an ethnographic approach to identity in which one’s identity is not static or assumed. Rather, identity is negotiated in conversation between interlocutors. It is important to view the following excerpts from these personal history interviews within the local and global contexts. The global context proves to be an important factor as interlocutors may be responding to a popular definition or categorization of themselves (Benwell & Stokoe 2006; De Fina 2003).
Indeed, in these interviews, participants respond to these global contexts by orienting towards or away from the definitions and categories discussed in the previous chapter.

1.2. Questions

This dissertation employs ethnographic methods combined with a Variationist sociophonetic analysis to study Long Islanders’ ethnic and regional self-identification practices. This dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the state of NYCE on Long Island?
- How do Long Islanders identify in terms of ethnicity and region?
- Is there a correlation between ethnic and regional affiliation and the use of traditional NYCE features?

1.3. Data and Equipment

All respondents participated in a sociolinguistic interview, which included the recitation of a wordlist as well as a personal history interview. The length of these interviews averaged around 45 minutes. The first set of recordings were made on an Edirol R-09 with Sound Professionals SP-CMC-2 lapel microphones at a sampling rate of 44kHz in .wav format. The second set were made on a Zoom H4n Handy Recorder using the internal microphones at a sampling rate of 44kHz.
1.4. Methods

1.4.1. Sociolinguistic interviews

I conducted 36 sociolinguistic interviews with residents of Long Island. Some participants were life-long Long Islanders, while others were from outside Long Island, but still grew up within the NYCE dialect region. Each participant answered questions during a personal history interview that focused on their backgrounds, family histories, and experiences with New York City. Most participants also read a wordlist. The interview and wordlist data informed the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4.

In order to provide an accurate representation of language and culture on Long Island, this study must take into account my interaction with the data collection as a local researcher. Cukor-Avila (2000) warned of the dangers of underestimating the effect of the field worker—Labov’s (1966) Observer’s Paradox. Participants may respond differently based on the researcher’s gender, race, age, or dialect than they would in another context. For example, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) found that the same African American woman used more AAE features with an older African American male interviewer than she did with a younger Anglo female interviewer. These studies suggest that researchers must include their role in the analysis from data collection to the linguistic analysis.

In the first round of interviews, I knew most of the participants prior to conducting the research. I was closer to some participants (like my best friends) and
not as close with others (acquaintances from high school). Additionally, I was still developing my interviewing skills. These interviews, especially with the younger participants, tended to be on the informal side. The questions I asked were not very in-depth, and I did not have the insight to ask poignant clarifying questions.

Furthermore, some participants (like my closest friends, for example), might have provided answers that they thought would “help the research”. Others may have omitted details out of embarrassment or to save face in front of an acquaintance. For some of these participants, the context may have felt more like they were helping out a friend with a project for school rather than participating in an academic study.

On the other hand, the second round of interviews were much more formal and in-depth. I did not have any personal connection to most of the interviewees in the second round. These respondents replied to an advertisement to participate in the study in exchange for a $10 gift card. In this scenario, I felt more comfortable asking more specific questions partly due to my having had experience with conducting sociolinguistic interviews previously and partly due to the fact that I was simply more aware of the relevant phenomena. This allowed me to explore avenues within the interviews that were not explored in the first round. The interview questions I used for the two sets are located in Appendix (A).

1.4.2. Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis allows for an analysis, which not only addresses my role as observer within the context of the interviews conducted, but also uncovers the local categories that are important to the participants. I transcribed excerpts from
the interviews according to a slightly modified version of the Du Bois et al. (1993) transcription conventions. These excerpts, presented in Chapter 3, demonstrate common themes found in all interviews.

The approach I use to discuss the narrator’s identity is one in which identity emerges in interactional circumstances. By analyzing these interviews as interactional circumstances, I examine what the defining features of being a Long Islander are in the local context. Specifically, what does the speaker orient towards in the interaction? How do my own responses as interviewer affect the data? By taking this approach, identity is never assumed, but instead must be negotiated within the interaction (Benwell & Stokoe 2006).

There are numerous reasons why these interviews are analyzed as separate interactions between Long Islanders. While participants are providing answers to specific questions, they must establish their own identities within their responses. Indeed, the identities of both the interviewer and interviewee as well as the definitions of different words and phrases are negotiated throughout the interaction, turn by turn, in the form of interruptions, clarifications, chuckles, etc. The ethnic categories and cultural traits described below were borne out of the participants’ responses. These categories are used in the sociophonetic analysis in Chapter 4 rather than relying on pre-determined categories for ethnicity.
1.4.3. Sociophonetic Analysis

Wordlist data was collected from 33 of the 36 participants. After inspecting the recordings for quality issues, I ran the analyses with 29 speakers. I conducted a multiple regression analysis fit with fixed effects for each NYCE feature to determine which features different types of Long Islanders prefer. Vowel formants were measured by hand at 30ms into the vowel, after any formant transitions and the measurements were recorded along with social information in an Excel worksheet. The measurements were then normalized in NORM (Thomas and Kendall 2007) using the Neary2 (speaker extrinsic) method. This method was chosen because it normalizes speakers to other speakers rather than to just their own productions, which is the preferable method for data sets, such as this, that have large numbers of tokens for each environment for each speaker (Watt, Fabricius, and Kendall 2011).

1.4.3.1. Social Variables

The social variables considered were borne out of the categories that emerged from the personal history interviews, which will be explained in-depth in Chapter 3. Variables considered are age, gender, education, and ancestry/ethnicity. Age was analyzed using participants’ ages at the time of interview. It was included as a continuous variable rather than separated into discrete age groups. Speakers identified as either male or female and gender was analyzed categorically.

According to Hout (2008) social class may be thought of as “how people earn their money, how much money they have, or what they do with their money” (26).
As such, social class is often investigated by means of income, education, and occupation. Determining social class for this group was particularly problematic because so many of the respondents were still in college. As one’s family history and parents’ social class can determine whether a person will be accepted into college, this educational status may be inherently tied up with social class (Lareau and Weininger 2008). From the current data, it is unclear what these college students’ income was because I had not thought of asking about respondents’ parents’ occupations when I conducted my interviews. Because of this, I decided to use education as a means to investigate variation according to social class rather than coding for different social classes themselves. Education was coded based on participants’ responses into high school, associates, college, and graduate.

Participants who were enrolled in a four-year college or university at the time of recording were placed in the college category.

Ancestry/ethnicity was coded based on answers to some of the personal history interview questions, following Waters’ (1990) methodology, which will be explained in detail in Chapter 3. The categories borne out of the data were not limited to familial ancestry, but also incorporated whether a person had a familial immigrant connection to New York City. Speakers were grouped into the following categories for analysis: Caucasian, Mixed European, Italian, and People of Color.

Respondents coded as Caucasian tended to identify as “American” or “Caucasian” when questioned about their ethnicity. They often had no ties to any of the boroughs of New York City and only provided vague ancestry information when
prompted. They viewed themselves as primarily “non-ethnic”. Respondents coded as *Mixed European* were those who freely self-identified with one or more ethnic groups and had a sense of their family’s migration through the New York metropolitan area. All but one of these respondents reported some Italian ancestry. The other respondent was of Jewish descent. Respondents coded as *Italian* were most easily identifiable by their tendency to use regions in Italy to describe their Italian ancestry and by their overt self-identification as Italian. Respondents coded as *People of Color* came from varying non-white backgrounds—African American, Latino, and Indian.

Coding for particular variables aimed towards getting a sense of Long Islanders’ attitudes towards their home island did not provide any results. As it turns out, it isn’t Long Islanders’ Long Island identity that keeps them using NYCE—it’s their self-identification as ethnic New Yorkers. As such, this self-identification is incorporated in the ancestry/ethnicity variable.

### 1.4.3.2. Statistical Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted fit with mixed-effects models in Rbrul, which is a program written for use within the statistical analysis program R (Johnson 2008). It is designed for sociolinguists for specifically this type of sociophonetic analysis. Given the nature of sociolinguistic data (in that it is only in very rare cases one would have the exact same number of tokens of each vowel for each speaker in a different category), fitting a mixed model with random effects to
the data takes into account by-speaker and by-item correlation; it also estimates between-group and within-group effects (Johnson 2009).

1.5. Thesis

Long Islanders tend to see themselves as “real” or “ethnic” New Yorkers. They often conflate their families’ immigration through the boroughs of New York City with their families’ immigrant cultural heritage. The sociophonetic analysis shows that although younger and female Long Islanders in general tend to disprefer the traditional NYCE variants, some variants are predicted by these local ethnic categories.

If ethnicity is defined as a societal distinction based on shared cultural norms, then the boundary between New York regional affiliation and ethnicity on Long Island becomes blurred. Rather, I posit that in the metropolitan New York area, “New Yorker” is emerging as a type of American ethnicity rather than just a regional identification.

1.6. Participants

36 speakers participated in this study, 16 male and 20 female. 24 interviews were conducted between May and October of 2009. These interviews were obtained by means of the snowball methodology. The original participants responded to an advertisement. These participants were then asked if they knew anyone who would be willing to participate. In some cases, I conducted up to five recordings in one
household. 12 additional speakers were interviewed in May and June of 2011. Participants were recruited by means of flyers posted at various locations in the area (SUNY Stony Brook, Gino’s Pizza in Patchogue, Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Company in Patchogue, Brother’s Bagels in Holbrook, Dolci Momenti Bakery in Holbrook, and the Patchogue and Sachem Public Libraries). Wordlist data was collected from 33 speakers out of the 36, but personal history interviews were conducted with all. The ages of participants ranged from 21 to 85 (See Table 5 below for details). The first set of interviews were conducted at respondents’ homes and the second set were conducted either at public libraries in the area or on campus at SUNY Stony Brook. Of the 33 wordlists collected, 29 were of acceptable quality for sociophonetic analysis.

The map in Figure (1.6) below shows participants’ hometowns marked with an icon indicating their gender with pants and skirts. In the first set of interviews, all participants were of European descent from Long Island. All but one participant were from Suffolk County, with one participant being originally from Nassau County (but raised her family in Suffolk). In the second set of interviews, participants were more from the broader NYCE dialect area; three were from Suffolk, three were from Nassau (however, two of them were clear on stating they were from the boarder with Queens), one from Brooklyn, one from Harlem, and one from Rockland County. However, all these participants were at the time living on Long Island, either

7 Photos and descriptions of some of these locations are located in Appendix D.
attending college at SUNY Stony Brook or having moved permanently to Long Island to raise their family.

Figure 1.6: The hometowns of the participants. The majority of participants are of Long Island origin, while few are originally from outside Long Island, but residing there at the time of interview. Map created in Google Maps.

The second round of interviews also included more diverse ancestries; participants reported Indian, Latino, and African American ancestries. Participants’ reported and coded ethnicities are listed in Table (1.2) below. Most participants reported more than one ancestry.

Table 1.2: Details of participants included in the sociophonetic analysis. Participants’ reported ethnicities are included as well as the ethnicity categories used in the sociophonetic analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Reported Ethnicity</th>
<th>Coded Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HG</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Woodbury (Nassau)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RG</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>English, Irish, Dutch</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>East Quogue (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>German, Italian, Welsh, Native American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Manorville (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>JE</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Irish, English, Armenian, German</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Bay Shore (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Mastic (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Italian, Irish</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Remsenburg (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Italian, Irish, German</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Huntington (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Italian, Napolitano</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Shirley (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FO</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Italian, Scottish</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Centereach (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Italian, Barese, Sicilian</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Holtsville (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CS</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Italian, Sicilian</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>West Babylon (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>JG</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>German, Italian</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Manorville (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>LH</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>German, Italian, English</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Westhampton (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GC</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Irish, German</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>South Huntington (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>LR</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Irish, Spanish, French, English, Native American</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Mastic (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Italian, Dutch</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Ridge (Suffolk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Italian, German</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Westhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Italian, Irish</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Northport (Suffolk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Italian, Irish, Scottish, Swiss</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>East Moriches (Suffolk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DR</td>
<td>Spanish, French, English, Native American</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Massapequa (Nassau)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Ronkonkoma (Suffolk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Italian, Napolitano</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>East New York (Brooklyn)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SM</td>
<td>Irish, English, German</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Patchogue (Suffolk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Irish, German</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Centereach (Suffolk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Russian, Austrian, English, Jewish</td>
<td>Mixed European</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Jericho (Nassau)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DI</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>People of Color</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Nanuet (Rockland)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>People of Color</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Bellrose (Nassau)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TG</td>
<td>Panamanian, American Black</td>
<td>People of Color</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Central Harlem (Manhattan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Spanish, Colombian</td>
<td>People of Color</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Floral Park (Nassau)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure (1.7) below demonstrates the diversity in participants’ reported ancestries. All ancestries reported are included in the pie chart. The majority of participants (N=15, 51.7%) reported Italian ancestry, followed by Irish (N=9, 31.0%) and English (N=7, 24.1%).
Figure 1.7: A pie chart showing the various reported ethnic backgrounds. Most participants reported more than one ethnicity.

One of the main concerns of this dissertation is to quantify the sociolinguistic variation in speech on Long Island. Especially considering the small sample size, it would not be useful to include all the ancestry groups as variables in the multiple regression analysis. Instead, participants were placed into categorized ethnic groups based on their responses in the personal history interviews (listed in Table 5 above and analyzed in Chapter 3). These categories are demonstrated in Figure (1.8) below.
Figure 1.8: The proportions of participants that were coded in different ancestry/ethnic groups in the multiple regression analysis.

1.7. Organization of the dissertation

Chapter 2 presents a brief history and current ethnography of the people and language of Long Island. This information is presented in order to provide a thorough description of the local and global contexts Long Islanders respond to in conversation. Chapter 3 discusses the local categories that were borne out of the personal history interviews. I present transcripts and discuss these examples in terms of participants’ approaches to identity. Chapter 4 makes use of the categories borne out of Chapter 3 to conduct multiple regression analyses to test the state of
NYCE on Long Island in terms of vocalic features. Chapter 5 discusses the results of Chapter 4 in terms of the local categories uncovered in Chapter 3 and also in terms of idiosyncratic differences. Chapter 6 aims to synthesize the analyses and provide the conclusion to the dissertation.
Long Island: Past and Present

Just as North America is seen by Native Americans as a big turtle, with Mexico as its tail, Florida as its rear right leg, and Baja as its rear left leg, many Native people around Long Island today see Matouac [Long Island] as a big fish or whale, with its tail pointing east and its jaw at Rockaway Point in the west, ready to devour Staten Island. If that is true, Manhattan Island seems to be a worm on a hook just above its head, ready to snare it. That describes the odd relationship between the two islands: the vastly larger of the two always trying to avoid being overwhelmed by the smaller. (Pritchard 2002:305)

This chapter presents an overview of the inhabitants of Long Island. If its shores could talk, they would remember the Algonquian languages that once dominated the island and the transition from native land to European colony. They might speak of the shipwrecks of whaling boats and the passing of huge steamboats through the Long Island Sound. Long Island’s history sheds light onto the distinctions modern Long Islanders feel about being New Yorkers. The Long Islanders who identify more with the colonial history of the island tend to disprefer the NYCE features used by Long Islanders who trace their ancestries back to the 20th century immigration of southern and eastern Europeans through Ellis Island and
later out into the boroughs of New York City and the suburbs of Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

This chapter also presents an ethnographic view of millennial Long Island. By comparing the demographics of Suffolk and Nassau counties to Brooklyn and Queens counties, the differences in the socioeconomic backgrounds of these locales are highlighted. These are considered the global contexts in which Long Islanders find themselves. Furthermore, Long Island subcultures are discussed, which provide the local contexts that Long Islanders may position themselves in relation to in conversation. These socio-cultural qualities provide the backdrop for the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.1. The post-Colombian settlement of Fish-Shape Paumanok

The first Long Islanders were Algonquian-speaking people of various tribes. There is much debate among scholars as to how many nations originally inhabited the island, but the number that most Native people and scholars agree on is thirteen. They are Montauk, Shinnecock, Unkechaug, Secatogues, Massapequa, Merrick, Rockaway, Canarsie, Matinecock, Nissequogue, Setauket, Corchaug, and Manhasset (Pritchard 2001). Many towns on Long Island still bear these names. Some of these towns are summarized below in Table (2.1).
Table 2.1: Some place names on Long Island of indigenous origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Algonquian Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amagansett</td>
<td>“place of good water”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquebogue</td>
<td>“head of the bay”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calverton</td>
<td>From Conumgum, “fixed line” or “boundary”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commack</td>
<td>“pleasant lands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coram</td>
<td>“a passage between hills or valleys”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauppauge</td>
<td>“overflowed land”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ronkonkoma</td>
<td>“freshwater pond called Raconkamuck,” which translates as “the boundary fishing place”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattituck</td>
<td>“the great creak”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moriches, Center Moriches, East Moriches</td>
<td>Thought to be named after a Native American Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noyack</td>
<td>“a point or corner of land”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peconic</td>
<td>“nut trees”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quogue</td>
<td>“cove” or “estuary”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wading River</td>
<td>“the brook where we wade for thick shells”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, because of the plague that decimated the indigenous population throughout the continent, many survivors had to relocate and join other historically separate tribes. The two reservations that remain on Long Island today
are the Shinnecock Reservation of the Shinnecock Indian Nation in Southampton and the Poospatuck Reservation of the Unkechaug Indian Nation in Mastic.

2.1.1. The arrival of the Europeans

Soon after the Europeans’ arrival in North America, they started trading with the Natives. They introduced guns, cloth, metal tools, and alcohol into the area. Shortly after, they settled into the towns and villages already established by the Natives and the European diseases they brought with them turned into a plague, which decimated the indigenous populations (Strong 2011).

The Dutch laid claim to Long Island after Henry Hudson’s 1609 voyage to find the Northwest Passage and subsequently built trading posts on Manhattan and western Long Island. England also claimed Long Island based on John Cabot’s voyage in 1497, however there were no English settlements on the island. In 1637, the English colonists of Connecticut, Plymouth Bay, and Massachusetts Bay waged war against the Pequots who lived across the Long Island Sound. The Pequot were an ally of many Indian nations on eastern Long Island. They were offered wampum—the sacred shell beads used as a form of currency—in exchange for military alliances (Strong 2011). The Montaukett of east end Long Island were one of the nations at war with the Pequot (Pritchard 2002). Upon learning of the displacement of the Pequots, Wyandanch, the sachem (chief) of the Montaukett nation, established a relationship with a local English commander, Lion Gardiner. This relationship meant military protection for the Natives on Long Island and at the
same time gave the English an opportunity to challenge the Dutch territorial claims (Strong 2011). Although scholars disagree as to who sold Gardiner the island, two years later he established a home for himself on one of the islands between the two forks of the east end which now bears his name (Pritchard 2002, Strong 2011). Within a year, two other groups of English colonists settled in Southold and Southampton on the north and south fork of the east end, bringing the indigenous people into more direct contact with the Europeans (Strong 2011). The map below, reproduced from Strong (2011) shows some of the original Indian nations of Long Island along with some of the early English colonies. This map also shows the Dutch/English border established in 1650, close to Hempstead established six years prior.
Figure 2.1: The tribal territories and English and Dutch settlements, ca. 1650. Reproduced from Strong (2011).

In 1667, the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam was officially surrendered to the British, becoming New York. All of Long Island was included in this treaty, even the towns on the east end, which were geographically and economically more connected to the Connecticut colony across the Long Island Sound (Weigold 1974). There is still debate today over whether east end Long Island is part of what is considered New England. I will show in later chapters how this “New Englandness” has an effect on the English spoken by inhabitants with this historical connection.
2.1.1.1. Thomas Jefferson visits the Unkechaug

In 1789, Thomas Jefferson, along with James Madison, made a “fact-finding” trip up through Upstate New York, New England, and Long Island. The facts they were meant to find where those that might help them win an election against rival Alexander Hamilton, however, Jefferson had a keen interest in Native American culture (Strong 2011). After crossing the Long Island Sound into Southold and making their way down to Mastic, they were guests of William Floyd—a politician and signer of the Declaration of Independence. Floyd escorted the two men down to Poospatuck where Jefferson conducted a bit of fieldwork with two older women as well as a younger woman who acted as in interpreter (ibid.). Jefferson noted that the Unkechaug dialect differed from the dialects spoken by the Shinnecock and Montauks, asserting “the three tribes can barely understand each other” (Boyd 1982).

Jefferson’s dictionary remained with him during his presidency from 1801-1809. Unfortunately, most of it was lost after his second term ended and he moved back to Monticello, Virginia. His belongings were making their way back up the river when a thief boarded the boat and stole what was the largest and heaviest trunk. Upon opening it, he disappointedly threw the contents into the river, the papers being of no use to him. Among the documents ruined were most of the Unkechaug vocabularies. Only a few pages were salvaged from the water (Strong 2011).

Currently, these few pages of lexical items are serving as one point of reference in the Unkechaug and Shinnecock Language Revival Project. Members of
both nations have joined forces with scholars from Stony Brook University to reconstruct their languages through records such as the Jefferson vocabulary and other documents kept by Unkechaug chief Harry Wallace (Cohen 2010).

2.1.1.2. Names for Long Island

Although the Algonquian languages have fallen out of use today, they survive through various place names. Many modern visitors to the island marvel at the ease with which Long Islanders can pronounce these names. Personally, there have been many times that I've told a visitor we’ll be taking the train from Ronkonkoma [zan.ka.na] to get into the city and once we get to the station and they see the sign, they say, “so that's how you pronounce it!”

Long Island itself has been referred to by different names of various “indigenous” origins. Some Long Islanders are familiar with the term Sewanhacky. This was the term used by the Dutch when they first arrived, sewan meaning “scattered” or “loose” in the Masachusett language, which the Dutch used to call the Native Americans’ beads made from seashells—known on Long Island as wampum. Hacky is a Delaware word meaning “land” or “country.” A popular translation is “The Island of Shells”, although the mixing of these two languages to create an “indigenous” term for the island seems bizarre by modern standards (Tooker 1901)

2.1.2. Early colonial life

Early explorers often wrote about the abundance of seafood to be caught in the Long Island Sound. One account explained, “those fishes are so tame that many
are caught with the hand” (Weigold 1974). The first European colonies on Long Island stayed close to the Sound to take advantage of the food source.

The forests of Long Island provided another source of food—mainly deer and rabbits. Colonists began to depend on farming to sustain them throughout the year (Weigold 1974). Corn, being one of the major sources of food of the indigenous people, became a major crop (Strong 2011).

Shortly thereafter, the colonists began moving inland. Roadways were established based on trails used by the indigenous people. For example, Montauk Highway (Route 80/27) follows the old Montauk Trail and Route 231 follows another North-South path further west (Pritchard 2002). As a result, trading expanded, although the colonial economy depended mostly on agriculture and fishing—whaling in particular (Weigold 1974).

2.1.3. Modernization

2.1.3.1. The Long Island Railroad

In 1834, plans began for establishing a quicker route to Boston from New York City via a rail line that expanded from Brooklyn across Long Island and up the north fork to Greenport. From there, passengers would board a steam ship that would take them to Stonington, Connecticut where they would board another train
that to take them into Boston (Weigold 1974). The Long Island Rail Road Company designed the rail to travel along the south shore of the island where the land was mostly uninhabited. The only goal of the rail was to move people as quickly as possible to the steamboat waiting for them at Greenport—serving the Long Island communities was not one of their priorities (ibid.).

The line opened in 1844 to much jubilation among its investors in New York City. During the early colonial years, the communities of Long Island and Connecticut surrounding the Sound held many cultural similarities. However, in the industrial age, an intense rivalry began to develop. This, Weigold (1974) suggests, is one of the reasons the Long Island Rail Road Company pushed for their line to be completed—it was feared a rail line would be established through Connecticut, providing a quicker trip than the 11 hours projected by the Long Island Rail Road. The sooner the rail was up and running, the longer they could operate and make a profit before a rail was constructed through the rivers and inlets of the Connecticut coastline.

In 1848, however, the New Haven Railroad Company completed a direct route between New York City and New Haven (the line between Boston and New Haven was already in existence), thus completing the all-rail route between New York City and Boston. The Long Island Rail Road Company went bankrupt in 1850. The company needed to reorganize, as the Boston service was no longer profitable (Weigold 1974). The Long Island Rail Road was to be transformed into a local line.
However, as it stood, the rail from Brooklyn to Greenpoint was essentially a “route from Brooklyn to nowhere”, since the interior of the island where the railroad ran was scarcely inhabited (Weigold 1974). They began expanding the line into the western part of the island, with the Syosset branch being built in 1854. Other companies, such as the North Shore Railroad, began developing lines in the same area, creating a web of competing railways that were scarcely used and unprofitable to the many companies operating them. Finally, in 1899, the Long Island Rail Road was permitted by the New York State legislature to build a tunnel under the East River, connecting Manhattan Island to Long Island (Weigold 1974). This tunnel, along with the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883, thrust Long Island into becoming part of the New York Metropolitan Area.

2.1.3.2. Immigration

“In 1660 William Kieft, the Dutch governor of New Netherland, remarks to the French Jesuit Isaac Jogues that there were eighteen languages spoken at or near Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan Island. There still are: not necessarily the same languages, but at least as many; nor has the number ever declined in the intervening three centuries. This is an essential fact of New York: a merchant metropolis with an extraordinarily heterogeneous population. The first shipload of settlers sent out by the Dutch was made up largely of French-speaking Protestants. British, Germans, Finns, Jews, Swedes, Africans, Italians, Irish followed, beginning a stream that has never yet stopped.” (Glazer and Moynihan 1963)

Towards the end of the 19th century, the United States experienced a major influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Between 1880 and 1919, almost 75% of over 23 million European immigrants relocated to New York City (Blake 2006). New York’s multicultural identity was (and still is) often a point of
contention. Blake (2006) examined competing discourses about New York—one camp—the conservative anti-immigration groups—claiming New York was un-American as a result of its many ethnic residents, and the other camp—the tourism industry—inviting Americans to come to New York to “see the world”. The influx of Italian, Irish, Jewish, and Polish immigrants posed a threat to the maintenance of the “old stock” New Yorkers who were generally of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant origin (Blake 2006).

2.1.3.3. Suburban Sprawl

As the city’s population continued to grow, it was inevitable that people would move out from the central parts of the city to the outlying boroughs, and eventually to the newly-created suburbs. This was a prominent change not only for the city dwellers of New York City, but also for the communities of Long Island. Although some communities had already been established more inland, Long Island still retained a maritime way of life. The mass-production of the automobile revolutionized the look of Long Island (and consequently, the typical Long Islander) (Weigold 1974).

After World War I, the wealthy residents of New York City began moving out onto Long Island’s north shore—the Gold Coast of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s classic American novel The Great Gatsby. They would drive their automobiles out to ride on the smooth and sparsely populated parkways. They built grand estates on the
Sound, often times with docks for private yachts and large fields for playing polo. Soon, middle and upper-middle class residents began spending their weekend “out on the Island”, much to the dismay of local residents (Weigold 1974). Long Island was quickly turning into New York City’s playground.

It was only after World War II, however, that Long Island became the sprawling suburb of New York City that it is today. With the construction of the Long Island Expressway (Interstate 495) beginning in 1953 and the creation of the first planned suburban community of Levittown in 1947, Long Island’s population exploded (Weigold 1974). People were drawn to the country living out on Long Island while still being able to work in the urban center of New York City. This lifestyle is maintained by many Long Islanders today, although the economic shape of Long Island today looks much different than its fishing and agricultural past.

2.2. Long Island in the new millennium

2.2.1. Geography

Long Island is an island in Southeastern New York that juts out east of Manhattan and spans 188 miles. For perspective, to drive from Manhattan to Montauk on the south fork takes about 2.5 hours. On weekends during the summer, it can take upwards of 4 hours because of summer vacation traffic from the city. There are four counties located on Long Island—from west to east, they are Kings
(Brooklyn), Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk. Although the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens are physically located on Long Island, they are considered boroughs of New York City. When locals say *Long Island*, they are referring to Nassau and Suffolk counties exclusively. The easternmost part of the Island, referred to as ‘East End Long Island’ or ‘the East End’, is divided into two forks. These are the areas where the upper class from NYC have summer vacation homes, but there are also year-round residents belonging to middle and lower class communities (Cushman Murphy 1962; Rattray 1979).

2.2.2. Demographics

2.2.2.1. Income

Suffolk County is the eastern-most county on Long Island. According to the 2010 Census, Suffolk County has a population of 1,493,350 and an area of 912.05 square miles, thus giving it a population density of 1,637 persons per square mile. The median household income is $84,106 and the mean household income is $102,914. These demographics are summarized in Table 1 below along with the numbers for Nassau, Queens, and Brooklyn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Population Density per square mile</th>
<th>Median Household income</th>
<th>Mean Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>1,493,350</td>
<td>912.05</td>
<td>1,637.4</td>
<td>$84,106</td>
<td>$102,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau</td>
<td>1,339,532</td>
<td>284.72</td>
<td>4,704.8</td>
<td>$91,414</td>
<td>$119,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>2,230,722</td>
<td>108.53</td>
<td>20,553.6</td>
<td>$53,572</td>
<td>$69,941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nassau County is surrounded by Suffolk to the east and Queens to the west. With a population of 1,339,532 and a land area of 284.72, its population density surpasses Suffolk at 4,704.8 persons per square mile. Nassau residents also earn more than Suffolk residents; the median household income in 2010 was $91,414 and the mean was $119,725. The land area of Queens and Brooklyn is much smaller, yet they both have larger populations, giving them a population density of 20,553.6 and 35,369.2 persons per square mile, respectively. In Queens, the median household income in $53,572 and the mean is $69,941. In Brooklyn, the median is $42,752 and the mean is $63,031. From these data we can see that the population is much greater inside the city boroughs, but at the same time, their residents earn much less than those residing in the suburbs. From these data, we can see that Suffolk and Nassau County’s residents are in a relatively higher socio-economic class than residents of Brooklyn and Queens.

### 2.2.2.2. Race and Ethnicity

The United States Census gives residents a list of 5 races to choose from. These are White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). In 2000, the Census Bureau added the option to choose more than one race.
as well as the option to mark “Some other race” (Jones and Smith 2001). They define “Hispanic or Latino” as a “person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (ibid.). These races and ethnicities from the 2010 Census are listed below in Table 2 for the four counties on the physical island.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Two or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>1,206,297 (80.8%)</td>
<td>111,224 (7.4%)</td>
<td>246,239 (16.5%)</td>
<td>50,972 (3.4%)</td>
<td>5,366 (0.4%)</td>
<td>83,460 (5.6%)</td>
<td>36,031 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau</td>
<td>977,577 (73.0%)</td>
<td>149,049 (11.1%)</td>
<td>195,355 (14.6%)</td>
<td>102,266 (7.6%)</td>
<td>3,185 (0.2%)</td>
<td>75,547 (5.6%)</td>
<td>31,908 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>886,053 (39.7%)</td>
<td>426,683 (19.1%)</td>
<td>613,750 (27.5%)</td>
<td>511,787 (22.9%)</td>
<td>15,364 (0.7%)</td>
<td>289,922 (13.0%)</td>
<td>100,913 (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>1,072,041 (42.8%)</td>
<td>860,083 (34.3%)</td>
<td>496,285 (19.8%)</td>
<td>262,276 (10.5%)</td>
<td>13,524 (0.5%)</td>
<td>220,472 (8.8%)</td>
<td>76,304 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Racial populations and percentages by county. Source: Census 2010.

All counties have a majority White population, but the White population is much larger in Suffolk and Nassau counties (80.8% and 73.0%, respectively). This is compared to the 39.7% and 42.8% White population in Queens and Brooklyn. Conversely, Queens and Brooklyn boast a larger population of people of color. The

8 For space-saving purposes, I’ve collapsed “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” into the “Other” group. This is not because I don’t think this ethnic group deserves attention; rather, given the small sample size of my study, I don’t have any sociolinguistic information, first-hand or anecdotal, about this particular group in the NYC metropolitan area.
Black population is the smallest in Suffolk County, making up 7.4% of the population, and it is the largest in Brooklyn, accounting for 34.3% of the population. The Hispanic population is largest in Queens, making up 27.5% of the population. Hispanics also account for 19.8% of the population in Brooklyn, 16.5% in Suffolk and 14.6% in Nassau—this population has been growing in all counties. In Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk the Hispanic population is larger than the Black population. The Asian population, with people of both East Asian and South Asian descent lumped together, is growing. It is the largest in Queens at 22.9%—the third largest ethnic population after the White and Hispanic groups. Although racial and ethnic diversity is growing in Suffolk and Nassau Counties, it is true that residential areas are still segregated as is evidenced in the racial composition of the public schools. People of color constitute 90% of students in high-poverty schools, but only 23% in medium poverty schools and 9% in low poverty schools (Jones et al 2012).

Table (2.4) below shows the largest ancestry groups in the four counties as reported by the 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Although Dutch and English are not among the top 5 ancestries in any counties, I've included this data because of their historical significance, as described in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1. I've also included the “American” ancestry because it does show up in Nassau, Queens, and Brooklyn. I find this ancestry particularly interesting because there is no clear definition. Is it meant for people who can't trace back their family's ancestry? Does it apply to all racial groups?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Suffolk</th>
<th>Nassau</th>
<th>Queens</th>
<th>Brooklyn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 5 Ancestries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>413,786 (27.6%)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>294,245 (21.9%)</td>
<td>West Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>339,377 (22.6%)</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>217,210 (16.2%)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>249,302 (16.6%)</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>135,961 (10.1%)</td>
<td>Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>83,075 (5.5%)</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>68,608 (5.1%)</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>78,189 (5.2%)</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>67,143 (5.0%)</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Comparison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>9,685 (0.6%)</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>4,166 (0.3%)</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>49,641 (3.3%)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>40,457 (3.0%)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Top 5 most common ancestries by county; other ancestries included for comparison. Source: 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Out of all the ancestries listed in Table (2.4), only Italian and Irish show up as one of the top five in all four counties compared. Italian is the most common
ancestry in Suffolk and Nassau Counties, accounting for 27.6% and 21.9% of the population, respectively. It is followed by Irish (22.6%, 16.2%), German (16.6%, 10.1%), and Polish (5.5%, 5.1%). In Queens, two populations share first place at 6.4% of the population—West Indian and Italian. West Indian is also the largest ancestry group present in Brooklyn at 11.8%, followed by Italian at 5.7%. The Irish population in Queens and Brooklyn shrinks to 4.4% and 3.2%, respectively. Across the entire island, the English and Dutch populations have greatly diminished since they settled in the area 300 years ago. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, some of these colonial ties still play an important role in Long Islanders’ construction of identity.

2.2.2.3. Education

Educational attainment differs across these four counties as well. These statistics from the 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates are summarized below in Table 4. High School is the most common highest level of education attained across all four counties. In Nassau County, 24.8% of the population reports High School as the highest level of education attained. This is followed by 27.8% in Queens, 27.6% in Brooklyn, and 30.4% in Suffolk County. Brooklyn and Queens have the highest percentage of residents that have not attained a High School diploma at 21.7% and 19.6%, respectively. Suffolk and Nassau Counties have populations of 10.0% and 9.4%, respectively. Suffolk, Brooklyn, and Queens report similar populations of residents holding Bachelor’s Degrees at 18.2%, 18.6%, and 19.3%, respectively. 23% of Nassau County’s
population holds a Bachelor’s Degree. Similarly, Nassau County has a higher population of residents with a graduate or professional degree (18.2%) than do Queens, Brooklyn, or Suffolk County (11.2%, 11.3%, 14.7%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Less than High School</th>
<th>High School Graduate</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Graduate or Professional Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Educational attainment in population percentages. Source: 2011 American Community Survey 1-year estimates.

Although most residents remain on Long Island after high school graduation, some do pursue higher education off-island. A common college experience reported in the interviews I conducted included 4 years at a college in upstate New York (essentially meaning anywhere north of the Bronx—a definition many residents of mainland New York would disagree with), and then a return to live and work on Long Island.

According to participant interviews and my personal experience having grown up there, it is during this period away from home where most young college-bound Long Islanders are exposed to the stereotypes outsiders hold about them.
Some of the stereotypes held about Long Islanders reported by respondents are that they are all Jewish or Italian, they like to party, and fashion-wise they are sloppy, trendy, and gaudy. Physically, they are expected to have tanned skin achieved by repeated sessions in tanning salons and the men are expected to be in extremely muscular condition achieved by hours in the gym, perhaps aided by steroids. They are not expected to be the smartest in the class, but they are usually regarded as gregarious and funny. It is not uncommon for someone to make fun of Long Islanders’ use of the phrase *Strong Island*, which is a nickname used by residents to refer to their home.

2.2.3. Subcultures on Long Island

2.2.3.1. The Strong Island Subculture

The phrase *Strong Island* arose out of the hip-hop scene of the late 1980’s. Each of the boroughs of NYC have nicknames that denote some aspect of toughness and/or style associated with the area: Brooklyn → Crooklyn, BK; Queens → Cop-killa Queens; The Bronx → Boogie-down Bronx, BX; Staten Island → Shaolin Island; Manhattan → Money-makin’ Manhattan. Additionally, some neighborhoods within the city limits have a nickname. *Strong Island* came about as a way for local hip-hop artists to establish themselves as a part of the NYC hip-hop community. The stereotype at the time was that the rappers from Long Island were too middle class to be authentic. Because they were perceived to live in houses with large yards and to own cars, they weren’t considered tough enough. *Strong Island* was a reaction to this stereotype (Crafton 2009). For that community, it signified the struggles the
African American community on Long Island still had to face despite the material advantages they had over communities in the boroughs. It was a way of saying, ‘We are New York too.’

J.V.C.F.O.R.C.E.’s 1988 single “Strong Island” brought the phrase into the broader metropolitan scene. More acts began representing themselves as coming from *Strong Island* and it became a common theme found in album artwork, apparel, and other accessories. Other notable rappers to come out of the *Strong Island* scene were Flavor Flav, Chuck D, and Professor Griff of Public Enemy, MF Doom (known as Zev Love X during his days with KMD), and Rakim. Rakim recorded a track titled “Strong Island” in 2001. The chorus demonstrates the community’s desire to associate themselves as a part of the greater metropolitan New York culture, but also establishing themselves as unique and innovative: “The rhyme that I’m stylin’, smooth as a violin, but rough enough to break New York from Strong Island.”

The *Strong Island* persona was eventually adopted by members of the young, suburban White community. However, it took on a slightly different look. While still adhering to the idea of perseverance and struggle, *Strong Island* started to take on a flashier sentiment. It can be seen as a way of demonstrating how one’s family has achieved success since moving out of the ethnic ghettos of New York City—one has to be strong to survive. The styles in the new millennium revolve largely around the DJ and club cultures.

Important physical aspects of the style include clean haircuts for men, loud hair color combinations for women (a popular style is bleached blonde or pink
underneath with black at the top and crown), wearing clean, ironed clothing, clean sneakers, and having an in-shape or muscular physique. Some members of the community partake in weekly tanning maintenance as well. Body piercing and tattoos are also very common among both men and women. A current trend among women is the microdermal piercing or single-point piercing. In this type of piercing, the skin is cut and a piece of jewelry with an anchor is inserted. It can be placed anywhere, but it usually seen around the eyes, chest, and hands. All of these physical attributes are symbols of success and affluence. It costs money to maintain a gym membership, get elaborate tattoos, and have one’s hair professionally dyed. Figures (2) and (3) below demonstrate some of the other commonalities found in the style.

Figure (2) is a screen shot from the website strongisland.com. This website caters to the Strong Island community in that they sell apparel and locally-produced music, as well as provide professional audio/visual services to record music and videos. The site features various images to conjure their Strong Island attitude—the outline of Long Island drawn with “STRONG ISLAND” written inside in a graffiti-style font, DJ’s headphones, turntables, and clothing with similar images. There are also links to locally produced radio shows, which showcase DJs with a Strong Island sound.
Figure 2.2: Screen shot of strongisland.com, a website which sells products to the Strong Island community. Taken August 2011.

Figure (3) shows some examples of women’s apparel sold through the above-mentioned website. The shirt on the left is a gray v-neck t-shirt with the phrase “strong island DJ’S GIRL” written on it in black, pink, and white lettering, emphasizing the importance of DJ culture as well as the fact that the wearer is currently romantically involved with a DJ. The shirt in the middle is a green men’s undershirt (locally called a wifebeater). It has an image of a cookie with a sexy woman’s face with pouty lips. A bite has been taken out of the cookie and the phrase “TOUGH COOKIE” is repeated 13 times behind the image in yellow lettering. The shirt on the right is another wifebeater, this time in pink. It is the same schematized DJ seen earlier. The entire image is printed in black. These images demonstrate the importance of the DJ culture as well as the importance of strength and toughness.
The phrase *Strong Island* itself is not especially used in everyday speech; rather, it is reserved for special situations. For example, one might hear *Strong Island* exclaimed at a house party either upon a group’s arrival to announce their presence or when two groups of Long Islanders meet up unexpectedly off-island as an exaggerated in-group marker. Other mainstream uses of the phrase include *Strong Island Wrestling* (a wrestling summer camp), *The Strong Island Sound* (a local and currently defunct minor league basketball team, a play on the body of water to the north—The Long Island Sound), and another *Strong Island Sound* (a recording studio and production company). By using the phrase *Strong Island*, Long Islanders are establishing themselves as part of the greater NY metropolitan area, but at the same time recognizing themselves as a separate community. Use of *strong* in place
of long refers to the importance of toughness to Long Island’s distinction from the city.

2.2.3.2. Extreme Sports Subculture

Although many Long Islanders hold an affinity for New York sports teams (either the Yankees or Mets, the Jets or Giants, the Islanders or Rangers, and of course, the Knicks⁹), some Long Islanders also belong to a subculture that centers on extreme sports. Sports included in this designation are skateboarding, BMX racing, auto racing, and surfing, among many others.

It is common to see groups of children and teenagers, mostly boys, skateboarding and riding bikes in the streets of their suburban neighborhoods. It is also not uncommon to see BMX trails fashioned out of empty lots. For example, in the neighborhood I grew up in, empty lots often served as a place for kids to hang out after school and ride their bikes. Some of the neighborhood boys were even involved in BMX racing for children. Besides BMX parks, there are many more parks dedicated to skateboarding on Long Island.

The image in Figure 4 below represents a bit of suburban skater graffiti. This is a sign at the Town of Brookhaven Ecology Site, Park & Animal Preserve, which is

⁹ At the present time, I do not know of any Long Islander who has switched loyalties to the new Brooklyn (formerly New Jersey) Nets.
built on a reclaimed landfill. The site includes a petting zoo, a fitness trail, and greenhouses for residents to grow vegetables and flowers. This sign is located along the fitness trail. It is an educational poster describing how the site was built, which has been poorly preserved behind a Plexiglas frame. In green spray paint, in angular letters, someone has written “UFO SKATE” across the sign, a testament to how the artist feels about this particular brand’s skateboards and accessories. This example demonstrates the prevalence of the skater community as well as this subculture’s affinity for challenging authority.
Surfers are also a part of this subculture. Since surfboards cost considerably more than bikes or skateboards, surfers who start at an early age usually come from more affluent families. In high school, when teenagers are earning their own money via part-time jobs and free to pursue their individual interests, many new surfers are born. During the school year, some surfers stop at the beach before school to ride a couple swells. Having salty, beach-tousled hair and sand accumulated on your Rainbow flip-flops is seen as a badge of honor, something only dedicated surfers can achieve.
2.2.3.3. Driving Culture

Long Islanders do a lot of driving. Long Island is interconnected lengthwise down the center by the Long Island Expressway (I-495), which runs west to east from Queens into Riverhead at the meeting of the two forks on the East End. Montauk Highway (NY 80) runs from Jamaica, Queens to Montauk Point on the south fork, where it merges with Sunrise Highway (NY 27). Summer traffic from the city usually starts out on the Long Island Expressway until Manorville, where commuters take Rt. 111 down to Sunrise Highway. Many secondary roadways run north to south and connect with all three roadways. Since personal vehicles are the preferred means of transportation, when two Long Islanders are referring to different places on the island, it is not uncommon for them to use exits on either highway as reference points.

Although Long Islanders’ commutes are shorter on average than residents of the city, they normally take their own personal vehicles rather than public transportation, as is demonstrated in Table 5 below. In Suffolk and Nassau Counties, 79.5% and 70.4% of residents commute to work in their own vehicle, compared to 31.1% and 18.7% in Queens and Brooklyn. Conversely, residents of Suffolk and Nassau Counties don’t take public transportation nearly as much as those in Queens and Brooklyn; 6.3% and 15.5% of residents in Suffolk and Nassau take public transportation compared to 53.0% and 61.8% in Queens and Brooklyn. It should also be pointed out that many Long Islanders who use public transportation are Long Island Rail Road commuters who work in the city (Regional Plan Association
2003). These numbers are not surprising. Queens and Brooklyn take up much smaller areas than the two counties of Long Island and they are also connected by NYC’s public transportation system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Suffolk</th>
<th>Nassau</th>
<th>Queens</th>
<th>Brooklyn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commute alone in personal vehicle</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commute by public transportation</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean travel time to work in minutes</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.5: Commute information. Source: 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.**

### 2.2.3.4. Summer on Long Island

Since it is an island, Long Islanders take advantage of the 1,180 miles of seashore during the summer months (Regional Plan Association 2003). Public beaches are a mainstay of summer life on Long Island. Middle and working class residents of New York City will sometimes venture as far out east as Robert Moses State Park in western Suffolk County to visit the beach, but more often will utilize local parks in Brooklyn and Queens. Many upper class residents of Manhattan bypass most of Long Island and spend their summers on the East End—in the Hamptons.

On the East End, many locales that are closed during the winter reopen during the summer. This includes many nightclubs—one of the only summer-only resource locals are likely to utilize, as the other seasonal commercial businesses
(like designer crib shops and upscale clothing stores) often cater to the more affluent summer community. Many seasonal shops employ local teenagers to staff their businesses. Having worked one of these jobs myself for five summers, I can attest to the fact that these seasonal employees are treated quite poorly by the summer residents. This bad attitude has given way to a nickname used by the locals—the “citiots”, a blending of “city” and “idiot”. Residents of Manhattan also have a condescending nickname for Long Islanders—“bridge and tunnel people”. From these nicknames, it is clear that some animosity exists between the communities.

Locals, especially those of the lower middle and working classes, feel a large resentment towards the summer residents. Although some seasonal residents own their summer homes year-round, they generally only live in them from late May to early September. Often, one parent (usually the mother) will remain with the children in the Hamptons, while the other parent works in the city during the week, then commutes to the Hamptons for the weekends. For many Long Islanders who reside in or close to the East End, their interactions with “people from the city” (not “New Yorkers”, as I will explain in the next chapter) are limited to scanning their items at the supermarket or fitting their children with a rental surfboard. Because of this, they believe the “citiots” view them as poor country-bumpkins. This clashes with Long Islanders’ belief that they are New Yorkers themselves, which, in turn, creates more resentment. These beliefs and stereotypes will be addressed in finer detail in the following chapter.
For Long Islanders living between central Suffolk County and Queens, the seasonal population boom in the Hamptons is hardly felt, save a rise in traffic on the LIE on Fridays and Sundays. Their interactions with city residents are limited, unless they commute to Manhattan for work, which is about 20% of the population (Regional Plan Association 2003). Many houses on Long Island have a pool in the backyard and neighborhood children will play in them during the hot summer days. Several ice cream trucks service each neighborhood and public parks. Residents of different townships have access to parking areas at specific beaches. The beaches of the South Shore are the most populated during the summer months—Jones Beach, Robert Moses State Park, Fire Island, and the Hamptons. These south-facing beaches feature a moderate surf. The light sand is fine enough to be very comfortable to sit or lay on but coarse enough that it’s not powdery. These are the beaches residents visit to sunbathe and play in the surf. The north shore beaches on the Long Island Sound, on the other hand, are not main attractions to beat the summer heat. The water is quite still and there is not a lot of soft sand; instead, these beaches tend to be quite rocky. Additionally, many beaches on the North Shore are private. These factors tend to lead residents to the South Shore.

2.3. Conclusion

While the people and languages of fish-shape Paumanok have changed dramatically over its history, millennial Long Islanders identify themselves in these
historical and modern terms. The discourse analysis in the following chapter shows how Long Islanders respond to these local and global contexts in conversation.
Chapter 3

Discourse Analysis of the Interviews

While regional, ethnic, and racial categorizations are necessary for large-scale social analyses, social scientists know that not all participants will fall into the pre-determined categories. The previous chapter presented on the demographics of Long Island as well as common social practices and local culture. This chapter uses an ethnographic approach to investigate how these global aspects of identity play out in Long Islanders’ day-to-day lives. The goal is to describe how the participants described in Chapter 1 construct their own local identities, with a focus on my own interaction with the data. The data show that the participants (myself included) are constantly negotiating their identities through conversation.

The interviews analyzed in this chapter, however, should not be mistaken for normal, day-to-day conversations. The expectations for formality, divulgence of information, and power relations are different in the interview context than in a regular conversation. In these interviews, the participants knew before agreeing to
participate that they would be partaking in a study about English as spoken on Long Island. The power dynamics are also much different. Rather than two interlocutors establishing power dynamics based on other factors like age, status, gender, etc., the interviewer holds the power over the conversation. Interviewers are *expected* to ask questions and interviewees are *expected* to provide answers.

The types of answers will vary depending on the relationship the interviewee has with the interviewer. If an interviewer already knows the interviewee, there may be background information (like ethnicity, gender, etc.) that is already known and consequently omitted from the interview. Furthermore, past experiences between the interviewer and interviewee will shape the interviews. In the context of the interviewer and interviewee being strangers, all information has to be exchanged, including the relevant background information for each interlocutor. In all scenarios, however, the interviewer is often seen as the expert within the conversation. For some interviewees, this may prompt them to provide answers to questions that they think will "help the study", which may not be the answer they would have provided otherwise. For others, they may disagree with the subject of the study or the kinds of questions being asked, and consequently, may resist questioning by providing insufficient or irrelevant answers. Using conventions of discourse analysis to analyze the interviews allows for an ethnographic approach that takes into account both local and global contexts.

The following excerpts come from the sociolinguistic interviews described in Chapter 1. They are transcribed according to a slightly modified version of the Du
Bois et al. (1993) transcription system for discourse analysis. Long Islanders take different approaches to doing identity work. While some take an essentialist view of ethnicity and regional affiliation, others are more concerned with the socio-cultural aspects of what makes them who they are, taking a performative approach to identity construction. In reality, many people integrate both methods, demonstrating the difficulty people have in conceptualizing identity in and of itself.

3.1. Ethnicity on Long Island

The majority of Long Islanders are of the type of European American descent described by Alba (1994) and Waters (1990) above and cited in the statistics in the previous chapter. When asked about their ethnicity, the European Americans of Long Island have various “ethnic options” to choose from. All respondents could identify at least one ancestry. I specifically used the word “ethnicity” in the interviews rather than “ancestry”, “race”, or “nationality”, although it seemed to be interpreted differently depending on the interviewee.

3.1.1. Caucasian

Respondents coded as Caucasian either answered with “American” or “Caucasian” to the question regarding ethnicity. They provided ancestry information when prompted, but they did not directly identify with any particular culture. The interview with AS (24 Caucasian female) was one of the first I
conducted. AS is a childhood friend of mine. The interview was conducted in my old bedroom in Mastic, NY. She and I had not seen each other since graduating high school six years previously. The interview was highly informal, marked by points where we would stray from the questions completely. In Excerpt (3.1) below, she explains her ethnicity and family history. When I directly question her about her ethnicity, she prefaces her uncertainty in lines 3-4. In lines 6-7, I ask her what she identifies most with, to which she replies, “I don’t know, American?” in lines 9-10. The laughter in line 12 treats AS’s answer as somehow problematic or insufficient, and AS recognizes this and reformulates a more specific answer starting in lines 13-17. However, German, Italian, and a little bit of Welsh do not constitute “so many things” as she had said in line 4. She goes on to lament about how she doesn’t know more about her ancestry in lines 20-23. I assure her that her answer was sufficient in lines 24-26 and we moved on.

**Excerpt 3.1**

1 AMO: um --
2 what is your ethnicity,
3 AS: (H) oh gosh,
4 so many things.
5 um --
6 AMO: what do you identify with,
7 the most.
8 AS: ch-
9 I don’t know,
10 American?
11 [um --]
12 AMO: [@ @]
13 AS: German,
14 Italian mostly.
15 AMO: okay,
Participants coded as *Caucasian* typically could not provide an accurate timeframe or generation when asked if they could trace back their family’s arrival to the United States. In Excerpt (3.2) below, I ask AS about her family’s history. She says she cannot trace back when her family arrived in line 2, laughs, and provides an account for why she cannot in lines 4-8—her family doesn’t discuss family history. In line 14, she asks if other participants can usually provide these details. This demonstrates the power dynamic between interviewer and interviewee where the interviewer is being treated as the expert although it is actually the interviewee’s *personal* expertise being sought. In lines 15 and 17, I assuredly (but naively) told her that other participants *could* trace back their family (which ended up being false), and thus marking this participant as providing insufficient information.

**Excerpt 3.2**

1  AMO:  so can you trace back to when your family got to this country.
2  AS:  no=.
3    @ @ @ @
4  my family doesn’t really talk,
5    um-
AMO: [@ @]
AS: [not that] we don’t talk,
but we just don’t talk about history and stuff like that,
I have [no idea.]
AMO: [no idea,]
okay,
that’s fine.
AS: ...(1.3) do people usually know,
AMO: yeah,
AS: really?
AMO: yeah.
AS: (H)
[I don’t know!]
AMO: [that’s okay,
you’ll go home and you’ll ask,]
because most of-
AS: my mom doesn’t know,
that’s the thing.
AMO: oh.
AS: and then like my Italian family,
it’s like-
...(1.3) my grandfather-
I think might have been in the mo=b or some[thing?]
AMO: [mm-hmm]
AS: and he actually went to jail?
AMO: mm-hm,
...(0.8) and he died in jail.
like,
[my-]
AMO: [<WH oh shit, WH>]
AS: my great-grandfather,
so,
like,
my mom’s,
...(0.6) grandfather.
AMO: uh-huh,
AS: okay?
...(so like,
I think those were-
...(maybe their parents came over here?
AMO: uh-huh,
AS: ...(0.6) but it’s kind of like,
...(0.5) he died of like emphysema or something?
in jail?
yeah?
so it’s kind of like a weird issue?
AMO: mm-hm.
...then ...(0.9) my German side of the family is my dad’s side of the family, ...(1.4) and I just I don’t know. I think it was like the generation like- (H) my great-grandparents’ parents. so like, my [great-great]-great-grand[2 parents, 2] AMO: [uh-huh] [2 okay. that makes sense. 2] AS: came over here.

In response to my typification of AS as not having sufficient knowledge of her family history, in line 23 above, she provides another explanation for why she doesn’t have very much information—her mother doesn’t know either. She then goes on to explain why her family really doesn’t talk about their family history in lines 26-52. In line 29, she states that her Italian grandfather might have been in the mob. Not only was he in jail, as she states in line 31, but he died in jail, as she says in line 33. She concludes this small story with the fact that this ancestor is a sore topic for her family in line 52. The details she chooses to include reinforce the stereotype of the Italian Mafioso criminal, suggesting her disalignment with the ethnicity. In lines 54-61, she attempts to provide details for the German side of her family, but provides two different generations—her great-grandparents’ parents in line 59 and her great-great-great-grandparents in line 61.

Importantly, respondents were coded based on their own ways of self-identification rather than their ancestries “by blood”. AP (19 Caucasian female) provides an example of this in Excerpt (3.3) below. This interview was conducted during the second round of interviews at SUNY Stony Brook. AP was a sophomore
student there and a part-time barista. She grew up in Ronkonkoma and was raised by her paternal grandparents. She had a particular interest in linguistics after taking some ASL courses at a community college, which is what prompted her to respond to my advertisement. When directly questioned about her ethnicity, she responds with a racial category—Caucasian (line 5). In lines 7-11, she indicates that she can also provide ancestry information. In line 9, she almost refers to it as her “nationality”, but then corrects herself to say “heritages” in line 11.

**Excerpt 3.3**

1 AMO: (TSK)  
2 what is your ethnicity.  
3 AP: (TSK)  
4 um,  
5 I'm Caucasian,  
6 u=h,  
7 but if- if you wanna know like my,  
8 m-  
9 natio- n-  
10 my um,  
11 (...) heritages [I guess?]  
12 AMO: [uh-huh,]  
13 AP: I'm um,  
14 (H)  
15 I'm Italian mostly,  
16 I'm a little bit Irish,  
17 and then like a tiny bit French and Austrian.  
18 AMO: okay,  
19 AP: so.  
20 AMO: um do you really relate,  
21 (...) to any of those specifically,  
22 or do you feel [kinda] more,  
23 AP: [um]  
24 AMO: just American.  
25 AP: [you know,]  
26 AP: @ @ @  
27 AMO: okay cool.
In lines 12-16, she specifies her ancestry, but when I asked if she felt particularly drawn to any of those ancestries in lines 19-21, she finishes my question by stating “just American” in line 23. She further elaborates on this in line 29—“I don’t know too much about the other cultures.” So, although AP was able to identify her ancestries, she was coded as Caucasian because of her preference of being labeled American rather than another ethnic option.

Participants were also asked if they were exposed to any other languages growing up. Caucasian participants did not report any languages other than English; they were raised in monolingual environments.

3.1.2. Mixed European

Respondents coded as Mixed European were those who freely self-identified with one or more ethnic groups, but who did not consider Italian before other nationalities. For example, PD (21 Mixed European male) specifies percentages in Excerpt (3.4) below, which is not an uncommon practice for Long Islanders. In lines 7-9, he reports, “fifty percent Italian, twenty-five percent Dutch, twenty-five percent German”.

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Excerpt 3.4

Respondents coded as *Mixed European* could provide a timeframe and generation for at least two of their ethnic identifications, one of them usually Italian. Additionally, *Mixed European* respondents reported some exposure to other languages. In PD’s case, his grandmother spoke a little Dutch with him. In DR’s (49 *Mixed European* female) case, as a child she heard her Cuban aunts and uncles speaking Spanish to each other in the kitchen during family gatherings\(^\text{10}\). This exposure to languages other than English perhaps led these participants to identify more with their European immigrant roots.

3.1.3. Italian

Respondents coded as *Italian* were most easily identifiable by their tendency to not only identify as Italian, but to further specify the region(s) in Southern Italy their families came from, the most common of these *paese* (‘land’, ‘region’) specifications being *Napoletano, Calabrese, Sicilian, and Barese*. These regional

\(^{10}\) DR is still considered *Mixed European* because she didn’t specifically identify with any Latino heritage or as being Latina herself.
denominations are all pronounced in a way similar to how they were pronounced in the varieties of Italian spoken during the time of the Southern Italian Diaspora. *Siciliano* [sidʒiˈljan] is used more often by 2nd generation speakers than the younger generations, who tend to use the English equivalent. The following interview with JD (38 Italian male) was conducted during a weekend get-together at a neighbor’s house in Mastic, NY during the first round of interviews. The interviews took place around the island table in the kitchen with other participants (BT, LR, DR, JE) coming in and out. The crossed out lines in Excerpt (3.4) below contain conversation on the recording that is not related to the interview in the example. The question and answer sequence begins in line 4. I say, “You are Italian. Anything else?” Because I already knew this participant before the interview, I knew he was Italian. My question in line 6 indicates a request for more information. In lines 9-10 he reports about ten percent Lithuanian on his mother's side, indicating his uncertainty about the exact percentage. He then offers more information about the Italianness that I’ve assumed. In lines 12-17, he first names the city Naples, then provides the *paese* specification in line 17 as an adjective modifying *Italian*. The fact that he volunteers this information without my solicitation implies the importance of this Italian regional affiliation to his identity.

**Excerpt 3.5**

1. BT: she-
2. AMO: wait,
3. I'm not understand[ing]
4. you are,
5. Italian,
Most Italian respondents reported some exposure to Italian, although none reported any knowledge of the language themselves. Additionally, some speakers specified that they identify most with their Italian ancestry, such as TS (22 Italian female) in Excerpt (3.6) below.

**Excerpt 3.6**

1 TS: she is part Irish,
2 but I identify as Italian.

### 3.1.4. People of Color

Respondents coded as People of Color came from varying non-white backgrounds—African American, Latino, and Indian. “People of Color” is a term used to refer to many Americans who have had similar experiences with discrimination as a result of being part of a racialized ethnic group. They all strongly identified with their ancestries except for TG (25 male) who identified as “mixed” because he was of African American, Native American, Latino, and European descent. Furthermore,
these respondents were all 1st generation New Yorkers—all of their parents had been born in different countries, except for TG whose father was from the American South, but whose mother was from Panama. Furthermore, two participants—PP (19 Indian female) and MP (19 Latina female)—were technically raised in Nassau county, but repeatedly reminded me throughout the interview that they were from the Queens border and that they would not consider themselves Long Islanders.

3.2. Long Islanders’ Regional Self-Identification Practices

The following sections describe how Long Islanders respond to local and global contexts to situate themselves within a narrow view of what it takes to be considered a real “New Yorker”. This is highly related to an ancestral connection to the various boroughs of New York City via European immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century.

3.2.1. What is “the city”?

For different Long Islanders, the phrase “the city” can have different referents in the local and global contexts. Often in the local context, it is limited to Manhattan, but in the global context it is usually used to refer to the five boroughs.

For example, the following excerpt comes from the interview PD (21 Mixed European male). This interview was conducted in LH’s childhood home with LH (22 Mixed European male) and RG (23 Caucasian female) also present. When I had
interviewed RG (whom I sang in the choir and plays with in high school) and her grandmother (HG) earlier in the day, she suggested I might be able to interview her boyfriend (PD) and his friend (LH), both of whom I had also known from high school music events. In Excerpt (3.7) below, I asked if PD has family in New York City. He requests further clarification in line 4—“including the Island?” where the island refers to Long Island. This is an example of how Long Islanders tend to view Brooklyn and Queens as part of Long Island rather than “the city” proper.

Excerpt 3.7

1 AMO: ...(0.8) okay,
2 do you have any family in New York City?
3 PD: (TSK) u=m --
4 ...(0.7) including the Island?
5 no.
6 [just the city.]
7 AMO: [na-]
8 do you have-
9 I guess --
10 Queens and Brooklyn [considered the] city.
11 PD: [u=m-]
12 ...(0.6) no.
13 AMO: ...(0.9) [okay.]
14 PD: [what,]
15 LH, RG: (holding back laughter 1.7)
16 RG: [@ @ @]
17 PD: [wh@at- what.]
18 AMO: [@ @ @ @]
19 LH: well,
20 it didn’t matter then.
21 RG: (H)
22 AMO: @ @ @ @
23 PD: no,
24 because I used to have family in-
25 in --
26 LH: @ @
27 PD: ...(1.1) Queens.
28 ...(0.9)
PD’s unexpected negative response in line 12 brings about a moment of laughter as LH questions why he needed to clarify if he didn’t have any family in any of the boroughs anyway in lines 19-20. In lines 23-27, PD clarifies that he used to have family in Queens. This excerpt demonstrates that Long Islanders are aware of these different shades of meaning of “the city”. At the same time, by actively negotiating the meaning of this term within conversations, they are doing identity work by establishing their affiliation with the city.

In the second round of interviews, I proposed a hypothetical question to participants to determine what they thought the phrase *the city* referred to, in hopes of obtaining more precise answers than the previous interviews. The answers to this question, however, required just as much negotiation of the term as the answers in the first set of interview questions. The example from the interview with AP in Excerpt (3.8) below demonstrates how the meaning of *the city* is negotiated within the interview context. In lines 4-5, I propose the question to AP, who does not quickly provide an answer. I further clarify what I am looking for in lines 7-12 co-
constructed by the two interlocutors. She offers some tourist attractions—Times Square (line 14, repeated in line 22) and 42nd Street (line 19)—as well as the major train station Penn Station, which houses the Long Island Rail Road commuter rail terminal, as well as the New Jersey Transit commuter rail terminal and access to the New York City Subway and Busses. When Long Islanders go “into the city”, they typically take the train to Penn Station.

In lines 26-34, she brings up the fact that with a specific friend of hers, “the city” could refer to Brooklyn, but that its definition really depends on her interlocutor, demonstrating the fluidity of the boundaries of this phrase’s meaning. But she returns to Penn Station in line 39, followed up by an uncertain question in line 45—“I guess that’s Manhattan, right?”

**Excerpt 3.8**

1  AMO:  so,
2  say y-
3  uh,
4  a friend tells you he’s going to meet his cousin in the city,
5  where is he meeting his friend.
6  AP:  ...(1.1) u=m,
7  AMO:  ...(2.0) or when just like like-
8  when you hear “the city”,
9  AP:  the c-
10  the city.
11  AMO:  wha-
12  what does [that im]ply?
13  AP:  [u=m,]
14  the first thing that pops up in my head is Times Square,
15  and like,
16  the surrounding areas.
17  when I think [“the city”]
18  AMO:  [uh-huh]
19  AP:  I think like 42nd Street,
Penn Station,

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: Times Square.

AMO: uh-huh.

AP: um,

…(1.3) that (...) could mean-

with one of my friends that could mean Brooklyn.

AMO: mm-hm,

AP: but it's very-

…(1.6) I don't know,

it's specific to the friend.

if somebody's like “I'm going-

AMO: [mm-hm]

AP: [you know,]

if I know this person [frequents this] area,

AMO: [mm-hm,]

AP: but uh-

(1) generally the city.

you know,

Penn Station

[that] area right there.

AMO: [mm-hm,]

AP: (1) [I guess-]

AMO: [okay.]

AP: I guess that’s Manhattan right?

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: downtown Manhattan,

AMO: yeah.

um,

so what do you consider “the city” then,

just Manhattan then,

AP: um,

…(1.5) it’s difficult to say because,

(...) I've never really been too far out of the Manhattan area,

so I don’t really know,

[you know --]

AMO: [okay,]

AP: (1) I was really going to say the most stupid thing ever,

I'm going to say it anyway.

AMO: yeah,

AP: [please do,]

AP: [I don’t-]

AMO: [2 @ @ 2]

AP: [2 @ 2]

I don’t know how tall the buildings are far away from-

@ far away from Manhattan,

if they're tall,
After establishing the phrase Manhattan in the conversation, in lines 50-51, I directly ask her, “what do you consider the city then—just Manhattan?” AP declares that she cannot answer because she hasn’t spent much time outside of the areas she mentioned. She adds in lines 65-69 that she doesn’t know how tall the buildings are outside Manhattan—or as she puts it, “if they’re tall, like the city”. Throughout this exchange, she tends to use “the city” in place of “Manhattan”.

In line 5 in Excerpt (3.9) below, which is a continuation of Excerpt (3.8) above, I ask a clarifying question to determine how just how unfamiliar AP is with Queens and Brooklyn. She reports that her friend’s father has an insurance office in Queens in lines 8-11. She says her friend works there in line 11, but it is unclear whether AP goes to visit her or whether she provides the anecdote about her friend to establish some sort of a connection to these areas. Then in lines 15-29, she provides a “small story”—one that is not central to answering the question, but an anecdotal story about her life growing up (Bamberg 2004a). She describes an annual religious festival held in Queens, but concludes the story in line 32 by stating that she no longer attends that event. In line 35, she says, “that’s the only reason I’ll
go” in the present tense. It is unclear if this refers to only visiting her friend’s job at the insurance or the religious parade or both.

### Excerpt 3.9

1. AMO: okay.
2. cool.
3. so-
4. um-
5. so you don’t really find any reason to ever go to Queens or Brooklyn or-
6. AP: um,
7. not really.
8. I mean my friend
9. when my friend’s-
10. her dad has an insurance office,
11. and she works there [twice a] week,
12. AMO: [uh-huh]
13. AP: you know,
14. in Queens.
15. but you know-
16. (H) um-
17. …(1.0) and,
18. my grandfather,
19. since he was a police officer for all those years,
20. they have um-
21. AMO: mm-hm,
22. AP: (H) they like have a religious-
23. every-
24. once a year in like May I think,
25. Sunday breakfast in-
26. AMO: uh-huh,
27. AP: I believe Flushing it’s in
28. AMO: okay.
29. AP: and they have like a parade to the church and [back to] the restaurant,
30. AMO: [okay,]
31. AP: like,
32. (H) I don’t go to that anymore though,
33. [so,]
34. AMO: [uh-huh]
35. AP: that’s the only reason I’ll go.
36. @
37. AMO: okay,
38. cool.
um, (...) how often do you go in to Manhattan then?

AP: um-

(...), usually only if there’s just an event,

I mean-

sometimes uh-

sometimes when my friends-

(H) my best friend moved upstate,

AMO: mm-hm,

AP: but when she was here,

sometimes she’d just be like,

oh,

let’s-

let’s go to the city today.

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: you know,

...(0.6) that was uh-

...(0.5) that was sometimes spontaneous.

but um-

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: usually just concerts or something,

I think the last thing I was in the city for was to see Lewis Black.

AMO: [okay,]

AP: [um-]

(...), but I’ve been going to Brooklyn for concerts,

so,

AMO: okay,

AP: I mean,

like,

I don’t know if I consider that the city or not though,

it’s kind of like a-

(...), nother-

(...) Brooklyn and the city.

AMO: right.

AP: so,

AMO: okay,

very cool.

In line 40, above, I ask AP how often she frequents Manhattan. In line 42, she reports that she only goes in for special events, but in lines 43-56, she provides another small story about spontaneously wandering around “the city” with her friend as evidence for having frequented the area. Then in line 60, she provides the actual last time she was in “the city”, again using the phrase in place of Manhattan.
Then she adds, in line 63, that she has recently been going to concerts in Brooklyn. This is particularly interesting, because in the previous Excerpt (3.8) she claimed she wasn’t familiar with anything outside Manhattan. Finally, in line 68, she asserts that she is unsure whether to classify Brooklyn as part of “the city”—that she almost considers it a separate city in lines 69-71.

3.3. The Interaction of Ethnicity and Regional Identification

Participants often conflated regional and ethnic affiliations. Evidence for the fluidity of ethnic identification is provided by AP in Excerpt (3.10) below. Furthermore, participants themselves sometimes held conflicting views about identity. While some interviewees adhered to an essential nature to ethnicity in that they viewed ethnicity as being passed on “genetically” or “by blood”, others took a more constructivist and performative approach. In the latter approach, ethnicity is viewed as a social construction—one that has real meaning for people in their everyday lives. People may “perform” this ethnic identity through speech patterns, cultural traditions, or clothing (like the examples presented in the previous chapter). In this example, we start off talking about holidays and family traditions. I had asked her what her family typically ate for Christmas Eve. She reports in lines 2-5 that they had ham and “something else Italian”. In lines 6-11, she adds that her grandmother included Italian food at the family gatherings.

Earlier in the interview, she self-identified as Caucasian, but in Excerpt (3.3) above as also having Italian, Irish, French, Austrian ancestry, so in lines 17-19, I give
my interpretation of her anecdote stating that it must be her grandmother who is of Italian descent. I start to follow up by asking about her grandfather, but she interrupts me in line 21 and in line 24 begins to say, “my grandmother is not-” but corrects herself to clarify that her grandmother’s mother was French and Austrian and she believes her grandmother’s father was Italian. She is apparently unsure of her grandmother’s Italian ancestry. In lines 34-41, she explains that her grandmother’s mother did not teach her to cook; rather, her grandmother learned to cook Italian food from her Irish mother-in-law.

**Excerpt 3.10**

1. AP: but um,
2. I think it was ham,
3. and then,
4. you know,
5. something else Italian.
6. my grandmother likes to make,
7. you know,
8. some Italian dish,
9. for all the,
10. AMO: right.
11. AP: ...(0.8) holidays.
12. AMO: okay.
13. cool.
14. very cool.
15. so your-
16. um,
17. your grandmother then,
18. that’s-
19. the Italian side,
20. is your grandfather-
22. that’s @
23. that’s interesting.
24. my grandmother is not --
25. um --
26. my grandmother’s mother was French and Austrian.
I believe her father was Italian.

AMO: okay

AP: so,

uh,

my grandfather I think is one hundred percent Irish.

[um]

AMO: [okay]

AP: but my grandmother learned to cook, Italian food,

I think she said from my grandfather’s mother.

which is interesting.

[um @]

AMO: [oh= o]kay.

AP: because, uh,

because her mother didn’t know how to do it.

you know,

[um,]

AMO: [right.]

AP: …(1.8) i- it’s interesting cause um,

…(0.8) she absorbs this whole Italian identity,

and [she’s-]

AMO: [mm-hm]

AP: but she’s like (...) not,

you know,

she- she p- portrays this like one hundred percent Italian,

[she's-]

AMO: [uh-huh.]

AP: my mother’s the hundred percent Italian.

AMO: oh!

[o]kay.

AP: [um,]

but my grandmother,

she just-

(...) she like resonates Italy,

and she’s [not]

AMO: [right.]

AP: (...) Italian,

you know?

AMO: uh-huh.

AP: …(0.9) o[kay,

cool.]

AMO: [it’s interesting] @ @

AP: (...) and so,

on your mother’s side family,

(...) then,

(...) were her parents from Italy?

AP: yeah.

both of her parents were born in Italy,
In line 46 above, she says that her grandmother “absorbs an Italian identity” but in line 49 declares “but she’s not”. She repeats a similar sentiment in the following turns. In line 51, she continues, “she portrays this like 100% Italian”, but in line 54 reminds me that her “mother’s the 100% Italian”, positioning her mother’s ancestry against her paternal grandmother’s. She concludes this repetition in lines 60-63, saying “she like resonates Italy and she’s not Italian”. It seems that AP sees
ethnicity as something that is transmitted by blood, which conflicts with her
grandmother’s self-identification. This excerpt highlights the different ways in
which Long Islanders do identity. In this story, AP’s grandmother takes a
performative approach to establishing her identity. Although her grandmother’s
father was Italian himself (as she reports in line 27), AP takes an essentialist
approach and doesn’t consider this enough to make her grandmother really Italian.

In Excerpt (3.11) below, which is a continuation of Excerpt (3.10) above, I
continue my questioning of AP’s family history and ask if anyone in her family has
lived in “the city”. She responds in line 6 that her grandparents were raised in the
Bronx, but qualifies that in lines 9-10 with “I don’t know how close to the city that is
actually”, implying in the same line that she acknowledges my usage of “the city” to
refer to the greater boroughs, but referring back to her own interpretation of the
phrase. She distances herself and her grandparents from the city in lines 13-14 that
they were never “Manhattan kids”, which could imply that they were not of upper-
middle socio-economic status, based on the narrow definition of “the city” that AP
provided in Excerpts (3.8) and (3.9) above. She furthermore establishes her own
essentialist view of “the city” as being defined by Manhattan. Although her family
may have taken part in the same cultural traditions, she takes care to make the local
distinction.

Excerpt 3.11

1 AMO: (...) okay,
2 um and-
do you know if anybody at any point ever lived in the city?

AP: ...(0.8) um,
...(0.7) my,
...(1.5) grandparents were raised in like Bronx?

AMO: okay,

AP: (...) um,
but I don’t-
I don’t know how close to the city that is actually.

AMO: mm-hm,

AP: um,
(...) they were never like,
Manhattan kids,
[but um,]

AMO: [right,]

AP: (H) you know,
they have family in Yonkers,

AMO: okay,

AP: and stuff still over there.

um,
...(0.6) and they kind of moved away from the Bronx,
and there’s still family-
I know when we go to um-
...(1.0) when we go to the-
family’s house on Christmas Eve,
[that’s where] we go.

AMO: [uh-huh.]

oh.
okay.
[in Yonkers?]

AP: [you know.
so everyone still-]

um,
I believe in Yonkers,
yeah.

(H)
everyone’s still over there,
but um-
...(0.7)
you know,
they moved from the Bronx back here.

AMO: okay,

AP: so,

AMO: okay,

AP I’m not [really sure] when they did,

AMO: [cool,]

AP: I think they’ve been here-
...(1.3) I know they’ve had this house for like,

thi=rty-
In line 18 above, she reports that they have family in Yonkers, which is north of the Bronx in Westchester County, NY and considered part of the greater metropolitan area. Then in lines 24-27, she reports that when they visit with the family on Christmas Eve, this is where they go to celebrate. It is here that she connects her family’s cultural traditions to the region. Although she reports that her family is not Italian, they still participate in the same cultural traditions of this particular ethnic group. In this way, Italian culture has become New York culture.

3.4. Are Long Islanders New Yorkers?

The following excerpts provide evidence for how Long Islanders view themselves as New Yorkers. They define themselves as New Yorkers both within the local and global contexts; however, they also have a clear sense of being a different kind of New Yorker because they are Long Islanders.

Excerpt (3.12) below comes from an interview conducted with SM (47 Mixed European male). SM reported a strong connection to both his father’s family’s Irish
immigrant past as well as his mother’s familial connection to the early English
settlement of Center Moriches\textsuperscript{11}. He was clearly interested in and had investigated
his own family history. In fact, he reported that he began to take an interest in his
Irish heritage in his 20s and joined a bagpipe band. He is a lawyer who works for
clients in the city and commutes from Long Island to Manhattan. He practiced law
and lived with his wife in Manhattan for years, but relocated and now lives in his
hometown of Patchogue, NY again. The interview took place at his office off Main
Street in Patchogue.

Excerpt (3.12) below begins with SM explaining what he means by “the city”.
All the boroughs are referred to using their name, but Manhattan, he says in line 7, is
the only part that is “the city”. In lines 12-15, I ask SM a question with two options as
to which he could answer: how are Long Islanders different from New Yorkers or
are Long Islanders considered New Yorkers. He empathically responds in line 17 by
saying Long Islanders are “the original New Yorkers.” He then further positions
himself against the Manhattanites (line 21) he often hears referred to as New
Yorkers in lines 23-29—“I think of people that grew up in Idaho, that get an
apartment in New York, and think they’re New Yorkers.” In lines 34-37, he describes
a hypothetical situation in which one would want to know what “ethnic New York”
was like—a term he introduces. The first evidence he cites in line 39 is the presence

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} “Nettie’s Diary: The 1880’s Diary of Nettie Ketcham” was written by one of his
ancestors on his mother’s side.
\end{flushright}
of the “true New York accents” on Long Island. He claims that Long Island is where one would find the Italians, Irish, Polish, German, and Puerto Ricans “who lived in the city for a generation or two, then moved out here” (lines 46-47). In line 47, he refers to “the city”, but in this context it appears to apply to the entire city including the outer boroughs. It appears that what makes them “ethnic” New Yorkers is their ties to the New York City immigrant experience. “Ethnic New York” to SM is the New York that was being built at the turn of the 20th century by Irish and Italian immigrants, thriving in their own small communities with laundry strewn between brownstone buildings, listening to records of folk music from the old country.

Excerpt 3.12

1 SM: when I mean Queens,
2 I say Queens,
3 when I mean the Bronx,
4 I say the Bronx,
5 AMO: right.
6 SM: Brooklyn’s Brooklyn,
7 the city’s Manhattan.
8 AMO: okay,
9 cool.
10 ...(0.8) um-
11 so-
12 ...(1.6) in your opinion,
13 how are Long Islanders different from New Yorkers-
14 or-
15 ...(1.1) are Long Islanders New Yorkers.
16 SM: ...(1.0) (TSK)
17 oh I think we're the original New Yorkers.

12 In fact, on The History Channel's How the States got the Shape, the episode dedicated to regional accents, they traveled to Suffolk County, Long Island to showcase the New York accent. The episode aired on July 12, 2011.
ya know,

um-

(0.6) when people say New Yorkers now,

Manhattanites,

I th-

I think of people,

(H) that grew up in Idaho,

AMO: ...(0.6) [right.]

SM: [that] get an apartment in New York,

and think they're New Yorkers.

AMO: ...(0.6) right.

SM: they're not New Yorkers.

(...) I mean-

...(1.6) New York-

I mean-

Long Island,

like I always say,

when people wanna know what ethnic New- New York was like,

you come to-

...(0.6) Long Island.

...(1.2) because you have,

the true New York accents,

it's the Italians,

Polish,

German,

Irish,

now Puerto Ricans,

or whatever,

AMO: mm-hm,

SM: who live in the city for a generation or two,

and then moved out here.

AMO: mm-hm.

SM: so-

and that was really brought home when my wife (...) moved here,

and she had lived in Manhattan.

AMO: [mm-hm]

SM: [for] y- years,

and she was at the pork store over here,

AMO: mm-hm.

SM: and all the old Italian ladies are like,

<VOX get your finger off the scale,

you tell him to slice it [1 thin, 1] VOX>

AMO: [1 @ 1]

SM: [2 and she comes home 2] and telling me.

AMO: [2 @ @ @ 2]

SM: I go,

well this is-

(0.5) Brooklyn and Queens fifty years ago.
they moved out here!

right.

and they still carry on the same way, so,

(...) I think Long Islanders are the real-

...(0.5) and ya know,

in terms of-

(...) *ethnic* New York,

ya know?

right.

...(0.5) but-

(...) I don't think people-

...(0.8) Manhattanites are New Yorkers.

right.

(...) Queens and Brooklyn,

yeah.

and Bronx,

but not-

(...) not Manhattanites.

right.

The “ethnic New York” described by SM is further evidenced in the small story he provides about his wife at the pork store\(^\text{13}\) in lines 45-51. His wife was originally from suburban New Jersey outside the NYCE dialect region, met SM when they both lived in Manhattan, and moved out to Long Island with him after they were married. According to this story, she is surprised by the experience she had at the Del Fiore Pork Store. He explains in lines 64-66 that Long Island “is Brooklyn and Queens 50 years ago”. What is particularly interesting is that although SM does not report any Italian ancestry, he reports the Italian presence on Long Island as further evidence for Long Island being where all “the original New Yorkers” live.

\(^{13}\) Some photographs of this store are included in Appendix D.
He concludes this example by saying that he doesn’t think Manhattanites are New Yorkers (line 78). In line 77, he begins to say, “I don’t think people-”. He begins to say “people from the city” but corrects himself to specify Manhattanites. He reiterates 81-83 that the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens are all comprised of New Yorkers, but not Manhattan—stressed again in line 85.

Many Long Islanders also claimed there was a clear distinction between being from upstate New York and downstate New York. AP gives different reasons for why Long Islanders are New Yorkers. First, in lines 6-7 in Excerpt (3.13) below, she says that when one thinks of New York, they typically think of “the city”. She goes on in lines 8-10 to say that since Long Island is so close to the city, it is very influenced by its fast-paced culture. At the same time, in lines 14-19, she explains that there is a difference between being from Long Island, being from the city, and being from upstate. She points out upstate New Yorkers in particular and said they’re New Yorkers, but only “by demographic” (line 32). By lines 36-38, she juxtaposes upstate New York from the downstate regions by saying, “they’re out there, and we’re all here”, using geography as evidence.

In 42-45, she provides further evidence by describing the times she’s gone to visit her best friend who moved from Long Island upstate somewhere—although she mentioned her friend moving twice, she never mentioned where upstate she moved. It is not uncommon for Long Islanders to conflate the entire upstate region, which is geographically very large. In lines 55-56, she then says that there aren’t too many differences between “a person from the city” and a Long Islander, but in line
60 repeating that there are still differences. Despite this, in line 65, she declares, “I consider myself a New Yorker.”

**Excerpt 3.13**

1. (0.5) um-
2. (0.5) (TSK) (...) so,
3. do you think that Long Islanders are New Yorkers?
4. **AP:** (1.0) um-
5. (1.3) I definitely think that we (...) are because,
6. (...) I feel like outside New York,
7. if you hear “New Yorker” you think the city,
8. and I think that we’re so close to the city,
9. (...) we’re very influenced by it.
10. we’re very fast-paced,
11. we’re very-
12. you know.
13. all of this but,
14. (0.8) at the same time,
15. I feel like there’s a certain s-
16. um-
17. identity (...) with being a Long Islander,
18. and being a New York City,
19. and being an upstate.
20. [you know,]
21. **AMO:** [mm-hm]
22. **AP:** I think that they’re very different.
23. I feel like um-
24. I feel like people upstate New York,
25. (0.7) um,
26. they’re New Yorkers,
27. but it’s not-
28. it doesn’t fit the mold.
29. **AMO:** mm-hm.
30. **AP:** you know,
31. they’re-
32. they’re New Yorkers by demographic,
33. but it's just like,
34. (0.5) completely,
35. (0.9) like,
36. (0.8) they’re-
37. they’re out there,
38. and we’re all here.
you know,

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: um-

(1.5) it’s completely different.

like my friend moved upstate,

and I go upstate,

and it’s just like a completely (...) [different] (...) world.

AMO: [uh-huh,]

AP: (H)

AMO: different-

AP: uh @ [@ hum,]

AMO: [right.]

AP: (0.5) but I think,

I-

you know-

I think um-

(1.2) if (...) would you compare a Long Islander to like a city person,

they’re not that different.

AMO: mm-hm,

AP: um-

(1.6) once again though,

I do believe that there is (...) a difference. (h)

AMO: right.

AP: the identity being a Long Islander than being like a= (0.5) New Yorker.

AMO: uh-huh,

AP: I mean,

(...) I would consider myself a New Yorker,

AMO: right.

AP: but,

In Excerpt (3.14) below, which is a continuation of Excerpt (3.13) above, I
ask some clarifying questions to understand who AP considers to be a New Yorker.

When I ask her in lines 1-2, she responds affirmatively, citing geography in lines 5-6.

In line 17, however, provides a performative example of identity where she
describes the fast-paced culture downstate again. She positions this culture against
the slow pace upstate in lines 22-23 by using a slowed-down pace in her speech. In
this example, the accurate “performance” of “New Yorker” is what establishes Long
Islanders as different from other New Yorkers from the state.
Excerpt 3.14

1 AMO: (1.1) do you think then Long Islander are kind of more New Yorkers than-
2 (... ) than people from upstate?
3 AP: (H) a little bit.
4 AMO: okay.
5 AP: because they’re just um-
6 ...(0.6) they’re so far away from everything,
7 you know,
8 AMO: right.
9 AP: and,
10 ...(0.9) I think-
11 I think to them,
12 being a New Yorker means something different than it does to us.
13 [because,]
14 AMO: [right.]
15 AP: (H) um-
16 (...) you know,
17 we have the fast pace,
18 (snapping fingers)
19 and that’s New York.
20 AMO: right.
21 AP: but-
22 ...(1.6) <up there,>
23 <it’s not as->
24 <it’s a little slo=w>
25 it’s a little,
26 AMO: right.
27 AP: relaxed,
28 it’s-
29 (2.7) I kind of feel like their identity would be like being an upstate [New
30 Yorker.]
31 AMO: [mm-hm,]
32 AP: you know,
33 it’s [1 kind of two 1] completely-
34 AMO: [1 right. 1]
35 AP: it’s just such a [2 big state. 2]
36 AMO: [2 yeah. 2]
37 AP: and everything’s s- so far away from this li=ttle city at the bottom,
38 you know?
39 AMO: right.
40 AP: ...(0.6) [@ @ @]
41 AMO: [okay,]
42 cool.]
43 (...) no,
that’s great.

...(0.5) um,

...(1.4) (TSK) (1.5) so-

hm.

so,

New Yorkers-

(…) people from the city and Long Islanders.

...(1.6) have this kind of like fast-paced kind of attitude [towards them.]

AP:

[mm-hm.]

AMO: 

(…) what do you think it is that separates Long Islanders from the city.

AP:

...(0.9) um-

AMO: 

...(0.5) or if there’s anything.

AP:

well,

definitely we’re not as fast-paced as the city,

because we have-

(1.4) we have more space.

and we have-

you know,

we have cars,

and they have-

they m- mostly walk.

I mean,

there’s [cars in the city,]

[mm-hm,]

AMO: 

[mm-hm,]

AP: 

but they mostly walk everywhere.

AMO: 

mm-hm,

AP: 

(H) and I feel like a lot of the fast pace is generated by that because,

AMO: 

mm-hm,

AP: 

you know-

you have to walk everywhere.

[mm-hm,]

AMO: 

[mm-hm,]

AP: 

so what if you’re [late,]

AMO: 

[right.]

AP: 

you know,

you have t-

you have to foot it.

AMO: 

mm-hm.

AP: 

um-

...(1.3) I mean,

...(0.6) I- I-

in general I think we’re all very impatient,

but it’s different kind of impatient.

I think they’re impatient like give me my coffee now,

and we’re impatient like,

...(0.7) don’t wait ten seconds at the light.

you have to go now.

you know,

AMO: 

right.
In line 52 above, I ask her what makes Long Islanders different from people from the city, since she had mentioned it at least twice. She says the fast-paced nature is just exhibited differently because of how much space residents have. Because Long Islanders have so much space, they rely on cars whereas residents of the city usually rely on public transportation.

This example of performative identity contrasts directly with the example in Excerpt (3.10) above featuring AP where she adhered to an essentialist view of identity about her grandmother who “portrays this 100% Italian” but who AP views as “not Italian”. Rather, she takes a much more cultural, performative view about being a New Yorker. For AP, regional affiliation is seen as being cultural whereas ethnicity is seen as being essential, much like the essentialist view of race described by Morning (2011). However, she conflates the Italian cultural traditions of her family with the city boroughs, demonstrating how Long Islanders blur this distinction between being a descendent of a New Yorker and being a descendent of 20th century southern and eastern European immigrants.
3.5. Conclusions

These interviews have shown how Long Islanders talk about ethnicity in terms of ancestry as well as regional affiliation with New York City’s white ethnic immigrant past. They see themselves as New Yorkers in a sense that is specific to the downstate metropolitan region. Often when a Long Islander says “the city”, they are referring specifically to Manhattan. Otherwise, they use the specific borough names. In the following chapter, I will use these ethnic categories in a sociophonetic analysis of the wordlist data collected from participants during the interviews.
Chapter 4

Sociophonetic Analysis of the Wordlist Data

This chapter presents the results of the sociophonetic analysis conducted with the wordlist data. Taking into account the categories uncovered in the discourse analysis in Chapter 3, this chapter presents the correlations between the usage NYCE variants and several social factors, the most significant predictors being age, gender, and ethnicity, as described in the previous chapter.

4.1. Statistical Analysis

The multiple regression analyses were conducted using mixed-effects models in Rbrul (Johnson 2008). Johnson (2011 PC) explained that Rbrul can conduct both step-up and step-down models, but there is also an option to run both. He suggested using this option to ensure that both step-up and step-down models match up in
how they account for the data. Both step-up and step-down models are run in the following analyses.

4.1.1. Phonological Variables

The phonological variables included in the analysis are tense /aeh/, raised /oh/, /iyF/, /eyC/, /eyR/, and /ahR/. They are described in detail below.

4.1.1.1. The long ingliding vowels

To look at the split short-\(a\) system, I used normalized F1 of /aeh/ as the dependent variable in order to determine whether the tensed version has been “laxed” (lowered). Similarly, height of /oh/ was examined by including normalized F1 as the dependent variable. Although /ah/ is traditionally included in the set of long ingliding vowels in NYCE, in creating the wordlists for this study, I unfortunately did not include sufficient instances of /ah/ to conduct an analysis of this variable. Initially, I only included father and hockey in the lists read by the first 11 participants\(^\text{14}\).

\(^\text{14}\) As I was going through the first round of recordings and reassessing my wordlist, I naively deleted the /ah/ class because I thought it was completely merged with /o/. This was “apparent” in the recordings as well as in my own speech (or so I thought). After six years of advancing in my knowledge of phonetics and language variation and especially after becoming acutely aware of the difference in even my own pronunciation of bomb and balm ([bɔm] and [bəm], respectively), I very much regret not coding for this variable. As such, whether these vowels are merging on Long Island is a question that will have to remain unanswered in this dissertation.
4.1.1.2. The long upgliding vowels

Because the splits in the long upgliding vowels were more pronounced in the front vowels, I focused on lowered /iyF/ and raised /eyC/. The normalized F1 measurement for each was included as the dependent variable to determine vowel height.

4.1.1.3. /r/-Vocalization

In the wordlist readings, there were no instances of an r-less production. In fact, there was one instance of an epenthetic r inserted at the end of the word “awe” as spoken by 83-year-old Caucasian female HG. Rather than look at r-lessness, I looked at the quality of the vowels /ey/ and /ah/ before /r/ since they are described in the ANAE to exhibit the most movement. By including the normalized F1 as the dependent variable for both analyses, I determined whether these vowels are raised or not.

4.1.2. Social Variables

Participants were coded by gender (male, female), age (coded as a continuous variable), education (high school, associates, college, graduate), and ethnicity (Caucasian, Mixed European, Italian, People of Color). The social variables included in the analyses are described in detail in Chapter 1.
4.2. Results

In all analyses run, both step-up and step-down models matched. \( p \) values and \( \beta \) values are reported from the step-down models. The threshold level of significance is set at 0.05.

Vowel plots were created using NORM (Thomas and Kendall 2007), which was the same program utilized to normalize the data before running the multiple regression analyses. Plots below are presented in normalized Neary2 values.

4.2.1. The long ingliding vowels

The variables that significantly predicted raised-/aeh/ were ancestry \((p<0.001)\) and age \((p<0.021, \beta=-0.001)\). People of Color exhibited the lowest /aeh/ \((\beta=0.062)\). In other words, they had the most instances of traditionally tense words pronounced with the lax counterpart /ae/. Caucasians were the second most likely group to use a lax variant instead of a tense one \( (\beta=0.00)\), followed by Italians \((\beta=-0.022)\) and Mixed Europeans \((\beta=-0.040)\), who are grouped together in highest and leftest part of the vowel space. The vowel plot for /aeh/ is shown in Figure (4.1) below.
Figure 4.1: The vowel space for /aeh/ as distributed by ancestry/ethnicity.

Age was the other variable to significantly predict this shift ($p<0.021, \beta=-0.001$), with older speakers preferring the traditional split shot-α system and the millennials much preferring a lax-dominant split system. This variable is presented below in Figure (4.2).
Figure 4.2: The vowel space for /aeh/ as distributed by age.

This trend is even more apparent when looking at the individual values in Figure (4.3) below. The lower right corner of the space represents the lax variant /ae/. This space is mostly occupied by speakers in their early twenties. While there are some tokens from older speakers in this space, they are mostly concentrated in the canonical space for /aeh/. Clearly, many millennials do exhibit raised-/aeh/, as is evidenced by their appearance in the raised space in the upper left corner. For
many millennials, however, the traditional NYCE split short-\(a\) system is not completely intact.
Figure 4.3: The vowel space for /aeh/ as distributed by age reported in individual tokens.

Age ($p<0.001$, $\beta=-0.002$) and gender ($p=0.039$) were the best predictors for using raised-/oh/. The means in Figure (4.4) below show that for some millennials, /oh/ is very low, and perhaps merging with /o/, which will be discussed in the
following chapter.

Figure 4.4: The vowel space for /oh/ as distributed by age.

Gender was also a significant predictor for raised-/oh/ with men preferring the traditional raised variant ($\beta=-0.018$) and women preferring the millennial lax variant ($\beta=0.018$) as shown in Figure (4.5) below.
Figure 4.5: The vowel space for /oh/ as distributed by gender.

Looking at the individual tokens in Figure (4.6) below, we can see that it is true that women are using the lowered tokens of /oh/, but they are also using the highest tokens—the most traditional tokens—of /oh/.
Figure 4.6: The individual tokens of /oh/ as distributed by gender.
4.2.2. The long upgliding vowels

The best predictors for lowered-\textipa{/iyF/} are ancestry \(p<0.001\) and age \(p<0.001, \beta=0.001\). As shown in Figure (4.7) below, Mixed Europeans \(\beta=0.018\), Italians \(\beta=-0.006\), and Caucasians \(\beta=0.006\) all preferred the lowered variant and People of Color \(\beta=-0.018\) preferred the canonical raised \textipa{/iyF/}. Furthermore, it appears that people who identify with more than one European ancestry have a lower token than those of Italian descent or those who don't identify with a particular ancestry.
Furthermore, older speakers preferred the lowered variant (p<0.001, β=0.001). The plot of the normalized values for /iyF/ by age is found in Figure (4.8), below. The oldest speakers are found in the lowest end of the space in the bottom
right corner and the millennials occupy the highest and frontest space in the top left corner.
Figure 4.8: The vowel space for /iyF/ as distributed by age.

The only predictor to significantly predict the height of /eyC/ was age (p<0.001, β=0.001). The Neary2 normalized values for /eyC/ are plotted below in Figure (5.14). This is reminiscent of the previous plot with the younger speakers using the highest /eyC/, grouped in the top left corner. The oldest speakers,
however occupy the lower right vowel space, indicating their preference for a lower /eyC/.

Figure 4.14: The vowel space for /eyC/ as distributed by age.
4.2.3. \((r')\)-Vocalization and its effect on vowels

The best predictor for \(/eyR/\) is ancestry \((p=0.003)\). The plot in Figure (5.15) below shows the normalized vowel spaces for each ethnic group. People of Color had the highest production of \(/eyR/\) \((\beta=-0.043)\), followed by Italians \((\beta=-0.001)\), Mixed Europeans \((\beta=0.014)\), and Caucasians \((\beta=0.030)\). It appears that speakers of European descent prefer the lower variant and People of Color prefer a much higher variant.
Figure 4.15: The vowel space for /eyR/ as distributed by ancestry/ethnicity.

The best predictor for /ahR/ was age (p<0.001, \( \beta=-0.001 \)). As demonstrated below in Figure (5.16), the millennials have the lowest production and they are concentrated in the lower left portion of the vowel space. The oldest speakers prefer the raised, traditional variant, as demonstrated by their concentration in the highest
space towards the right, but there is a mix of middle-aged and younger speakers in
the center of the vowel space.
While some millennials do use a raised variant of /ahR/, they are the only group to use the lowest targets for this vowel.
4.3. Conclusions

All above analyses produced significant differences between groups of Long Islanders. Across all but one variable, older Long Islanders preferred the traditional NYCE variants.

4.3.1. The long ingliding vowels

Raised /aeh/ was significantly predicted by ethnicity and age. Italians and Mixed Europeans preferred the most traditional usage, People of Color highly dispreferred this usage, and Caucasians’ usage fell in between these groups, suggesting the Caucasian Long Islanders’ disassociation with NYCE. Raised /oh/, on the other hand, while significantly predicted by age, was also predicted by gender with young women dispreferring the raised traditional variant. Ethnicity was not a significant predictor for this variable.

4.3.2. The long upgliding vowels

The results of these analyses supported what Olivo and Koops (2013) found. Older speakers preferred a lower /iyF/ than younger speakers. Additionally, Long Islanders of European descent preferred the traditional lower variant as well. /eyC/ appears to be a millennial variant as it was significantly predicted by age only. Long Islanders in this sample do not appear to vary this variable along any other social grouping.
4.3.3. /r/ vocalization and its effect on vowels

The traditional raised /eyR/ was only significantly predicted by ethnicity. While People of Color exhibited the highest /eyR/, they patterned differently than the European descendents. The differences in the production of this vowel between the European groups are indicative of the traditional r-less system of NYCE. Caucasians preferred the lowest token and Italians preferred the raised token. Age was the only variable to significantly predict raised /ahR/ with the oldest speakers preferring the traditional raised variant.

The synthesis and discussion in Chapter 6 takes a closer look at these significant results in terms of individual speakers to describe if and how the results of the statistical analysis are an accurate representation of how these Long Islanders sound as well as who they are.
Chapter 5

Synthesis and Discussion

As discussed in Chapter 1, Johnstone (2003) stressed how problematic external, imposed categories can be when doing work on American English. She argued that while some may make “universalizing claims” about American speakers, discourse analytic work should reflect particular Americans or groups of Americans and how linguistic varieties compare with each other. In this spirit, this chapter serves to synthesize the qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 discussed the ways in which Long Islanders do identity work in regard to ethnicity and regional affiliation. The results presented in Chapter 4 highlighted some trends in the wordlist data. On Long Island, younger speakers and women tend to prefer millennial variants while older speakers and men tend to prefer the traditional variants. Furthermore, residents of European descent tended to prefer the traditional variables. Out of the European descendents, residents who

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related most closely with their ancestral immigrant past in greater New York City were more likely to retain the traditional variables.

This chapter presents further analysis, including comparisons of phonemes and their traditional placements in the vowel space. In particular, I discuss the state of the long ingliding vowels (the split short-a system and raised-/oh/) and /r/-vocalization (the raising of /eyR/ to merge with /aeh/ and the raising of /ahR/ to merge with /oh/). This chapter concludes with a discussion of the motivations for the continued use of NYCE among Long Islanders.

5.1. The long ingliding vowels

5.1.1. The split short-a system

As presented in the previous chapter, raised-/aeh/ was significantly predicted by ancestry (p<0.001) and age (p<0.021, β=-0.001). Mixed Europeans and Italians were most likely to use the traditional tense variant for words with phonological /aeh/. Caucasians were slightly more likely to use a lax variant in place of the traditional tense variant and People of Color much preferred the lax variant overall.

Figure (5.1) below shows the distribution of /ae/ and /aeh/ with the means for each vowel for each speaker. For most speakers, the two phonemes are still separate. However, some younger speakers exhibit a much lower /aeh/, closing in on the space for /ae/. The youngest non-white speakers have means for /aeh/ lower
than /ae/, implying that their systems are non-existent according to the complex rules established for the NYC system. In Figure (5.1), squares represent /aeh/ and dots represent /ae/. Some of the lowest means for /aeh/ can be seen along the board of the two vowel spaces—they are all millennial females—AS (Caucasian), DI (Indian), and RG (Caucasian). For AS and RG, however, their corresponding /ae/ is much lower, indicating their systems are still somewhat intact. However, for DI, her average for /ae/ is actually located above her /aeh/. The two participants with the lowest means for /aeh/ are PP (19 Indian female) and MP (20 Latina female). They are discussed in greater detail below.
Figure 5.1: The distribution of /ae/ and /aeh/ with the normalized means for each speaker. Squares represent /aeh/ and dots represent /ae/.

For most speakers, the split short-a system is completely intact. For example, in Figure (5.2) below, SO (53 Italian female) has a completely separate system. The tokens for /aeh/ are concentrated in the upper left and the tokens for /ae/ are concentrated in the lower right. The two spaces do not overlap.
SM (47 Mixed European male) exhibits an interesting pattern. As demonstrated in Figure (5.3) below, his system is intact for the most part. However, he produces some tokens of phonological /ae/ with a raised /aeh/ variant. As discussed in Chapter 3, SM has very strong ties to his family’s history and considers Long Islanders to be the “real,
ethnic” New Yorkers. One possible explanation for the pattern exhibited in Figure (5.3) is his self-identification. Because he self-identifies as a New Yorker (and even listed the “New York accent” as an identifying feature), perhaps he overextended his usage of the traditional NYCE variable to assert his identity as a New Yorker.
SM’s pattern is particularly interesting given the fact that these vowel spaces come from wordlist data, which traditionally produce speakers’ most formal data. The oldest speakers in the set exhibited more of the linguistic insecurity described by Labov (1966). For example, CB (82 Italian female) has a completely split system. However, she produces some tokens of traditionally raised-/aeh/ in the vowel space for her /ae/. Her
system is shown in Figure (5.4) below.

![Diagram showing the distribution of individual tokens of /æ/ and /æh/ for CB (83 Italian female).](image)

**Figure 5.4:** The distribution of individual tokens of /æ/ and /æh/ for CB (83 Italian female).

HG (85 Caucasian female) shows a similar pattern of hypercorrection in Figure (5.5) below. However, she has more instances of phonological /æh/ being produced in the space for lax /æ/ than CB did above. Ethnicity was shown to be statistically
significant in predicting this and these two vowel plots (Figures 5.4 and 5.5) demonstrate the pattern.

Figure 5.5: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for HG (85 Caucasian female).

Many of the millennials still have their split short-\(a\) systems intact. One example is LR (24 Mixed European female) in Figure (5.6) below. The vowel spaces for /aeh/ and
/ae/ are clearly separate; however, there are a few tokens in the center that show some variation. Although these tokens are more centralized, they do not cross into each other’s phonological space.

Figure 5.6: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for LR (24 Mixed European female).

JG’s (24 Mixed European female) system in Figure (5.7) below is mostly intact,
but beginning to show signs of instability. Rather than two separate spaces like LR has above, JG’s tokens of /aeh/ and /ae/ seem to fall on a continuum with no obvious boundary between them.
Many older men preferred the traditional split system, but some millennial men showed signs of instability. LH (22 Mixed European male) in Figure (5.8) below demonstrates this pattern. His vowel spaces look similar to JG’s above, but where /aeh/ and /ae/ meet on the continuum, some tokens begin to cross over into the other phonological space.
Figure 5.8: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for LH (22 Mixed European male).

Other millennials have maintained an obvious split, but the traditional system is unraveling. An example of this is shown in Figure (5.9) below. AS (24 Caucasian female) has two distinct vowel spaces where she produces these tokens. However, from the mix of squares and dots in the phonological space for /ae/, it is clear that AS is using the lax variant for many of the traditionally tense lexical items.
Figure 5.9: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for AS (24 Caucasian female).

PD’s (21 Mixed European male) system in (5.10) has come even more undone. First, rather than two separate spaces, all tokens for /aeh/ and /ae/ are located in one large space within the vowel space. The tokens appear to be on a continuum with more tense /aeh/ tokens in the upper left part of the vowel space and more lax /ae/ tokens in the lower
right. However, from the mix of squares and dots, it is clear that PD produces many of these tokens in the same phonological space.

![Figure 5.10: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for PD (21 Mixed European male).](image)

For non-white millennials, it seems that the traditional NYCE split short-a system is not present, which is in line with the significant results of the multiple regression
analysis. In Figure (5.11) below, PP (20 Indian female) seems to have two separate spaces for /aeh/ and /ae/, but as demonstrated by the mix of squares and dots in both phonological spaces, the system is not the same as the other Long Islanders.

![Figure 5.11: The distribution of individual tokens of /ae/ and /aeh/ for PP (20 Indian female).](image)
5.1.2. Raised-/oh/

The results in the previous chapter reported that age (p<0.001, β=-0.002) and gender (p=0.039) were the best predictors for using raised-/oh/. Older speakers and men (β=-0.018) preferred the traditional raised variant. All speakers retained a phonological difference for /oh/ and /o/. Younger speakers usually have these two vowels in close proximity with some speakers using these vowels on a continuum. The means for /oh/ and /o/ for each vowel are plotted in Figure (5.12) below.
Figure 5.12: The distribution of /oh/ and /o/ with the normalized means for each speaker. Squares represent /oh/ and dots represent /o/.

AS (24 Caucasian female) retains a full distinction between /oh/ and /o/ in Figure (5.13) below. Although the millennials retain this phonological difference, the distance between the two spaces is not as great as it is for the oldest speakers. In Figure (5.13) it is
clear that although the spaces are separate, the values for normalized F1 are on a closer continuum.

![Graph showing the distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for AS (24 Caucasian female).](image)

**Figure 5.13:** The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for AS (24 Caucasian female).

On the other hand, GC (78 Mixed European male) not only exhibits the phonological split, but also demonstrates a traditionally raised-/oh/. In Figure (5.14)
below, the distance in normalized F1 between /o/ and /oh/ for GC is much greater than AS’s in Figure (5.13) above.

Figure 5.14: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for GC (78 Mixed European male).
HG (85 Caucasian female) shows a similar pattern to GC in that there is a clear difference in F1 for /o/ and /oh/. Her vowels are plotted below in Figure (5.15) below. Although she retains two phonological spaces, the space for /oh/ is not as compact as the other older speakers.
Some millennials showed a different pattern. Mainly exhibited by young women, but also a few younger men, the vowel spaces for /o/ and /oh/ appear on a continuum. BT’s (24 Italian female) vowel space provides an example of this phenomenon in Figure 5.15: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for HG (85 Caucasian female).
(5.16) below. Although the phonemes show up on different ends of the continuum, there is not a clear distinction between where one vowel space starts and the other stops.

/Figure 5.16: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for BT (24 Italian female)/
PD (19 Mixed European male) shows a similar pattern to BT above. His vowels, plotted in Figure (5.17) below, also appear to be on a continuum. Although the multiple regression analysis predicted that men preferred the raised variant for /oh/, some younger men, such as PD, have a lower /oh/ closer to /o/. 
Figure 5.17: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for PD (21 Mixed European male).

People of Color also showed different patterns for /oh/ and /o/ between men and women. For example, in Figure (5.18) below, PP (20 Indian female) does not show as
obvious a split in these phonemes, suggesting that her /oh/ and /o/ are almost totally merged. The other young women in this group exhibited the same patterns.

Figure 5.18: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for PP (20 Indian female).
On the other hand, TG’s (24 Mixed\textsuperscript{15} male) vowel space in Figure (5.19) below shows clearly different spaces for /oh/ and /o/. He patterns with the rest of the young men interviewed in that they preferred the traditional raised-/oh/ variant, which is what the multiple regression analysis predicted.

\textsuperscript{15} TG reported African American, Latino, Native American, and European heritages, but did not identify with any one in particular.
Figure 5.19: The distribution of individual tokens of /oh/ and /o/ for TG (24 Mixed male).
5.2. /r/-vocalization

5.2.1. /eyR/

In the traditional NYCE system, /eyR/ is raised and occupies the same vowel space as tense /aeh/. As reported in the previous chapter, the best predictor for raised /eyR/ is ancestry (p=0.003). People of Color had the highest production of /eyR/ (β=-0.043), followed by Italians (β=-0.001), Mixed Europeans (β=0.014), and Caucasians (β=0.030). Further analysis of the vowel spaces shows, however, that while People of Color had the highest values of /eyR/, they do not exhibit overlap with /aeh/, suggesting they do not participate in this shift. Closer inspection of the other ethnic groups reveals that older speakers tended to keep the traditional system with /eyR/ and /aeh/ merged. Among the millennials, those who identified most closely with their ethnic New Yorker ancestry tended to prefer the traditional raised /eyR/.

Although age did not come out as a significant predictor for this variable, the vowel plots suggest that the oldest speakers exhibit the most overlap in their /eyR/ and /aeh/. For example, in Figure (5.20) below, HG demonstrates a traditional system. /eyR/ shares the vowel space of /aeh/. The tokens of /aeh/ in the lower right demonstrate some linguistic insecurity by means of the hypercorrection of tense /aeh/ to lax /ae/. 
Figure 5.20: The distribution of individual tokens of /eyR/ and /aeh/ for HG (85 Caucasian female).

GC (78 Mixed European male) demonstrates a similar pattern to HG above in Figure (5.21) below. However, there are some notable differences. First, GC has fewer tokens of hypercorrect /aeh/ than HG does. Second, although his /eyR/ and /aeh/ occupy
the same space, there are more tokens of raised /eyR/ in the higher part of the space, while /aeh/ occupies the lower part of the same vowel space. These two vowel plots demonstrate the fact that Long Islanders of European descent who identify most closely with their family’s immigrant past are more likely to exhibit the traditional variants since GC has a higher /eyR/ than HG, comparatively.
Figure 5.21: The distribution of individual tokens of /eyR/ and /aeh/ for GC (78 Mixed European male).

Among the younger speakers, while /eyR/ and /aeh/ tend to occupy spaces within the same vicinity, some speakers retain more of an overlap while some speakers are splitting them. AS (24 Caucasian female) is an example of a younger speaker who retains
a merged space for /eyR/ and /aeh/. Her vowel plot, in Figure (5.22) below, shows that she demonstrates many tokens of /aeh/ in the space for /ae/. While her /eyR/ remains raised, it appears that she prefers the lax variant for many traditional tense words.

Figure 5.22: The distribution of individual tokens of /eyR/ and /aeh/ for AS (24 Caucasian female).
PD (21 Mixed European male) exhibits a more advanced system than AS. In Figure (5.23) below, although /eyR/ and /aeh/ occupy similar spaces and there is some overlap, they appear to be on a continuum with higher tokens of /eyR/ and some very low tokens of /aeh/, with some in the vowel space for /ae/.
Figure 5.23: The distribution of individual tokens of /eyR/ and /aeh/ for PD (19 Mixed European male).

LR (23 Mixed European female) exhibits one of the most advanced systems of the millennial Europeans. Although /eyR/ and /aeh/ occupy spaces in the same vicinity in Figure (5.24) below, /eyR/ is clearly higher than /aeh/. While she retains a raised /eyR/, her tense /aeh/ is centralized a bit lower than that, indicating that these two phonemes are not merged.
This behavior among millennial Long Islanders is particularly interesting, because it appears that while one traditional NYCE system is continuing its trajectory (raised-/eyR/) another related traditional system is unraveling (split short-\(a\)). While they retain raised-/eyR/, they are using lower targets of raised-/aeh/. One motivation for the retention of the raised vowels before /\(r/\) is the simple fact that /\(r/\)-lessness is too stigmatized. Although they have re-inserted the /\(r/\) in coda position, they are retaining the quality of the vowels affected by /\(r/\).
This behavior is not exhibited in any of the millennials of non-European descent. For example, MP (19 Latina female) shows a clear split between /eyR/ and /aeh/. This suggests that People of Color do not participate in the traditional NYCE shift. An example of this is provided in Figure (5.25) below in the plot for MP’s vowel space.
Figure 5.25: The distribution of individual tokens of /eyR/ and /aeh/ for MP (19 Latina female).

5.2.2. ahR

In the traditional system, /ahR/ is raised and merges with raised-/oh/. Among Long Islanders, these vowels show a different pattern than their front
counterparts. As reported in the previous chapter, the best predictor for /ahR/ was age (p<0.001, β=-0.001), with older speakers preferring the raised variant. The means for each speaker’s /ahR/ and /oh/ are plotted in Figure (5.26) below. Most speakers, except for some millennials retain separate spaces. However, the fact that some millennials exhibit a merged space does not mean they are merged in the traditional NYCE space. Rather, /ahR/ remains in its lowered space closer to /o/ and the tokens of traditionally raised-/oh/ are lower than older Long Islanders’ /oh/.
Although the oldest speakers exhibit the highest tokens of /ahR/, they still retain separate systems in their wordlist productions. This is particularly interesting, because they freely merged /eyR/ with /aeh/, as demonstrated in Figures (5.20) and (5.21) above. The oldest speakers, instead, exhibited some of the clearest distinctions. This can be attributed to the particularly stigmatized nature of
/oh/. New Yorkers are acutely aware of this variation in particular, and as such, their linguistic insecurity prompts them to use more “standard” versions in formal settings. CB (82 Italian female) demonstrates this in Figure (5.27) below. The phonological spaces for /oh/ and /ahR/ are clearly distinct.
Figure 5.27: The distribution of individual tokens of /ahR/ and /oh/ for CB (82 Italian female).

GC (78 Mixed European male) exhibits the same pattern as CB above, but with more space between the two phonological spaces, as demonstrated in Figure (5.28) below. The oldest speakers in general retained the clearest distinction.
Some speakers exhibited some overlap with tokens of raised-/ahR/. SM (47 Mixed European male) demonstrates this overlapped pattern in Figure (5.29) below. Although the vowel spaces don’t completely overlap, there are clearly some
tokens of raised-/ahR/ found within the space for /oh/. Because SM proudly asserted his identity as a New Yorker, it is not surprising that he would demonstrate this merger in his most formal pronunciations.
Figure 5.29: The distribution of individual tokens of /ahR/ and /oh/ for SM (47 Mixed European male).

Younger speakers tend to overlap these phonological spaces so that they appear more on a continuum. This is also due to the fact that younger speakers tend to use a more “standard” /oh/ than older Long Islanders who prefer the traditional raised variant. The vowel plot in Figure (5.30) below shows AS’s (24 Caucasian
female) tokens for /ahR/ and /oh/. Although the tokens for /ahR/ are concentrated on the lower end and the tokens for /oh/ are concentrated on the higher end, there is a small amount of overlap. Not only do younger speakers prefer a lower /ahR/, they also prefer a lower /oh/. Yet, they still exhibit some very raised tokens of /oh/.
Figure 5.30: The distribution of individual tokens of /ahR/ and /oh/ for GC (78 Mixed European male).

LH (22 Mixed European male) shows a slightly different pattern in Figure (5.31) below. He exhibits a fair amount of overlap between /ahR/ and /oh/, but the size of these spaces on their own varies. The size of LH’s space for /ahR/ is concentrated in the lower portion of the plot. /oh/, on the other hand, occupies a
much greater area, demonstrating the increased variability of this phoneme. Rather than /ahR/ raising to meet /oh/, /oh/ is lowering to meet /ahR/. This means that the traditional merged NYCE variants became unmerged (i.e. split) in the recent past due to stigma, but are now re-merging in the other direction.
Figure 5.31: The distribution of individual tokens of /ahR/ and /oh/ for LH (2 Mixed European male).

JG’s (24 Mixed European female) vowel plot in Figure (5.32) below represents the most advanced system of this new merger on Long Island. The
phonological spaces for each vowel are completely merged, save a few instances of slightly raised-/oh/.

Figure 5.32: The distribution of individual tokens of /ahR/ and /oh/ for JG (24 Mixed European female).
5.3. The long upgliding front vowels

The previous chapter reported that best predictors for lowered-/iyF/ are ancestry (p<0.001) and age (p<0.001, $\beta=0.001$). Mixed Europeans ($\beta=0.018$), Caucasians ($\beta=0.006$), and Italians ($\beta=-0.006$) all preferred a lower /iyF/ and People of Color ($\beta=-0.018$) preferred a higher /iyF/. The only predictor to significantly predict the height of /eyC/ was age (p<0.001, $\beta=0.001$). The following plots show the vowels spaces for each vocalic phoneme /iy/ and /ey/. The means for both free (vF) and checked (vC) allophones are included to determine the state of merging and/or splitting of these allophones.

As predicted by the statistical analyses conducted by Olivo and Koops (2013) and in the previous chapter, the splits in these vowels are most different among different age groups. SM (47 Mixed European male) exhibits both splits in Figure (5.33) below. For both /iy/ and /ey/, the mean values for the checked allophones are much higher than their free allophone counterparts. SM exhibits the traditional /iy/-lowering found among older speakers as well as the /eyC/-raising common among younger speakers.
DR (49 Mixed European female) displays a more advanced system in Figure (5.34) below. Her /iyF/ is slightly only lower than her /iyC/ and her /eyC/ is very raised in comparison to /eyF/, so much so, that it appears to occupy the same space.
as /iy/. The traditional split in /iy/ is not nearly as great as the millennial split in /ey/.

Figure 5.34: The distribution of individual tokens of /iy/ and /ey/ for DR (49 Mixed European female).

The oldest speakers of different ethnic groups in the sample show different patterns. In Figure (5.35) below, GC (78 Mixed European male) exhibits both the
split in /iy/ and in /ey/. Both checked and free allophones have similar distances between them and the phonological spaces for each vowel remain distinct.

**Figure 5.35**: The distribution of individual tokens of /iy/ and /ey/ for GC (78 Mixed European male).
This is different than the pattern exhibited by HG (85 Caucasian female) in Figure (5.36) below. HG maintains two very separate phonological spaces. There is a slight difference in production of the free and checked tokens, which one would expect due to the different syllable codas, but they don't appear to be split in any meaningful way, as demonstrated by the fact that /iyF/ is higher than /iyC/ and /eyF/ is lower than /eyC/. Furthermore, HG’s vowel space is particularly unique among the rest of the sample.

/i[y] and /ey/

![Graph showing /iy/ and /ey/ frequencies]

- /iyF/: Star
- /iyC/: Triangle
- /eyC/: Circle
- /eyF/: Square

F1 and F2 axes represent acoustic frequencies.
Figure 5.36: The distribution of individual tokens of /iy/ and /ey/ for HG (85 Caucasian female).

The youngest speakers exhibit the smallest phonological space for /iy/, as exhibited by LR (23 Mixed European female) in Figure (5.37) below. LR is the daughter of DR in Figure (5.34) above. LR’s system is more advanced than her mother’s. The distance between /iyC/ and /iyF/ for LR is much smaller than for DR. Consequently, her raised /eyC/ is not as close to /iy/’s phonological space as DR’s was. Although /eyC/ is dramatically raised, the two phonemes retain separate spaces.
However, it should be noted that some of the younger males still retain more of the traditional split in /iy/ as demonstrated by LH’s (22 Mixed European male) vowel plot in Figure (5.38) below with a larger split in /iy/ and a smaller split in /ey/.
Figure 5.38: The distribution of individual tokens of /iy/ and /ey/ for LH (22 Mixed European male).
5.4. Discussion

It is of the upmost importance to view the wordlist data as a particular type of linguistic situation, rather than wholly representative of the speech of Long Islanders in general. In the recitation of a word list, these participants have still had to do identity work. All participants freely volunteered and were informed that the goal of my research was to document and describe the English spoken on Long Island. As such, we can view their wordlists as performances of what they believe to be representative of not only English on Long Island, but of themselves.

The trend that has emerged from all the above comparisons is that for older speakers, they mostly prefer the NYCE variants. Older Caucasians, however, sometimes disprefer those variants. As a general trend, younger speakers tend to prefer non-NYCE variants. However, and most importantly, for those younger speakers who strongly identify with their NYC/white immigrant ancestry, they tend to exhibit more traditional NYCE systems.

By exploring the vowel spaces of individual Long Islanders, and comparing those vowel spaces to other groups of Long Islanders, I can conclude that the ethnic categories used in the sociophonetic analysis are socially relevant to Long Islanders in general. In other words, the identities examined in the interviews in Chapter 3 are played out in the analysis of the wordlist data in Chapter 4. For Long Islanders, ethnicity and regional affiliation are often conflated.
Research in the past on white ethnicities has focused on the assimilation of these groups. Alba (1994) described an “emerging European-American ethnic identity”. For these groups, “ethnicity is an option rather than an ascribed characteristic” (Waters 1990). For white people on Long Island, ethnicity is certainly an option, but we don’t see one cohesive group of “European Americans”. Rather, while some white people strongly identify with particular ethnic groups, others strongly identify as “just Caucasian”. Rather than having any relation to the Caucasus region, these participants saw themselves as completely assimilated. In this way, I used “Caucasian” as a label to describe the ethnic group of people who self-identified as non-ethnic, rather than using it in terms of popular racialized categories.

Furthermore, Long Islanders hold different beliefs on doing identity work. For some who take an essentialist approach, ethnic and regional identity are seen as something that must be passed on “by blood”. For Long Islanders who take a more performative approach to identity, ethnic and regional identity are more cultural. Some Long Islanders, held both types of views about identity, which highlights the fact that doing identity work is just as difficult for the people doing it as it is for the people researching it. This stresses the need for researchers to be flexible in their methods for data collection and analysis. The world does not exist in black and white and we would commit a disservice to the scientific endeavor by imposing unrealistic categories on our human data.
It was evident that for most Long Islanders, identifying with an ancestral immigrant connection was very important, not because of the multi-national cultures, but because of the authenticity that comes with it of being an “ethnic New Yorker”. In this way, many Long Islanders conflate their family’s European ancestral and regional American histories. When Long Islanders identify as “New Yorkers”, they are identifying with a specific American experience as well as a specific immigrant experience.
This dissertation answers the following questions:

- What is the state of NYCE on Long Island?
- How do Long Islanders identify in terms of ethnicity and region?
- Is there a correlation between ethnic and regional affiliation and the use of traditional NYCE features?

I will now expand upon these answers and provide explanations for each in relation to the others.

6.1. What is the state of NYCE on Long Island?

It appears that on Long Island, we have a case of diffusion as well as transmission of linguistic variables. Labov (2007) defines these phenomena:

The transmission of linguistic change within a speech community is characterized by incrementation within a faithfully reproduced pattern characteristic of the family tree model, while diffusion across communities shows weakening of the original pattern and a loss of structural features. (344)
In this case, it appears NYCE was diffused onto the Island when New Yorkers started moving out to the suburbs. Although their use in everyday speech is fading out of favor, young Long Islanders’ use of traditional NYCE features is still a case of transmission—they are learning these features from their parents and caregivers. Because of Long Islanders’ sense of connection to and history with NYC, it is no surprise that the dialect has survived out in the suburbs.

Interestingly, although young people in general disprefer the traditional NYCE variants, it is clear from the comparative vowel plots presented in Chapter 5 that younger Long Islanders who identify as New Yorkers are more likely to retain the traditional system of their elders.

6.2. How do Long Islanders identify in terms of ethnicity and region?

Chapter 3 established how Long Islanders position themselves towards the relevant local and global contexts. Firstly, most Long Islanders tend to strongly identify with their families’ white ethnic immigrant pasts. Other white Long Islanders whose family trees extend into the period of Dutch and English colonial settlement often disassociated themselves with any ethnicity, preferring to identify as “American” or “Caucasian”.

Long Islanders also hold different approaches about how they perceive and talk about identity. Some hold essentialist views of ethnicity and region that rely on
specific ethnic boundaries and regions. For most Long Islanders, they take a more
performative approach to ethnicity and place. I provided evidence for how Long
Islanders must negotiate the meaning of “the city” in everyday conversation, which
demonstrates the fact that Long Islanders do not place hard boundaries on these
associated identities. Long Islanders view their familial ethnic pasts as an
indispensable part of what makes them New Yorkers.

As Wölck (1984) noted, “neighborhood is becoming a more important and
more reliable factor than ethnic origin; the accent seems to be more locally and less
ethnically bound” (23). Long Island presents a locale that is similar to Wölck’s
description. Although it is still important for Long Islanders to identify with their
families’ European immigrant ethnic pasts, the particular type of European ethnicity
does not make as much of a difference. While Chapter 4 showed that significant
differences were found between the Mixed European and Italian groups, the
differences between these two groups and the Caucasian group were more stark
when looking at the comparative plots in Chapter 5.

6.3. Is there a correlation between ethnic and regional
affiliation and the use of traditional NYCE features?

The statistical analyses conducted in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5
support the categories borne out of the discourse analysis in Chapter 3. Coding the
data according to the real, local categories important to Long Islanders allowed for a
more detailed description of the dialectal features as well as the motivations for using these features in speech. If I had coded my categories based on traditional researcher categories, I would have missed out on all these specific details of the ethnic variation on Long Island. Specifically, if all the European descendents had been categorized in one group, as they often are in large-scale quantitative sociolinguistic studies, the variation among them would not have been evident. This finding demonstrates that researchers in New York City (and throughout the US) must take white ethnicities into account. Furthermore, this finding supports the notion that researchers must also use categories that are real for the participants. By taking an interactional approach to analyzing discourse, researchers can uncover these distinctions with empirical data rather than relying on traditional categorizations.

On the other side of the coin, People of Color were categorized as one group, although the members came from very different cultural traditions. I would have preferred to keep these ethnicities separated, but due to the constraints of the sample size, I found this to be the best option for analysis. However, once again, this demonstrates the difficulty of conducting a statistical analysis based on participants’ self-identification practices.

6.4. Implications

This research has implications for sociolinguistics as well as education. I have shown that Long Islanders construe their ethnicity in local terms and these local
categories were integral to the analysis. This demonstrates that linguists must take care when categorizing their human data into preconceived categories. Although some participants may look white or of European ancestry, it does not mean that all white people will vary their language in the same way. The traditional racial categories of “white” and “black” are not sufficient to capture the variation within these groups. As the demographics of this country change, so must our labels.

The implications for education are similar. While a teacher may know a student’s ethnic or cultural background, it is important not to make any assumptions about that student’s language. It is important for educators to be able to recognize this linguistic variation while at the same time having strategies for working with new varieties in the classroom.

6.5. Conclusion

The fact that NYCE still exists on Long Island, whereas research coming out of the city boroughs (Wong 2007, Becker and Coggshall 2009, Becker and Wong 2010, Becker 2010, inter alia) shows that millennial New Yorkers have moved away from these traditional variants, highlights the complexity involved in naming a dialect or dialect region. If what was once labeled as “New York City English” is no longer spoken in the city but, rather, on Long Island, is “New York City English” still a representative label? Perhaps not, but calling it “Long Island English” doesn’t seem appropriate either. As the next generation of Americans are born and start speaking,
the terms that sociolinguists and dialectologists use to refer to these dialects may need to be updated or at least redefined.

Clearly, the boundary between ethnic and regional identification is often blurry for Long Islanders. For Long Islanders, ethnicity and regional affiliation are discussed in terms specific to the global and local contexts that Long Islanders live within. For this particular region, the residents are not satisfied with being labeled solely by ethnicity or solely by region. I predict that this type of construction of ethnic identity as seen on Long Island will be indicative of the ways Americans tend to identify in future generations.

Yen (2013) reported on the US Census’ current finding that American babies and children of European descent now make up less than half of the population under 5 years old. The demographics of this country are quickly changing and the way people adapt the way they talk about the concepts of race, ethnicity, and place. As the world becomes more connected and the general American public becomes more educated about different cultures and constructivist ideas about race and ethnicity, I believe Americans will start to construe their ethnicities in new ways with reference to their regional and ancestral affiliations. New York City has been known as a multicultural city, boasting large populations of various ethnic enclaves. It is because of New York City’s prominence and size that it has become one of the first American regions to take on an *ethnic* affiliation.
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Appendix A – Survey Questions

Summer 2009 – Survey Questions

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Occupation:
Education:
High School:
Ethnicity:

• Do you have any family in NYC?
• When did your family arrive?
• Were you exposed to other languages growing up?

Current address:

Previous addresses:

Time spent outside Long Island:

Would you ever consider moving off the Island?

Have you had any experiences with your speech in which someone told you that you had an accent?

Additional comments:
The goal of this survey is to describe daily life on Long Island and to get an idea of how Long Islanders talk. For example, do all Long Islanders sound the same? What kinds of shared experiences do Long Islanders have? There are no wrong answers. Your honesty is appreciated and respected and rest assured your answers will remain anonymous.

Name:
Age:
Sex:
Address:
Previous address:
Time spent off LI:
Education:
High School:
Ethnicity:
Occupation:

Youth

• What was your neighborhood like growing up?
• Was your family close with other families in the neighborhood?
• What kinds of games did you play? With neighbors? In the streets?
• Were you involved in intramural sports? dance? singing?
• Did you have friends of other ethnicities, races, or religions?

Family

• When you were growing up, what time did your family eat dinner?
• Was/is your mother or father a better cook? What was their best meal?
• What was the most important holiday for your family?
• Did your family go to church on Sundays (religion)?
• What did your family eat for Christmas? Easter?
• How far back can you trace your family?
• Did any part go through NYC?
• Did anyone speak a language other than English?

Daily Life

• What is a typical workday like for you?
• What do you regularly do after work? Gym? TV? Tanning? Manicure?
• What do you normally do on the weekends?
• If someone were coming to visit you from out-of-town for a weekend, what would you take them to do/see (old aunt vs. young, hip cousin)?
• Would you/have you ever considered moving off the Island? Why?
• A friend tells you he’s going to meet his cousin in the city—where is he going?
• When was the last time you were in the city? What did you do?
• How often do you go to the city? What is your opinion of the city?
• Are Long Islanders New Yorkers? Are they different from people from the city?
• Do you follow sports?
• Mets or Yankees?
• Giants or Jets?
• Islanders or Rangers?

Stereotypes

• Do you think there are stereotypes about Long Islanders?
• When did you realize? On TV? Good? Bad?

Language

• What do you think of the way Long Islanders speak?
• When you travel, do people guess where you’re from?
• Do you think out-of-towners like the way Long Islanders speak?
• Do/did your parents/grandparents have noticeable accents?
• Does someone from the city sound like someone from Long Island?
• Are there any specific phrases you associate with Long Island or the city?
• Can you think of a time where you’ve ever argued over grammar or pronunciation?
I want you to take a second, close your eyes, and imagine the prototypical Long Islander.

- Man or woman?
- Ethnicity? Hair/eye color?
- Attractive? In shape? Clothing style?
- What kind of job would this person hold?
Appendix B – Labovian Transcription Conventions

The Labovian transcription system is used as a convenient way to represent the phonemes of English without use of diacritic marks. These symbols refer more to a historical phonemic system rather than specific phonetic targets—something that cannot be avoided with use of IPA symbols. The Labovian symbols can be amended to provide syllabic information with either F indicating a free or open syllable (e.g. /iyF/ → bee) or C indicating a checked or closed syllable (e.g. /iyC/ → beat). Variables are written between parenthesis (e.g. (iy)) and variants are written between slashes (e.g. /iy/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labovian symbol</th>
<th>IPA equivalent</th>
<th>Example words (as pronounced in traditional NYCE)</th>
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<tr>
<td>/iy/</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>beat, bee</td>
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<tr>
<td>/ey/</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>bait, bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æ/</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>bat, cat</td>
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<tr>
<td>/æh/</td>
<td>[eʰ]</td>
<td>bad, dance, bare</td>
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<td>/oh/</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>coffee, talk, dog</td>
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<td>/ay/</td>
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<td>bite, buy</td>
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<tr>
<td>/ʌy/</td>
<td>[ʌ]</td>
<td>Bert, shirt</td>
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# Appendix C – Discourse Transcription Conventions

These conventions are slightly modified from the Du Bois et al (1993) transcription conventions.

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<tr>
<td>Word</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truncated word</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>pause less than 0.5 ms</td>
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<tr>
<td>...(0.0)</td>
<td>timed pause</td>
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<td>(H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhalation</td>
<td>(Hx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughter</td>
<td>@</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Quotation quality</td>
<td>&lt;Q Q&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special vocal quality</td>
<td>&lt;VOX VOX&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whisper</td>
<td>&lt;WH WH&gt;</td>
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</table>
Appendix D – Photos of the Field Site

Patchogue, NY [pʰæ.ʧʊ.ɡ̊] is located on the South Shore of Long Island in Central Suffolk County. Many businesses are located there and it is considered a good place for young people to hang out at night, because of its walkable Main Street with lots of restaurants and bars. It is also one of the historical post-Colombian communities of Long Island. At the marina, one can make a day trip on a fishing boat or take the ferry across the bay to Fire Island. Patchogue is home base to many local fishermen.

Figure 6.1. The Patchogue Fishing Center with an employee standing outside smoking a cigarette. This is one of many fishing supply stores in the area.
Figure 6.2. Gino's Pizza, where I hung a flyer to recruit participants. One of the owners is standing outside taking a look around at nothing in particular. To the right of the store is a walkway that leads to public parking.
Figure 6.3. A view of Main Street from the car. To the left is the Patchogue-Medford Public Library and to the right is the Theater. Cars are parallel parked along both sides of the two-way street. A few small trees also line the street.
Figure 6.4. The Patchogue-Medford Library, where I hung another flyer. Many of these local businesses have signage from the 50's and 60's, such as the shoe store to the left of the library. The crosswalk is also visible in this picture.
Figure 6.5. The Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Company, located inside a Bridgehampton National Bank. I hung a flyer in here, which got many responses, including SM from the “ethnic New York” example. I also spent many hours working in here.
Figure 6.6. The pork store SM referred to in his short story. The sign reads "DEL FIORE PORK & RAVIOLI. ITALIAN DELI. COLD CUTS*PASTA*MOZZARELLA". On the awning, it reads “Est. 1971".
Figure 6.7. The window of the pork store. They offer heros [sic] by the foot, imported Italian products like olives and San Marzano tomatoes, and homemade sausage, dry sausage, sopressata, pasta, manicotti, stuffed shells, ravioli, and other prepared foods.
Figure 6.8. Reese’s Pub, located just off Main Street. It is owned by a friend of SM. It is located in an old brick building. Outside they fly an American flag and an Irish flag.