

**POSTVOCALIC /R/ IN NEW ORLEANS: LANGUAGE, PLACE AND
COMMODIFICATION**

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Christina Schoux Casey, PhD

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From *silva dimes* to *po-boys*, r-lessness has long been a conspicuous feature of all dialects of New Orleans English. This dissertation presents a quantitative and qualitative description of current rates of r-lessness in the city. 71 speakers from 21 neighborhoods were interviewed. R-pronunciation was elicited in four contexts: interview chat, Katrina narratives, a reading passage and a word list. R-lessness was found in 39% of possible instances. Older speakers pronounce /-r/ less than younger speakers, and those with a high school education or less pronounce /-r/ far less than those with post-secondary education. Race and gender did not prove to be significant predictors of r-pronunciation. In contrast to past studies, many speakers in the current study discuss their metalinguistic awareness of /-r/ and their partial control of /-r/ variation, discussing switching between r-fulness and r-lessness in different contexts.

In New Orleans, this metalinguistic awareness is attributable in part to the devastation following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when the near-disappearance of the city intensified an already extant nostalgia for local culture, including ways of speaking. Nostalgia and amplification by advertisers and popular media have helped recontextualize r-lessness as a variable associated with a number of social meanings, including localness and authenticity.

These processes help transform r-lessness, for many speakers, from a routine feature of talk to a floating cultural variable, serving as a semiotic resource on which speakers can draw on to perform localness.

This dissertation both closes a gap in research on New Orleans speech and uses New Orleans as a case study to suggest that the social meanings of linguistic features are created and maintained in part by a constellation of interrelated social processes of late modernity. Further, I argue that individual speakers are increasingly agentively engaged with these larger processes, as part of a global transformation from more traditional, place-bound populations to more deracinated individuals who choose to align themselves with particular communities and local cultural forms, particularly those that have been commodified.

Dedicated to William Gordon McLain, III, whose faith that ethics begins with engagement and whose profound love for New Orleans shine through this work, as they do through so many lives, like a beacon.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Lee Pederson, in a 1977 review article on American dialectology, states that "the phonic realizations of /r/ have received more attention from students of North American English pronunciation than have all the other obstruent and resonant consonants taken together" (1977: 266). In sociolinguistics as well as dialectology, /r/ has received enormous attention. Walt Wolfram notes "one of the well-known phonological features showing regional and social distribution in American English is the lack of constriction in r" (1969: 109). This is at least in part because two foundational sociolinguistic studies were investigations of /r/; McDavid's 1948 South Carolina study and Labov's 1966 New York City study. Postvocalic /r/ has been a longstanding focus of English dialectology and has been correlated with social factors from the inception of sociolinguistics.

This chapter briefly reviews the status of postvocalic /r/ in the American South and in New Orleans. Chapter 2 discusses the social history of New Orleans and the impact on language of the destruction of most of the city due to flooding following Hurricane Katrina. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and data collection for the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of a rapid and anonymous survey. Chapter 5 presents descriptive and statistical analysis of the data. Chapter 6 discusses the effects of cultural processes on speakers' use of r-lessness and summarizes the findings.

1.1 R-LESSNESS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

In the American South, absence of postvocalic /r/ has historically been prevalent along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and continues to be considered a stereotype of all Southern speech (Montgomery 1989: 761, Wells 1982: 542, Cobb 2005). While the r-less, plantation "moonlight and magnolia" variety remains a stereotype, r-fulness has actually overtaken r-lessness. The consensus among linguists (e.g., Wolfram 2004, Fought 2005, Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006) is that r-fulness is increasing both because of the spread of r-ful Inland or Piedmont Southern speech and because of the pressure exerted by r-ful Mainstream American English as a prestige national variety.

The spread of r-fulness began in the South around World War II (McDavid 1948, O'Cain 1972, Feagin 1990, Baranowski 2006). As early as 1948, McDavid noted r-fulness making inroads in South Carolina into the traditional prestigious Charleston-centered r-lessness, and suggested that it is a lower class-led phenomenon (as does O'Cain 1972). A contrary conclusion was drawn by Van Riper in his 1958 study of postvocalic /r/ in the Upper and Lower South, who found that /r/-lessness was prestigious, in agreement with McDavid, but judged it to be spreading in the South. However, although Van Riper's study was published in 1958, his data are from linguistic atlas information collected in the 1930s and 1940s, earlier than McDavid's 1948 data. By 1966, Levine and Crockett observed that r-fulness was spreading, although they suggested the spread was due to a change towards an r-ful national prestige norm. In their study of 270 Whites in North Carolina, they found that /-r/ was much more likely to be pronounced by women, young people, and "higher status persons" (Levine and Crockett 1966: 98). Similarly, Anshen (1969), in a study of 87 African Americans in North Carolina, found that women, young

people, and those with higher educational attainment and non-manual labor jobs were more likely to be r-ful. Guy Bailey, in a note for the American Dialect Society newsletter, concluded that r-fulness was considered a prestige feature for *Linguistic Atlas of Gulf States (LAGS)* informants (Bailey 1986).

Thomas Schonweitz's study using data from *LAGS* corroborated previous studies, finding r-fulness to be a prestige variant, and that women, Whites, and younger informants had the highest percentages of r-fulness (Schonweitz 2001). Schonweitz states "[j]udging from the linguistic data collected by *LAGS* more than two decades ago, the linguistic change in progress from r-less to r-ful pronunciation in the Southern states is spear-headed by younger female white speakers in all sectors of the area" (Schonweitz 2001: 282). Further, based on the fact that women pronounce postvocalic /r/ more often than men in 92% of *LAGS* keywords, he finds that "the tendency of women towards retroflex /r/ is clearly the most systematic and regular phonological pattern as far as sex-related speech differences in the American South are concerned" (2001: 264).

More recent studies suggest that, whether r-ful pronunciation originated from above as an adoption of a prestige Northern feature or from below as the spread of a working-class Inland Southern feature, r-fulness is now dominant in Southern speech. Feagin (1990) in a study of 10 White speakers in Anniston, Alabama, showed a transition from r-lessness to r-fulness in three generations. A 2006 study of 100 White natives of Charleston, once almost categorically r-less, found that most speakers under 60 are now "largely r-ful" (Baranowski 2006: 76). Baranowski also found that age was the only significant factor influencing /r/ pronunciation. This finding leads him to suggest that the social class differences which were discussed in earlier studies as spearheading the spread of r-fulness "can no longer be discerned" (2006:76).

These studies, particularly Feagin (1990) and Baranowski (2006), lead to the conclusion by Labov, Ash, and Boberg in their *Atlas of North American English (ANAE)* that "the great majority of southerners (except for African Americans) are now using consonantal /r/ consistently" (ANAE: 48). More specifically, they state that "*r*-pronunciation has swept through the region in all styles of speech, so that younger white speakers are consistently *r*-ful" (ANAE: 47), with younger and more educated speakers in general most likely to be *r*-ful. Similarly, John Fought describes increasing *r*-fulness by saying "[i]t is clear, however, that for generations both *r*-less Southern and *r*-less Northern speech have been losing ground and that *r*-ful varieties have been gaining" (Fought 2005). Both *r*-fulness as a prestige Northern feature and *r*-fulness as a feature of Inland Southern speech have conspired dramatically to increase /r/ pronunciation across the South.

The characterization of *r*-fulness as now dominant in the South, however, is a generalization with exceptions. Largely *r*-ful speakers may nonetheless be *r*-less in many instances, even in more formal contexts such as word lists and reading passages, and /r/ pronunciation continues to show variation based on social factors. Montgomery describes *r*-lessness as a "representative phonological feature for blacks, upper-class whites, and many middle-class whites" in the South (Montgomery 1989: 764). Schonweitz, in his study of *LAGS* data that finds women far more likely to be *r*-ful than men, nonetheless finds women *r*-less in 45% of instances across the Gulf states, and 49% *r*-less in the West Gulf region that includes New Orleans. A more recent study of 23 rural South Louisiana Houma Indian, White, and African American men finds that, while younger speakers are more *r*-ful than older speakers, postvocalic /r/ remains absent in 76% of instances for even the youngest speakers (Strand, Wroblewski, and Good 2010: 220).

Further, r-lessness is determined by differing sociohistorical circumstances. Wolfram (2004) describes older upper class speakers in the South continuing to adhere to historically prestigious Charlestonian r-lessness, while some rural, isolated lower class speakers in historically r-less areas remain r-less because they have not yet been influenced by the rise of Inland Southern r-fulness. Wolfram notes that differing historical circumstances unite "older metropolitan and younger rural speakers in r-lessness but with quite different social meanings associated with the r-lessness" (Wolfram 2004: 71). Schonweitz finds that of the four "social status" class divisions in *LAGS*, the lowest and highest social status groups, with some subregional exceptions, are least likely to be r-ful, with the two middle class groups using the most /r/ (Schonweitz 2001: 275). While r-fulness is growing predominant across the South, there remain both r-less regional pockets and demographic groups as well as variation in /r/ pronunciation in more r-ful speakers.

1.2 R-LESSNESS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN SPEECH

Some studies consider the greatest demographic group variation in /r/ in the South to be race-based. Absence of postvocalic /r/ is considered a feature of vernacular African American speech in the South and nationally (e.g., Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram 1969; Bailey and Thomas 1998; Rickford 1999; Green 2002). Much research has been devoted to the question of whether vernacular African American English is nearly indistinguishable or sharply different from Southern White English, and whether the varieties are converging or diverging (reviews in Schneider 1996, Bailey 2001).

As quoted in Section 1.1, Labov, Ash and Boberg exclude African Americans from the spread of r-fulness in the South: "the great majority of southerners (except for African Americans) are now using consonantal /r/ consistently" (*ANAE*: 48). Wolfram and Thomas, in a North Carolina study using data collected in 1997, conclude that, with regard to postvocalic /r/, African American speakers are "following a course of change that is quite different" from the White community (Wolfram and Thomas 2002: 145), with African American speakers growing more r-less while White speakers grow more r-ful.

Schonweitz finds a similar pattern noting "[t]he probability for black informants using a retroflex pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ is lower than that for the white speakers for all [*LAGS*] keywords; in all cases a sharp difference between black and white informants was observed" (Schonweitz 2001: 265). In *LAGS* data from across the Gulf states, African American informants were three times as likely as Whites to use a non-retroflex variant in 20 keywords (.20 for African American informants vs. .60 for White informants [Schonweitz Table 3, p. 266]). However, there is a great deal of regional variation within the *LAGS* data. In the West Gulf region, which includes New Orleans, the difference in probability for African Americans to use a non-retroflex /r/ is smaller, dropping to roughly one-third greater than for Whites (.39 for African American informants vs. .54 for White informants [Schonweitz Table 15, p. 278]).

Other studies have found educational attainment, social class, and gender to be as important as regional differences to r-realization. Dorrill's study of four speakers from the *Linguistics Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* investigated two pairs of socioeconomically comparable Black and White speakers in two South Carolina counties. He found the differences in the informants' speech to be "of a minor statistical nature rather than categorical" (Dorrill 1975, quoted in McMillan and Montgomery 1989: 227). Wolfram's (1969)

and Anshen's (1969) studies of African American speakers in Detroit and North Carolina found r-pronunciation stratified by social class, with r-fulness increasing with higher social status, and by gender, with women more r-ful than men. A 1981 study of 40 African American college students in New Orleans also found r-fulness to be stratified socially, with upper and middle class students far more r-ful than lower class students (Doss 1981).

Overall, r-pronunciation in the South varies within both African American and White speech. As John Rickford notes, "many of the phonological features of AAVE [including r-lessness]...also occur in the colloquial English of Americans from other ethnic groups, especially those from the working class" (Rickford 1999: 11). Approaching the abstract construct of "African American English" as ontologically different from the abstract construct of "White English" may obscure regional and social patterns shared across race.

The relationship of African American to White speech across the country remains contentious, particularly with regard to the Northern Cities, which gained large numbers of African Americans from the South during the Great Migration, and also with regard to the degree of similarity between AAE and Southern White speech. The current study makes no claims about these larger issues. For this study, which investigates a city that has long had a largely autochthonous African American and White population, the speech of White New Orleanians is not considered ontologically different from the speech of African American New Orleanians. This approach is supported by both previous research in the city, discussed in the next section, and the current study, none of which has found significant differences between African American and White speakers. In New Orleans, age, educational attainment and supralocal cultural orientation are more predictive of r-fulness than race. The underlying reasons for the

weak significance of race are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. For the current study, the speech of both groups is considered in the analysis of contemporary r-pronunciation.

1.3 POSTVOCALIC /R/ IN NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is geographically in the South, but has had a very different linguistic history. It has historically been r-less, but not for the same reasons as Coastal Southern areas. The city's speech is not classifiable as part of either Inland or Coastal Southern. Closer to New York and Charleston than to nearby Baton Rouge, Louisiana, or Jackson, Mississippi, in terms of settlement patterns and linguistic practices, it is a linguistic island in southeastern Louisiana (Bailey 2011). Labov, Ash, and Boberg summarize New Orleans by saying "[t]he New Orleans dialect has been shown to be marginal to the South in many respects" (*ANAE*: 260). The city's most beloved novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, puts it succinctly: "that Hoboken near the Gulf of Mexico" (Toole 1980: 4). Because New Orleans speech is unlike the rest of the South, and unfamiliar to those not from the city, Toole opens his novel with an explanation of local speech in an epigraph, taken from A.J. Leibling's 1961 book, *The Earl of Louisiana*:

There is a New Orleans city accent...associated with downtown New Orleans, particularly with the German and Irish Third Ward, that is hard to distinguish from the accent of Hoboken, New Jersey, and Astoria, Long Island, where the Al Smith inflection, extinct in Manhattan, has taken refuge. The reason, as you might expect, is that the same stocks that brought the accent to Manhattan imposed it on New Orleans.

While immigrants do not "bring" accents anywhere, it is true that large groups of Irish, Germans, and Italians settled in both New York and New Orleans. The similarities between the working class dialects of both cities have often been noted. Many participants in the current

study mention out-of-towners mistaking them for New Yorkers. An older participant who spent childhood summers away from New Orleans recalled that "people would think we were from Brooklyn, that was kind of usual" (SR103). In addition to settlement patterns, Labov, Ash, and Boberg trace similarities between the cities' sounds to contact, saying that "[t]he relation between the New York City and New Orleans speech patterns is the product of a long and intimate history of contact" (ANAE: 260), citing longstanding commercial and social ties between the cities, particularly at the height of the cotton trade (1820-1860, cf. Berger 1980, Hall 1851).

The dialect referred to by Liebling and the ANAE is known locally as Yat (from the greeting *where y(ou) at*), and arose in the working class neighborhoods of the city inhabited by African Americans, Creoles and White speakers of mixed French, Spanish, German, Irish, and Italian descent. Yat is the dialect most often referred to in discussions of New Orleans speech, as when Labov, Ash, and Boberg refer to "*the New Orleans dialect*" (italics mine), quoted above. There are multiple dialects in the city, however, and as DePascual et al. (1994) note, even within Yat "there are many overlaps with other common nonstandard speech varieties in the New Orleans area" (1994: 43).

White-Sustaíta (2012: 48) suggests five major urban varieties: New Orleans African American English, Creole English, Yat English, Southern White English, and Mainstream American English, but does not offer a detailed description of features for each variety. A 1985 documentary on local speech opens with speakers of four city accents, unnamed in the film but recognizable as each of the dialects White-Sustaíta lists, with the exception of Mainstream American English (Alvarez and Kolker 1985).

Research for this dissertation largely supports White-Sustaíta's classification, finding (1), a New Orleans version of African American English; (2), an older upper class White English,

which shares features with Coastal Southern pronunciation; (3), the English of originally Francophone Creoles; (4), Yat; and (5), Mainstream American English. There are also microdialects in the city. One is locally known as the Harry Connick, Jr. accent, for the entertainer of that name. White men, like Connick, Jr., who identify with African American culture, often through participation in the city's musical scene, sometimes adopt a way of speaking that combines the prosody of local African American speech with a raspy vocal quality and vernacular vocabulary. Locals also identify differences in pronunciation between Uptown and Downtown neighborhoods, and also between Uptown neighborhoods that lie close to the Mississippi River and those that lie farther away. These major and micro-varieties are, of course, primarily abstractions; there is overlap between varieties, and speakers do not generally express one variety categorically.

One area of overlap across New Orleans dialects has been lack of postvocalic /-r/. Every indigenous dialect of the city has historically been r-less.

1.3.1 Previous research on /-r/ in New Orleans

An early prescriptive work (Rizzo 1945) analyzing the speech of three New Orleans women, finds r-less "standard southern" to be prevalent in the speech of the two older women (78 and 48 years old). The youngest (21 years old) woman's speech followed "general American principles," in which "the most outstanding evidence of general American is found in the use of r" (1945: 188).

George Reinecke completed the first comprehensive survey of r-lessness in New Orleans in 1951. Reinecke studied 62 White speakers of both sexes, 42 schoolchildren drawn from seven

public neighborhood elementary schools and 20 adults with post-secondary education. Using a reading passage with 13 instances of postvocalic /r/, he found r-lessness in 96% of children's responses (529/550) and 87% of adult responses (227/260). The nearly categorical absence of r-pronunciation by the schoolchildren in his data strongly suggests that neither caretaker nor peer speech was r-ful in 1948, the year of his data collection. For the adult participants, Reinecke observes that "[p]ost-vocalic 'r' is sounded infrequently, but occurs in a sufficient number of subjects to make it acceptable, though its omission is to be preferred" (1951:159). Considering his data in more detail, he says:

Perhaps the most striking feature of the adult statistics is the complete absence of the retroflex from the subjects of the oldest age group. Also interesting is its [r-fulness's] greater prevalence among men than among women, and the fact that it occurs most often among those male subjects who are engaged in commercial pursuits. These three observations taken together might indicate that the older standard avoided the retroflex, and that women, perhaps because of more conservative environment and ideals, have tended to retain the old standard more than men, especially men of business who, in the course of their less parochial associations, have tended to conform to the more widespread speech-norms of their non-southern associates. (1951: 84)

Reinecke suggests r-fulness is a feature of educated and externally oriented younger men. The situation Reinecke finds in New Orleans is in direct contrast to McDavid's (1948) finding that r-fulness was a feature of poor, isolated rural White speakers in South Carolina, and that younger, educated urban South Carolina speakers tended towards r-lessness. Reinecke's data is much more similar to Labov's 1966 conclusion that r-fulness was emerging as a prestige marker in New York City speech, further substantiating the historical connection between New Orleans and New York. That Reinecke found men more r-ful than women does not accord with Labov's finding that women adopt an incoming prestige marker before men do, but that may be due to

either his small (20 speakers) sample size, or because r-fulness had not yet fully emerged as a prestige marker.

August Rubrecht's (Rubrecht was a *Dictionary of American Regional English* fieldworker) 1971 study of Louisiana speech included four speakers from New Orleans. The speakers include one older African American man, categorically r-less, two middle-aged White Yat speakers, categorically r-less, and one middle-aged White woman, whose "treatment of postvocalic /r/ varies; it may be lost, only slightly weakened, or somewhere in between" (1971: 100). While Rubrecht's New Orleans sample is too small for generalizations, his data corroborate Reinecke's assessment that New Orleans was predominantly r-less. Rubrecht's overall finding for Louisiana speech is that "[t]he chief variation pertinent to /r/ is the frequent loss or weakening of the postvocalic allophone...retraction is lost for most informants at least part of the time" (1971: 160).

In 1983, Reinecke's student Pamela Brennan continued the investigation of /-r/ in New Orleans. She found that r-fulness had emerged as a prestige marker, and that women were significantly more r-ful than men. Her study of 36 African American and White adult men and women from three age groups used a reading passage, interview chat, and word list. Brennan found r-lessness in 63% of possible instances, with no significant difference between African American and White speakers. She found that men were more r-less than women (45% of responses versus 28% for women), and that r-lessness decreased with higher educational attainment, with the most educated speakers r-less in 40% of possible instances, in contrast to those with a high school diploma or less, who were r-less in 75% of possible instances.

DePascual et al.'s 1994 monograph on Yat speech in New Orleans is drawn from interviews with eight adult New Orleanian men and women Yat speakers from five

neighborhoods. Absence of postvocalic /r/ is described as a prominent feature of Yat English (1994: 2). The study defines a Yat speaker as "a native New Orleanian who has not standardized his or her English to any extent and is not overly educated" (1994: 21), thus strongly correlating r-lessness with working class speech. The study gives phonetic transcription of portions of the interviews, but does not offer any quantitative results. There are instead brief summaries of the prominent linguistic features of each interview. For five of the eight interviews there are comments noting the general absence of /-r/. For two interviews there is no mention of /-r/ in the summary sections. The interview summary for one participant, a mid-twenties White male college graduate, notes "the vast majority of post-vocalic r's are pronounced" (1994: 63), although the transcription of his interview includes r-less *water*, *culture*, and *work*. It is important to note that the authors selected participants for the study who they felt were particularly "yatty," and that the transcriptions consist of "excerpts from the interviews that we thought were the most representative of true Yat" (1994: vi). Because the sample is skewed by design, the strong r-lessness found cannot be taken as representative of local speech as a whole.

The most comprehensive general study of New Orleans speech is the *Linguistic Atlas of Gulf States* (LAGS 1986-1992), which includes 13 New Orleans speakers. Barbara Rutledge conducted four interviews in 1975, Gordon McKemie conducted six in 1977, and Susan Leas McDaniel conducted three supplementary interviews in 1983. The speakers include one African American man, four African American women, six White men, and two White women. An impressionistic assessment of r-lessness was obtained by listening to a portion, approximately five minutes in the first two "Food and Cooking" segments, or if that was not available, the first "Social Institutions" segment of each interview. The impressionistic evaluation of r-pronunciation by LAGS informants is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. R-lessness in New Orleans Linguistic Atlas of Gulf States speakers. The number in parentheses is the LAGS speaker identification number. Interviews downloaded from <http://www.lap.uga.edu/Projects/LAGS/Speakers/>.

Age	Almost completely r-less	Some /-r/	Almost completely r-ful
Younger		African American man, age 22 (654) White man, age 33 (657)	White man, age 18 (656) African American woman, age 31 (655)
Older	African American woman, age 66 (650A) White man, age 67 (651) White woman, age 68 (652) African American woman, age 78 (650B) African American woman, age 83 (650) White man, age 86 (657X)	White man, age 53 (657Y) White man, age 58 (657Z) White woman, age 81 (653)	
Total	6	5	2

It is clear from the table that r-fulness appears to be increasing in apparent time, with the four youngest speakers (654, 655, 656, and 657) pronouncing more /-r/. This non-scientific

observation is supported by Sage Lambert's 1995 study, which quantitatively analyzed *LAGS* data in Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana. Investigating r-constriction for eight postvocalic /r/ tokens from 180 speakers, including the 13 New Orleans speakers, she found that the region including New Orleans was the most r-less. However, she notes that for all speakers, r-fulness steadily increases in apparent time (Lambert 1995: 44).

The picture that emerges from previous research in New Orleans is that r-fulness has been increasing in the city since the Second World War, particularly among women and the most educated. There is a major gap in research since the early 1980s. The most recent research, DePascual et al.'s 1994 study, looked exclusively at self-identified Yats, and while analyzing one urban subculture, does not reflect the city as a whole. The current study looks at r-lessness across the city. In the following chapter, the social history of the city is provided as a background for the results of the study.

2.0 NEW ORLEANS BEFORE AND AFTER KATRINA

In New Orleans...you can't separate nothing from nothing. Everything mingles each into the other..until nothing is purely itself but becomes part of one fonky gumbo.

Dr. John (Mac Rebennack), Musician and New Orleans native (1994: 159)

There are many layers to this doberge of a city. The layers are separate and distinct and the people who are the ingredients of each layer have their own special quirks, their unique ways of speaking, their celebratory customs, and their foods.

Ella Brennan, Restaurateur and New Orleans native (2006: 60)

Dr. John voices the widely held opinion that New Orleans is an archetypal melting pot. Ella Brennan's claim that the layers of the city are as *separate and distinct* as the layers in a doberge cake represents a perception that the culture and speech of the city are sharply divided. In an echo of Brennan's characterization, the novelist Julie Smith has a character say of New Orleans, "the social structure's got more strata than a shale cliff." Smith's character goes on to divide New Orleans talk by social class, saying "[i]f you hear my-nez or New Awyuns, kowtow. It's what they say at the very top rung around here (Smith 1990: 56). And yet, the "my-nez" (*mayonnaise*) and "New Awyuns" (*New Orleans*) pronunciations are also used by some working-class Whites and African Americans. So we are returned to Dr. John, saying that in New Orleans "nothing is purely itself."

The linguist, New Orleans scholar and city native George Reinecke suggests that the syncretism characteristic of New Orleans culture is the product of the "synthesis of the various cultures in the unique New Orleans melting pot as they interacted one by one with the original French, Franco-American or Afro-French population" (1985: 55). He goes on to say:

Until the mid-nineteenth century, they [immigrant groups] were for the most part easily absorbed into the group of French speakers in the city, but even long after this language-group was in turn swallowed up by English, the New Orleans lifestyle, common in large measure to black and white, remains markedly distinct from other American places. (1985: 55)

This "markedly distinct" local culture is evident everywhere in the city, from speech to music to food, and is evident, too, in the skin color of its natives, which denies America's binary black and white racial classification. As one commentator noted in *American Speech* in 1975, discussing the replacement of *Negro* with *black*, "the word currently in favor, *black*, would not have done in New Orleans, where if a truly *black* person passed the house, the children were called to see, not in derision but in interest, a rarity" (Claudel 1975: 143). The presence in the city, from its inception, of free mixed-race people, some of whom chose *passant blanc*, or passing for White, complicates attempts to separate races. This is not to say that New Orleans has a history of racial equality. The opposite is true. The historical circumstance of light-skinned people disavowing their families in order to live or work as White indicates the greater life chances of Whites. The population has, however, historically occupied the uneasy, shadowy space where the artificiality of constructs of Black and White are revealed.¹ Linguistically, too, New Orleans has occupied a shadowy, intermixed space. The linguist Mackie Blanton notes that

¹ For example, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was the last of a series of legal challenges to segregation by a group of Creole New Orleanians, in which the light-skinned Homer Plessy boarded a section of a train reserved for Whites without attracting attention. Just as all grammars leak, all racial constructs leak, and New Orleans has been a leaky, brackish borderland requiring sustained regulatory efforts to identify and segregate races.

it is "imprecise to speak of 'white' or 'black' as discrete varieties of American English in the South, and the lack of precise rubrics is even more noticeable in referring to the English of the New Orleans areas" (Blanton 1989: 780).

Beyond intralingual difficulties in separating the provenance of New Orleans African American and White English, the linguistic background is also multilingual. New Orleans was an international, Catholic, and Francophone city for almost a hundred years before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Anglophone Americans flooded the city after the Purchase, but in 1809, almost 10,000 Francophone refugees from what is now Haiti, including enslaved Africans and light- and dark-skinned Creoles, settled in the city, doubling the population and reinvigorating New Orleans as a French-speaking city. The city gradually became English monolingual, but French reflexes remain scattered through the local lexicon. In addition, New Orleans's enormous port, to this day part of the busiest port complex in the world, has been a continuous source of linguistic diversity. Many participants in the current study trace their diverse ethnic heritage from sailors settling down in the city, discussing fathers or grandfathers from countries including Norway, Belize, Cuba, and the former Yugoslavia.

The city's history complicates analysis of language, race, and ethnicity, and analysis is now further complicated because of the flooding of the city following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. That devastation is the greatest disaster in American history, displacing the city's entire population of 450,000 (over one million people were displaced in the region overall, from East Texas to Florida) and leaving 80% of the city underwater for weeks. The near-complete evacuation of the city's population and the destruction of many neighborhoods, many of which have not been restored, caused an unprecedented demographic and geographic reshaping of the city. The history of New Orleans is now divided into pre-Katrina and post-Katrina periods.

Separating the historical strands that influenced the city's speech and culture and assessing changes due to the flooding in 2005 is probably impossible; the rest of this chapter attempts only to outline the major factors influencing the city's speech. The remainder of this chapter presents the social history of New Orleans as a context for the discussion of r-variation in Chapters 4 and 5. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 briefly describe the settlement history and neighborhood development patterns of the city prior to 2005. Section 2.3 describes the flooding following Katrina in terms of its effects on the city's demographics and neighborhood composition. Section 2.4 discusses the effects of a long tradition of performance and metalinguistic activity.

2.1 "A DISTINCTIVE CULTURAL ENTREPÔT"

Originally inhabited by Native Americans including Houma and Choctaw peoples, New Orleans² was colonized by the French in 1718 as a trading and military outpost near the mouth of the Mississippi River. The city was taken over by Spain in 1763, who ceded it back to France in 1801. France then sold it to the United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. In 1803, at the beginning of its Americanization, New Orleans had a population of approximately 8,000. One account describes the population as including "fiery Creoles, plain, upstanding Acadians, yellow sirens from Santo Domingo, staid and energetic men from the German Coast speaking perfect French³, haughty Castilian soldiers, dirty Indians, Negroes of every shade and hue, and the human trash— ex-galley slaves and adventurers" (in Garvey and Widmer 1982: 65).

² Much of the information in this section is drawn from the geographer Richard Campanella's work on New Orleans, particularly his historical demography in *Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics Before the Storm* (Campanella 2006).

³ These were German farmers who fled the Napoleonic Wars and settled along the Mississippi River above New Orleans, many on the subsequently-named *Côtes des Allemands*. Germans often took French names, so that Troxler became Trosclair, Traeger became Tregle, and Dubs became Toups (Reinecke 1985: 59, cf. Garvey and Widmer 1982). Many Cajuns are of German ancestry as a result of this assimilation.

2.1.1 A Note on Creole

The "fiery Creoles" warrant discussion since the term *Creole* itself has shifted its definition over time and remains both contentious and salient in New Orleans. After the founding of the French colony in New Orleans, Creole referred to those born in the colony, whether free or enslaved, European, African, or mixed (Tregle 1952, Dominguez 1977, 1986). Early New Orleans maintained a tri-partite ethnoracial system that acknowledged very fair-skinned people as *Creoles*, less fair-skinned people as *Creoles de couleur*, and generally dark-skinned enslaved people or freedmen as *Nègres* (for extensive discussion, see Tregle 1952, Dominguez 1977, 1986; Hirsch and Logsdon 1992; Hall 1992; Valdman 1997; Kein 2000; Brasseaux 2005; Gaudin 2005; Eble 2008).

When the Spanish ruled New Orleans, from 1762-1803, *Creole* came to be associated with France and French customs in opposition to Spanish rule, but after statehood in 1812, came to mean local Europhilic culture in opposition to Americanization. In the late 1800s, nearly a century of American statehood increasingly asserted the binary American racial construct that perceives only a black-white distinction versus the tripartite colored-white-black distinction of francophone New Orleans. Because of this pressure, Creoles who claimed "pure White" ancestry made efforts to distinguish themselves from darker-skinned Creoles, and stopped speaking French, the better to identify with English-speaking White Americans (Dominguez 1977).

But this attempted disenfranchisement by light-skinned Creoles was not accepted by Creoles with more obviously mixed blood, who continued to identify themselves as Creole. Thus, Dominguez states "there are today two separate groups of people who apply the term [Creole] to their image of their separate communities" (1977: 595): "White" Creoles who claim

pure European blood and are overwhelmingly English-monolingual, and Creoles of color who claim mixed ancestry and often speak some French. More recently, Dubois and Melancon, using survey and 1990 U.S. Census data, claim that “the term [Creole] has acquired a more restricted meaning, being mainly confined to African-Americans in South Louisiana who have Creole French-speaking ancestors” (DuBois & Melancon 2000: 238). Further, the term Creole is widely used for many cultural artifacts claimed as possessing pre-statehood roots in New Orleans, from foods (e.g., Creole tomatoes) to architecture (e.g., Creole cottages).

The definitions of Creole used by participants in the current study are conflicting. For example, while the four participants quoted below all consider themselves Creole, all have different understandings of the term. (In their speech, however, all are nearly r-less.) One 59 year-old Creole man who grew up in the Downtown Ninth Ward said:

You know Creole, the number (r0) one, to me, and everybody's going to argue left and right, Creole is the first born (r0) in the new land— is the first tomato that you planted here (r0), that came from somewhere (r0) else, that's grown out of this ground, instead of somewhere (r0) else, but the true meaning of Louisiana Creole is you have to have French roots you- if you're (r0) Creole, you speak French. (HV1511)⁴

For this participant, Creole can be based on nativity, but also ancestry and language use. He doesn't speak French himself, but his grandmother and mother did. Another participant, a 22 year-old man who grew up Uptown, uses a non-French-oriented definition:

You know, the definition of Creole that I use and the Creole that I think more (r0) and more (r0) are (r0) understanding (r0) to be correct is simply— simply the native culture (r0) of New Orleans, and to a great extent South Louisiana. To be Creole means you more (r0) or (r0) less should have ancestry in Louisiana that

⁴ The interview quotes in this chapter note r-less pronunciations in parentheses as (r0). Unless followed by parentheses, all pronunciations are r-ful.

goes before (r0) the Purchase you know, and you can be White, you can be Black, you can be descended from free people of color (r0) or (r0) slaves, cause there (0) were (r0) certainly Creole slaves who understood (r0) the distinction. (JH1711)

Some participants partially minimized the distinction between African American and Creole, as with this 71 year-old man who grew up in the Seventh Ward:

We're (r0) still African Americans. We all African Americans— it's a bunch of bull, it's another (r0) division that- Blacks, Whites- and you create this other (r0) little group over (r0) here (r0). Creole Catholics versus African American Baptists, there (r0) is a difference; lifestyle, culture (r0). I mean, it's different, but not to the point where (r0) it should be discriminated. (LB1511)

Every self-identified Creole participant has a strong idea of what Creole means. An extended description came from a 94 year-old woman who grew up Uptown, and brought up the term the moment we began to talk. She is of the group that Dominguez (1977) discusses as claiming Creoles to be of purely European ancestry, saying:

I would like to clarify the meaning of Creole because that has been very, very confused. A Creole is a foreign citizen of a country in one of that country's foreign places. Like we were (r0) France, we were (r0) part (r0) of France, we were (r0) the French Creoles, and the Spanish Creoles, and the combination. There (r0) was a lot of marriage between the French and the Spanish and that's what the Creoles and the name Creole stood for (r0).

That is the true meaning of Creole: the citizens of a country in a foreign country. They are (r0) their (r0) foreign children, so to speak, so we had the French Creoles and the Spanish Creoles and the combination of the two were (r0) the Creoles. We were (r0) the foreign citizens of France and Spain. (PCVII)

She goes on to say that she had written the local newspaper to correct their terminology after she saw an article that defined Creole as mixed race:

But I had a big thing going because one time, there (r0) appeared (r0) in the newspaper (r0) a story about someone having moved into a Creole neighborhood (r0), meaning Black and White, which is what it has come to- they've used the name, they've used the term Creole for (r0) that. And I wrote an article for (r0) the paper (r0) trying to clarify what Creole really meant. It did not mean Black and White, but they adopted that name and so the Black community here (r0) considered (r0) themselves Creoles- but they also, many of them- their (r0) families- started (r0) as the, uh, servants of the Creole families. (PCVII)

For this participant, pure European ancestry is crucial to the definition of Creole. She herself traces her family to 1776, describing how her ancestor, a Spanish duke, was sent by the King of Spain to assist the Spanish Governor of Louisiana. The vehemence of her remarks, and her deictic divisions (*we were France; they've used the name*), are evidence of the continuing, and emotional, struggle over the term for some.

For others, the term Creole is no longer primarily applicable to people, but is an abstraction from a more complex cultural situation. A young male participant noted:

There's a lot of overlap in the city that I think a lot of people downplay because it's hard- hard to say, like, if— if— to be honest, the Yat and the Creole and the Cajun have a lot of differences, but they also have a lot of similarities ...like everything down here (r0). It's just so jumbled and mixed up it's really hard to talk about one without mentioning the others. (BD1211)

For this participant, cultural blendings and borrowings makes current differences a matter of degrees, and keeping groups apart verges on contrivance. The speakers quoted give a glimpse into the diversity of opinions on the term: from Francophone heritage to pre-statehood ancestry to solely White European ancestry to historical thread interwoven in local culture. For this dissertation, Creole is used as a label for those who self-identify as such, with the understanding that the definition varies across participants.

2.1.2 Back to 1803

As mentioned in section 2.0, the original native Creole population of 8,000 was doubled in 1809 when, following Toussaint L'Ouverture's successful revolt in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), 9,000 Creoles and enslaved African fled to New Orleans. The Francophone Saint-Domingue and New Orleans Creoles differentiated themselves culturally, religiously, and linguistically from the Anglophone Americans, including many uneducated laborers from Kentucky and Ohio, who moved to the city after 1803.

Concomitantly, New Orleans served as one of the largest slave depots in the country, bringing Africans in large numbers, many of whom remained in New Orleans (Johnson 1999; Blassingame 1973). The historians Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon note that, from its inception, New Orleans developed as "a distinctive cultural entrepôt, where peoples from Europe and Africa initially intertwined their lives and customs," so that the "resulting way of life differed dramatically from the culture that was spawned in the English Colonies of North America" (Hirsch and Logsdon 1992: x).

The city was a thorough mixture of French and English speakers, but English gained ascendancy as the number of English speaking emigrants increased, so that the French-speaking majority had eroded from seven-to-one in 1803 to three-to-two by 1820 (Campanella 2006). New Orleans also attracted emigrants from all over Europe; an 1809 letter remarked "[m]ake a tour throughout the city, and in every street you will encounter native Americans, native Lousianians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Spaniards, Italians, &c, &c" (Carter 1940: 855).

Emigrants continued to contribute heavily to New Orleans's population in the nineteenth century, particularly Irish, Germans, and Italians. The first Irish arrived in the 1700s, fleeing

British persecution, but the largest numbers of Irish arrived as a result of the Potato Famine of 1845-1847. By 1860, more than 25,000 Irish-born people had settled in New Orleans (Garvey and Widmer 1982: 91). Germans emigrated in large numbers, with as many as 7,000 living in the city by 1830 (Campanella 2006: 248), growing to over 11,000 by 1860, nearly 10% of the city's population. Previously, Whites had always been in the minority to Creoles of color, freedmen and slaves, but the influx of Irish and Germans made the city majority White by 1840, shown in Figure 2.1.

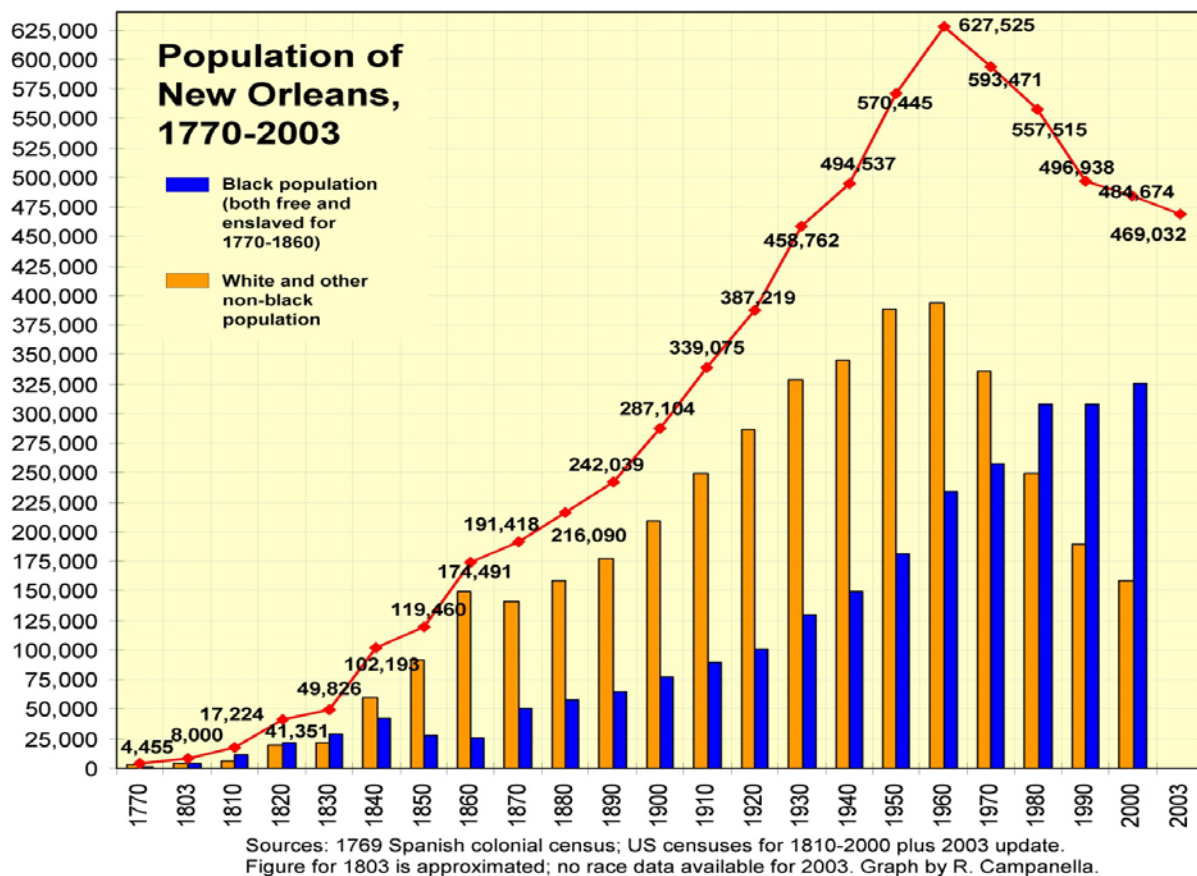


Figure 2.1 Population of New Orleans, 1770-2003. Map by Richard Campanella. Used with permission by the author.

Italians had formed a small part of New Orleans's population from the first European arrival, but the largest group of emigrants arrived at the turn of the twentieth century.

Approximately 15,000 Italians, predominantly Sicilians fleeing poverty and discrimination, were living in the city by 1907 (Campanella 2006: 321), comprising roughly 5% of the population.

The late nineteenth century also brought the arrival of emancipated slaves. In the decades after the Civil War, more than 40,000 former slaves emigrated to the city, primarily from rural plantations (Peretti 1992: 25). These "American blacks," mostly uneducated and Anglophone, doubled the African American population of the city by 1870, although people of color remained in the minority due to continued emigration of White Americans (Campanella 2006: 14).

"American blacks" were held in general disregard by the more literate, educated, Catholic, and culturally French- and internationally-oriented Creoles of color.

African Americans, Anglo-Americans, Creoles, Italians, Germans and Irish constitute the largest historical demographic groups in New Orleans. There are also smaller populations of Greeks, Jews, Cubans, Hondurans, Chinese, and emigrants from the former Yugoslavia (Reinecke 1978, 1985; Cooke and Blanton 1981). Most recently, Vietnamese and Latin American emigrants, especially from Mexico, have emigrated to the city. Cajuns have also influenced the city's speech.

2.1.3 A Note on Cajun

In 1755, French Catholics who had settled in Acadia (now Nova Scotia) were forced by the new British regime to pledge allegiance to Britain, which required renouncing Catholicism. Many of these French Canadians refused, and were punished by the British with forced removal from

their land, in what is still referred to as *Le Grand Dérangement*. Acadians were scattered until 1784, when the King of Spain decreed them welcome in then-Spanish ruled South Louisiana. Thousands of Acadians arrived in New Orleans after 1784. *Les Acadiens*, pronounced as *Cajuns* by Americans, largely did not stay in the city, but settled in the marshland and bayous to the west and north. As quoted above, "plain, upstanding Acadians" could be seen on the streets of nineteenth century New Orleans, and the descendents of these Acadians, now numbering in the hundreds of thousands, still populate Southern Louisiana.

From the time of their arrival to the present day, Cajuns have been considered by most New Orleanians to be country people, held in opposition to urbane Creoles and other New Orleanians. The general New Orleans assertion of urban sophistication versus rural rusticity has meant an under-emphasis of Cajun influence in the city. New Orleans and Cajun cultural practices, including food, music and language, are all popularly held to be fundamentally distinct. For example, in a 1977 LAGS interview, speaker 655, a female 31 year-old African American social worker, tells the interviewer, *I've never eaten boudin...that's more rural*, but that a woman she works with, from Opelousas, in Cajun country, is familiar with it, because *that's a dish of their area*. Later in the interview, as the interviewer tries to elicit words for calling farm animals, she pleads ignorance and says, laughing, *you'll make a farm girl out of me* (LAGS audio file INF655.4.10).

While Cajun English (and Cajun French before it), like all of Cajun culture, is considered rural and unlike New Orleans's urban culture, more than two hundred years of contact has inevitably led to overlaps in the speech of both communities. Both New Orleans Creoles and Cajuns were originally Francophone Catholics, and they both grew predominantly English-monolingual in the twentieth century (DuBois and Melancon 2000). Features including r-

lessness, ð-hardening, and French lexical items and phrases are shared by Cajun and New Orleans English. Even the city's official tourism slogan, *Laissez les bon temps rouler*, was taken from the Cajun tourism board.

While not widely discussed (in contrast to the constant discussion of French heritage), Cajun influence is remarked upon by individuals. One participant in the current study recalled meeting another native New Orleanian and thinking that the man sounded like his aunt, whose parents had moved to the city from Cajun country, Labadieville in Lafourche Parish. He found the man's parents had also moved to the city from the same parish, leading the participant to note that:

He spoke like my daddy, like my daddy's sister (r0). I've seen, every once in a while I'll see, like in Treme, I'll see somebody that looks like my nanan [godmother], just the way they speak, and just you know, you see it in the eyes or (r0) something. It's something, just their (r0) mannerisms like, kind of spooky. I can see that bayou country and the French.

A lot of people, the guy that owns this place [a Downtown coffee shop], his people came from that area [Bayou Lafourche]; there's (r0) a lot of people that hang in here (r0)... and I know a few people in the Lower (r0) Ninth Ward (r0) that came from that area. So there's (r0) a lot of Cajun French influences in New Orleans (r0). (HV1511)

Other participants see their Cajun heritage as Creole, as when I asked a 49 year-old White woman about her ethnicity.

I'm Sicilian, Scottish, English, French and Spanish...Creole French I guess. My great-grandmother was from Golden Meadow, and French was her first language, and when I knew her she spoke English, but she would still throw in French phrases and words. (LP1212)

Golden Meadow is a Cajun area, but the speaker characterizes her great-grandmother as Creole rather than Cajun. In addition to Cajuns living in New Orleans forming part of the city's linguistic mix, some New Orleanians notice features shared with Cajun speech. A young participant, discussing visiting his grandmother in Oberlin, Louisiana, in Cajun country, observed that:

She's never been to New Orleans before, but certain words she says, it sounds like they say it in New Orleans. Like in New Orleans, instead of saying sink, they say zink.(MRQVIII)

These anecdotes provide evidence of mutual influence between New Orleans and Cajun speech. Unlike other ethnic groups, no data are available on the number of those in the city with Cajun roots. However, Cajuns have exerted an influence on local language, in addition to the influence of Creoles, Irish, Germans, Italians, and emancipated African Americans.

2.2 NEIGHBORHOODS AND RACE

The original Creole and enslaved population lived in the Vieux Carré, or Old Square, now known as the French Quarter for its original Francophone residents. The French Quarter is the oldest area of the city, selected by the city's founder, the Sieur de Bienville, in 1718 as the site for settlement because it offered the highest ground in the area due to natural levees created by the Mississippi River depositing silt on its banks.

Americans arriving after 1803 settled in what had been plantations upriver of the French portion of the city, in what was known as the American Sector. The dividing line was Canal Street, the original demarcator of Uptown, the American area, and Downtown, the Creole area.

Upriver of Canal Street, Americans developed the main business district, now known as the Central Business District, or C.B.D. Upriver from the C.B.D., Americans developed St. Charles Avenue (originally called Nyades Street) as the main artery and the Garden District as the main residential area. Creoles lived in the Vieux Carré, with Esplanade Avenue as the lower boundary, built to take advantage of a natural ridge leading towards Lake Pontchartrain.

2.2.1 A Note on Uptown and Downtown

Possibly as a result of heavy commerce between New York and New Orleans, nineteenth century New Orleanians, particularly American emigrants, began using terms popular in Manhattan, *Uptown* and *Downtown*, to distinguish the areas above and below Canal Street (for a history of the terms, see Campanella 2006: 157-167). Originally, Creoles lived below Canal, and Americans settled above it. Tensions between the two groups were intense, so much so that the median strip on Canal Street was called the *neutral ground*, meant to permit Creoles and Americans to occupy it simultaneously without violence (today, *neutral ground* remains the exclusive term for all street medians, and is adopted by newcomers). The perception of distinctions between Uptown and Downtown continue today. Contemporary New Orleanians and even new arrivals to the city often classify themselves as *Uptown* or *Downtown* people, and are dismissive of the other category. For example, speaking of Downtown Creoles and Uptown African Americans, the Creole musician Paul Dominguez said in 1950:

Downtown people, we try to be intelligent. Everybody learns a trade...try to get an easy job that our education qualifies us for. We try to bar jail...Uptown, cross Canal yonder, they [American blacks] used to jail...Uptown folk all ruffians.
(Lomax 1950: 25-26, 80-83)

The simple binary division of Uptown/Downtown may be irresistible, encouraging categorical statements like *Uptown folk all ruffians* or, from a 26 year-old in the current study, *I hate Uptown*. The division appears frequently in the city. In the social columns of the local newspaper, one is called the *Uptown Scene*; the column covering downtown is called *Vieux Point*, nostalgically employing faux French. The flyleaf of a sentimental double memoir titled *Uptown / Downtown: Growing Up in New Orleans* (Martinez and LeCorgne 1986) states, "sections of New Orleans have their own distinctive lifestyles, customs, and traditions. The most conspicuous sectional differences exist in the Uptown and Downtown communities." These kinds of divisions circulate in private and public discourse, constantly renewing and reifying the bifurcation of the city.

Stereotyping the communities erases the presence of people or practices that fail to confirm the stereotype. One Uptown Creole participant expressed frustration with Downtown Seventh Ward Creoles:

That whole Uptown, Downtown, Canal Street thing is not an absolute rule. There (r0) are (r0) many, many Creoles who live Uptown. Just within—you're talking about Colored (r0) Creoles—I can give you the names of the Labattres, the Rousseaux, the Duprees, the Breaux, the McDermotts, the Martinezes (r0), all these families—the Hydels—were (r0) all in the Uptown area, so although the Seventh Ward (r0) don't give us credit for living up there (r0), you hear (r0) the term "real creole," they say we're (r0) not the "real creoles" because we live above Canal Street.(JAVI)

The nineteenth century distinction between Creole and American sections remains robust to the present day for residents of both areas, a testament to the perduring strength of local identification with the labels. As with all social indexicals, the meaning of the distinctions changes across time and across speakers. For some like Paul Dominguez, quoted above, Uptown

primarily connotes poor Blackness, while others consider Uptown the heart of wealthy Whiteness. One young White male Downtown participant said:

We're wild, we're yats, we don't really care, we're gonna do what we're gonna do, and that steps on a lot of rich white uptown folks' toes so that they want to kick us out and we don't care. (DY2411)

The stereotype of Uptown as home to the White upper class is shown in a 1978 cartoon (Figure 2.2), which contrasts talk overheard at a grocery store in the Irish Channel, on the left, with that at an Uptown store, on the right.

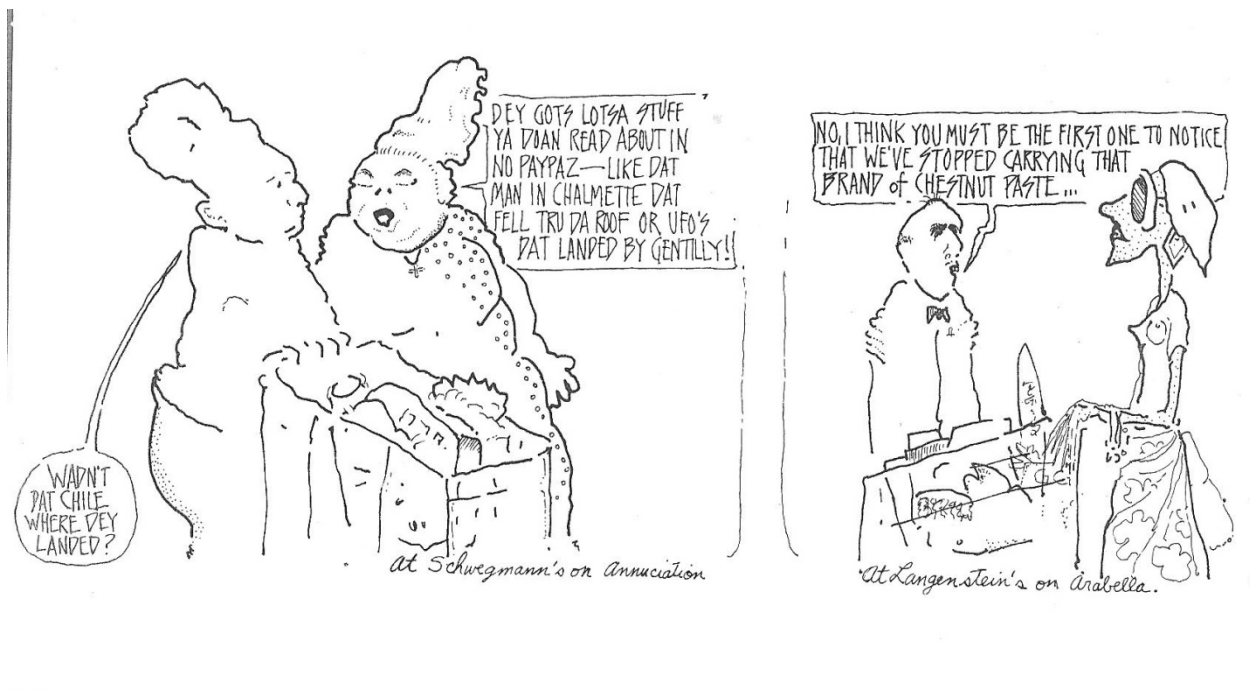


Figure 2.2 Uptown / Downtown cartoon. The image is from a book of cartoons accompanying overheard talk, called "F'sure!: Actual dialogue heard on the streets of New Orleans" (Matthews 1978).

Interestingly, the Irish Channel neighborhood is above Canal Street, and thus uptown, but because it historically has been working-class, is not considered part of the social construct of Uptown with a capital "U."

The Uptown/Downtown divide is mentioned because many participants noted differences in speech between the two areas. Discussing how Downtowners have peculiar ways of speaking, a young Uptowner said:

One major (r0) giveaway of a real Downtowner (r0) generally is that they'll say 'I've gawt' [gɔt] - in other (r0) words, instead of saying 'I've got [gɒt] five dollars' (r0) [they'll say] 'I've gawt [gɔt] five dollars' (r0), and we always used to laugh at that, cause it's just so funny, because you can instantly tell where they're (r0) from just through the sound. (JH1711)

When asked why Uptowners did not share this feature, he suggested the Downtown population was insular, leading to nonstandardisms:

Uptown was more (r0), more (r0) of a mix because it did have Americans- people moving in from Mississippi, Tennessee, all those God awful places like that, and you had- you'd meet Whites you know, all along St. Charles (r0), Napoleon Avenue etc., and so we assimilated more (r0) as far as language. Down there (r0) [Downtown], because everybody is more (r0) or (r0) less from the same background, I think that when they made the transition over (r0) to English- I think the things that didn't translate so well are (r0) the things they never (r0) learned to pronounce in the way that what they call Standard (r0) English- American English contended [that they should be pronounced]. (JH1711)

This evaluation authenticates the speaker as a "real Creole," as he denigrates *Americans* moving in from *all those God awful places*, which is remarkable, as he is discussing demographic changes of 150 years ago. He also frames Uptown Creoles, with their frequent

exposure to Whites and a range of African Americans, as more worldly than those from Downtown, suggesting that Downtown insularity led to imperfect acquisition of English.

Another participant, who grew up in both Uptown and Esplanade Ridge, also noted differences between Uptown and Downtown talk:

P: The minute you cross Canal Street, and I don't include Esplanade- most of that is the old New Orleans base- what's left of it- which isn't much, the language changes completely. That's where (r0) 'how's ya mama' 'where (r0) yat'- um, um, it's just a whole different vernacular (r0, r0) . They say things differently, they pronounce things differently; they say erstahs [oysters].

C: How do you say it?

P: I say oystahs ... um, anyway it's just a different vernacular (r0, r0) because the other (r0) side of Esplanade or (r0) really now I guess maybe Canal Street, it was a different level of income, education, it was just a different atmosphere (r0) of life. (PCVII)

This speaker evaluates what she perceives as Downtown as uneducated, poorer, and culturally unlike Uptown. She excludes Esplanade Avenue from her assessment of Downtown, probably because it had historically been wealthy and occupied by light-skinned Creoles. Her comments about *erstahs* and *where yat* suggest she is talking about the Yat dialect, associated with the working-class Downtown Ninth Ward, but also with the Uptown Irish Channel, although that is not salient for this speaker. Uptown and Downtown thus continue to carry strong local connotations, cultural and linguistic, for many contemporary New Orleanians, and some participants note differences between the speech of the two areas. In terms of postvocalic /r/, however, both Uptown, from the majority White Garden District to the African American Central City neighborhood, and Downtown, from the multiethnic Eighth Ward to the historically Creole Treme neighborhood, have historically been r-less. The situation in New Orleans is similar to what Wolfram (2004) described as a pattern in the South whereby different

demographic groups are united in r-lessness, although the origins and social meanings of the feature may be distinct for each group.

2.2.2 Back to Neighborhoods and Race

Irish and German emigrants settled throughout the city, Uptown and Downtown. Their heavy concentrations in specific areas led to neighborhoods that bear their name, including the Irish Channel and Little Saxony in the Faubourg Marigny. Sicilian emigrants settled in the market district of the lower French Quarter. Both the Marigny and the Irish Channel became predominantly African American neighborhoods when most of the original residents of European heritage moved to the suburbs in the 1950s and 60s. Recently, gentrification has brought Whites to many neighborhoods that had become almost exclusively African American by the late 1970s.

The city historically existed within a very small footprint, winding along the curves of the Mississippi River, because frequently flooded swampland lay between the river and Lake Pontchartrain to the north, preventing habitation. The early city is eloquently mapped in Figure 2.3. The city remained small until the middle of the twentieth century, and older New Orleanians have strong recollections of the densely populated city of their youth.

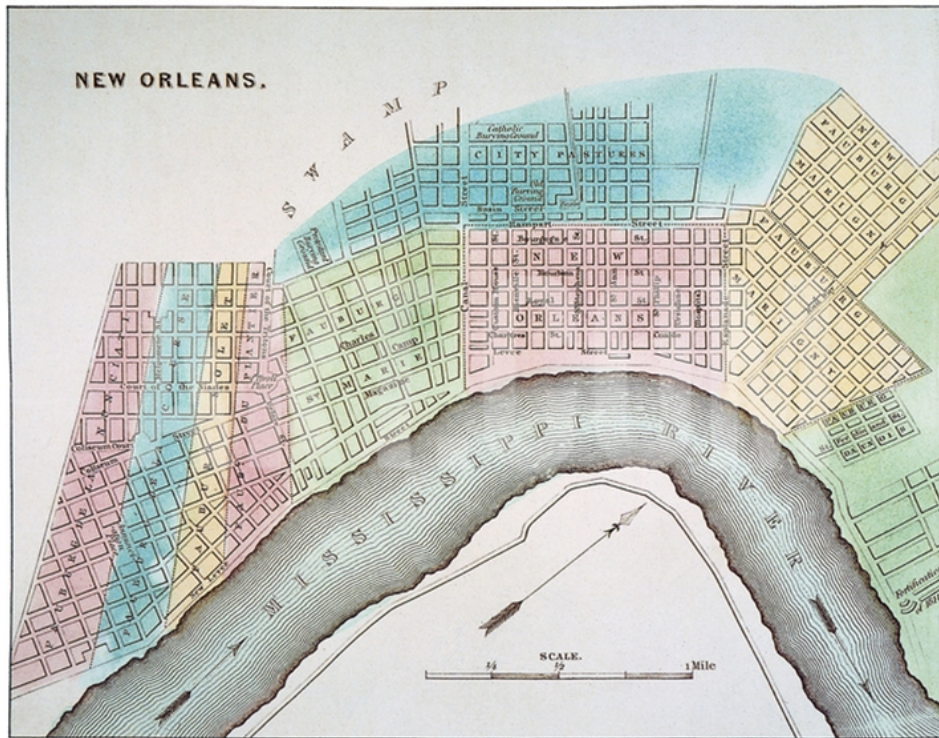


Figure 2.3. 1837 map of New Orleans. "Swamp" is printed above the block grid. Canal Street, the dividing line between Uptown and Downtown, runs vertically down the map just to the right of the "P" in "Swamp."

One older speaker who grew up Uptown but moved to a suburb as a teenager recalled:

There was a much smaller land mass, cause there was no New Orleans East, no Broadmoor, no Lakeview, so everybody was crowded chockablock and a lot of these houses that you see that, um, were doubles [two-family duplexes] and maybe now they've been converted to singles, well, they were really doubles and most people didn't have as much room. Like, you know, they had more kids in each room, and all that sort of stuff. (SA1411)

Geographic facts kept the habitable area of the city compact, causing ever-greater population density, as the population grew to 500,000 by 1940. Downtown buildings were often multi-family units facing an inner courtyard, so that residents were in constant interaction.

Uptown originally developed in the 1800s as mansions on large verdant lots, giving rise to the name of the oldest Uptown neighborhood, the Garden District. As the population grew, some of these large lots were subdivided, so that the original mansions were surrounded by smaller houses, often built as "doubles" for two or even more families. The wealthy Americans of the original mansions lived in close proximity to the working class European emigrants and African Americans who settled in the smaller houses surrounding the mansions.

These necessarily dense residential patterns across the city forced constant interaction across ethnic and class lines (e.g., Reinecke 1985), resulting in an intensely multicultural urban life that affected the city's culture. The historian Bruce Raeburn discusses the emergence of jazz as dependent on the multicultural composition of neighborhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Ethnic and racial diversity within working-class neighborhoods stimulated vernacular cultural development in the Crescent City. The prevalence of music in the streets via marching bands, wagon advertisements, and spasm bands⁵ meant that musical innovations coming out of the African American community were available to everyone within earshot, regardless of the strictures of segregation that sought to keep whites free from black cultural penetration...demographic configurations that predated the implementation of segregation in the 1890s interspers[ed] Creoles, Latinos, Jews, blacks, and whites side by side within blocks. (Raeburn 2009: 8)

Raeburn is a musicologist, interested in "musical innovations," but linguistic innovations from every demographic group were similarly available to "everyone within earshot." It is for this reason that divisions between African American and White speech, and the speech of particular ethnic groups, have been less distinct than elsewhere.

⁵ *Spasm bands* were street performing groups, often with child musicians and dancers. These bands predated jazz.

The swamp was drained and developed in the middle of the twentieth century, and the city now spreads north to Lake Pontchartrain, as well as to the west and east. Figure 2.4 shows the city today, which one research center divides into 72 neighborhoods (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center 2012).



Figure 2.4 Map of New Orleans today. The swamp was drained in the 1950s, allowing the development of city to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at the top of the map. The Lower Ninth Ward, which gained notoriety in media coverage in 2005, is divided from the rest of the city by the Industrial Canal, which runs to the right of the "New Orleans" near the center of the map. Map by Rand McNally.

Two factors caused a dramatic shift of the population from the older city to the newly developed areas. The already densely populated city had an even greater housing shortage after World War II, spurring a building boom, and the Civil Rights movement led many Whites of at

least moderate resources to leave the city center and settle in the new neighborhoods and suburbs. Today, many White New Orleanians claim that the city's unique history precluded the racism of other American cities. The federally-ordered and enforced desegregation of New Orleans public schools in 1960 is perhaps the most dramatic evidence to the contrary, and shows that the geographic conditions that dictated the urban melting pot had long obscured racist and classist impulses. Ruby Bridges, a 6 year-old African American girl, had to be escorted by federal Marshalls to a downtown elementary school in November of 1960, local police having refused to assist her. White parents protested and immediately removed their children from school, so that Bridges sat alone with a teacher for the year. Bridges recalls that:

Militant segregationists, as the news called them, took to the streets in protest, and riots erupted all over the city. My parents shielded me as best they could, but I knew problems had come to our family because I was going to the white school. My father was fired from his job. The white owners of a grocery store told us not to shop there anymore. (Bridges 2000, online)

Between 1960 and 1970, the White population declined by almost 60,000. The city became majority African American for the first time since 1840. New Orleans' population was almost 70% White in 1960; today, the city's population is 33% White. It is evident that White New Orleanians enthusiastically joined the White flight that affected most American cities.

The availability of new housing due to swamp drainage provided an outlet for Whites fearful of desegregation, and also for many New Orleanians eager to experience less-crowded suburban living. Many middle-class African Americans left the city center for newly developed neighborhoods including Gentilly, Pontchartrain Park, and New Orleans East, and for neighborhoods on the West Bank of the river. As the White and middle class African American

population migrated to the suburbs, the city lost population and tax revenue, with a resultant weakening of services and infrastructure. By 1980, the city became majority African American and impoverished. Further, while the population has been about 70% African American since that time, 90% of public school children are African American. The children of the 30% White population are sent primarily to private or parochial schools. Finally, new residential patterns have created many nearly monoracial neighborhoods. The geographer Richard Campanella calls the clustering of White residents in a string of neighborhoods along the Mississippi River (which is both the highest ground in the city and increasingly expensive real estate) the "White teapot" for the shape on the map made by these neighborhoods. The rest of the city, built on lower ground and reclaimed swampland, is predominantly African American. Since the 1970s, New Orleans neighborhoods have undergone more severe racial segregation than during the city's first two hundred years.

2.3 EFFECTS OF POST-HURRICANE FLOODING

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. The storm brought high winds and heavy rain and caused some damage, including loss of electricity, but the center of the hurricane missed New Orleans. By the evening of that day, the 25% of residents who had not taken part in the evacuation were relieved that the city had essentially escaped the storm. All storms that hit New Orleans push water across Lake Pontchartrain, which forms the northern edge of the city. During Katrina, water was pushed across the lake, which, after the storm, formed a surge as the water returned southward towards New Orleans. Three sections of man-made levees around the

city failed when the surge arrived, flooding the low-lying city. Lack of electricity and criminally poor emergency communication meant that almost no one knew what was happening.

Those who stayed all recount their uncomprehending shock at seeing fast-moving water rolling down streets many hours after the storm had ended. One participant, whose house was on high ground in an area that flooded, described the night and morning after the storm:

When I went to bed that night there was not a puddle of water (r0) in the neighborhood (r0). This was after (r0) the storm (r0). Not a puddle. I got up the next day— I went out to get the newspaper (r0), I don't know where (r0) my mind was— I went out to get the Picayune. I opened up the front door (r0) and I just said 'Jesus Christ,' I mean [slams hand on table], you know, I said—I think I made a noise, I mighta just said something like 'hey,' but it was insane, it bounced off the water (r0), like, 'hello, hello, hello, hello.' It was exactly like I woke up next to the City Park (r0) Lagoon— the water (r0) was up to my porch (r0). (NC2511)

Water poured into the city for three days, until the water in the city equalized with the water in the lake, leaving the flooded sections of the city under an average of six to nine feet of water, where it stayed for more than three weeks. 80% of the city was flooded, with only stretches of high ground along the Mississippi River (the "White teapot" neighborhoods) and scattered pockets of higher ground remaining dry. New Orleanians who had remained in town had a terrible struggle as they tried to leave the city after the flooding. The tragedy became the focus of intense international media attention. Tragedy evolved into debacle as civilian and military attempts at rescue and crisis management were shown to be an unending series of missteps and failures.

There are many scholarly and journalistic accounts of the details of Hurricane Katrina, and the sociocultural and political aspects of the disaster (e.g., Van Heerden and Bryan 2006; Hartman and Squires 2006; Brinkley 2006; Cooper and Block 2007; Horne 2008; Levitt and

Whitaker 2009; Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2010; David and Enarson 2012; Wolff 2012). There are thousands special issues and articles in a wide range of academic journals, on topics from architecture to zoology. A vast and continually growing body of personal memoirs, documentary films, television programs, and coffee table books of disaster photography have also appeared (e.g., James 2006; Deichmann 2007; Neff 2007; Antoine 2008; Baum 2009; Eggers 2009; Ewy 2009; Neufeld 2009; Barclay and West 2010; Laborde 2010; Misrach 2010; Rutledge 2010; Wilkinson 2010; Smith 2012). Large numbers of newspaper articles (more than 24,000 in the *Newspaper Source* database alone, which includes 150 newspapers) address aspects of the storm. The disaster and its ongoing effects have been exhaustively catalogued and analyzed.

The destruction of the city affected every aspect of life. For this study, only changes since 2005 that are likely to affect language use in the city are outlined. These are changes in demographics, in neighborhoods, and in cultural affect.

2.3.1 Population Upheaval

The 2005 population of New Orleans was 454, 863. 75% of the population evacuated by August 28 in anticipation of Katrina. By mid-September 2005, most of the 25% of residents who had remained were gone, most because their houses had flooded and they were eventually rescued and evacuated, the rest because, even though their houses had remained dry, there were few municipal services available. Apart from emergency personnel and a few thousand determined residents, the city was empty. People in the city who stayed or returned briefly to visit their property all commented on the apocalyptic emptiness and silence. One participant recalled:

There were no birds, there were no squirrels, they didn't have any bees or mosquitoes, they didn't have any of that. No frogs, they didn't have any of that.
(WXIV)

Another participant described returning to see her house:

We couldn't get back to even see the house for (r0) about six months. You had to go down Airline (r0) [highway], and when you got to the airport (r0, r0) you had to put Vick's salve in your (r0) nose, and we had to put a mask. Everything was brown, not a bird, not a sound. It was utter (r0) silence. We opened the door (r0) [.5] We both threw up right in the street. (JOAI)

People whose houses were destroyed were not allowed, by various military and government I.D. checkpoints, into the city for months, as the speaker above recounts. Residents whose houses were not destroyed slowly trickled back, negotiating daily the arbitrary and militarized checkpoints and curfews. By October 2006, the population had reached 187,525, under half the pre-storm population (Centers for Disease Control 2006). This restored population was proportionally much Whiter; 44% White and 46% African American in 2006, as opposed to 28% White and 67% African American in 2005.

A disproportionate number the city's pre-Katrina African American population had lived in neighborhoods that were heavily flooded. The poorest could not generally afford to travel back to New Orleans quickly, if at all, and the depleted housing stock meant that renters had few places to which they could return. In addition, public housing complexes, many of which did not suffer much damage, were nonetheless closed, permanently preventing residents from returning. Finally, homeowners in flooded areas trying to return were not only prevented from even visiting their property for months, but faced with byzantine and frequently shifting new regulations and permits for rebuilding. One participant noted that her friend, a wealthy real-estate developer whose house had flooded, had few problems rebuilding:

They've got lawyer (r0) friends who were (r0) specialists in insurance, mitigation, title and research to help her (r0) get money from the storm. They were (r0) made very whole, they had no trouble at all. (JOAI)

In order to receive recovery funding and rebuild quickly, multiple legal specialists were needed. Most of the population of New Orleans did not have access to such legal resources, and most had to find work in the places to which they had evacuated, leaving them with neither the time nor the legal assistance which rebuilding demanded.

In addition, for several years, numerous city, state, and federal groups proposed rebuilding plans for the city (e.g., Urban Land Institute; Bring New Orleans Back Commission) that recommended selective rebuilding, turning some flooded neighborhoods into parkland, or rebuilding based on how many people returned to neighborhoods. There was enormous confusion about what would happen to the city. A 2006 article by urban planner Kenneth Reardon describes the chaos:

The uncertainty of the proposed neighborhood planning process, and the lack of a guarantee that displaced residents can move back permanently, has discouraged many from returning. They couldn't fail to notice the media's daily barrage of negative images of the city's neighborhoods, the excruciatingly slow progress in restoring basic services, the attempts to bulldoze homes in the Lower 9th Ward and the failure of the city's housing authority and HUD to re-open public housing complexes that were unaffected by the storm. Many residents of the 9th Ward, Gentilly and New Orleans East neighborhoods are still without electricity and sewer service. Without these essential services, FEMA will not provide families with trailers to enable them to return, rebuild and take part in the community renewal process. (Reardon 2006: 4)

The uncertainty and frequent shifts in rebuilding plans kept many former residents away. The three neighborhoods, the Ninth Ward, Gentilly, and New Orleans East, mentioned as still lacking electric and water services in 2006 were all overwhelmingly African American, leading many to feel that a concerted plan was in place to rebuild New Orleans as a Whiter city.

Eventually, the reports of various commissions were ignored, and no master plan for the city was adopted. Instead, individual residents returned and rebuilt their homes as they were able. Today, the city's African American population is approximately 214,000, 60% of the population. Overall, the city's population is 360,000, 25% smaller than before Katrina. The city has returned to racial proportions slightly narrower than pre-Katrina figures: 60% African American, 33% White, as seen in Figure 2.5. (versus 67% African American and 28% White in 2005).

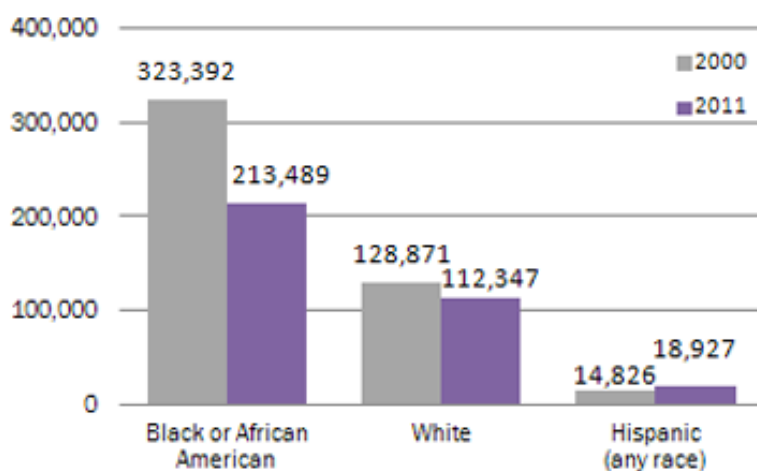


Figure 2.5 New Orleans population, 2000 and 2011. Chart by Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (Ortiz and Plyer 2012).

New Orleans has historically had a very high nativity rate, and while data on city of birth is not available, the 2010 Census estimates that 73% of the current population is Louisiana-born, very close to the 77% of the population in 2000. There has been a substantial influx of new

residents, part of which is the so-called "brain gain" of educated professionals moving to New Orleans post-Katrina, with 20% of the population born outside Louisiana, 32% of which possess college degrees, as opposed to 26% in 2000. Hispanics and Asians, primarily Vietnamese, make up 5% and 3% of the population, respectively, close to pre-Katrina percentages. The poverty rate is 29%, almost unchanged from the 27% of 2000. The unprecedented population upheaval of 2005 has resulted in a smaller population of roughly similar proportions to pre-storm New Orleans.

2.3.2 Neighborhood Upheaval

Neighborhoods, on the other hand, are still profoundly disturbed. The flooding in 2005 destroyed more than 80,000 housing units, nearly 40% of the city's total. Almost every neighborhood of the city suffered catastrophic damage. Today, there are 189,896 housing units counted in New Orleans, of which a quarter (47,738) are vacant or blighted (Ortiz and Plyer 2012). This causes what is called the jack o'lantern effect, where a few houses on a block are illuminated, while the rest of the street is dark due to unoccupied houses and empty lots.

The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center supplies statistics to city government and others, and is a relentless cheerleader for the recovery of New Orleans, striving to present the most optimistic analysis of statistics. Yet even they note that 65 of the city's 72 neighborhoods have lost population since 2000 (Figure 2.6) . The loss of population has implications for language, as neighborhood networks are an important factor in shaping language variation and change (e.g., Labov 2006). Neighborhoods have been profoundly disturbed, and are much less

dense than they were pre-Katrina, accelerating a population decline that began years before the storm.

It is not uncommon to see just a few houses occupied on a block. It is also not uncommon to talk to people who are among the only people on their street. One participant in the current study rebuilt his house in the predominantly African American neighborhood called New Orleans East, which flooded heavily and has lost 30% of its population. He is planning to move out of Louisiana when he retires in a few years, due to his frustration with the city:

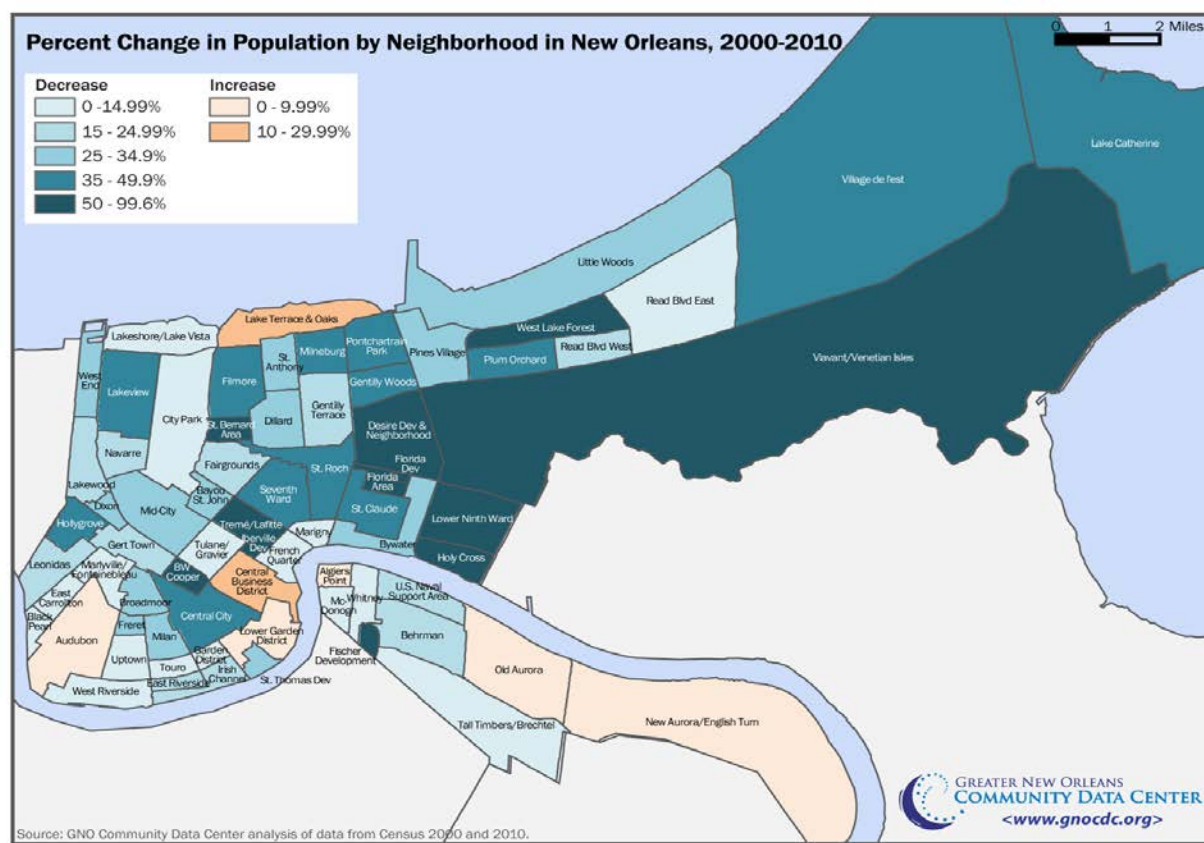


Figure 2.6. Population decline in New Orleans. Darkest areas have lost the highest percentage of population. Map by Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

The block that I'm in there's probably a couple of houses that haven't been rebuilt, some tall grass. You go the other direction toward the Chef [Chef Menteur Highway], it's probably at least two or three lots, the houses have been demolished, at least another two or three homes that have not been rebuilt, and I find it very frustrating that things are so slow, and I don't really believe the city had done- has made a great effort in the revitalization process. (BJXIV)

Years after Katrina, the city has not recovered many largely African American pre-storm neighborhoods. Some determined residents who did rebuild, like the participant quoted above, regret their decision to rebuild, suggesting that some neighborhoods may lose even more residents in the future.

All New Orleans neighborhoods were affected by the storm, including those that were not flooded. These habitable areas saw rental prices rise immediately after Katrina, as government contractors and others employed in recovery efforts paid double or triple pre-Katrina prices. These prices have stayed high, changing the socioeconomic and racial composition residents of un-flooded neighborhoods. The upheaval across all neighborhoods will have an impact on the city's language in the future, and has already had an effect on New Orleanians, many of whom feel a sense of nostalgia and loss about the city.

2.3.3 Cultural Upheaval

Changes in population and neighborhoods can be straightforwardly compared to data before the storm. An important change less amenable to direct comparison is the shift in cultural affect, a mental disposition toward the city, that has occurred post-Katrina. The destruction in 2005 was an emotional and psychic rupture that divided individual lives and the life of the city into a *before* and *after* (Schoux Casey 2012). The shock and extent of the disaster and the magnitude of

media attention combined to create a dramatic historical event considered by all to be a watershed moment for themselves and for the city. As one participant put it:

I think a lot of people say this, too, there's like, there's pre-Katrina and then there's post-Katrina, and pre-Katrina is kind of fuzzy, like, you know, there's a lot of things I don't really remember as much.(LSVIA)

Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had been an increasingly marginal third-tier American city, with an economy driven by tourism, which created primarily low-paying, low-benefit service industry jobs. As one participant put it:

Before the storm New Orleans was right on the verge of becoming Detroit- right on the verge- and, uh, it's unfortunate (r0) it took a storm to get us out of our malaise.(HLP1V)

New Orleans was a failing city, with legendarily corrupt politics and cronyism. A tiny and insular upper class controlled most of the city's resources. Most ambitious young people left the city because the closed power structure and tourism-based economy offered so few opportunities. One older male participant commented:

We training people to leave the state of Louisiana; we got a brain drain, black and white. The only ones staying here (r0) are (r0) people that, as my friend Bernard Monbousquet say, people who have gumbo in their (r0) veins— they just love New Orleans and they going to stay here (r0) no matter (r0) what. (LB1511)

For this participant, only the irrational would stay in New Orleans. Otherwise intelligent people who remained chose to stay because they had *gumbo in their veins*; New Orleans culture has always been rich, and families and communities had deep roots. But New Orleans was a provincial and failing city, and even those who had gumbo in their veins understood their

affection was not logical. Natives with any ambition distanced themselves from local affiliations, working to eradicate local language from their speech. A 23 year-old female participant recalled:

Probably in like middle school when you started— I started— becoming conscious of, you know, what I was looking like, and what I was talking like, and it's like, 'oh goodness' y'know? So you become, I guess, conscious because of other people— it's like 'oh, well, if I want to do well, I don't have— I shouldn't talk like this,' you know? (BD1211)

A 32 year-old participant also remembered deciding to change her speech:

I think that I used to do that [no postvocalic r], and I trained myself to not do it. Like, and sometimes, if I'm talking fast or I'm aggravated or something, I feel like I, maybe it's not that noticeable, but yeah, that does happen. I feel like years ago I used to drop my rs a bit and decided 'I don't want to do that anymore.' I think it was probably when I left and went to Mississippi [for college]. (LSVIA)

Both of these speakers planned to live away from the city permanently. But, like all evacuated or expatriated New Orleanians, they watched the storm and its aftermath on television. Katrina was a mediated, televised spectacle and crucible that forced reflection and decision on every New Orleanian. Every person who returned to live in New Orleans made the choice to do so. Those residing in the city had to choose whether to return and attempt to rebuild their homes and communities. Many of those who had chosen to move away before the storm and distance themselves from the city also found themselves re-evaluating their lives. For some, a new affect snapped into place. The 32 year-old participant quoted above, who had been living in Mississippi before the storm, decided to move back:

But it was just like a switch went off or something, and all of a sudden, like, I wanted to be here, like I missed it, I missed everything- things that I didn't even

like- like Mardi Gras, I mean I hated Mardi Gras, I mean I still don't really go to Mardi Gras, but all of a sudden it was just- I loved it and I wanted to be there.

And a lot of just little things, even the language, even silly things like saying neutral ground instead of saying median like everyone else in Mississippi— like, 'I'm just not going to conform.' [laughter]. I love everything, all these weird things that, you know, that are New Orleans, and like, why, you know, why am I trying, you know, to do all this stuff, you know, talk- drop the language and stuff.(LSVIA)

The destruction caused this participant to reconsider the city and make conscious efforts to identify herself with New Orleans, including re-introducing features of local language that she had rejected as a teenager. The 23 year-old quoted above also found that Katrina had changed her stance towards her speech and her city:

I kind of wish that I had a more prominent accent, you know what I mean, cause it's special, not a lot of people have it. Like, after Katrina, like, I re-evaluated everything about my hometown. Like, at first I hated it, I didn't want to go back and I was just angry cause everything was gone and I didn't want to have to go back and have to do all that again you know, I was 17, so I was going through all that high school b.s. and like, 'Katriiiiina' [rolled eyes, exhausted wail]— so I was like, "I don't want to go back, I don't want to go to high school in a shack' and then, shortly after, I realized 'That's my home, I love that place more than I'll ever love any other place.' (BD1511)

Another participant, a 25 year-old man, expressed the same reaction to Katrina:

I went to Lafayette for a semester after the storm, and like, I made a conscious effort to speak as much of a yaf as I possibly could, it was funny. Cause I like my hometown and I don't like outside of my hometown. After the storm it kinda, you know, 'New Orleans!' BD1211)

Many speakers described similar profound changes in affect towards the city, and towards aspects of local culture, including local dialect. There is general agreement that New

Orleanians became cheerleaders for their ruined city. A 48 year-old female participant put it this way:

There's been a huge resurgence of that— people feeling more New Orleanian and being really proud to be New Orleanian, with the fleur de lis and you know, anything New Orleans, like, has risen in popularity tremendously. I mean, just since the storm— like, a huge resurgence of that. I think we believed that we almost lost it. I think people have... really, um, embraced it and want to bring it back and I think that has created a big resurgence. (MC1212)

A young male participant noted that even those who, in his opinion, were not locally oriented, had experienced a change in perspective:

The uptown kids, all the rich kids who, after the storm, I think, in my honest opinion, it became cool to be local so like ... they want that and it's cool now. Now it's not cool to be Anglo-Saxon White guy. Now all the traditional New Orleans things are cool. (DB0410)

This change in affect has caused a re-valorization of local language; it has become valued as a beloved part of the lived experience of the city before the storm, a cultural practice that people want to revitalize and perpetuate. One intangible legacy of Katrina is a renewed or newly established commitment by New Orleanians to support and perpetuate many aspects of local culture. This affective valorization of the local influences linguistic choices (discussed in Chapter 5).

2.4 ONLY IN NEW ORLEANS

The final aspects of New Orleans' sociohistorical context that contribute to local language use are metadiscursive commentary and the performative aspect of local culture. There is a genre of anecdote in the city that uses *only in New Orleans* as the evaluative component. These anecdotes all relate experiences by the narrator that demonstrate the uniqueness of New Orleans. Someone who visited a flooded part of the city a few months after Katrina, for example, described the desolate wasteland of rotting, slime-covered houses. Out of nowhere, a small boy appears, crossing the street. "And he had a trumpet in his hand. Only in New Orleans." Residents often discuss finding creative juxtapositions of people in the city. Standing in line at a convenience store, someone recounts that in line were a drag queen, a few tourists, and a topless woman spray-painted gold. A participant mentioned that they were at a party with the voodoo priestess Sallie Ann Glassman and her boyfriend, the prominent real estate developer Pres Kabacoff: *Only in New Orleans*.

Anecdotes like these abound, and continuously circulate the idea that New Orleanians are unusual, unconventional, and colorful. These stories metadiscursively promote a performative aspect to local culture. New Orleanians are aware of the stereotype of the colorful, quirky city, and often work to maintain it: in their dress, in their social relations, in their speech. There are perhaps no NORMs in New Orleans, in Chambers and Trudgill's (1980) sense. One participant noted that when talking to out-of-towners, he often deliberately uses local talk:

Sometimes I throw local expressions in just so they can ask me about my favorite soapbox topics which is, I guess, first- being Creole and second- being from New Orleans proper (r0)- because you'll find that we're (r0) fiercely proud of our (r0) city.(JH1711)

His comment articulates the idea that New Orleanians are highly self-aware, and proud of local culture. Use of locally-associated linguistic features is part of the performance of localness, one that many discursive genres employ. Bunny Matthews, the creator of the cartoon in Figure 2.2 above, has been writing cartoons in exaggerated Yat English since the early 1970s. His r-less characters "Vic n Nat'ly" are local institutions, and their fictive talk has reinforced perceptions of authentic local language. Other discourses similarly popularize aspects of New Orleans talk. Figure 2.7 shows the illustration accompanying a 1979 newspaper feature describing local linguists' research on New Orleans English. The words wrapping around the figure include r-less *mira* (mirror) and *guhil* (girl).



Figure 2.7 1979 Times-Picayune newspaper feature, on George Reinecke and Helen Malin's New Orleans dialect research.

A 1985 documentary on local dialects (Alvarez and Kolker 1985) remains popular, with portions posted on YouTube and hyper-linked in personal blogs. The depth of public awareness of local speech is made plain by results of an online newspaper poll, which asked readers to send suggestions for what aspects of the city would be most important for a television show to "get right." Figure 2.8 charts responses by type. The bulk of responses, 46%,

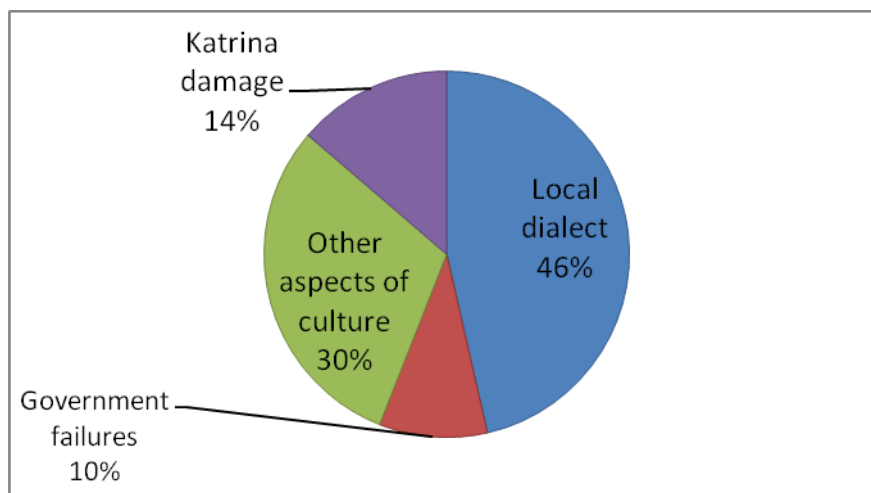


Figure 2.8 2010 online poll results. Percentage of reader responses to “Help HBO’s Treme Get New Orleans Right,” an online New Orleans Times-Picayune reader’s poll April 1, 2010. Data from Cuppy 2010.

claimed that local dialect was the most important element to portray accurately, suggesting that local metalinguistic awareness is robust.

This awareness allows speakers to employ r-lessness and other local features in performances of localness. Many participants mention "turning it on and off" when discussing their use of local speech. Newcomers to the city employ local language, in an agentive simulation of native talk, adopting local vocabulary such as *neutral ground* (*median*), *brake tag*

(*car inspection sticker*) and constructions with *make*, such as *make the block* (*go around the block to find parking*) and *make x age* (*she made one last week*). Metalinguistic awareness of local speech is prominent for both native New Orleanians and new residents.

Metalinguistic awareness is also promoted by institutional actors such as the New Orleans Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, as well as individual businesses, which use local language as a sign of New Orleans' uniqueness.

2.5 SUMMARY

In the eighteenth century, New Orleans was a Francophone, Catholic port town. The Latin influence remains strong enough today that the city is still called the northernmost capital of the Caribbean. After America bought New Orleans as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the city grew as tens of thousands of Anglo Americans, Irish, Germans and Italians, and later in the century, emancipated African Americans emigrated. By the mid-twentieth century, the city became nearly English monolingual, and grew to its largest population of over 600,000. The development of suburbs after World War II and the desegregation of public schools in 1960 led to a massive demographic shift in the city, creating a majority African American population with White enclaves. The city has historically been primarily working class, with a small upper class. Today, with the mechanization of the port and the loss of industry familiar across the country, the city has shifted its economic base to tourism, which has generated low paid, low benefit jobs for the majority of the working class.

The flooding after Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent destruction of many areas of the city has led to less-dense neighborhoods with new residents, as many displaced New Orleanians found themselves unable to return and rebuild. Historical settlement patterns and neighborhoods have thus been profoundly disturbed. In addition to geographic and demographic changes since 2005, a cultural change has taken place since the destruction of the city. Two kinds of affect that play a role in local talk have emerged. The valorization of the city and all things local in response to Katrina is one. The other pre-dates Katrina, but has been intensified since the flooding; the longstanding performative aspect of New Orleanian-ness, including language use. Chapter 6 discusses how r-lessness is entwined with these affects. First, Chapter 3 describes methodology and data collection, and Chapters 4 and 5 present descriptive and statistical analysis of the data.

3.0 DATA AND METHODS

This investigation draws its data from sociolinguistic interviews and oral history projects. I interviewed 56 participants, and, with the gracious permission of the interviewees, transcribed an additional 15 interviews from recent community oral history documentary projects. Additionally, a rapid and anonymous survey (Labov 1966) was conducted to elicit "French Quarter" and "Bourbon Street." Sections 3.1 through 3.5 discuss the fieldwork techniques and equipment used, speaker sample, social and phonetic variables, transcription, coding, and method of analysis.

3.1 FIELDWORK

I have lived in New Orleans since 2009, working in the city and listening to New Orleanians tell stories. New Orleans is famously a city of gracious, gregarious raconteurs, perhaps because cocktails and coffee have been vital to the city for centuries. I wanted to update Reinecke's and Brennan's earlier studies, and I also wanted to get a sense of the city today. I have volunteered at neighborhood organizations and events across the city's cultural landscape, from a community foundation in the flood-ravaged lower Ninth Ward to the Tennessee Williams Literary Festival. I taught at Xavier University and at Nicholls State University, both of which attract students from New Orleans. I have participated in many second line parades on Sunday afternoons. I have

attended church services at historically Creole Catholic churches, and monthly meetings of neighborhood associations. I've loitered in laundromats, grocery stores, bars and public parks. Hours have been spent watching New Orleans-focused programs on local public television, local coverage of Saints football games, and City Council meetings, particularly those public meetings where residents offer comments. I have chatted with policemen and librarians, auto mechanics and car detailers, archivists and activists. I have given presentations on New Orleans language and culture at local high schools and universities, chatting afterwards with students and teachers.

In the course of living in the city, I met many people interested in the project and willing to be interviewed. I collected interviews from 2009-2012, totaling 71, attending to the need to fill sociodemographic cells fairly evenly.

3.1.1 Interviews

The main source of data for this investigation are recorded interviews that roughly followed a Labovian sociolinguistic interview schedule. The questions are attached as Appendix A. While the drawbacks of interviews as specialized speech events are well known (e.g., Wolfson 1976; Schilling-Estes 2008), the benefits remain robust: long stretches of talk and the opportunity to record a reading passage. Participants were almost uniformly loquacious, and each interview encompassed a range of topics, from family history to changes in the city, from church life to Carnival to the high murder rate. Interviews were recorded with a Zoom H4 Handy Recorder attached to a Samson Q7 microphone.

With Labov's "danger of death" elicitation technique in mind, I asked each participant I interviewed *where did you evacuate to for Katrina?*, with the knowledge that nearly every

resident was forced to leave the city in 2005. 23 respondent answered at length, narrating their evacuation experience, their homecoming, and the damage they and others suffered. I had expected that these Katrina narratives would elicit the rapid, less self-conscious speech that Labov discusses. In coding the data, I placed Katrina stories in their own category, to investigate whether Katrina talk would emerge as distinct from other interview topics.

But I found that, far from less self-conscious speech, at the vantage point of at least five years since the flood, Katrina stories had evolved into dramatic set pieces. Speakers often spoke slowly, pausing at suspenseful moments, changing speech volume and tempo, employing unusual syntactic constructions, and evaluating their stories with well-practiced phrases (e.g., "Katrina *took* [1.0] [staring with wide eyes and raised brow at interviewer], that's what she did"). While the effect of Katrina narratives on postvocalic /r/ will be discussed in Chapter 5, I want to note here that the Katrina question elicited more considered responses than other interview topics, a response unlike that which the "danger of death" question is hypothesized to encourage.

After the general chat and Katrina portions of the interview, participants were asked to count aloud from one to five, and name the days of the week and months of the year, following Brennan 1983. They were then asked to read a short passage containing 63 possible instances of postvocalic /r/. Participants included three illiterate speakers who did not read the passage. For these participants, I elicited several of the words from the passage (e.g., *girl*, *grandfather*, *teacher*, *work*) over the course of the interview.

The passage, and the word elicitation, were adapted from Brennan's 1983 protocol. Her passage is based in turn on Labov's "Nobody knows your name" passage about high school basketball, also used by Wolfram (1969). The passage is appended as Appendix B. While it would have been preferable, in terms of reliability, to use Brennan's exact passage, cultural shifts

made some sections distracting to the modern speaker. Thus "[w]hen my turn came, I felt like a girl, but fortunately I did O.K." caused participants to comment on the text. The text was changed to "when my turn came, I felt awkward, but fortunately I did O.K." Similarly, "[m]y father was so proud that he bought me my first glass of beer," in the context of a high school basketball team, caused raised eyebrows. Additionally, many contemporary speakers do not have a father involved in their lives. The text was changed to "my grandfather was so proud that he bought me my first pair of sneakers, in the French Quarter, on Rampart Street." Finally, the team was changed to a girls basketball team, rather than the boys team of the original.

In retrospect, I would make several changes to the text. The addition of four additional *girl* tokens was not ideal, as it is a rather challenging word to pronounce, and one sentence contained two tokens of *girl*. Further, the phrase "that he bought me my first pair" gave many participants pause. Finally, there are 63 instances of postvocalic /r/ in the 12 sentences of the passage, a prodigious number of that rough, snarling letter (in Samuel Johnson's words), which gave the passage an odd, stilted feeling. Despite these infelicities, in the interests of having all participants read the same passage, no further changes were made to the text.

After reading the passage, I told participants that I was researching the different sounds of city neighborhoods, including r-pronunciation, and asked what they thought of local dialects. For some participants, this direct questioning was not of interest and they did not take it up. For other speakers, being asked about New Orleans speech directly spurred extended conversation about local talk. For the speakers that engaged with discussing the city's speech, the direct questioning after the reading passage successfully encouraged metalinguistic commentary.

Interviews varied widely in length, from five hours—for the most voluble and least busy participants, a 95 year-old woman and a 94 year-old man—to fifteen minutes, for an

opportunistic interview with a fellow bench-sitter at a local park. Most interviews, however, were roughly two hours long. While the ideal situation for clear recordings is in the quiet living room of the participant, my main goal was for participants to feel at ease, have fun, and not be inconvenienced. For that reason, I asked most participants where they would like to meet, with the result that 16 interviews took place in people's workplace or on their college campus, 15 took place in cafes or bars, 15 took place in people's homes, and 10 took place in public parks. Fifteen additional interviews were taken from oral history projects recorded in 2011 and 2012 by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and by the I-10 Witness Project. These interviews were similar to the interviews I conducted, in terms of level of formality and type of question, conducted by an outsider and recorded.

3.1.2 Rapid and Anonymous Survey

To supplement the interviews, a rapid and anonymous survey was conducted at lunchtime on a workday in the busy Central Business District, a neighborhood abutting the French Quarter. I, together with two other linguists, Katie Carmichael and Nathalie Dajko, who generously volunteered their time, walked around the neighborhood and approached people, asking *Excuse me, do you know where Pat O'Brien's is?* Pat O'Brien's is a famous bar at the corner of Bourbon and St. Peter streets in the French Quarter, and it is likely that most locals would know it. If the speaker's response was *Bourbon Street*, a follow up question was then asked, *And what neighborhood is that in?* in order to encourage *French Quarter*. The presence of large numbers of tourists and convention-goers in the city may have mitigated any awkwardness about being approached—residents are used to being asked for help finding places.

Unscientific data on age, race, and gender were noted for each respondent. Age was divided into young, middle, and old. Race was divided into African American, Latino, or White, and gender into women and men. 155 tokens were collected in an hour and a half. While we were in a busy part of town at lunch hour, New Orleans is not a large city, so we stopped the survey after it became clear that we were beginning to exhaust the possibilities for new passersby; a few people told us they had recently been approached by someone asking the same question.

Because of the rapidity of the survey, no attempt was made to find out whether respondents were native New Orleanians. Survey results are therefore not representative or valid. The survey is justifiable in that it was designed to assess whether ['kwa tə] remains a common pronunciation heard on the streets of downtown New Orleans. The results of the survey are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 THE SAMPLE

3.2.1 Neighborhoods

New Orleans is divided into 17 political wards, growing from 7 wards at the time of the city's incorporation in 1805 to the current number in 1880, when the town of Carrollton was made part of the city. Some of these wards encompass multiple neighborhoods, stretching from the Mississippi River to the south across town to Lake Pontchartrain to the north. For that reason, no attempt was made to locate speakers from every ward, as not all ward designations are meaningful to residents.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many neighborhood distinctions. Opinions differ on the number of neighborhoods in the city, with one organization proposing 72 neighborhoods (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center 2012). There are larger divisions, encompassing multiple neighborhoods, that are talked about as salient locally, including Uptown, Downtown, Mid-City, the Lakefront, the West Bank, and New Orleans East. Speakers from 21 neighborhoods were included in the sample. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of neighborhoods of origin of speakers in the sample.

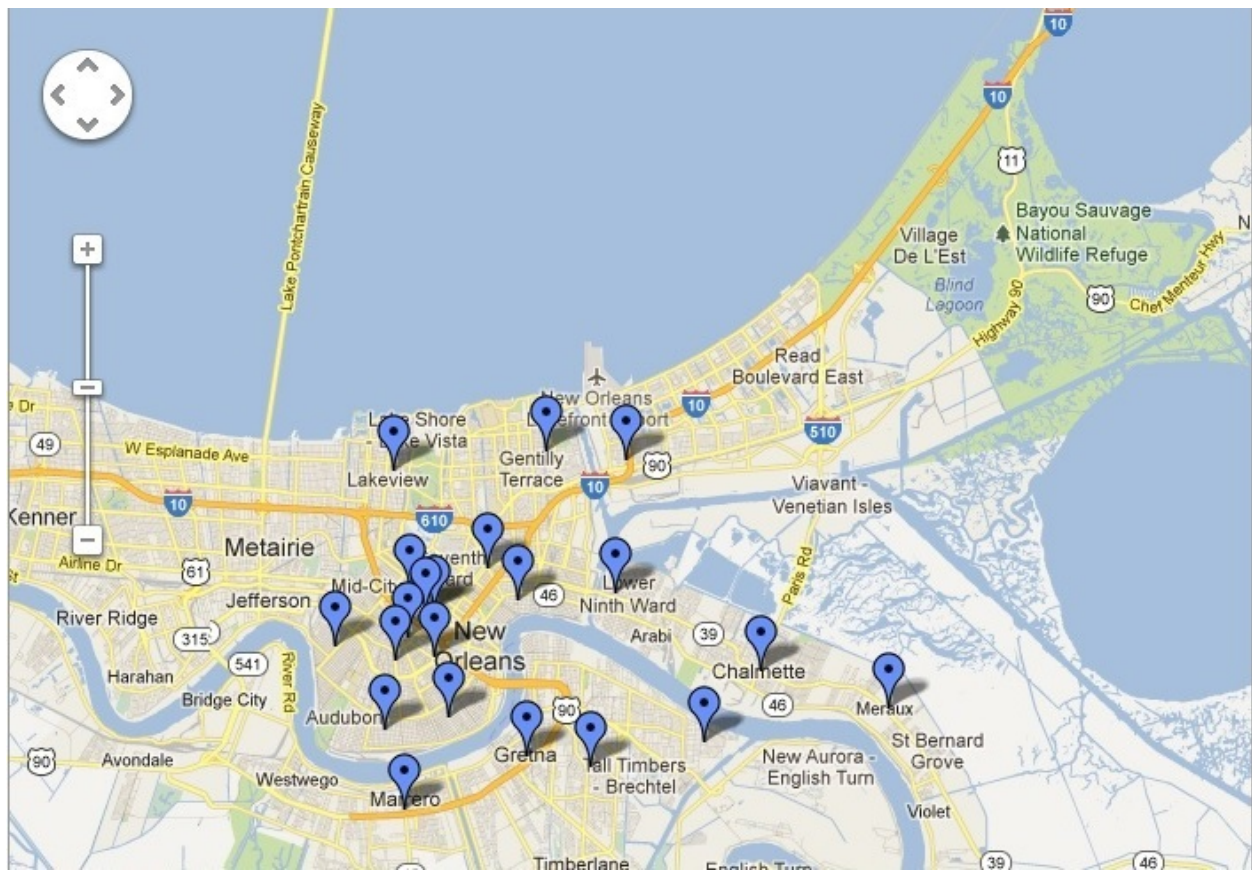


Figure 3.1 Participants' neighborhoods of origin. The Mississippi River is the blue crescent-shaped band curling around "New Orleans." Map by Google Maps.

3.2.2 Contacting Participants

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, I met most participants in the course of living in the city. Friend-of-friend tactics were sometimes used, most importantly in the case of participants I met as a result of Connie Eble graciously putting me in touch with her high school classmates. Meeting with three of those women resulted in four additional participants, including one participant's daughter. Apart from that family, there are three other parent-child sets of speakers, because one participant then suggested talking to their parent or child. I also visited freshman classes at Loyola University, University of New Orleans, and Xavier University, and asked local students if they would be interested in being interviewed. Twelve participants were located this way.

Wishing the sample to be as representative of the city as possible, I also approached barest acquaintances—a carpet repairer, an accountant, a janitor, an archivist, people at parks, two drivers who came to tow my car one day. I explained I was studying local culture and language, and trying to get a sense of the different city neighborhoods. The 14 people I approached in this way were interested in the project and agreed to be recorded. I also tried to locate participants by calling alumni in charge of organizing high school reunions, whose announcements were in the newspaper. One of the people I called answered the phone, and generously consented to be interviewed.

3.3 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS: SOCIAL FACTORS

"I doubt there's anywhere else in this country you could find so many black people who look white or so many white people who sound black." (Robinson 2006, quoted in White-Sustaíta 2012: 46). This quote from a newspaper article, non-scholarly as it is, points to the hybridized nature of New Orleans residents, as discussed in Chapter 2. Dividing people into tidy demographic boxes is a challenge in New Orleans, especially with regard to ethnicity and social class. Determining membership in structural categories is, of course, not challenging only in New Orleans, but everywhere, as people who "belong" to one category may in fact orient to another and draw on linguistic resources associated with other groups. Researcher-imposed categorizations may not be able to explain individual language use. The use of the term *cell* to describe the little box into which a speaker is put for analysis is not inappropriate, as it makes clear that room for individual freedom of movement is precluded in such a structure. And yet, at the level of gross description, sociodemographic categorization is useful. Wearily and warily, participants were assigned to boxes, with at least 3 speakers per cell. Participants were coded for six demographic factors and one psychological factor, cultural orientation, that emerged from the data.

In the interest of replicating Brennan's 1983 study, participants were grouped into three ages: 25 years or less, 26-50, and 51 years and older.

<u>Age</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
18-25	22
26-50	18
51 and over	31
Total	71

Participants were classified as male or female. There is a robust transgender and transsexual population in the city, and an exploration of language use of by these speakers would be of interest. However, many in these communities grew up elsewhere and migrated to the city, so, due to time constraints, I did not try to locate native New Orleanian members who self-identify as outside the conventional gender binary.

<u>Gender</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Female	35
Male	36
Total	71

Participants were asked how they would describe themselves, and examples were given: Sicilian-American, Creole, White, Irish-American, African American. Participants gave only three answers: White, Creole, and African American. Participants often mentioned that they were Irish-American, or had a lot of French blood, or a lot of White blood, but subordinated those identifications to one of the three major classifications. Two of the seven Creoles additionally identified themselves as African Americans, but were categorized as their first self-descriptor, Creole.

<u>Race</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
African American	36
White	28
Creole	7
Total	71

With the many theoretical and methodological problems of assigning social class categories in mind (e.g., reviews in Dodsworth 2010; Mallinson 2010), I initially did not consider class, using level of educational attainment as a rough economic marker. In the interests of making this study comparable to other analyses of variation, however, I decided to calculate a Labovian numeric class score for analysis. I combined education and occupation into a composite category, although I kept education as a separate category as well. For class score, I divided educational attainment and occupation into five and six point indices, respectively. Participants were given scores for each category, which were then combined for a class score. The education index is taken from Labov 2006. Participants' scores ranged from 1 to 6 points, with most falling between 3 and 5.

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Level of Education</u>
1	Grade school or less
2	Some high school
3	High school graduate
4	Some college
5	College graduate
6	Post college education

A five-point occupation scale was used. Labov 2006 uses a six-point scale, subdividing white-collar occupations into two categories, white-collar: proprietor, manager (5), and white-collar: merchant, foreman, sales (4). Within the current speaker sample, my white-collar participants included a residential real estate developer, three office managers, a Latin teacher, and a municipal court worker. I could not discern a justified way to subdivide these speakers. In addition, I included college students in the white-collar (4) rating, a provisional and unsatisfying rating.

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
1	Unemployed / Public assistance
2	Blue collar employee / manual laborer
3	Blue collar business owner / artist
4	White collar/ pink collar employee / college student
5	Professional

The artists in my sample, ten musicians and one comedian, were another troubling classification. I categorized them with blue-collar business owners because, like business owners, they do not draw paychecks from a blue- or white-collar employer, but are responsible for providing a service (in their case entertainment) to the public. Further, the life chances of artists and entertainers are not necessarily improved by an ability to speak any perceived standard language variety, similar to the situation of blue-collar business owners. Finally, artists in New Orleans, like artists in most places, are vaguely valued by society in general for their work but, as people, are not necessarily considered part of a socioeconomic elite.

The range of occupation scores was 1-5. The highest score possible would be 12 points. A speaker who graduated from high school (3) and owned a diner (3), for example, would have a score of 6. A speaker who completed college (5), and worked as an IRS accountant (5), would have a score of 10. There was no speaker with a score lower than 3, so 3 was made the baseline. Looking at the distribution of speakers, and anticipating regression analysis, I made three divisions in scores: 3-7 as working class, 8-10 as middle class, 11-12 as upper middle class. The average score was 8.01, the median was 8.

<u>Class Score (combined score range)</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Working (3-7)	27
Middle (8-10)	27
Upper Middle (11-12)	17
Total	71

Educational attainment was coded twice, alone and on the combined class index category described in 3.3.4 above. As an independent category, speakers were divided into three groups, as I did not have enough speakers in each of the six levels of the index used in the class score. For that reason, I grouped speakers into three categories: those who attended grammar school; those who graduated from high school or attended some college; and those who graduated from college or had postgraduate education.

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Grammar school	4
High school graduate/ some college	31
College graduate/ postgraduate education	36
Total	71

"Where'd you go to school" is one of the first questions middle-class New Orleanians ask upon meeting someone. Some high schools are particularly salient locally. Several older speakers commented that they could identify what high school someone attended based on their speech.

The school asked about is understood to be a private high school, usually parochial:

To clarify, like all the "Where'd you go to high school?" is to private high schools ... they're so old, they're older than any of the public schools cause the public schools would change names and close down and reopen and stuff so they were constant, and also because you had family ties to all of them. Like, you went to that one because your brother went there and your dad went there and your cousins went there, you know, and then maybe on one branch of your family you know they went to a whole 'nother school just cause that's where they've always went. (MCVIII)

In a city of fewer than 400,000, and an even smaller demographic that attend private high schools, the answer also begins the process of finding out the acquaintances that might be held in common. The answer carries a lot of social information, allowing the asker to begin locating her interlocutor within the social geography of the city. As one young participant put it, the answer to "Where'd you go to school?":

It does carry different sort of socioeconomic connotations cause you have... like, if you say "Oh, I go to Newman," most likely you're probably either Jewish or from Uptown so you go "Oh, kind of like a rich Jewish Uptown kid." Or, if you say "Jesuit," Jesuit has kind of that Uptown/ Old Metairie vibe to it, Brother Martin's kind of a mix... so yeah, when someone does say like where they went, it kind of had an attachment, a mentality to it. "Oh, that person's like this."(JB1211)

Because high schools are socially important in New Orleans, whether the school a participant attended was public or private high was coded. Four speakers either did not attend or did not graduate from high school.

<u>High School Type</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Public	47
Parochial or private	20
Did not attend	4
Total	71

The devastation of the city in 2005 made discussion of its future prospects an explicit, and frequent topic of conversation. Every single participant evaluated the condition of the city and its future prospects. Further, the evacuation of the city and the destruction of much of the housing stock, necessitating rebuilding, often at great personal expense, meant that those who did

return to the city made a decision to do so, a remarkable situation. One participant called post-2005 New Orleanians a "100% volunteer population." Every participant discussed the affection and commitment they felt towards the city. As speakers chatted during interviews, it became noticeable that, while all speakers felt positive toward the city, some speakers characterized themselves as *embodying* New Orleanian-ness, while some speakers expressed a more abstract relationship between themselves and the city. For example, the 40 year-old female participant in the following quote takes an impersonal, evaluative stance towards the commitment of those who returned to the city.

I would say for the most part I think people... I think that people made a real decision either to stay or to go. And if you were going to stay, you- it's like you were all in, you know?(JHVII)

Another speaker, a 27 year-old man, voices the same idea, and employs a similar poker metaphor, but phrases his evaluation more personally, even correcting himself after using the third person.

I think it's [Katrina] a game changer- either you love it [New Orleans] or you hate it. If you don't want to be here, we don't want you, hit the road... I think the people that came back really want to be here you know, whether it's any neighborhood they made the commitment. What am I saying 'they', WE all made the commitment, we're not going to shrivel and die like everyone wants us to do, we're going to double our efforts and basically like a casino double down. (NCVIA)

Both speakers are proud to be New Orleanian, but the second speaker, in this quote and throughout his talk, frames himself in relation to the city in highly personal terms. These two kinds of discursive stances, or orientations, toward the city and other topics occurred in most interviews. Also noticeable was how some speakers discussed New Orleans and Hurricane

Katrina within a larger context, sometimes comparing Katrina to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, or to the 2006 and 2011 tsunamis in Thailand and Japan, and expressing sympathy for the suffering caused, while other speakers restricted their Katrina evaluations to personal and family memories. Here, the 55 year-old female participant employs first person and possessive pronouns.

'Cause I had to call my radio station and talk about my mayor (r0) too. 'Cause we had people working at Charity Hospital, and you know the first floor (r0) went under (r0). It went under (r0). We don't know, we can't get nothing in, ain't nothing coming out, you understand (r0)? And we don't know how the people doing at Charity Hospital, the ones that worked there (r0), even the ones that was sick. So you think we going to be right?(AL1212)

This participant is deliberately crafting a dramatic story, which she heightens with her syntactic choices, and the first person adds to the suspense of the story ("we don't know, we can't get nothing in"). But the use of the possessive in "my radio station" and "my mayor," as well as the final evaluative "so you think we going to be right?" echo the personal orientation to larger social structures expressed by the speaker quoted above discussing people returning after the storm "if you don't want to be here, we don't want you." In contrast, other speakers framed personal experiences, whether of Katrina or of other topics like racism, local dialect, or religion within a wider, historical, less-personal context.

Many studies have drawn distinctions between, loosely, locally focused and more externally oriented speakers, (Labov 1963; Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999; Eckert 2000; Hazen 2002; Dodsworth 2005, 2008), although many different terms are employed, according to the nuances and circumstances emphasized in the communities under study.

In discussing the maintenance or loss of historical dialect features in Ocracoke and Smith Island, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes use Henning Andersen's (1988) work in historical dialectology. Andersen discusses *endocentric* and *exocentric* communities. The two types are described as inward-looking communities focused on their own internal norms versus outward-looking communities orienting to supralocal outside norms (Schilling-Estes 2002: 79, Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999: 510). Schilling-Estes and Wolfram suggest that differences in the preservation or attrition of dialect features on the two islands may be due to the endocentric orientation of Smith Island and the exocentric orientation of Ocracoke. Schilling-Estes and Wolfram do not detail how they determine the exocentric/endocentric distinction. Further, their analysis pertains to the community taken as a whole, or fractions of it (e.g., the "poker group"), rather than individual speakers.

Hazen (2002) and Dodsworth (2005, 2008), on the other hand, discuss individual orientations that influence linguistic patterns. Hazen uses the terms *local-identity* and *expanded-identity* to discuss the cultural identity of speakers, which he describes as "the degree of attachment to life outside the county, along with educational and career aspirations" (Hazen 2002: 242). Hazen determined the categories based on impressionistic discourse analysis (Hazen, p.c.), and presents results from logistic regression analysis that suggest that cultural identity has a significant effect on patterns of language variation.

Dodsworth (2005, 2008), using C. Wright Mill's *The Sociological Imagination*, argues that differences in variation can be examined through distinctions between what she calls *consciousness types*. She notes that these distinctions "both emerged from the data and were shaped by Mill's coordinates" (Dodsworth 2008: 46). Dodsworth emphasizes that these types are

heuristic devices rather than facts about speakers; she nonetheless argues that linguistic variation can be explained in part by recourse to the types or perspectives she attributes to speakers.

With the previous studies in mind, speakers in this study were categorized as locally-oriented or externally-oriented. Speakers were categorized through discourse analysis. Speakers were categorized as locally-oriented if they primarily brought up local topics through the lens of personal experience, and took a strong New Orleans-centric perspective across topics (e.g., *everything- everything was born in New Orleans*), and used first person when speaking of the city as a whole (e.g., *We made the commitment; call my radio station and talk about my mayor*), and specifically discussed themselves as embodying New Orleanian-ness (e.g., *I may exaggerate the accent just like to- like just to hold on to it - wave your flag, you know?*).

Speakers were categorized as externally-oriented if they brought up non-local topics and used a less-personal, more evaluative lens (e.g., *NPR keeps doing big pieces on that and it's mind-boggling* [discussing student loan debt outpacing credit card debt]). Externally-oriented speakers also used less first person in talking about New Orleans (e.g. *The Seventh Ward was well known to be a Creole community- skilled workers masons pipefitters, plumbers. They passed it down through the generations*). Externally-oriented speakers also situated topics in a more regional, national, or historical context (e.g, *I think port cities tend to have some similar [accents]- and so it's not twangy but, like, it makes you think of a plantation, right [laughter]- and so you do see a little bit of that*).

<u>Cultural Orientation</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Locally-oriented	33
Externally-oriented	38
Total	71

Historically, distinctions between ethnic groups have been strong. One LAGS speaker (the linguist George Reinecke), a 58 year-old White man interviewed in 1983, stated that "this is a town where your origin determines your job," going on to note that Italians were grocers—he recalls them as *dago shops*, Irish owned saloons, Germans were bakers and Chinese owned laundries. Reinecke recalls being told to *go down to the German's* when going to the bakery, and recalls the expression *pass by the Chinaman's* to refer to picking up laundry (LAGS audio file INF657Z 3.13).

A 70 year-old participant in the current study discussed how churches were built for specific ethnic groups, and that this had an impact on the city's speech.

I guess speaking of language in New Orleans also gets back to ethnicity, and the whole history of the enclaves of the different groups. Like Uptown, where Blessed Seelos is and St. Mary's Assumption and St. Alphonsus- well, they had three churches right across the street: German, French and Irish. And you know ...all the churches were built for a certain ethnic group. And the Irish didn't like the Italians and I guess the Italians didn't like the Irish, but then what happened in the generation above me, pretty much so, is that there was a lot of intermarriage between the Irish and Italians probably more so than the others [ethnic groups], and, um, that wasn't really happily looked upon by the generation above that.(SR1212V)

For this participant and the LAGS informant, as well as in academic scholarship, ethnic distinctions are recalled as a fact of New Orleans life. As I began coding data, I kept a category for ethnicity, with the idea that it would be interesting to see whether, for example, people of

predominantly Italian descent spoke differently than those of Irish or German or French descent.

However, I had to abandon ethnicity as a category because all of the current participants discussed ethnicity in syncretic terms, pointing to their families' generations of mixed ethnic heritage. When asked to describe their ethnic heritage, a common response was along the lines of "Irish, French, Italian, German, a whole mix. My grandmother was from Honduras." One participant, a 65 year-old, argued that ethnic groups were irrelevant in the city:

[W]e've never had ethnic groups. We do not have ethnic groups here. You have such a diversity of cultures that have been here for— and when I say a diversity of cultures I do not mean ethnic groups separated out into their neighborhoods. I'm talking about a diversity of culture that probably is one of the only cities in which you actually had that gumbo, that mix. Everybody else kind of went to their little barrio or ghetto or whatever you want to call it. In New Orleans everybody just mixed up together. (DP117)

The geographer Richard Campanella claims that New Orleans "is arguably the oldest genuinely multicultural city in the nation" (Campanella 2006: 379). Working from census data, Campanella notes that New Orleans is much less ethnically diverse today, but that the diversity that once characterized the city "lives on in the ethos of the city, the built environment, the food and music, *in the bloodlines* and group memories of its citizens" (Campanella 2006: 203, emphasis added). While the city is now less ethnically diverse, in the sense of having a shrinking proportion of foreign born and first generation emigrants attending separate churches and living in specific neighborhoods, the population is more ethnically diverse in the sense that New Orleanians are primarily of heavily mixed ethnic ancestry, having intermarried over time.

The participants in this study reflected this fact, orienting not to specific ethnicities, but rather to New Orleanian-ness. Because of this lack of saliency for contemporary participants, ethnicity was not included for analysis.

3.4 PHONETIC AND DISCOURSE VARIABLES

While r-realization lies on a spectrum with many articulatory and phonetic possibilities (cf. Lawson, Scobbie, Stuart-Smith, in press), postvocalic /r/ was coded perceptually as either present or absent, following other studies, including Labov (1966), Wolfram (1969), Baranowski (2006), and Becker (2009). While Myhill (1988) and Miller (1998) found an effect of dissimilation in words with more than one /r/, Irwin and Nagy (2010) did not, and the current study coded both /r/s in words like *murder*.

To confirm the reliability of coding, two additional listeners coded 126 tokens. The overlap in perceptual coding between the three coders was 89%. Tokens were coded as interview chat, Katrina narrative, word recitation or reading passage. The word recitation consisted of participants counting from 1-5, and naming the days of the week and months of the year, with a total of eight tokens of postvocalic /r/. The reading passage is described in Section 3.1.1 above.

<u>Type of Talk</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
General interview	71
Reading passage	35
Katrina narrative	23
Word recitation	19

Tokens were coded for following environment and word position as follows.

<u>Following Environment</u>	<u>Example</u>
Word-final, following pause	"care."
Word final, following consonant	"care for"
Word final, following vowel	"care about"
Morpheme-final, following consonant in same syllable	"cares"
Morpheme-final, following consonant in next syllable	"careful"
Morpheme-internal, following consonant	"Rampart," "murder"

Tokens were coded for preceding vowel, according to the following classes (from Wells 1982).

<u>Word Class</u>	<u>Description</u>
BEER	high front tense
BEAR	mid front tense
BOOR	high back tense
BAR	low central or back
BORE	mid back tense
BURR	schwa/ schwar
FIRE	up and front gliding diphthong

Syllable stress was coded as stressed or unstressed.

<u>Stress</u>	<u>Example</u>
Stressed	"pair," "purpose"
Unstressed	"mother," "particular"

Words were coded as lexical (open class) or function word (closed class).

<u>Word Type</u>	<u>Example</u>
Lexical word	"Rampart," "murder"
Function word	"her," "for"

Syllables were coded as monosyllabic, disyllabic, or three or more syllables.

<u>Number of Syllables</u>	<u>Example</u>
Monosyllabic	"car"
Disyllabic	"mother"
More than two syllables	"particularly"

3.5 SUMMARY

Data were collected between 2009 and 2012. 71 participants from 21 neighborhoods were interviewed. In addition to interview data, a reading passage, word recitation, and Katrina

narratives were elicited. The data were coded for six linguistic factors: type of talk, following environment and word position, preceding vowel, syllable stress, word class (open or closed), and number of syllables. Seven social factors were coded: age, gender, race, social class (using a combined occupation and educational experience index), educational attainment, high school type, and cultural orientation (local or external). Ethnic background was discarded as a factor because of its lack of salience in New Orleans. In total, 5392 tokens were coded. The R programming environment (R Core Team 2012), was used for statistical and logistic regression analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

A rapid and anonymous survey was completed to gauge whether the traditional r-less pronunciation of *French Quarter* remains the standard. 155 responses were collected. Chapter 4 briefly presents the results of the rapid survey.

4.0 FRENCH QUARTER RAPID AND ANONYMOUS SURVEY

This chapter analyzes the results of a rapid and anonymous survey designed to elicit the term *French Quarter* from pedestrians in the business district of New Orleans. *Quarter* would not ordinarily be considered an appropriate word to use as a diagnostic for r-pronunciation because it may be subject to a dissimilating effect caused by the presence of two *r*'s in a word. It is also inappropriate because, as an iconic term, New Orleanians' pronunciation of *French Quarter* may preserve an older r-less pronunciation that does not reflect participants' speech in other contexts. For example, Baranowski (2006) excludes tokens of *Charleston* from his analysis of Charleston, South Carolina, because otherwise r-ful speakers often pronounce the city's name r-lessly. A survey of *French Quarter* (the subject of the survey was the final /r/ in *Quarter*) was undertaken because, as in Charleston, the word has historically been pronounced r-lessly. If an r-ful pronunciation now predominates, there is then evidence of a major shift toward r-fulness in New Orleans.

With this aim in mind, 155 responses to a rapid and anonymous survey were collected in the Central Business District at lunchtime in a single afternoon in April 2012. As described in Chapter 3, the question *Pardon me, do you know where Pat O'Brien's is?* was used to elicit the response *the French Quarter*. Pat O'Brien's is a locally well-known bar on Bourbon street in the French Quarter, and it is likely that most locals are familiar with it. If the speaker's response was

Bourbon Street, a follow-up question was then asked, *And what neighborhood is that in?* to encourage a *French Quarter* response.

Unscientific data on age, race, and gender were recorded for each respondent (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Rapid and anonymous survey demographic information.

Demographic Category	% of Total (N)
Age	
Younger	28 (44)
Middle	45 (69)
Older	27 (42)
Total	100% (155)
Gender	
Female	36 (56)
Male	64 (99)
Total	100% (155)
Race	
White	54 (85)
Black	42 (66)
Latino	4 (4)
Total	100% (155)

4.1 RESULTS

61% of responses were r-less (91/149, with 6 failures to elicit *French Quarter*)⁶. Figure 4.1 shows responses by age group. Middle-aged speaker responses were more r-less (68%) than

⁶ In contrast, /-r/ in *Bourbon* was nearly categorical; of 113 tokens of *Bourbon*, all but a single token were r-ful. This result for *Bourbon* is unsurprising given that r-lessness is disfavored morpheme-internally (c.f. Irwin & Nagy 2010: 257).

older (63%) and younger (50%) speakers. This is in contrast to interview data collected for this study, where older speakers are the least r-ful. This result may be skewed because there were

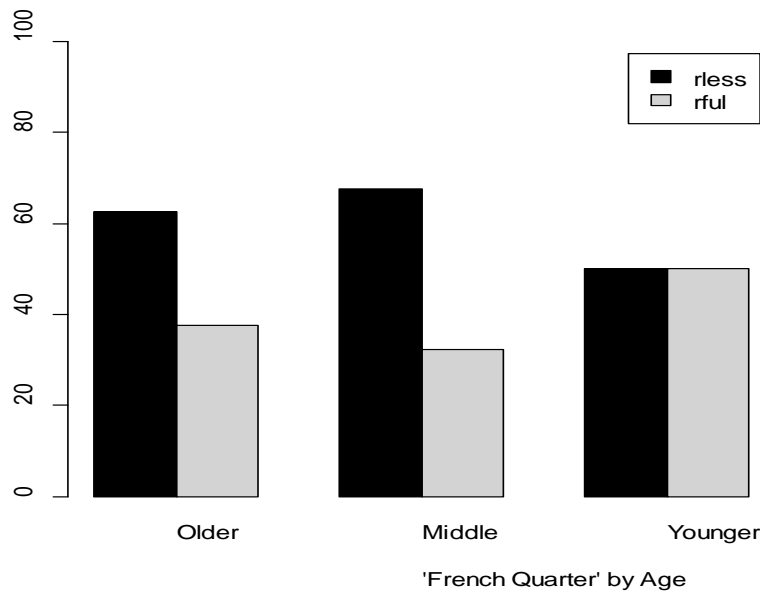


Figure 4.1. Rapid survey r-variation in "French Quarter" by age.

nearly twice as many middle-aged speakers surveyed than either of the other two age groups, and because of the impressionistic determination of age. It is clear, however, that older and middle-aged speakers taken together vocalize the final /r/ in *Quarter* more consistently than younger speakers.

Table 4.2. R-variation by age group.

	Older	% -r (N) Middle	Younger
r-less	63 (25)	68 (44)	50 (22)
r-ful	37 (15)	32 (21)	50 (22)

Figure 4. 2 shows r-pronunciation by race. Immediately apparent is the presence of the *Quarter* alternative *Quarters* (creating a morpheme final rather than word final environment) for

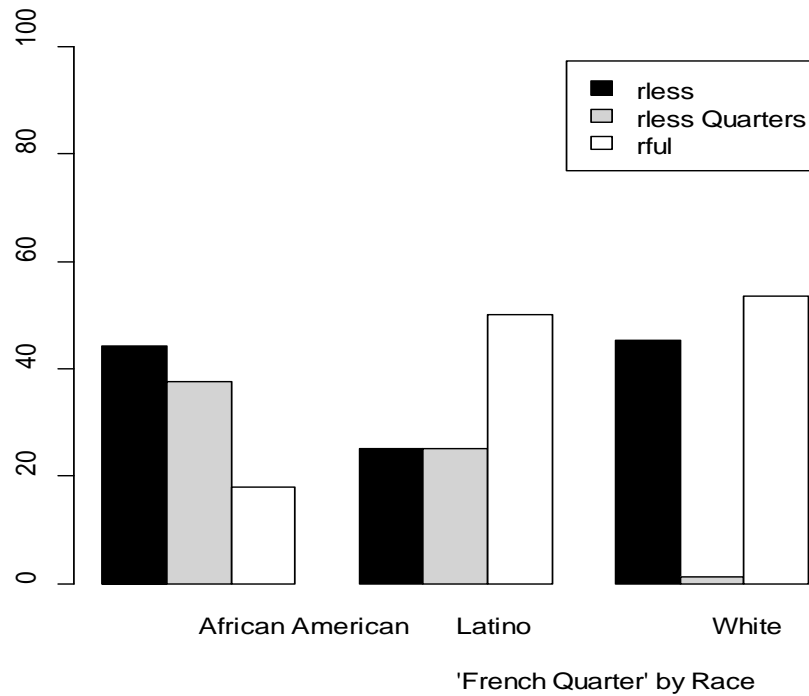


Figure 4.2. Rapid survey r-variation by race.

African Americans, and it's near categorical absence for Whites. While African Americans and White speakers produced r-less *Quarter* in nearly the same proportion (44% vs. 45%, Table 4.3), another 38% of African American responses (N=23) were productions of *Quarter* as r-less *Quarters*, while only a single White speaker produced that form. Pluralized *Quarters* is a

Table 4.3. R-variation by race.

	% -r (N)		
	African American	White	Latino
r-less	44 (27)	45 (38)	25 (1)
r-less Quarters	38 (23)	1 (1)	25 (1)
r-ful	18 (11)	54 (45)	50 (2)

traditional variant (e.g., *I'm going to the Quarters*), which used to be common among all New Orleanians. Today, it remains robust within the African American community, but is heard only from older White residents. Of the four Latino respondents, two were r-ful, one produced r-less *Quarter*, and one produced r-less *Quarters*. Because of the small number of Latino respondents, only African American and White respondents were included in the cross-tabulation of age and race (Figure 4.3).

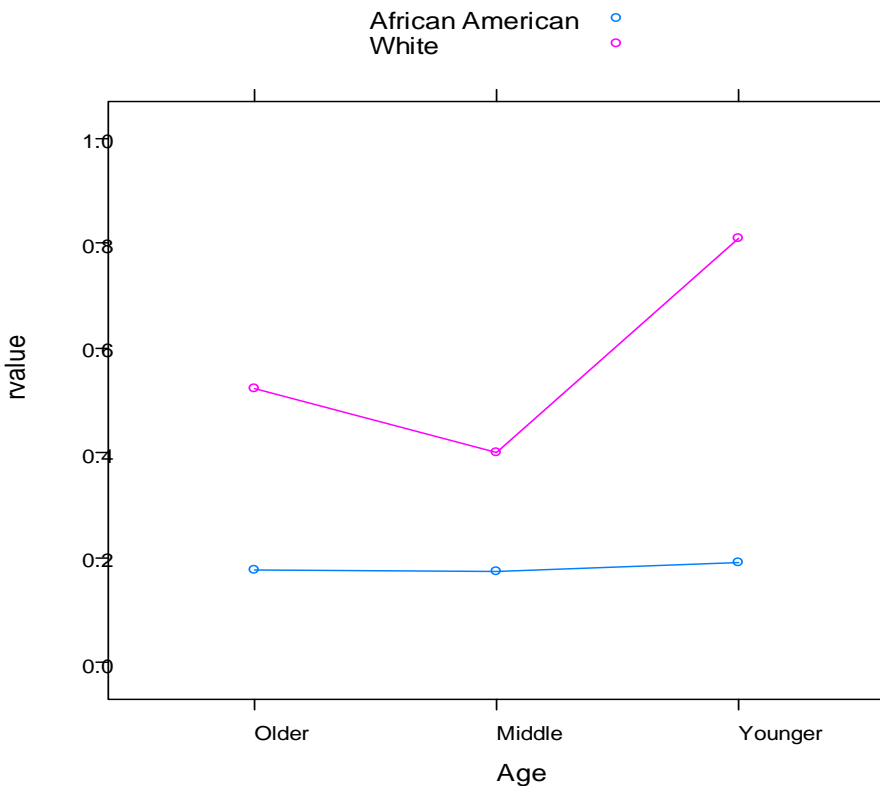


Figure 4.3. Rapid survey r-variation by age and race. 1.0 is 100% r-ful.

Figure 4.3 makes clear that African American respondents in the survey were consistently r-less across the three age groups, showing no change in apparent time, while younger White speakers produced significantly more r-ful tokens of *Quarter* (81%, N= 17) than older and middle-aged White speakers. This is surprising because the final /ɹ/ in *French Quarter*, like the /ɹ/ in *Mardi Gras*, is often vocalized, even among speakers who are otherwise predominantly r-ful. The strong tendency towards r-fulness of younger White speakers suggests that the consonantal realization of postvocalic /-r/ in this context has grown dominant within this demographic. This suggestion is conjectural because the survey depended on passersby on downtown streets on a workday afternoon. The large number of hotels and office buildings in the area may have caused a disproportionate number of respondents to have been more-educated young White professionals and less-educated young African American service workers, resulting in stronger distinctions between race and age groups than exists between comparably-educated groups.

Finally, Figure 4.4 shows that the survey found little difference according to gender.

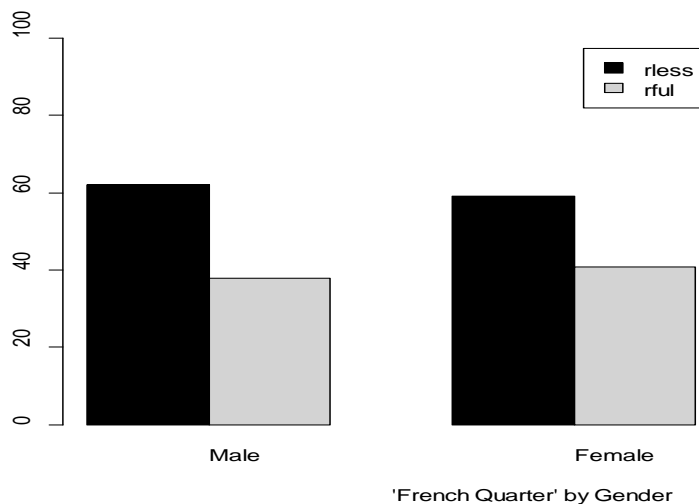


Figure 4.4. Rapid survey r-variation by gender.

Women produced r-less *Quarter* in 59% of responses, and men in 62% of responses (Table 4.4), with no significant interactions for race or age.

Table 4.4. R-variation by gender.

	% -r (N)	
	Female	Male
r-less	59 (32)	62 (59)
r-ful	41 (22)	38 (36)

4.2 SUMMARY

The rapid and anonymous survey results suggest that the r-less pronunciation of *Quarter* remains robust for African American respondents of all ages and for White respondents middle-aged and older. Younger White respondents pronounced *Quarter* r-lessly at a dramatically lower rate than middle-aged and older white respondents, while younger African American respondents had nearly identical rates of r-lessness in comparison to older and middle-aged African Americans. Further, the plural form of r-less *Quarters*, a traditional variant on *Quarter*, remains common among African American respondents of all ages but was nearly absent in White responses. The gender of the respondent appeared to have no effect on the pronunciation of *Quarter*. The following chapter presents the analysis of interview, reading passage, and word recitation data.

5.0 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: WHO, WHEN, WHERE

Reinecke's 1951 study found a rate of approximately 92% r-lessness among children and adults. Thirty-two years later, Brennan's 1983 study found an average of 63% r-lessness. Thirty years after Brennan, the current study finds that constriction in /-r/ has continued to spread in New Orleans. Across the sample of 5392 tokens from 71 speakers, 39% were r-less (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Overall r-variation.

/-r/	% (N)
r-less	39 (2079)
r-ful	61 (3313)
Total	100 (5392)

In the current study, phonological factors had the strongest effects on realizations of /-r/. As described in Chapter 3, tokens were coded for preceding vowel, following environment, stress, word type (closed or open class), and number of syllables. Tokens were also coded according to type of talk; interview chat, Katrina narratives, reading passage, and word recitation. The factors that most favor constricted /-r/ are the reading passage and word recitation, stressed syllables, high vowels and stressed schwa, and morpheme internal word position.

Six external, social factors were included in the analysis: age, gender, race, socioeconomic class, educational attainment, and cultural orientation. The oldest and the least educated participants were most likely to be r-less. Race, gender, and socioeconomic class showed variation, but did not reach statistical significance. Locally oriented participants were much more likely to be r-less than their externally oriented counterparts across demographic groups.

This chapter presents a quantitative analysis of the data, investigating which participants are r-less, and in what contexts. Section 5.1 builds a statistical model using logistic regression to test hypotheses about and estimate the effects of the factors conditioning r-variation. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 provide a descriptive analysis of the data in terms of internal linguistic and external social factors, and compare the current findings with Brennan's 1983 results. Section 5.4 discusses the quantitative analysis, and Section 5.5 summarizes the findings.

5.1 LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The "lmer" package in the R statistical software environment (R Core Team 2012) and Rbrul (Johnson 2009b) were used for the analysis. Rbrul is an interface to R that runs regression functions and fits mixed models. Because the variable of interest is binary— r-lessness vs. r-fulness— logistic regression (as opposed to linear regression) was used. Speakers contributed more than one response (i.e., there are 5392 /-r/ tokens in the data, but only 71 speakers, so there are repeated measures of the same speaker), so an analysis including random effects was used. Random effects are what some independent factors, including the repeated measures of the same speaker, are called. Daniel Johnson (2009a) notes that individual words are also a random effect

because every word is "nested" within its same lexical set. Because the data include multiple tokens from each speaker, and multiple tokens of the same word (from the reading passage and word recitation), both speaker and word were included as random effects. Because of the presence of random effects, a mixed effects model was used. Mixed effects models permit the use of both fixed effects, like preceding vowel or race, and random effects, like individual speaker.

Based on initial data exploration, some of the external factors did not appear to be significant. For extra caution, however, all factors were initially included, except for private vs. public high school type, which was clearly an uninformative categorization (described in Section 5.3). The independent factor groups are listed below.

- 1 Preceding vowel
- 2 Stressed/ Unstressed syllable
- 3 Following environment
- 4 Lexical/ function word
- 5 Number of syllables in word
- 6 Type of talk
- 7 Age
- 8 Gender
- 9 Race
- 10 Education
- 11 Class group
- 12 Cultural Orientation

Following Starkweather (2010), I first ran a *null model* to use as an initial baseline against which to judge the subsequent addition of independent factors. The null model contains only the dependent variable of interest and the random effects. So the null model for this analysis used the r-value (r1 or r0) for the dependent variable, and speaker and word as random effects. The goodness of model fit can be assessed in a number of ways. The residual deviance, or G^2 ,

which is the log-likelihood analog of Chi-squared (Johnson 2008: 162) can be looked at; the closer to zero, the better the model fits the data. For the null model, deviance was 3799. Log likelihood can also be looked at; the closer to zero, the better that fit. For the null model, log likelihood was (-1899). Finally, analyses of variation can be run between two models, to see if the chi-square differential reaches significance (the $p \leq .05$ threshold). The null model provided the baseline against which to judge other models.

For the next step, a full model, including all internal and external factors, was run. For full model, deviance was lower (3467), as was log likelihood (-1734), than for the null model. I then ran an analysis of variance between the full and null models to ensure that the data were not attributable simply to chance variation. The full model was a better fit than the null model (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Analysis of variance comparison between null and full models. The AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) are additional methods for assessing goodness of model fit. Lower figures for both are better, so that the BIC of 3709 for the full model is evidence of a better model of the data than the BIC of 3824 for the null model (Starkweather 2010).

Model	Df	AIC	BIC	logLik	Chisq	Chi Df	Pr(>Chisq)
Null (no factor groups, random effects only)	3	3804	3824	-1899			
Full (all factor groups)	29	3518	3709	-1730	338	26	< .001

Next, the full model was run against models subtracting each factor group individually. This procedure allowed me to test the hypotheses about the factors that had emerged as possibly

significant in initial exploratory cross-tabulations. If the analysis of variation between a model with a particular factor and the full model yielded a probability value of .05 or less, then it was considered as significant and included as a factor. Type of talk emerged as the most significant phonological factor ($p < .001$), followed by preceding vowel ($p < .001$), shown in Table 5.3

Table 5.3 ANOVA probability values for individual factor groups.

Factor Group	Pr>Chisq
Type of talk	< .0001
Preceding vowel	< .0001
Stressed/unstressed	< .0001
Following environment	< .0001
Cultural orientation	< .0001
Education	.0008
Age	.02
Lexical/functional word	.06
Class	.06
Number of syllables	.18
Race	.3
Gender	.3

Of the social factors, cultural orientation ($p < .0001$), educational attainment ($p = .0008$) and age ($p = .02$) were confirmed as significant, while socioeconomic class group ($p = .06$), race ($p = .3$) and gender ($p = .3$) did not reach significance.

The non-predictive factor groups were removed and a new test was run to compare a significant factor-only model against the full model. The analysis of variance between the models is shown in Table 5.4 The difference between models failed to reach significance ($p = .2$). However, the smaller model, with significant factors only, was retained because it offers the

same explanatory power; the log likelihood value was nearly equal, the deviance for both models was 3460, and the simpler model resulted in lower BIC and AIC values.

Table 5.4 Analysis of variance between full and significant-factors only models.

Model	Df	AIC	BIC	logLik	Chisq	Chi Df	Pr(>Chisq)
Significant factors only	24	3515	3673	-1733			
Full (all factor groups)	29	3518	3709	-1730	6.6	5	0.2

Because cultural orientation had a pronounced effect on younger speakers' realizations of /-r/ (described in Section 5.3), an interaction between age and orientation was added to the significant factors only model. No other interactions were significant. Table 5.5 shows that

Table 5.5. Analysis of variance between significant factors only and significant factor plus interaction models.

Model	Df	AIC	BIC	logLik	Chisq	Chi Df	Pr(>Chisq)
Significant factors only	23	3514	3665	-1734			
Sig. factors + age * orientation interaction	25	3510	3675	-1730	7	2	0.02

adding an interaction for age and orientation made a small improvement over the model without the interaction, and made a small reduction in residual deviance. The model that included

significant factors with an interaction for age and orientation was the best fit for the data. Other models collapsing factors within groups yielded no improvements in model fit, so the significant factor groups were left complete, with the exception of removing [ai] from preceding vowel due to the small number of tokens.

The factor groups for the best statistical model are given in Table 5.6. Factor groups are arranged in descending order of significance, so that type of talk is listed first ($p < .001$) and the interaction for age and orientation is listed last ($p = .03$). Results are presented in Rbrul format, which includes both the log odds for each factor and the factor weight. Rbrul factor weights are centered, rather than the uncentered weights used in Varbrul. Centered factor weights are preferable because they do not depend on the relative number of tokens within each factor group, unlike uncentered weights (Johnson 2009a). Log odds (also called logit) are the logarithmic transformation of the odds ratio. The greater the odds, that is to say, the higher the probability of an outcome (in this case r-lessness), the greater the log odds. A log odds of 0 is the equivalent of chance probability, .5 or 50%. A log odds of (-1.1) is equivalent to a 25% probability, and a log odds of positive 1.1 is equivalent to 75% probability.

For example, looking at Table 5.6, a postvocalic /-r/ in an unstressed syllable has a log odds of 0.7, which corresponds to a roughly 67% probability of being r-less. A postvocalic /-r/ in a stressed syllable has a log odds of (-0.7), corresponding to a roughly 33% probability of being r-less. The factor weights listed in the table are coefficients calculated by converting the log odds to a range from 1 to 0. Factor weights essentially convert the log odds to a probability. The factor weight for an /-r/ in a stressed syllable is .34, approximately the equivalent of a log odds of (-0.7).

Table 5.6. Statistically significant factors groups.

Factor group	Factor	% r-less	N	Log odds	Factor Weight
Type of talk (p < .0001)	Katrina narrative	62	255	0.2	.56
	Interview	55	2340	1.1	.74
	Word recitation	31	158	-0.8	.31
	Reading passage	22	2639	-0.5	.37
Stress (p < .0001)	Unstressed	48	2025	0.7	.66
	Stressed	33	3367	-0.7	.34
Preceding Vowel (p < .0001)	[e]	49	261	-0.4	.41
	[a]	47	674	1.2	.77
	[o]	40	995	0.6	.64
	[ə]	36	3056	-0.4	.31
	[i]	35	255	-0.1	.47
	[u]	22	135	-0.7	.33
Following Context (p < .0001)	Morpheme-final, _C (e.g. <i>scholarship</i>)	51	160	0.8	.69
	Word-final, _C (e.g. <i>car door</i>)	51	1303	0.3	.59
	Word-final, _. (e.g. <i>car.</i>)	46	489	0.4	.59
	Morpheme-final, _C (e.g. <i>cars</i>)	40	365	-0.2	.45
	Word-final, _V (e.g. <i>for it</i>)	40	762	-0.3	.43
	Morpheme-internal, _C (e.g. <i>girl</i>)	29	2313	-1.0	.27
Cultural Orientation (p < .0001)	Local	63	2297	1.7	.84
	External	20	3095	-1.7	.16
Educational Attainment (p < .0001)	Grammar	72	361	0.3	.58
	High School	62	1279	1.3	.80
	University	27	3752	-1.6	.16
Age (p = .02)	Older	54	2663	1.1	.75
	Middle	29	1361	-0.4	.32
	Younger	18	1368	-0.8	.41
Interaction-Age x Orientation (p = .03)	Local; younger	65	226	0.1	.53
	Local; older	64	1671	-0.9	.28
	Local; middle	59	400	0.8	.69
	External; older	37	992	0.9	.72
	External; middle	16	961	-0.8	.31
	External; younger	9	1142	-0.1	.48

This section has described the construction of a statistical model used to analyze which factors are most likely to constrain or promote r-lessness. Because of the binary nature of the dependent variable (r-less vs. r-ful), logistic regression was used. A mixed effects model was used to take in to account the random effects of individual speaker and individual word. The model that best fit the data included both linguistic factors: type of talk, syllable stress, preceding vowel and following context, and social factors: cultural orientation, educational attainment, and age. Because younger speakers who are locally oriented are dramatically more r-less than supra-locally oriented younger speakers, a factor combining age and cultural orientation was added, improving the explanatory power of the statistical model.

The next two sections explore the individual factor groups affecting /-r/. Linguistic factors are presented in section 5.2, and social factors are presented in section 5.3.

5.2 LINGUISTIC RESULTS

This section gives an overview of r-variation within the context of linguistic factors. The most significant predictor of r-fulness was type of talk. The four types of talk were Katrina narratives, general interview talk, word recitation, and a reading passage. Figure 5.1 shows percentages of r-realization by type of talk, averaged across all speakers. 95% confidence intervals for each context were calculated by finding individual means for each speaker and then comparing the individual means to the grand mean of all speakers. Barplots showing these confidence intervals for each linguistic and social factor are included as Appendix C.

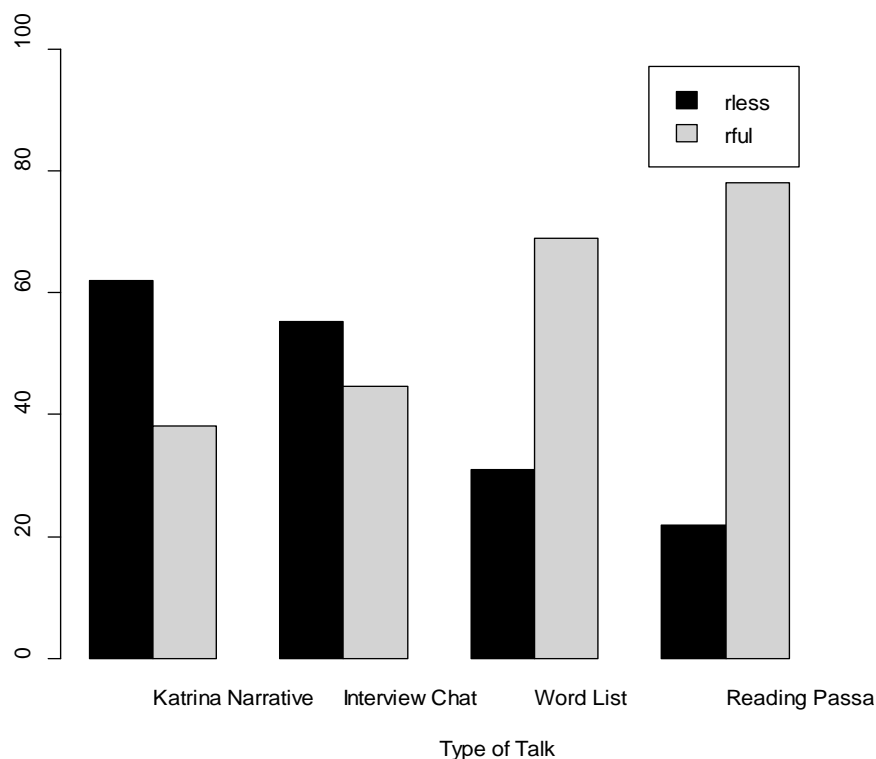


Figure 5.1 R-variation by type of talk.

Within type of talk, Katrina narrative are most r-less (61%, N= 158), followed by interview talk (55%, N= 1296), word recitation (31%, N = 49), and reading passage (22%, N = 576). The low rate of r-lessness in the word recitation and reading tasks is expected, but several issues need to be addressed. First, not all of the participants were recorded for each type of talk. 23 of 71 participants told a Katrina story, 35 read the passage, and 19 recited the word list (the numbers 1-5, days of the week and months of the year). The 15 speakers whose interviews were transcribed from the I-10 Witness Project (2012) and New Orleans Video Access Center (2012) oral history documentaries were included only in interview talk.

While all participants I interviewed were asked to read the passage, some preferred not to, and some did not wish to perform the word recitation. Word lists and recitation are typically

considered to elicit the most careful speech, and would be predicted to elicit the most consonantal /-r/. In the current study, the reading passage was not read by the least educated speakers, some of whom preferred not to read, so that the reading passage data are skewed toward more r-ful speakers than the word recitation.

The subset of participants who told Katrina narratives, on the other hand, is fairly evenly distributed across demographic groups: 12 women and 11 men; 9 African Americans, 12 Whites, 2 Creoles; 13 college graduates, 10 high school graduates. R-lessness is most prevalent in the Katrina narratives, a higher proportion than occurred in general interview talk. From a Labovian perspective, a higher rate of more vernacular speech is expected in danger-of-death stories, which are assumed to encourage less self-conscious talk. But, as discussed in Chapter 3, Katrina narratives, for many New Orleanians, have evolved into dramatic rhetorical set pieces. Participants have told their own Katrina stories repeatedly, and heard those of many other people, so that most personal narratives have a practiced and polished quality. Rather than eliciting the least self-conscious speech, the narratives seem to elicit the most self-conscious speech. For this reason, the high rate of r-lessness is a surprise.

The high r-lessness in the narratives suggests that postvocalic /r/ is associated with social meaning. Speakers can choose both to employ r-lessness in their most conscious speech styles, as with Katrina stories, and avoid it in their most conscious speech styles, as with the reading passage. R-lessness may be felt by speakers to be appropriate to the genre of personal narrative about the destruction and suffering caused by Katrina, but inappropriate to non-local, institutional genres of talk like the reading passage or word recitation, which are clearly designed to "test" speakers in some way.

The second most influential factor promoting r-fulness is syllable stress (Figure 5.2). Unsurprisingly, stressed syllables were less likely to be r-less (33%, N= 1115) than unstressed (48%, N = 964).

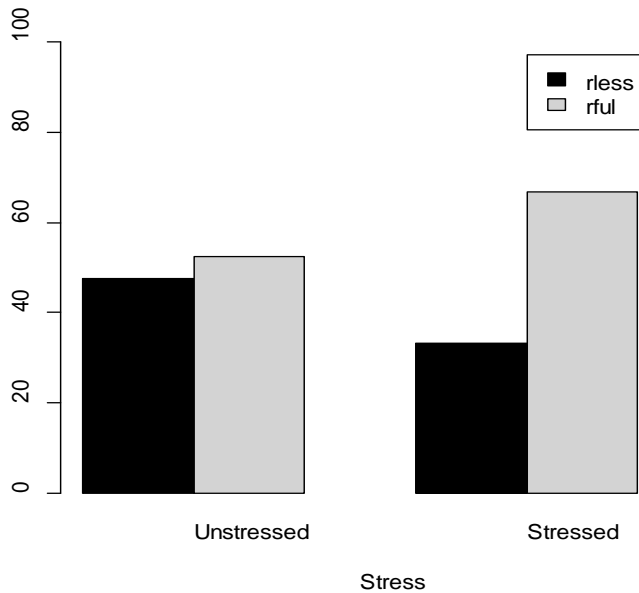


Figure 5.2 R-variation by syllable stress.

The third most significant factor promoting r-fulness is preceding vowel. Preceding vowels were coded according to seven classes, adapted from Wells (1982). Figure 5.3 shows the proportions of r-variation for each class.

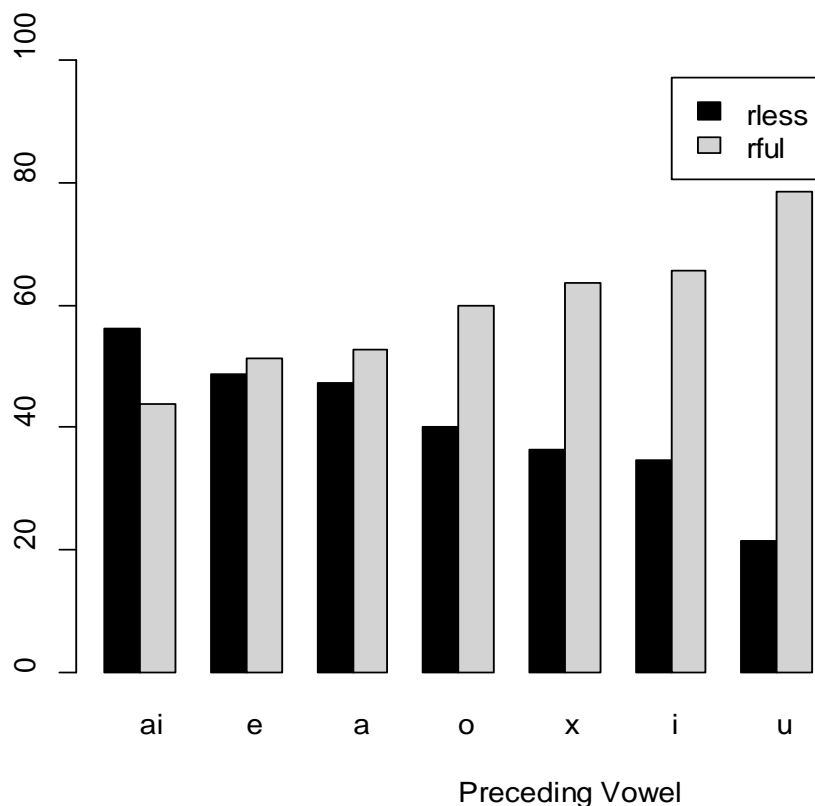


Figure 5.3 R-variation by preceding vowel. *x* represents /ə/.

As Table 5.7 describes, speakers are most r-less (56%) after [ai], but the number of tokens in this category ($N = 16$), is small. Speakers are most r-ful after stressed schwa (19%) and high vowels, especially /u/ (21%). While stressed schwa favors r-fulness in perhaps all English dialects, the effect of other preceding full vowels on r-pronunciation in New Orleans differs from previous studies of American speech. Studies of Southern speech in Anniston, Alabama (Feagin 1990) and Memphis, Tennessee, (Pollock and Bernie 1997, cited in Nagy and Irwin 2010) both found that front vowels most favored r-fulness, while studies of New York City (Labov 1972; Becker 2009) found back vowels to favor r-fulness. Still other results were obtained in Nagy

Table 5.7 R-lessness by preceding vowel.

Preceding Vowel	% r-less (N)	
[ai] (e.g., <i>fire</i>)	56	(9)
[e] (e.g. <i>care</i>)	49	(127)
Unstressed [ə] (e.g. <i>hot<u>ter</u></i>)	48	(876)
[a] (e.g. <i>car</i>)	47	(318)
[o] (e.g. <i>store</i>)	40	(400)
[i] (e.g. <i>beer</i>)	35	(88)
[u] (e.g. <i>cure</i>)	21	(29)
Stressed [ə] (e.g. <i>stir</i>)	19	(232)

and Irwin's 2010 study of Boston and New Hampshire, which found low front /a/, mid front /e/, and high back /u/ to all favor r-fulness. The New Orleans data finds both high front and high back vowels (/i/, /u/) and, to a smaller extent, the mid back /o/, to promote r-fulness.

The final linguistic factor to influence r-pronunciation is word context, coded as the combination of following environment and word position according to six categories.

Proportions of r-realization are shown in Figure 5.4.

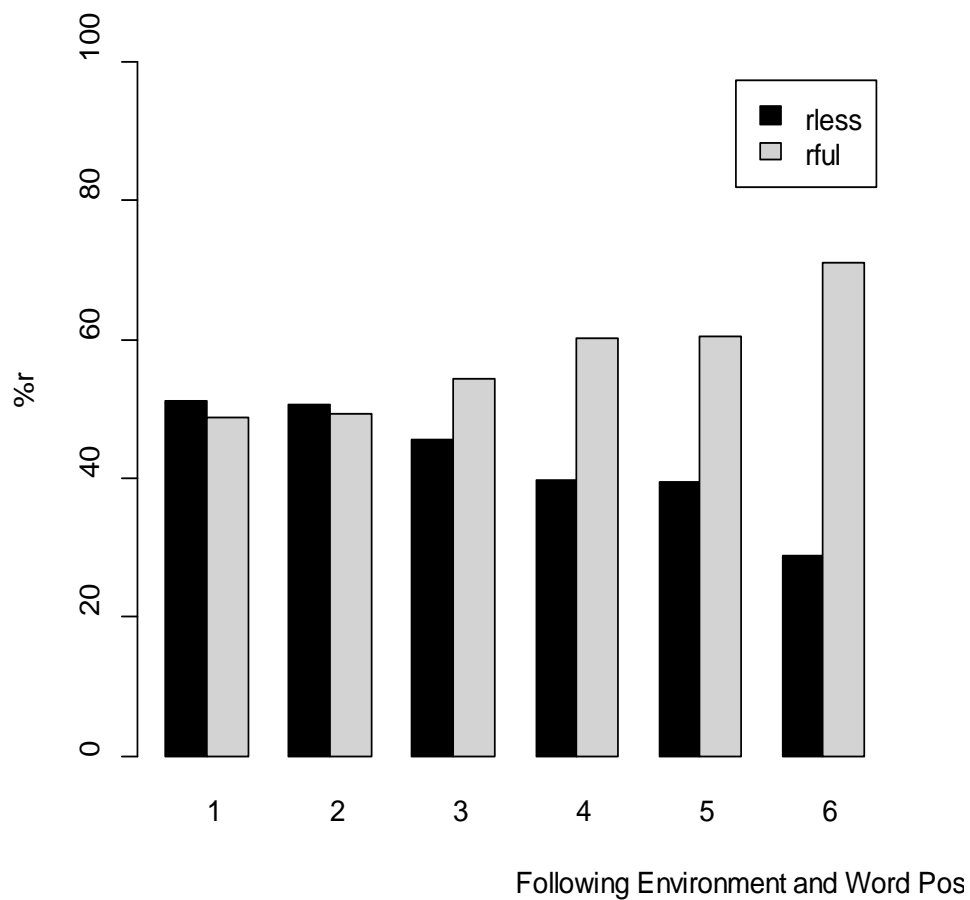


Figure 5.4 R-variation by following environment and word position.

The numbers one through six in Figure 5.4 correspond to the following environment and word positions listed in Table 5.8 on the following page.

Table 5.8 R-lessness by following environment and word position.

Following Environment + Word Position	Code	N r-less/N total	% r-less
Morpheme-final, following consonant in next syllable (e.g. <i>scholarship</i>)	1	82/160	51%
Word-final, following consonant (e.g. <i>car door</i>)	2	659/1303	51%
Word-final, following pause (e.g. <i>care.</i>)	3	223/489	46%
Morpheme-final, following consonant in same syllable (e.g. <i>cares</i>)	4	145/365	40%
Word-final following vowel (e.g. <i>care about</i>)	5	301/762	40%
Morpheme-internal, following consonant (e.g. <i>girl</i>)	6	669/2313	30%

Speakers are most r-less morpheme-finally with a following consonant in the next syllable (e.g., *scholarship*), and word-finally with a following consonant (e.g., *car door*). Speakers are most r-ful morpheme-internally (e.g., *girl*), and word-finally with a following vowel, similar to other studies (e.g., Wolfram 1969, Nagy and Irwin 2010).

Finally, tokens were also coded for word type (Figure 5.5) and number of syllables (Figure 5.6), but these did not prove to be significant predictors of r-lessness. As would be

expected, given the reduction function words are often subject to, lexical words are less likely to be r-less (36%, N= 1608) than function words (50%, N= 471).

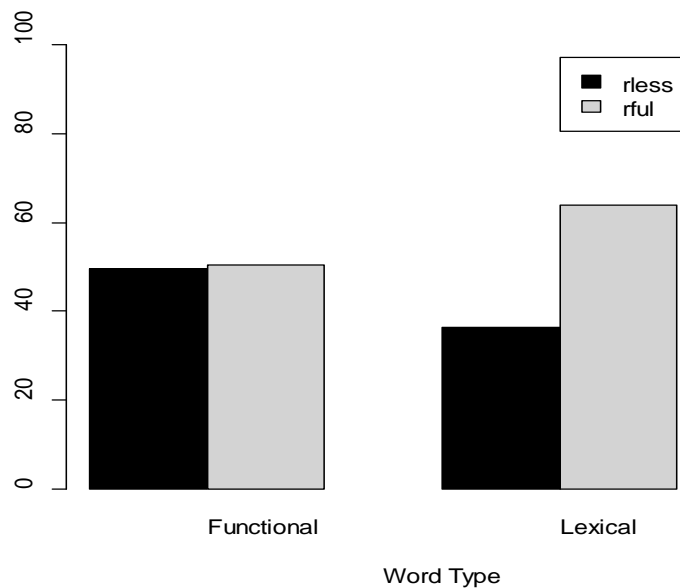


Figure 5.5 R-variation by word type.

The number of syllables in words was coded as monosyllabic, disyllabic, and three or more syllables. Postvocalic /r/ in words of three or more syllables is more likely to be absent (46%, N = 385) than in monosyllabic words (34%, N = 808). Figure 5.6 shows the distribution of r-variation across number of syllables.

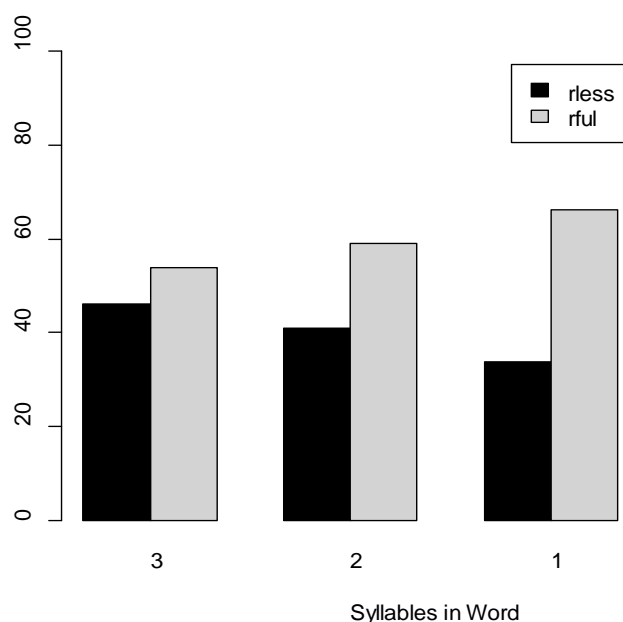


Figure 5.6 R-variation by number of syllables in word.

This section has provided an overview of the linguistic factors affecting r-pronunciation. The contexts most favoring consonantal /-r/ are reading passage and word recitation tasks, stressed syllables, preceding stressed schwa and high vowels, and morpheme internal word position. Distinctions between open and closed word classes and number of syllables in word are less predictive of r-lessness. The next section explores the external factors conditioning r-variation.

5.3 SOCIAL RESULTS

Regression analysis suggested speakers' cultural orientation, educational attainment and age to be the most important social factors influencing r-variation. As discussed in Chapter 3, cultural orientation was determined by classifying speakers as either externally, supra-locally oriented or

internally, locally oriented. Figure 5.7 shows the proportions of r-variation by cultural orientation.

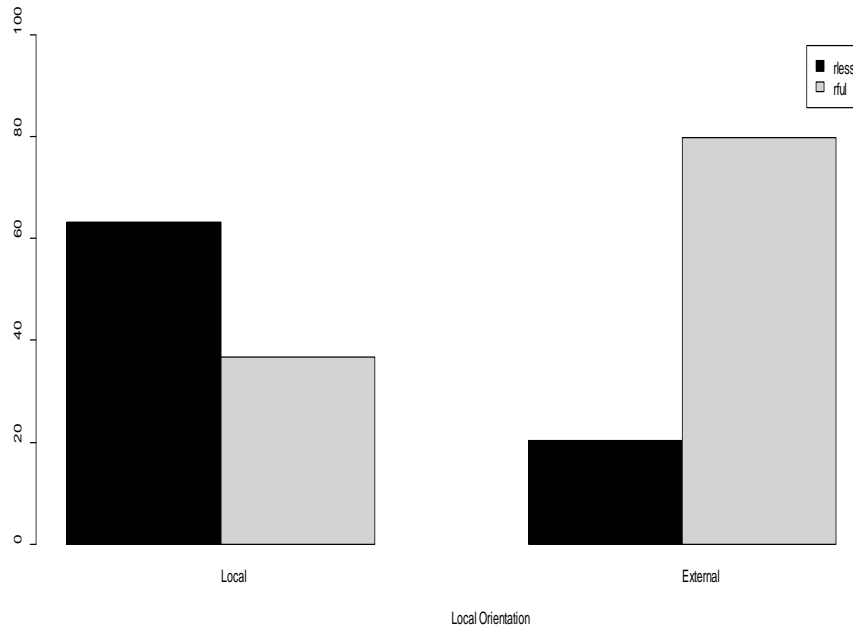


Figure 5.7 R-variation by cultural orientation.

Locally-oriented speakers are three times as likely as externally-oriented speakers to be r-less (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 R-variation by cultural orientation.

	% -r			
	Local (N)		External (N)	
r-less	63	(1453)	20	(626)
r-ful	36	(844)	80	(2469)

Whether male or female, Creole, African American or White, white-, pink-, or blue-collar, speakers who express a strong local orientation are consistently more r-less than

externally oriented speakers. The effect of local orientation remains robust for highly educated speakers, who otherwise tend to disfavor r-lessness (Figure 5.8).

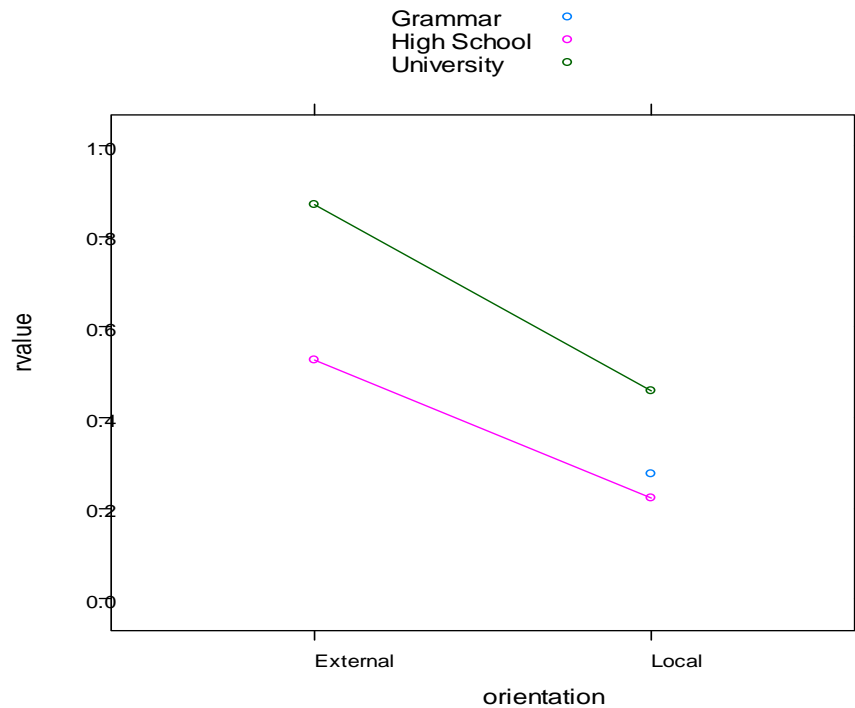


Figure 5.8 Mean /-r/ by orientation and educational attainment. 1.0 is 100% r-ful. (The study included no externally-oriented grammar school-only speakers, so there is only a mean value with local orientation.)

When educational attainment is cross tabulated with orientation (Table 5.10), both high school and college graduates who are locally oriented are more r-less than externally oriented speakers with the same educational attainment. Locally oriented high school graduates (78%),

Table 5.10 Cross-tabulation of /-r/ by orientation and educational attainment.

		% /-r/ (N)			
Grammar		High School		University	
External					
r-less	No speakers	47	(316)	13	(310)
r-ful		53	(353)	87	(2116)
Local					
r-less	72 (261)	78	(474)	54	(718)
r-ful	28 (100)	22	(136)	46	(608)

exceed non high-school graduates (72%) in r-lessness. Locally oriented college graduates pronounce four times less /-r/ than their externally oriented counterparts (54% vs. 13%).

The effect of cultural orientation interacts with speakers across age groups as well as it does with speakers' educational attainment. Figure 5.9 shows the cross-tabulation of age and

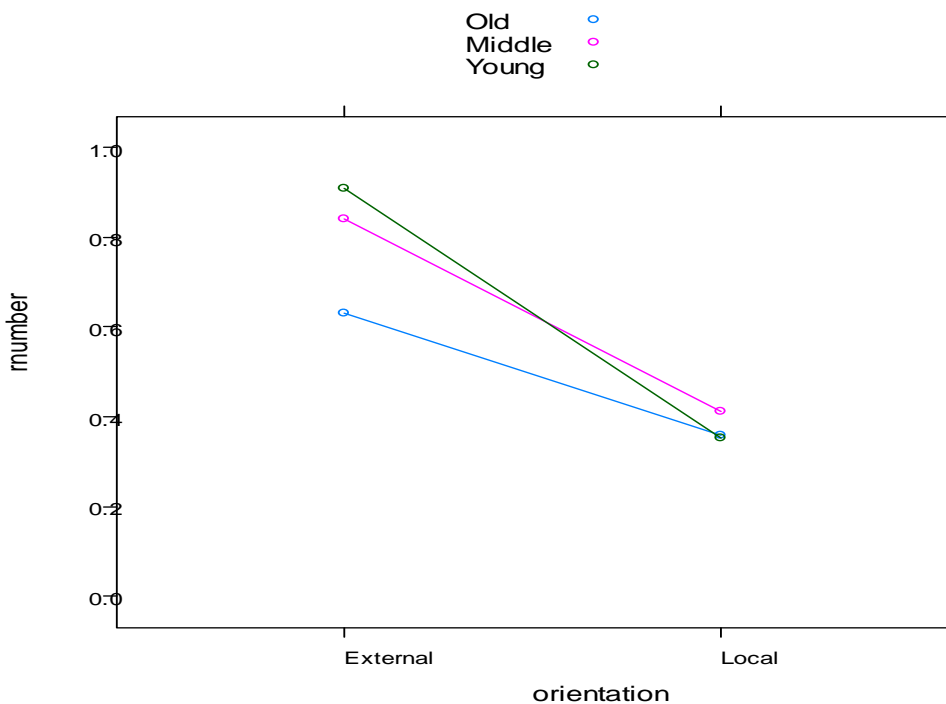


Figure 5.9 Mean /-r/ by orientation and age. 1.0 is 100% r-ful.

orientation. Locally oriented speakers of all ages pronounce /-r/ less than externally oriented speakers. Younger speakers (18-25 years old) exhibit a particularly pronounced difference when considered on the basis of orientation. Younger speakers who are locally oriented equal the oldest locally oriented speakers in r-lessness (65% and 64%, respectively), as Table 5.11 shows.

Table 5.11 Cross-tabulation of /-r/ by orientation and age.

		% /r/ (N)					
		Older		Middle-aged		Younger	
External							
r-less		37	(367)	16	(154)	9	(105)
r-ful		63	(625)	84	(807)	91	(1037)
Local							
r-less		64	(1072)	59	(235)	65	(146)
r-ful		36	(599)	41	(165)	35	(80)

In addition to cultural orientation, educational attainment was also a strong predictor of r-lessness. Figure 5.10 shows the proportions of /-r/ by educational attainment, and Table 5.12 shows the details. The current results agree with many past studies of /-r/ (e.g., Labov 1966;

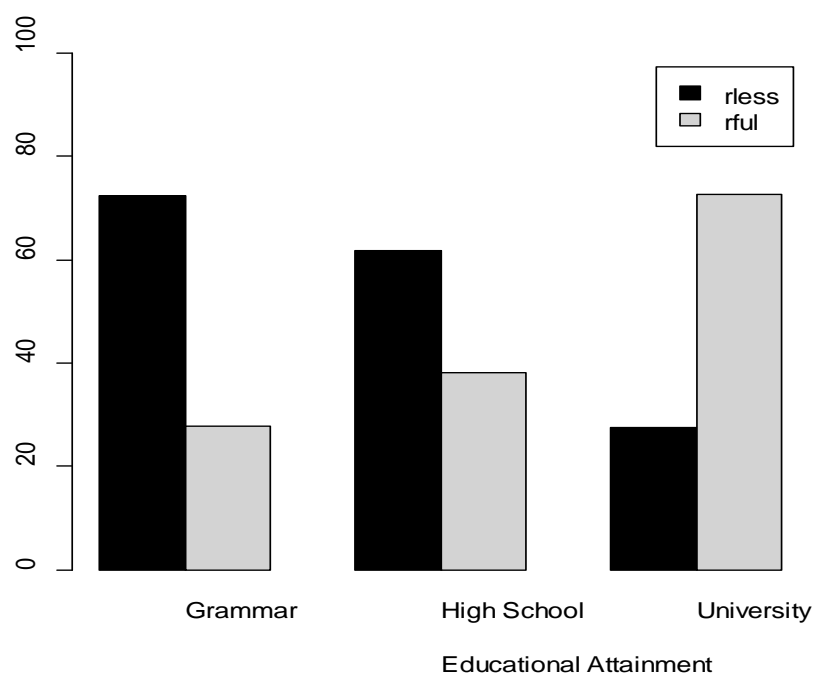


Figure 5.10 R-variation by educational attainment.

Wolfram 1969; Anshen 1969; Doss 1981), which have found high rates of r-lessness to be directly correlated with low educational attainment. The results also echo Brennan's (1983) New

Table 5.12 R-variation by educational attainment.

% /r/ (N)						
	Grammar School (N)		HS Graduate/Some college (N)		College Graduate (N)	
r-less	72	(261)	62	(790)	27	(1028)
r-ful	28	(100)	38	(489)	73	(2724)

Orleans study, which found that the least educated speakers had the highest rate of r-lessness (83%), while those who had graduated or attended some college had the lowest rate (54%). In New Orleans, as nationally, r-lessness tends to drop as level of education rises (with some exceptions among older speakers in the Northeast and Coastal South). As discussed above, however, if highly educated speakers are locally oriented, they are often much more r-less than their externally oriented counterparts.

The third social factor to influence r-pronunciation is age, with older speakers far more likely to be r-less than younger speakers, as has been found in all studies of historically r-less American dialects. Participants in the current study ranged in age from 95 to 18. Analysis of the data using Rbrul (Johnson 2009b), with year of birth as a continuous variable, shows that the likelihood of r-lessness drops 1.8% with each year of birth. Whether divided into three groups or considered by birth year, younger speakers clearly disfavor r-lessness. Brennan's study found young and middle-aged speakers to have very similar rates of r-lessness (60% and 56%, respectively), while older speakers showed an even higher rate (73%). Thirty years later, rates of r-lessness show a steep change in apparent time (Figure 5.11).

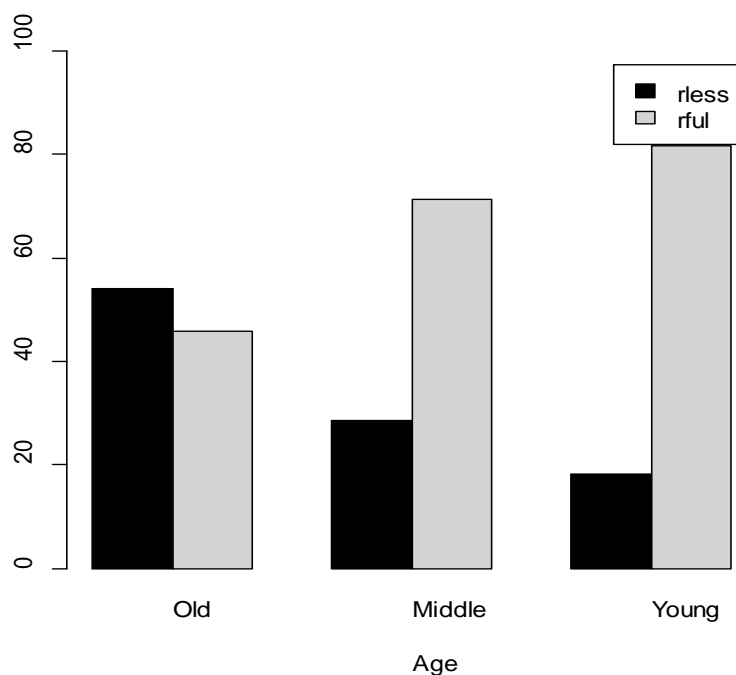


Figure 5.11 R-variation by age group.

Older speakers (those over 51) show a very similar rate to Brennan's young and middle-aged groups, but there is a significant drop for the two younger groups, middle-aged (26-50) and younger speakers (18-25), shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13 R-variation by age group.

% /r/ (N)						
	Older		Middle-aged		Younger	
r-less	54	(1439)	29	(389)	18	(251)
r-ful	46	(1224)	71	(972)	82	(1117)

Gender, on the other hand, was less predictive of r-lessness than age, education, and cultural orientation, although men pronounce /-r/ less than women (Figure 5.12). Men were r-less in 46% of instances, 14% more than women (32%, Table 5.14). Many studies have found women leading the change to r-fulness (e.g., Lambert 1995, Schonweitz 2001). In New Orleans, Brennan (1983) found a similar gender difference, with women r-less in 55% of instances, 17% less than men (72%). However, while Brennan found women to be significantly more r-ful than men, gender did not emerge as statistically significant in the current study.

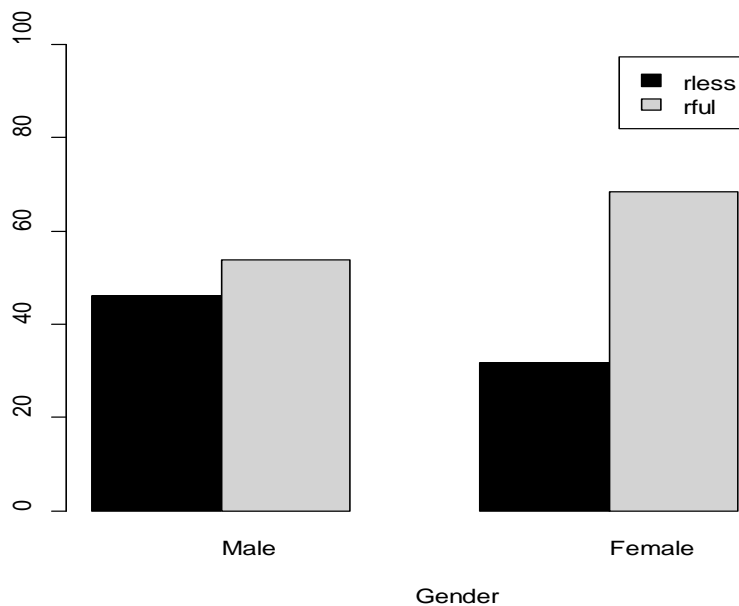


Figure 5.12 R-variation by gender.

While not statistically significant, the higher r-fulness for women does suggest that r-fulness is a change from above. Further, Reinecke's 1951 study, which showed women to be almost categorically r-less, while businessmen with non-local contacts were most r-ful, suggests that the diffusion of r-fulness has occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

Table 5.14 R-variation by gender.

% -r (N)				
	Male		Female	
r-less	46	(1183)	32	(896)
r-ful	54	(1378)	68	(1935)

Participants' race made little difference to r-pronunciation, as shown in Figure 5.13. This finding is similar to Brennan's 1983 study, and supports the Labov, Ash and Boberg's contention that New Orleans speech is "marginal" to the South (*ANAE*: 260). The unimportance of race in New Orleans with regard to /-r/ is in contrast to other studies of Southern Englishes, which have generally found race to be extremely salient. In North Carolina, for example, Wolfram and

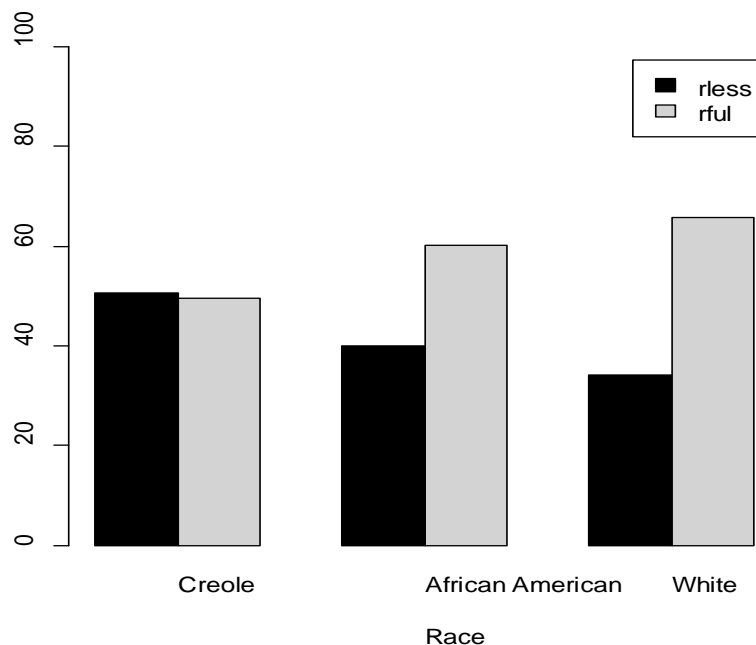


Figure 5.13 R-variation by race.

Thomas (2002) have found African American and White speech to be diverging, with African Americans growing more *r*-less while Whites become more *r*-ful. In Alabama and South Carolina, Feagin (1990) and Baranowski (2006) consider African American and White speech so distinct that they exclude African American speakers from their analyses. Feagin suggests that *r*-lessness is becoming "possibly a marker of ethnicity (race)" (1990: 129, parentheses in original) and notes "[o]bviously, the *r*-less white Southerner is an endangered species!" (1990: 144). In New Orleans, this is not the case. The overall shift towards *r*-fulness is not so starkly divided by race.

New Orleans' lack of racial stratification in *r*-realization is due to several factors. Historically, as George Reinecke articulates it, "beginning with the French culture as acted upon by the African, Antillean, German, Spanish, Irish, Italian, and, of course, 'American,' New Orleans has created a civic culture which resembles a separate ethnicity" (1985: 64). This "separate ethnicity" has historically meant that all racial and ethnic groups have shared more in common, linguistically and otherwise, than in other cities, where neighborhoods and social interaction have often been far more segregated. This is not to say that New Orleans has ever been race-blind or egalitarian, but that there has been more interracial social interaction than in many other places, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Further, all dialects of New Orleans English have historically been *r*-less, from Garden District upper class speech, to working class Yat, to the English of formerly Francophone Creoles. In fact, in the current study, self-identified Creole speakers are the group most likely to be *r*-less (51%, Table 5.15). However, there is a conflation with age, because five of the seven Creole speakers in the sample were older (three were over 70), and older speakers as a group show the highest rates of *r*-lessness. African American and White speakers show comparable

Table 5.15 R-variation by race.

	% -r (N)					
	Creole		African American		White	
r-less	51	(350)	40	(860)	34	(869)
r-ful	49	(343)	60	(1296)	66	(1674)

rates of r-lessness, 40% and 34%, respectively. Brennan (1983), similar to the current study, found little difference between African American and White speakers. In her study, African American speakers were 64% r-less, White speakers, 62%. In New Orleans, neither the race nor gender of speakers accounts for r-lessness; cultural orientation, age and education are much more robust external factors.

Socioeconomic class group proved to be an inconclusive predictor of r-lessness. As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were given a class index score between 1-3, based on a six point educational attainment scale and a five point occupational scale. I am uncomfortable with the class groupings, both because of problems determining socioeconomic class in the first place, and because of the large number of artists (11) and high school and college students (19), whose class ranking is murky to determine. Nonetheless, I grouped participants into Working, Middle, and Upper Middle class groups. Figure 5.14 shows the distribution of r-variation across these groups. R-lessness is clearly correlated with working class, less-educated speech.

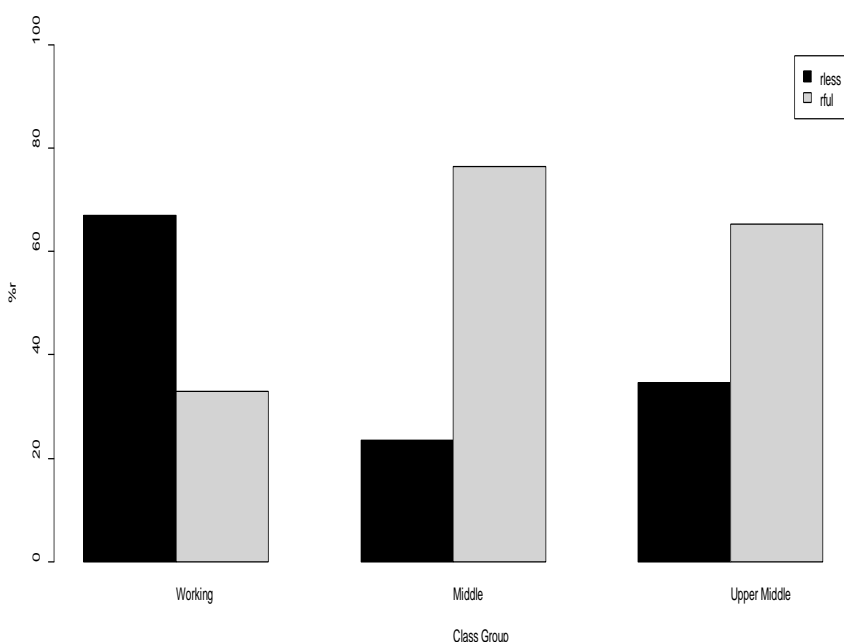


Figure 5.14 R-variation by class group.

Upper middle class speakers are more r-less than middle class speakers, (35% vs. 24%, Table 5.16), probably a result of the vestigial prestige of older r-less Southern varieties. Further, almost all the college students fell into the middle class grouping, which shows the smallest amount

Table 5.16 R-variation by class group.

	% -r (N)					
	Working		Middle		Upper Middle	
r-less	67	(944)	24	(525)	35	(610)
r-ful	33	(463)	76	(1703)	65	(1147)

of r-lessness, and which may have distorted class results by conflation with age and education.

Working class speakers show the most r-lessness (67%), which echoes Brennan's 1983 finding

that working class speakers were the most r-less, 79%, versus 56% for her upper class group and a combined average 59% r-lessness for her two middle class groups. Clearly, r-lessness is giving way to r-fulness for most middle and upper middle class speakers, while remaining the preferred pronunciation for working class speakers, whose rates of r-lessness, remain similar to those of thirty years ago, in contrast to the other class groups. A chi-square test between statistical models including and excluding social class found a probability value for social class of $p = .06$, failing to reach the .05 level, but working class speakers should clearly be considered as distinct from the other groups.

The final social factor to be considered was type of high school. Tokens were coded for whether the participant attended public or private high school, as that distinction is important in the city. However, while there are social distinctions between school types, r-lessness is not sensitive to the type of school, as Table 5.17 shows. There is a negligible difference between graduating from public or private high school on r-variation. On the other hand, the difference

Table 5.17 R-variation by type of high school.

	% -r (N)					
	No High School		Private/Parochial HS		Public HS	
r-less	75	(220)	35	(802)	37	(973)
r-ful	24	(72)	65	(1378)	63	(1841)

between speakers who graduated from high school compared to those who did not complete high school is highly significant. Graduating high school discourages r-lessness, regardless of whether the institution is public or private.

This section has explored the external factors that influence r-pronunciation. The most significant factors are cultural orientation, age, and educational attainment. In New Orleans, race and gender are far less predictive of r-variation than they are in other places. The following section discusses and contextualizes the data.

5.4 DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis finds that r-lessness has declined in New Orleans since Brennan's 1983 study. Overall r-lessness was 39% in this study, more than a third less than the 63% Brennan found. The logistic regression analysis in Section 5.1 strongly suggests that r-variation is conditioned by both phonological and social factors. The most significant internal factors are type of talk and syllable stress. The most significant external factors are cultural orientation and educational attainment. Given the status of consonantal /-r/ as a prestige national pronunciation, the tendency of highly educated and externally oriented speakers toward r-pronunciation is not surprising. The strong effect of local orientation on r-lessness is the most important finding of the analysis. Cultural orientation contributes to a shift in the realization of /-r/ even amongst younger speakers, the group least likely to be r-less. Locally oriented younger speakers are r-less in 65% of instances, in contrast to 9% for their externally oriented counterparts. The sharp difference in r-lessness in the youngest speakers based on cultural orientation suggests that postvocalic /-r/ is imbued with social meaning.

This hypothesis is further supported by the strong effect of type of talk on r-lessness. The most structured, formal interview tasks—the reading passage and word recitation—strongly disfavored r-lessness. But Katrina narratives, which are stylized, practiced rhetorical events for

New Orleanians, favored r-lessness. Speakers who avoided r-lessness in "test" tasks employed it in narratives more often than they did in general interview talk. These data suggest that r-lessness may be functioning as a stable sociolinguistic variable, appropriate for informal or local situations and topics, and inappropriate for formal, supra-local or institutionally-aligned situations and topics.

That r-lessness may be a stable variable available for socially motivated variation is supported by a small subset of data collected in the course of interviewing participants. During four interviews, participants were interrupted by friends stopping by, and the interview talk style was suspended as they chatted with friends. In these four interviews, I coded the sections where participants' talk style shifted. The number of speakers (N = 4) and tokens (N = 476) are very small, and were not included in the quantitative analysis. But this subset of intra-speaker data offer a glimpse into the way some speakers are agentively engaged with r-lessness, employing it as they shift styles. Figure 5.15 compares the proportions of r-lessness in interview talk and in more casual talk.

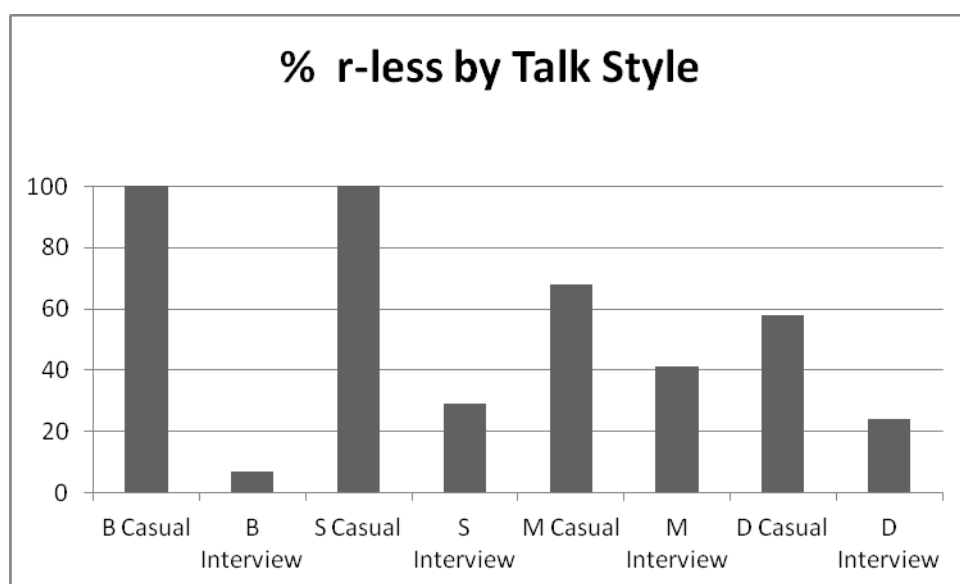


Figure 5.15 R-lessness across four speakers in two speech styles.

Across the four speakers, the rate of r-less rose from 33% (N = 70) in interview talk to 67% (N = 60) in casual conversation. Individually, these participants have large differences between interview and casual talk. Two speakers, Bethany and Sam (B and S in Figure 5.15), pronounced no postvocalic /-r/ at all in their casual asides to friends, in contrast to their much higher rates of consonantal /-r/ in interview talk (Table 5.18).

Table 5.18 R-variation by talk style.

Speaker	Age	Edu.	Orientation	Interview % r-less (N)	Casual % r-less (N)
Bethany	Y	Uni.	External	<1 (2)	100 (7)
Sam	O	HS	External	29 (10)	100 (7)
Martine	O	HS	Local	41 (52)	68 (15)
Doug	Y	Uni.	External	24 (6)	58 (31)

Both Sam and Bethany are aware that they speak differently across contexts. Bethany is a young college graduate, an externally oriented person who plans to become a psychologist. I did not mention /r/, but after telling Bethany I was interested in local language and culture she immediately said, speaking of herself and her boyfriend:

I think because we 're kind of, we're educated, we are trying to get away from the regional dialect, you know what I mean, but, but, when I drink, for instance, it comes out, and it is just like distinguishable, you lose the -r at the end of just about all words. (BD1211)

Bethany was almost categorically r-ful in our interview. Several weeks later, when I recorded her at a friend's house, Bethany was 100% r-less in the few minutes the recorder was turned on. Doug is a friend of Bethany's and also a college graduate. He is externally oriented,

but proud to be from New Orleans. In an interview alone with me, he was 24% r-less. When recorded while talking with a friend, he was 58% r-less.

Sam is an externally oriented high school graduate, and before Katrina operated a junkyard. After flooding destroyed his Ninth Ward home and business, he started a foundation and became an activist for poor and older New Orleanians encountering difficulties returning to their homes. In the years since Katrina, he has been a speaker at schools and conferences across the country, and, through his foundation, has managed thousands of out-of-state volunteers who come to New Orleans. Sam says, speaking of watching video recordings of himself giving speeches:

Even my grandkids say 'Pawpaw, why you talking like that?' You know, because I talk like New Orleans when I'm around New Orleanians. (LNWIX)

His grandchildren ordinarily hear Sam speaking in a more informal, local style. They notice the difference in their grandfather's speech in more formal, non-local contexts. In our interview, Sam was 29% r-less; when a friend called to him across the street, Sam's exchange with him was 100% r-less.

Martine is an older, locally oriented high school graduate. She recognizes that she shifts between speech styles:

I'm a tell you like this: we have our relaxed language, our relaxed English. If me and Andrea sit here, we sit and we just throw out little things and we clown around and just whatever way it comes out, it comes out. But on the other hand, I still know proper English. Cause I have little nieces and nephews and stuff, little ones in school that hangs around my house a lot. I say, 'How many cookies you want?' [and they say] 'Fo'.' [I say] 'HOW MANY?' and I get really perturbed because I try to force them to speak properly, even though they're young...cause there's no such thing as 'fo'. 'I said HOW MANY?' [and they say] 'Oh. Four.' (MAX1212)

Martine was 41% r-less in our interview, a rate that climbed to 68% when she addressed her friend.

The data from these four participants raise several points. First, as an interviewer, my own 100% r-ful speech and position as a university-associated person holding a recorder and microphone have an effect on how participants speak to me. The clear line for these speakers between appropriate interview speech and more casual speech suggests accommodation both to me and the interview genre. Seen from the light of accommodation theory, the overall r-lessness in the study means r-lessness remains robust; speakers remained r-less in 55% of interview talk despite having a completely r-ful interlocutor. Second, all the speakers in the subset data are metalinguistically aware of their style-shifting, and offered analyses of the variation in their talk. In fact, many participants beyond the four discussed here talked about r-lessness and other features as recognizably local, or authentically New Orleanian.

5.5 SUMMARY

New Orleans is clearly becoming more r-ful, as Figure 5.16, a comparison with past studies, shows. In contrast to near-categorical status in 1951, r-lessness occurs in less than half

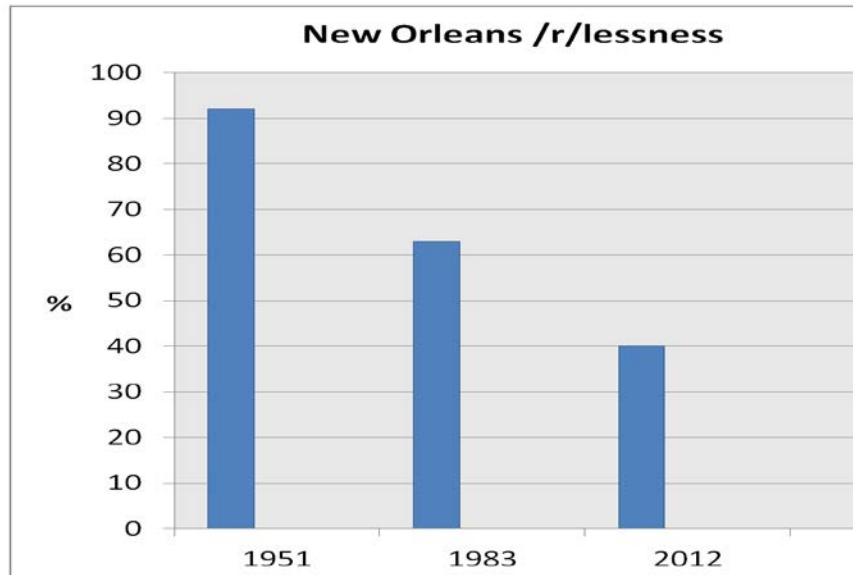


Figure 5.16 Declining r-lessness over time. Data from Reinecke (1951), Brennan (1983), and the current study.

of possible instances in the current study. Further, younger speakers as a whole are the least likely age group to be r-less (18% as opposed to 29% for middle-aged and 54% for older speakers), a change in apparent time that also suggests a retreat of r-lessness.

However, when cultural orientation is considered, an inexorable shift towards r-fulness seems less certain. Local orientation makes a difference within each age group, but is most pronounced amongst the youngest speakers. Locally oriented younger speakers are seven times more likely than externally oriented younger speakers to be r-less (65% vs. 9%). So while r-

lessness is clearly receding amongst younger speakers as a whole, for locally oriented speakers it has become an element of personal linguistic style.

Further, the casual style data from the subset of four speakers discussed in Section 5.4 provides evidence of r-lessness as a stable variable for some speakers, more akin to -ɪŋ/-in (*talking* vs. *talkin'*) variation than to a change in progress. The speakers in the subset, two older and two younger, alternate between r-variants depending on context and addressee, using much higher rates of r-lessness when addressing friends. These findings suggest that r-lessness will remain a variant in New Orleans speech.

The casual style data coupled with the strong effect of local orientation on r-lessness suggest that r-lessness has been enregistered—interpretable as having social meaning (Agha 2003, 2007)—and that, further, speakers are agentively engaged with their use of it. For some New Orleans speakers, /-r/ is no longer an imperceptible feature. In Johnstone et al.'s terms, it is a higher level indexical, noticeable for speakers and capable of being used consciously or semi-consciously (Johnstone, et al. 2006).

The destruction of the city after Hurricane Katrina has amplified an already extant performative aspect of local speech (described in Chapter 2). This amplification has helped make r-lessness and other linguistic features noticeable. Chapter 6 situates this study's quantitative findings on post-Katrina r-lessness within the context of metalinguistic awareness, place-making, nostalgia, commodification and performance.

6.0 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: WHY?

The destruction of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina must haunt this and every contemporary study of the city. The physical disappearance of the city, 80% of which lay underwater for weeks, and the disappearance of its evacuated inhabitants was a profound rupture. The destruction is so recent that it is still felt as a break in history, rather than part of it, and the rupture caused by the destruction ended one sociohistorical existence of the city, and launched another. While this post-Katrina existence is still unformed, there is a widespread sense that an affective transformation, a re-conceptualization of the city's social imaginary, has occurred.

The concept of a social imaginary is a useful way to articulate the affective change in post-Katrina New Orleans. The philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis describes a social imaginary as "the creation of each historical period, its singular manner of living, of seeing and of conducting its own existence" (1987 [1976]: 145). Post-Katrina New Orleans is a different entity than the pre-Katrina city; it is an imaginary with a different way of "seeing and conducting" itself. As discussed in Chapter 2, individual New Orleanians often discuss this re-imagining. The destruction of the city was a rupture that ended the pre-Katrina imaginary. The post-Katrina imaginary is being created with different elements. Language is intimately tied to the imaginary, being both a practice that constructs it and because language itself is construed through it. A

constellation of cultural processes interwoven with language are helping to shape the city's post-Katrina imaginary, including place-making, commodification and nostalgia.

These cultural processes are increasingly salient for speakers because of the expansion of mediation in personal experience. The experience of Katrina itself was completely mediated for most New Orleanians. The residents who evacuated, a majority of the population, watched television coverage for days, ceasing to watch only to try to locate those with whom they had lost contact. Mass media and the media of interpersonal communication (e.g., telephone, internet) were the sole means of seeing and interpreting the situation in New Orleans.

Mediation, in addition to being the means by which the city was brought to the attention of both a global audience and displaced residents, has affected the creation, representation and interpretation of New Orleans as a social imaginary. The mediated experience of Katrina, together with the disappearance of the city and its residents, has caused a valorization of the city. Former associations between New Orleans culture, including language, and negative or nonexistent social meanings have been subordinated to newer associations of everything New Orleans as local, authentic, sentimental, threatened and valuable. One participant discussed her experience of this process:

I think it's kind of like the old "you don't miss your water till your well runs dry" thing, and the fact that there were days, I say days, it might have been longer than that. But I can remember being in Houston after evacuating, thinking "Oh my God, it's gone." And we had always heard that this could possibly happen in New Orleans, and we never thought it actually would, and then it did. We thought "Oh my God, it's gone and it's never going to come back."

And there was talk that it was never going to be the same city again, you know, even if it did come back it would never be the same city, and I don't think it is, I don't think it is the same city, but I think people have grasped what is New Orleans and what had been historically New Orleans, whatever that means, and have really, um, embraced it and want to bring it back and I think that has created a big resurgence and anything New Orleans is wonderful. (MC1212)

This post-Katrina valorization of *anything New Orleans* has de-emphasized stigmatized associations of local language with poor education and low socioeconomic class (e.g., DePascual et al. 1994, Rizzo 1945) and linked it instead with desirable associations of localness and authenticity (cf. Johnstone et al. 2006; Johnstone 2010).

The disappearance of the city and its population and the subsequent nostalgic re-appraisal of the city as valuable has revived the whole city, including local language, as a simulacrum, a representation of the city's antediluvian self. Individual speakers interact with the re-appraised, re-imagined social meanings of linguistic forms, including r-lessness, as they are posited and amplified by mediated social processes including place-making, commodification and nostalgia. Speakers engage with these processes, using r-lessness as a resource in locally meaningful performances.

This chapter situates speakers' r-lessness in New Orleans within this group of interrelated cultural processes, providing the socio-cultural context for the findings presented in Chapter 5. Section 6.1 describes the relationship between r-lessness and place-making in New Orleans. Section 6.2 describes the commodification of local language, and Section 6.3 shows how nostalgia shapes mediation and commodification. The nostalgic valorization and commodification of all things local in response to Katrina accelerated speakers' metalinguistic awareness, but, to an extent, this awareness also pre-dates Katrina. There is a longstanding tradition of performance of New Orleanian-ness, including language use. Section 6.4 focuses on this aspect of local speech and its effects on r-lessness. Section 6.5 presents a summary of the chapter.

6.1 LANGUAGE AND PLACE

Cultural geographers, anthropologists and sociologists have drawn a distinction between space, defined as a specific geographical location, and place, which can be loosely defined as space imbued with social meaning. The cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan considers that narrative practices of naming and storytelling make place "humanized space" (1991). The sociologist Thomas Gieryn describes the transformation of space into place as a "double-construction," in which place constitutes a location both physical and imagined, the intersection of the "material and interpretive, physical and semiotic" (2000:467). Similarly, the cultural geographer Doreen Massey suggests that places can be seen as particular sets of intersecting social relations (1999). Place becomes, in this conception, a social construct created and sustained by human interaction with a spatial location.

6.1.1 Creating Place through Language

We construct these interactions through multiple practices, and language constitutes a fundamental element in the creation and maintenance of place. In turn, fragments of language—phonetic features, lexemes, syntactic structures—become linked to particular places. Traditional dialectology has taken place and language to be in a state of independent correspondence, using place primarily as a geographical framework on which to arrange groups of linguistic features. But much recent work has begun to explore how and why language comes to be associated with a particular place, sometimes becoming enregistered as local.

Speakers' use of place-linked features is seen as an active part of the creation and perception of place. In Pittsburgh, Johnstone and her colleagues (Johnstone, et al. 2002; Johnstone, et al. 2006; Johnstone & Kiesling 2008, Johnstone 2009) have shown how particular linguistic features came to be associated with the city, becoming available for use by some speakers as part of the performance and knowledge of localness. Becker (2009) explores speakers' use of particular features to enact and show solidarity with a downtown New York neighborhood identity. Similarly, Beal (2009) shows how children variably use certain Tyneside, England-associated features to project a local identity. Hall-Lew (2009) suggests that phonetic variation in San Francisco is linked to a local neighborhood orientation. Dodsworth (2008) finds the distribution of particular phonetic features in Worthington, Ohio, to be based partly on speakers' positive local orientation to the town versus towards the larger metropolitan Columbus area.

These studies of linguistic practices that create and affect conceptions of place support Monica Heller's contention that traditional models, which view communities and linguistic systems as fairly immobile, may need to move towards models based on “practices, speakers, resources, processes, and mobility” (Heller 2010: 104). The recent research also supports the geographer David Harvey's claim that “the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement, and communication” (Harvey 1993: 23-24). Speakers' use of linguistic features to align themselves with a place is one such elaboration of place-boundedness.

The importance of linguistic expression of emplaced or place-bounded identities grows as spatial barriers contract, affecting the construal of place. Late modernity has seen a profound shift in human relations to place. Historically, populations have often been relatively stable, so

that inhabitants of a place tended to be lifetime and multigenerational residents of what the geographer Wilbur Zelinsky calls a “traditional region” (Zelinsky 1992:110). With the advent of greater population mobility, populations have grown more transient, choosing where to live for economic or social reasons. This has led to the growth of what Zelinsky calls “voluntary regions,” where “the traditional spatial and social allocation of individuals through the lottery of birth is being replaced gradually by a process of relative self-selection of life style, goals, social niche, and place of residence” (1992: 111, quoted in Kretzschmar 2011: 188). Further, Zelinsky describes the appearance of a third region, termed “vernacular” or “perceptual” regions, which are the creation of “self-conscious participants who deliberately create their environment for themselves” (Kretzschmar 2011: 190). These types of regions or places are not exclusive; they are often co-extensive, so that a vernacular region is overlaid on a traditional region. Becker’s (2009) New York City research, for example, discusses how long-established, more traditional residents share the Lower East Side of the city with new arrivals who create the neighborhood as a perceptual region in part by using New York City features, including r-lessness, in a conscious project to identify themselves with their chosen neighborhood.

New Orleans, similar to New York, is a palimpsest of traditional, voluntary, and perceptual regions. The colonial Creole and enslaved population formed the traditional region, while waves of emigrants arrived after statehood, forming a more voluntary region. New Orleans has also long been a perceptual region. New Orleans has considered itself a unique outlier in America since statehood in 1812 (e.g., Saxon 1988 [1928]; Saxon, Dreyer & Tallant 1984 [1946]; Reed 2012; Cannon 2010; Campanella 2006; Starr 2001; Reinecke 1978). The New Orleans scholar S. Frederick Starr describes the city as “less a place than an idea, less a physical reality than a symbol. A symbol of what? Of everything that the New England tradition...is not”

(Starr 2001: xii). There is widespread awareness of the city as different and unique, and many New Orleanians and transplants, in their speech and other social practices, work to enact the idealized qualities of the city (discussed in Chapter 2.4).

The status of the city as a perceptual region intensified after Hurricane Katrina. All New Orleans-associated cultural practices were threatened with extinction due to the physical destruction and massive population displacement, and came to be both visible and seen as needing conscious protection efforts. A post-Katrina documentary about local musicians, for example, is titled "Endangered Species: New Orleans" (Vigreux 2010); a book of city vignettes is titled "New Orleans: What Can't be Lost" (Barclay & West 2010). Some participants in the current study discussed language use in the context of a renewed awareness of local culture and desire to sustain it. An older male participant discussed actively employing local linguistic features in nostalgic performances of place-aligned identity.

I may exaggerate the accent just like to— like just to hold on to it—wave your (r0) flag: 'Where (r0) y'at' (you at), 'Where (r0) y'at, darling' (r0), yeah. (HB1113)

One younger participant, Doug, reflected:

After the storm it kinda, you know, 'New Orleans!' Everybody got überproud. Before it was like, 'I don't want to say that kind of stuff' and now it's—people will talk in that, you know, accent. (BD01211)

As Doug sees it, a new pride in the city after Katrina led people to re-evaluate local language as something linked to New Orleans and therefore worth speaking. This post-Katrina valorization echoes a situation Chand has found with post-colonial Indian English in New Delhi,

where some speakers "begin to identify IndE [Indian English] as a commodity which serves to index their increasingly valuable local social identity" (Chand 2010: 3). Both participants quoted above evaluate New Orleans English as an index of a valuable local social identity and a way to demonstrate affiliation with the city, a way to *wave your flag*.

Even newcomers to the city adopt language they hear as local. One participant discussed a new arrival adopting local speech:

This girl from uh, Pennsylvania who moved down here, umm, I think a year ago, she said 'I'm goin' to make groceries' and I thought that was crazy, because I was like 'Ohh, you're not from here but you're, you know, integrating yourself into this, you know, "This is great! Goin' to make groceries'" (BD1211)

Another participant talked about non-natives identifying themselves with the city:

They get so- it's the best thing since sliced bread! They start picking up ALL the language and they use it at the most inappropriate times [laughing]. I just- I remember (r0)- I just have a friend who's moved here (r0) from Connecticut or (r0), well, who comes down from Connecticut and stays usually for a week or (r0) so at any given time and has just become the most New Orleans (r0), just identifies so heavily with New Orleans (r0). Has the Sewerage and Water (r0) Board (r0) earrings and the hats, the fleurs de lis and the this and the that and is just decked out in all this New Orleans (r0) stuff, and she's picked up on 'cher' (r0) and 'bébé' and all that kind of stuff. (JH512)

The newcomer wears merchandise printed with local symbols (the sidewalk water meter covers bearing the logo of the local water board are popular), and uses terms and pronunciations she hears as New Orleanian. New Orleans is created as a perceptual region in part by Native New Orleanians' deliberate use of, and newcomers' adoption of local speech.

The conscious use of local speech also instantiates the way, as Michael Silverstein puts it, "identifiable geographically connected accent, too, has become a positive emblem of a sense of placèdness" (2011: 23). That a place-connected accent can be considered a positive emblem is a sign of a perceptual place, with speakers consciously engaged with creating their environment, in Kretzschmar's (2011) terms. This is because in order to use local features deliberately, speakers must first be able to hear a particular way of speaking as evocative of place, rather than hearing local speech as undifferentiated, simply the way everyone talks. Many New Orleanians, and all New Orleans-philic newcomers, are not less-conscious traditional inhabitants, but rather active creators of the perceptual city.

6.1.2 The Mediation of Language and Place

Connected to the growth of perceptual regions, there has been a shift towards mediated experience as a condition of modern life and language. Mediation is used here as the term for the involvement, or interposition, of media between the individual and society. The sociologist Roger Silverstone describes this sense of mediation as:

[A] term that defines the media, both the media of mass communication (radio, television, the world wide web, but also the press) and the media of interpersonal communication (fixed and mobile telephony, e-mail, but also the letter), as actively creating a symbolic and cultural space in which meanings are created and communicated beyond the constraints of the face to face, and which is becoming increasingly significant for the conduct of public, institutional and private life. Readers, viewers and audiences are part of this process of mediation, because they continue the work of the media in the ways they respond to, extend and further communicate what they see and hear on the world's multitude of screens and speakers. (Silverstone 2006: 56)

Silverstone uses mediation as the activity of both mass media and "media of interpersonal communication," as well as the resulting internalization of what people see and hear. In calling mediation the source of a "symbolic and cultural space in which meanings are created," Silverstone also alludes to an older sense of mediation as an interpretation or middle term between one state of reality and another (as with a psychic medium communicating between worlds). This role grows as mediated activity accounts for a larger share of interactions than ever before, relative to face-to-face, unmediated interactions. In this sense, mediated interactions, both one-to-one between peers or one-to-many as with mass media, play an active role in positing and interpreting reality. Mediation presents, disseminates and repeats particular meanings for cultural objects and events, strengthening or even creating certain associations. Individuals both receive these mediated meanings and experience, interpret and internalize the world around them through mediated interactions, including mass media, social media and non face-to-face methods of private communication.

Mediation helps drive the creation of place-associated dialects, as Barbara Johnstone has described: "both [linguists] and the people we study create dialects as we use a variety of media and genres to exchange ideas about how people talk" (Johnstone 2009: 172). The linguistic forms that compose a recognized dialect are formed by mediated discourses that define the way a place sounds. Discourses, most visibly in the mass media, work to identify certain linguistic features as local and sanction them as authentic.

In New Orleans, this has been especially striking since 2005. For example, a newspaper article entitled "New Orleans from A to Z: How do we love thee? Let us spell the ways" (Lorando 2007) authenticates particular places, people, and pronunciations as being genuinely local: "G is for Galatoire's [a restaurant], Gawlin' & Angela" [referring to a news anchor,

Garland Robinette], "H is for hawt" [heart], "T is for trow me sumthin', mistuh." In these examples, r-lessness (*Gawlin'*, *hawt*, *mistuh*) is explicitly linked to authentic New Orleanian-ness. In another example, a popular newspaper columnist titled a post-Katrina article "Page Fences and Iceboxes: A Refresher Course in Basic Yatabonics" (Lind 2006). The title explicitly links particular terms to New Orleans. Further, the use of "refresher course" implies that those reading the article may need to be educated about local talk, suggesting that the glossary catalogued in the article, which includes r-less spelling pronunciations, may serve as both a nostalgic enactment of terminology no longer widely used, and as a primer for newcomers. Other forms of media, including blogs and online discussion groups also circulate ideas about local language.

The mediated linkage of language and place has been described regarding other places as well, including Wales (Coupland 2001), Glasgow (Stuart-Smith and Timmins, in press), Germany (Androutsopoulos 2001), Newfoundland (King and Wicks 2009), Hawai'i (Hiramoto 2011), Pittsburgh (Johnstone, et al 2006; Johnstone 2009), and Michigan (Remlinger 2009; Remlinger et al. 2009). Remlinger (2009) and Remlinger et al. (2009) trace how the definition of local dialect has developed through the mediation of tourist brochures, blog discussions, Web sites, and radio, film and television representation of local talk. Remlinger suggests that "certain features have become normed through discursive and metadiscursive practices that collectively function to create and maintain the idea of a dialect and to define local identity" (Remlinger 2009: 134), illustrating how mediation both constructs and sustains dialects as local.

Of course, not every New Orleanian is engaged with the mediated creation of the city as a perceptual region, through language or other cultural forms. There is a continuum of interaction with and attention to mediated ideas about language and place. But linguistic features found in

New Orleans have been circulated as expressing localness and authenticity particularly widely since 2005, causing an already widespread pre-Katrina metalinguistic awareness to grow even more so. A large number of this post-Katrina mediated activity has been commercial discourses, which commodify fragments of language as local.

6.2 COMMODIFICATION OF LOCAL LANGUAGE

Commercial discourses form a significant and highly visible part of the mediation of language and place. Merchandise printed with New Orleans speech are one form of commercial discourse, while metalinguistic commentary, in television, radio and print features, online content, and books, is another. Local television, radio, and print advertising also commodify language by making use of pronunciations and terms popularly perceived as local to appeal to customers (e.g., signs advertising *oysta po'boy* sandwiches). Musicians, too, make use of local language to evoke localness and sell albums: Dr. John's 2004 album *Dis Dat or D'udda (this, that or the other)*, Trombone Shorty's 2012 album *For True*, and Harry Connick, Jr.'s 2013 album *Smokey Mary* all use local language or knowledge (the Smokey Mary is a long-defunct local train). In New Orleans, r-lessness and other features are linked to localness and authenticity in commercial discourses, which further allows these linguistic forms to be commodified into marketable entities (e.g., subject matter for editorials, names for music albums, businesses, slogans printed on merchandise).

There are a wide variety of media that, in Silverstone's (2006) words, manufacture "a symbolic and cultural space in which meanings are created and communicated." The most ubiquitous commercial discourses in New Orleans may be television and radio program features

devoted to New Orleans topics. "Naturally N'Awlins," a popular segment on the WWL-4 television channel, and "Heart of Louisiana," a similar segment on the Fox 8 television channel, highlight often r-less people and places that the hosts present as particularly authentic.

Newspaper features in the *Times-Picayune* and *Gambit*, including many by longtime writers Angus Lind and Frank Schneider, often discuss certain features as local (e.g., Tilove 2012; Cannon 2010; Lind 2009, 2006, 2005; Lorando 2007; Schneider 1996; DeBerry 2005; Virgets 1997; Laborde 1988).

Some commercial discourses explicitly link linguistic forms with social meanings. For example, one feature from the *Times-Picayune*, discussing the phrase *who dat* (from *who that*), a popular phrase associated with the local NFL franchise team, says "the vernacular origins of *who dat*, and the way 'dat' is inserted in a variety of other formulations...bespeak aspects of a New Orleans character fans wish to promote: working class, casual, playful, colorful" (Cannon 2010: B-7). Here, the author explicitly links *dat* and a set of social attributes, metadiscursively circulating an interpretation of *dat* as connected to a specific set of meanings. As Asif Agha argues, "by virtue of their own dissemination, such discourses make the indexical values they articulate known to a social domain of persons... yielding social regularities of use and construal" (Agha 2011: 24). The article attempts to create "social regularities of use and construal" of the meaning of *dat*. In other words, the article itself creates and broadcasts links between *dat* and social meanings, while also describing these links. This is a powerful aspect of commercial discourse; by virtue of its own dissemination, it can strengthen the association of particular linguistic forms and social meanings, while also encouraging new value judgments for those meanings.

Other commercial discourses similarly promote some language as local. Folk dictionaries, novelty books, websites and personal blogs often include glossaries of local definitions and pronunciations (e.g., Lemotte 1985; Schneider 1996; Smith 1996; Taggart 2007; Higgins 2007; Champagne 2007, 2012; Weitz 2009; Callais & Associates 2010; Clifford 2010; Dehon Investments 2010;). For example, the jacket of a novelty book aimed at tourists reads “[t]ake a beginner's class in the New Orleans lexicon, where 'make a do-do' means 'get some shuteye' and a 'yat' is the essential sign of a native” (Dalide 2008). A book designed for locals, *The 7th Ward Nostalgia Dictionary 1938-1985* (Smith 1996), catalogs phrases and pronunciations from the author's youth, including r-less pronunciations (Figure 6.1).

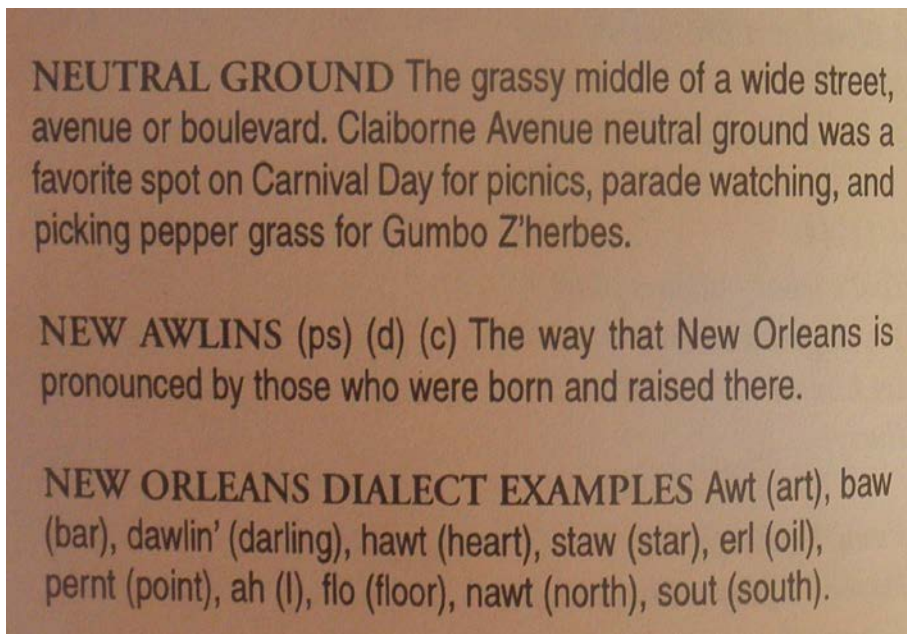


Figure 6.1 **The 7th Ward Nostalgia Dictionary** (Smith 1996: 70), with r-less pronunciations listed under *New Orleans dialect examples*.

Folk dictionaries like Smith's (e.g., Justin Lemotte's 1985 *How to Tawk Rite*; Ray Canatella's 2007 *The Yat Language of New Orleans*; and Chris Champagne's 2012 *The Yat Dictionary*) are locally popular, as well as increasingly popular with tourists.

Merchandise printed with local language (such as the t-shirt shown in Figure 6.2) is also popular. New Orleans language-decorated merchandise functions as both a symbol of local pride and insider knowledge, and as a nostalgic emblem of localness for the many New Orleanians living in diaspora since the flooding after Katrina in 2005 as well as for those who fled to the suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s. As Joan Beal suggests in her analysis of merchandise



Figure 6.2 Dirty Coast Co. t-shirt, with r-less spelling pronunciation of Kenner, and illustration of a drive-through daiquiri stand. Image from <http://www.dirtycoast.com/store/detail/188/Kenna-Brah>

printed with terms associated with Newcastle, England, “it’s most likely that the recipient [of such locally-branded merchandise] would be...someone who had moved away from Tyneside: diasporas form an important part of the market for such commodities” (Beal 2009: 147).

In New Orleans, the destruction in 2005 pressed a pre-existing diaspora to an extreme as most city residents were displaced from their flooded neighborhoods. New Orleanians evacuated all over the country, creating an instant market for locally-branded merchandise, and many remain far-flung. The use of local language on merchandise satisfies consumers' desire for place-linked goods, and is another elaboration of place identity. For the producers of such merchandise, local language is, as Monica Heller puts it, “useful as added value for niche markets and for distinguishing among standardized markets” (Heller 2010: 102). New Orleans as a niche market, and the importance of absence to enlarging that market, is articulated by the owner of a t-shirt company (Figure 6.2 is one design), who commented in a post-Katrina interview:

After the federal levee failures put the city’s future in serious doubt, everyone became a potential customer for the niche product I was about to launch. Ironically, the destruction of a great deal of my home town, the place that was the inspiration for the t-shirt designs, was the best thing that could have happened for the brand. (Black Unlimited 2010).

In the company owner's opinion, the market for his merchandise expanded after the destruction of the city. The disappearance of the city created an absence, a loss, which triggered a nostalgic valorization of all things local, including language, which, together with the mediated representation of New Orleans as a lost treasure, made *everyone...a potential customer*. Locally-branded merchandise provides both an avenue for the consumption and display of place-bound identity and strengthens, through its own existence and dissemination, the perception of local language as valuable.

The situation in post-Katrina New Orleans illustrates the reflexivity of commercial discourse. While it is made possible because of the valorization of terms associated with New Orleans, it simultaneously contributes to that valorization and association of particular terms with the city. This is why Agha (2011) argues that commercial discourse shapes perceptions; it articulates, creates and utilizes indexical values in attempting to link commodities to desirable social meanings. Through linguistic commodification, and the physical merchandise that forms a part of it, particular meanings for linguistic forms are popularized, shifting how they are perceived. As Coupland puts it, commercial discourse "tends to disembed voices from the social matrices we have taken to be primary [e.g., class designations] and infuse new meaning into them as they are recontextualized" (Coupland 2009: 298, brackets added).

Individual speakers can internalize the meanings recontextualized by commodification, and change their language use. During an interview for the current study, Monica, a middle-aged, externally oriented neurobiologist, discussed deliberately changing her speech toward a national standard variety when she moved across the country for graduate school. When asked whether she used any features she thought of as local, she said:

- M: *I still say making groceries, I'm sorry.*
 C: *You do?*
 M: *Hell, I do [laughs]. Now there are some times I will catch myself and not- I will just say 'I have to go and do grocery shopping' but there are times I know I say 'I gotta make groceries.'*
 C: *Why do you think that has stayed in your speech?*
 M: *I don't know. Well, at one point I believe it became something [2.0] kind of a sentimental phrase, almost. There was even, I had a shopping list that had 'making groceries' on it... and I had that for several years, you know, until I went through the whole pad. But it was kind of something that we embraced, that phrase. As a New Orleanian it was one of those things that we say, we say it. We're proud of it. (MC0512)*

While Monica has worked to remove many local features from her speech, she says she is proud of *making groceries*, although she feels it is a slip into non-standardism (*some times I will catch myself and not [say it]*). She says it is *kind of a sentimental phrase, almost*, and then mentions a notepad printed with it (as in Figure 6.3) that she used for years. The existence of the notepad helped recontextualize the phrase for her as a positive and sentimentally valuable

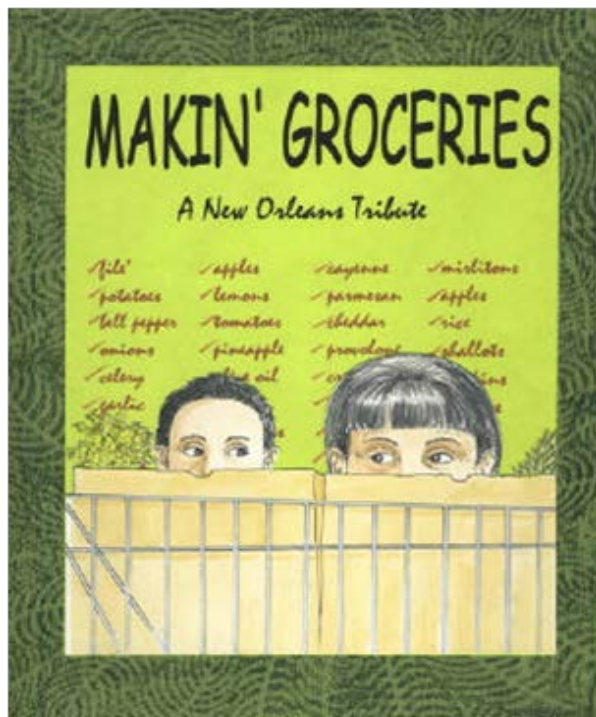


Figure 6.3 *Makin' groceries* notepad.

symbol of authentic localness, so much so that she thinks of the notepad when she thinks of the phrase. She says *as a New Orleanian, it was one of those things that we say...We're proud of it*. There are many things that people in New Orleans say, any of which Monica could choose to use, but she mentions, and keeps in her own speech, a phrase which has been concretely commodified. Monica's sense of nostalgia, her memory of the phrase as authentic, and the

imprimatur of value conferred on the phrase by virtue of its commodification are inter-connected factors that license her continued use of it, and pride in it, as *something that we embraced*.

Monica's experience with *making groceries* is, on an individual scale, similar to what Connie Eble (2009) discusses on a larger scale with the commodification of French in New Orleans. Eble suggests that the rise of tourism as the economic engine of the city spurred a deliberate expansion in the use of French to appeal to tourists and distinguish New Orleans from other destinations. The conscious deployment of French for commercial purposes by tourism officials has nonetheless affected local talk. Eble notes that seventy years ago New Orleanians said they were going to the *French Market* for *doughnuts*, while today people say they are going to *Cafe du Monde* for *beignets*; *Carnival* was the term for what is now widely called *Mardi Gras* (Eble 2009: 213). Further, five French immersion schools have opened in the past decade, outnumbering those devoted to any other language. Linguistic commodification has arguably influenced the growing use of French in the city, in both isolated phrases and as a spoken language.

In New Orleans, commercial discourse links particular pronunciations, phrases, and even whole languages to the city, which are sometimes taken up by speakers as they enact place-bound identities. Speakers' creation of New Orleans as a perceptual region is influenced by the mediation of commercial and private discourses that commodify local language and promote it as indexical of authentic place. Only some of the possible phonetic, syntactic, and lexical features are commodified, however. This is because place-making and commodification are tied to nostalgia and disappearance.

6.3 LANGUAGE, DISAPPEARANCE AND NOSTALGIA

The features most frequently commodified in New Orleans are those associated with Yat English (discussed in Chapter 1); r-lessness, ð-hardening (*dat* for *that*), and phrases such as *makin' groceries*. *New Orleans* magazine, for example, offers a monthly feature written in the persona of a Yat named Modine Gunch, who writes in a stylized vernacular. The column uses "particular interactional fragments and local sociocultural images," as Coupland (2009: 289) puts it, to entertain readers and sell copies. The long career of cartoonist Bunny Matthews has similarly drawn on and created local sociocultural images. His cartoons, which appeared in newspapers for many years, feature Yats named "Vic 'n Nat'ly," who use exaggerated Yat English. The Vic and Nat'ly characters are widely known in the city, and have been used for more than fifteen years in advertisements for a local florist. Mathews' characters, after Katrina, now also appear painted on the sides of delivery trucks for a local bakery, with the nearly r-less slogan *Sink ya teeth into a piece of New Orleans cultcha—A Leidenheimer po-boy* (Figure 6.4).

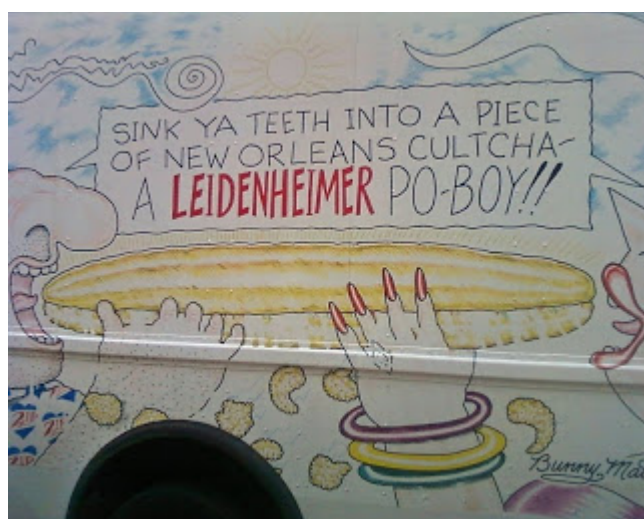


Figure 6.4 Bunny Mathews r-less cartoon advertisement, on Leidenheimer Baking Company truck, 2012. Photo from www.norainnola.com

The t-shirt in Figure 6.5 is sold online and in nearly twenty suburban New Orleans stores. It memorializes and celebrates closed local businesses—from movie theatres to gas stations—by printing their names inside each letter of the phrase *Ain't dere no more*. The phrase uses the Yat English-associated features *ain't*, *d* for *ð* in *dere*, and the multiple negation of *ain't... no*. The existence and popularity of the shirt typifies the nostalgia that suffuses Yat English in the city.



Figure 6.5 Front and back of *Ain't dere no more* t-shirt, with names of defunct local businesses printed inside each letter. Image from http://www.bennygrunch.com/yats_wear.html

Population shifts due to World War II-era housing development and White flight to suburban areas have resulted in many fewer Yat speakers within city limits (Carmichael 2012). Decades ago, a study noted that Yat was "quickly disappearing" from its urban neighborhoods of origin (DePascual et al. 1994: 39). Yat is now predominantly a suburban dialect, even though mediated activity frequently promotes it as *the* New Orleans dialect. Yat English in urban New Orleans is more widely discussed and celebrated than ever before; the linguist Felice Coles finds

that Yat is “gaining recognition as a symbol of being truly native to the city” (Coles 1997: 224). However, now that recognition is chiefly an act of nostalgia.

The *Ain't dere no more* shirt in Figure 6.5 is also an act of nostalgia, enshrining a way of speaking, and the places the shirt names, as authentically local. Nostalgia is a devotion to memory, so language that is nostalgically enshrined or enregistered as local is predominantly language that is falling into disuse, that is disappearing from contemporary speech even as it is being valorized as a sign of authentic place. It is for this reason that the Dirty Coast t-shirt company owner noted that the destruction of the city was "the best thing that could have happened" for his local language-branded merchandise. The disappearance of the city and the displacement of its population created the conditions needed for nostalgia and commodification. Language and other cultural objects that are fading away, or have disappeared, are in an ideal state to be recontextualized as appropriate objects of nostalgia and commodification. This is because they are freed from their former attachments to living, specific and complex groups of people, whose authority as speakers might challenge the new, often simplistic social meanings being attached to particular features (c.f. Androutsopoulos 2001 on the adoption of fragments of Turkish German by non-immigrant German youth).

New, recontextualized associations for linguistic features are able to be formed because their original circumstance, in which they are indexed to specific groups of people, has ended. The fractions of language circulated as being local are thus increasingly a simulation of what used to be routine talk. That is, the disappearance of living speech allows their revival as a simulation of the original. This is the philosopher Jean Baudrillard's idea of simulation, which he describes as a state "inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials and their artificial resurrection in the systems of signs" (1994 [1981]: 2). The “liquidation of all referentials” is the

disappearance of historical objects, including language, as a necessary step towards their existence as signs, or simulations of their original existence.

Baudrillard puts this process another way, saying “every event first passes through an historical existence being revived under a parodical form” (1993 [1976]: 35). Linguistic features are historical events that can become enregistered or revived as symbols, revived as simulations with new meanings. A historical event, whether a linguistic feature or other cultural form, originates in a particular context, but has an unlimited number of parodical lives available in simulation. Because it is a parody, a recontextualization, simulation transforms linguistic features into floating variables, less tethered to their original sociohistorical particulars. Because they are never original, all simulacra of a historical object are necessarily parodical, in the archaic sense of a song sung parallel to or after another. This is why Coles says Yat is recognized not as simply being native, but as “a *symbol* of being truly native” (1997: 224, italics mine). The original existence of Yat has ended, and its parodic life as a symbol has begun. The disappearance of Yat speakers, (as is also true of French speakers), from the city is what allows their resurrection as symbols.

One reason why disappearance, or the liquidation of all referentials, in Baudrillard's terms, favors the emergence of nostalgic, commodified simulacra is that language currently in use, that is, in a state of original historical existence, is attached to speakers. Actual speakers are complicated, and possess attributes that may be socially undesirable or too complex to be recontextualized into the small number of meanings ideal within the contexts of nostalgia and commodification. People are also often territorial, possessive of their culture and unamenable to any perceived re- or de-contextualization by outsiders. For example, the literary scholar C.W. Cannon recounts the outrage expressed by Creole French-speaking nineteenth century New

Orleanians by the portrayal of their speech in popular fiction as uneducated and unintelligible (Cannon 2012: 132). Similarly, King and Wicks (2009) describe angry viewer reactions to the portrayal of Newfoundland speech as rustic and unintelligible in a Canadian television commercial.

Actual speakers trouble efforts to recontextualize their language, so it is when the historical existence of a particular language draws to a close that the simulation of linguistic features, their resurrection in systems of signs, flowers. Commercial and nostalgic discourses are then free to attempt to create indexical values for language without any challenge from living voices about the simplistic, inaccurate, or artificial simulacra of language and culture they present. Not all linguistic simulacra are negative, however. While some simulacra mock the language they simulate, others represent language as purely positive. These simulacra, as is the case in New Orleans, recontextualize linguistic features as nostalgic, beloved signs of the local. This kind of recontextualization elides former historical associations of features with often undesirable social meanings: low socioeconomic class, poor education, or unfashionable rusticity.

The mediated experience of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the mediation of commodified discourse, and the effects of disappearance and nostalgia have all contributed to simulacra having an effect on speakers' stance towards and use of local language. Mass and interpersonal mediation and commercial discourses and unmediated face-to-face interactions are increasingly 'songs' experienced simultaneously. Speakers are actively engaged with both commercial and noncommercial, mediated and personal interactions, absorbing, reflecting and refashioning them until separating an original, primary, un-affected use of language from a

simulacrum is perhaps impossible. In New Orleans, r-lessness for many speakers has become a parodical form, a floating variable with numerous associations.

6.4 LOCAL LANGUAGE AS PERFORMANCE

While r-lessness and other features in New Orleans have grown increasingly recontextualized and parodic since the destruction of the city, local speech has always existed within a performative context. As the anthropologist Martha Ward puts it in a documentary film about the city's speech, New Orleans is a "very self-conscious city" (Alvarez and Kolker 1985). A long tradition of duality, including Creole and American, Uptown and Downtown, along with a Dionysian tradition of personal reinvention and performance during carnival season (c.f., Gill 1997) have contributed to the self-consciousness of New Orleanians. Many native New Orleanians are simultaneously both authentic and self-aware performers, a situation that complicates traditional ideas of the unself-conscious speaker as the most genuine.

Further, nostalgic celebration of local culture has always been a part of the city. Figure 6.6, for example, shows Sylvester Francis, a photographer who founded the Backstreet Cultural Museum in 1999 with a mission to "preserve and perpetuate the unique cultural traditions of New Orleans' African American society" (Backstreet Museum 2013). Mr. Francis wears a "History" suit decorated with the names of current and past local businesses.

Language, spoken in everyday talk, sung in Mardi Gras Indian or brass band songs, or discussed in popular media, is an integral part of the self-conscious performance and production of localness. A newspaper columnist, discussing the pronunciation of *New Orleans*, says "through the years I've changed the way I pronounce the name of my city three times. One might

wonder about such indecision, but the native doesn't" (Schneider 1996: 27). The line between the genuine and the performed is always indeterminable; in New Orleans the line is particularly vague.



Figure 6.6 Mr. Sylvester Francis, Founder of the Backstreet Cultural Museum, in "History" glasses and Mardi Gras suit decorated with names of current and past businesses. Photo by Terry Gaskins.

The centrality of tourism to New Orleans' economy has further complicated the separation between unself-conscious and performed vernacular language, as local talk is valued as a commodity for the entertainment of tourists (e.g., Zhang 2012, cf. Dubois and Melancon 2007). In the current study, one participant, Carl, works as a comedian with a Yat persona. When recording the reading passage during an interview, he was 35% r-less. He then asked if I would like to hear the passage *real yatty*. His Yat interpretation of the reading passage was 77% r-less, reflecting the availability of r-lessness as a performance resource for him.

Other participants also use r-lessness as part of their performance of localness. Norman, a young law school graduate, highly educated and therefore highly likely to be r-ful, instead is r-less in 64% of instances, in contrast to his brother, also a participant, who is completely r-ful. In the passage below, Norman says that he and his brother spoke alike in high school, but took different paths in college. Further, Norman emphasizes his local orientation and the importance of linguistically performing New Orleanian-ness when he left the city for graduate school:

I'm sure (r0) we were (r0) both yakking away [r-lessly] and we just didn't even realize it. But I think when he started (r0) at Tulane [an exclusive New Orleans university], he came in like himself and people, you know, kind of looked at him, and he had the idea, well, you know what, let me conform (r0). Where (r0) I was the exact opposite. As soon as I got to Boston and people said 'Where (r0) the hell are (r0) you from?', I was hell-bent on saying 'You know where (r0) I'm from'... I guarantee you go into that law school and ask anybody and they know, 'This sucker's (r0) from New Orleans (r0).' (NC0512)

For Norman, sounding New Orleanian is, in part, a self-conscious choice to perform. Norman and other participants, quoted above and in Chapter 2, alternate between more and less r-less speech, dependent upon their desire to project localness, often driven by a sense of nostalgia.

6.5 SUMMARY

The interrelated and increasingly mediated processes of place-making, linguistic commodification and nostalgia all recontextualize r-lessness and allow some speakers, as in the above quotes, to deliberately employ it in performances of local orientation. What the current study has found in New Orleans with speakers' use of r-lessness is that it is subject to shifting

meanings over time. Social meanings of linguistic features can shift because their meanings accumulate over time and mediated and private discourses continue to interact with them, enlarging the number of associations that may be linked to them. R-lessness in New Orleans also echoes Baudrillard's description of the "passage of every signification...into an operational field where it becomes a floating variable, dragging the whole imaginary of a previous life along with it" (1994[1981]: 11). While r-lessness in the city is decreasing overall, it is now a floating variable in an operational field that includes parodic, commodified and nostalgic elements with which speakers, particularly locally oriented speakers, engage.

Speakers can engage with r-lessness and other features as both self-conscious producers of culture, and as agents and reflections of cultural commodification. Carl's r-less Yat comedic persona is an example of the long-standing phenomenon in New Orleans of the adaptation of local, place-associated culture into commodities: as entertainment (e.g., Carl's comedy routine), as merchandise, or as an intangible experience that draws visitors (e.g., Mardi Gras Indian traditions⁷) While post-Katrina New Orleans has seen enormous growth in the production of local culture as a commodity, the recent efflorescence is a spike of activity in a city has been performing itself as a unique place for centuries.

In a sense, New Orleanians are a kind of vanguard for a global sociolinguistic process. New Orleanians have been resisting a homogenizing, culture-threatening force—Americanization—for two hundred years. Around the world, communities are increasingly confronting the interrelationship of local language and culture, globalization, disappearance, place, nostalgia, and commodification. Some aspects of local culture become cherished as

⁷ Second Chief Howard Miller, of the Creole Wild West Mardi Gras Indians, said in an oral history documentary, "the greatest kept secret in America today is the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians and we want to get it out to the world what we're about, our culture and what it means to us" (Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities 2008). His comment shows an awareness of and desire to promote local culture that many New Orleanians share.

bulwarks against the perceived rise of homogenizing, culture-threatening forces of globalization, just as aspects of New Orleans culture have become cherished in the face of Americanization, and, more recently, post-Katrina destruction. The linguistic results of this resistance to perceived threats are complex; some parts of local language become simulacra, commodified objects of nostalgia, while some parts are in robust quotidian use. Many parts of local language are both things at once, just as New Orleanians are both self-aware performers and authentic producers of culture. Speakers' use of r-lessness in New Orleans is declining as an expression of an original historical existence, as the low rate of r-lessness for younger speakers shows, but is thriving as a floating variable, revived in the system of signs in a new social imaginary.

APPENDIX A

A. 1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. Adapted from Brennan (1983)

Hello, my name is _____. Would you be kind enough to answer some questions about New Orleans language and culture?

In what city were you born?

Where were your parents born?

In what part of the city did you grow up?

Where did you go to school?

When were you born?

How would you describe your ethnic makeup? [e.g., Sicilian, Creole, Irish, African-American]

Word List

Would you please count slowly from one to five?

Would you name the days of the week? Months of the year?

Open Questions

What do you like to do in your spare time?

What is your occupation? What do you do in a day's work?

What happened during Katrina? Where did you evacuate to?

Did people comment on the way you spoke, would people say – “I could tell you were from New Orleans by the way you sound”?

What made you decide to come back?

What changes have you noticed since the storm? What are some of the changes in the city since you were a kid?

APPENDIX B

B.1 Reading Passage. Adapted from Brennan (1983)

This is a story about trying out for a basketball team in New Orleans. I'll never forget the first year I went out for the basketball team. It was my third year in high school, and it was murder. Tryouts were on a Saturday afternoon, so I couldn't go to work, and I had to try out with four other girls who never played on a team before.

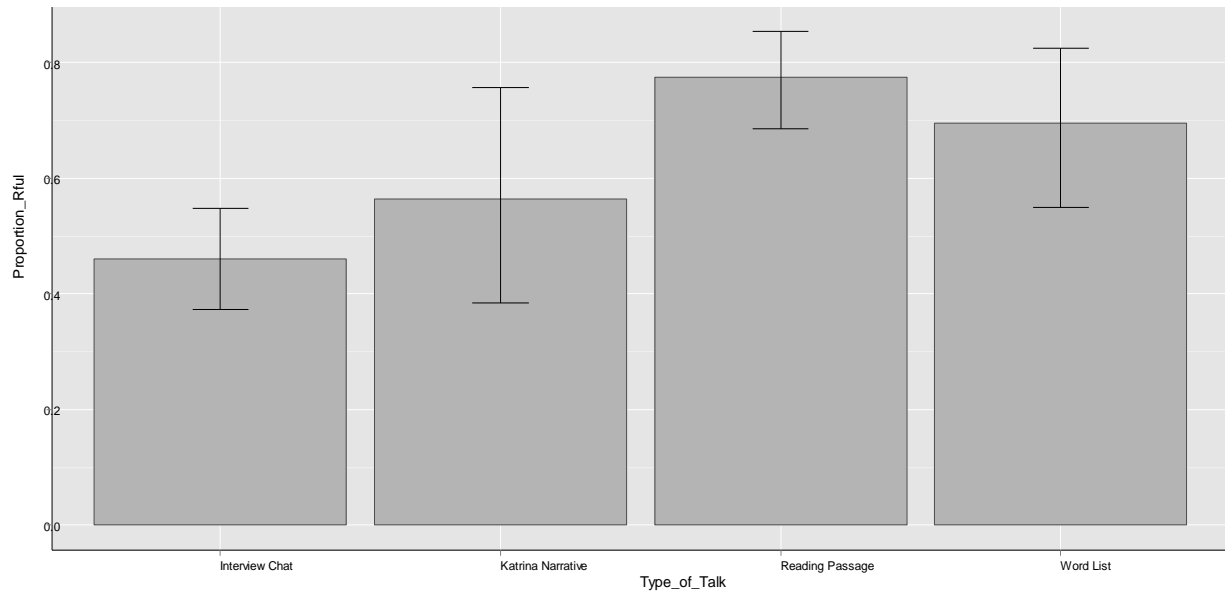
The first girl was a really poor player, but the third girl shot like she was a star on the Harlem Globetrotters. I was the fourth to perform, and I was real nervous, particularly nervous because she was so good. She toured the court like a pro and shot from everywhere. When my turn came, I felt awkward, but fortunately I did O.K. I tried to tour the court like the other girl, and I made four baskets.

The real hard part was waiting for Thursday when the teacher announced who made the team. The coach made the other girl a forward, and he made me a guard. My grandfather was so proud that he bought me my first pair of sneakers, in the French Quarter on Rampart Street.

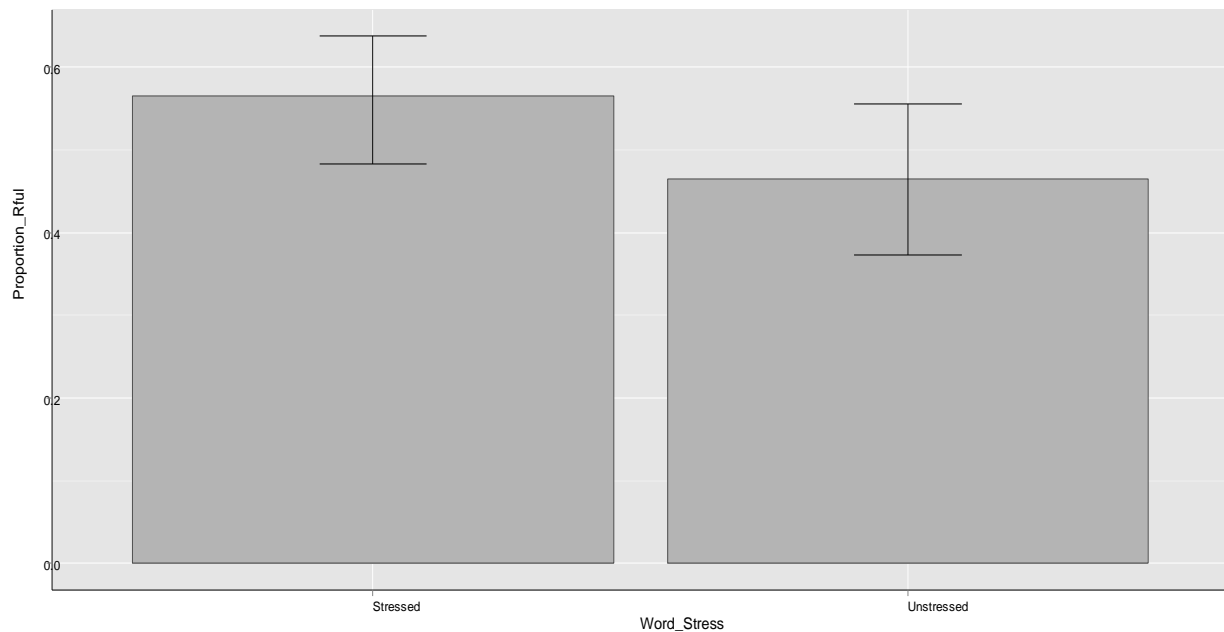
APPENDIX C

Confidence intervals for linguistic and social factors are presented below. Confidence intervals show the range of values describing the uncertainty surrounding an estimate. These bootstrapped 95% intervals are the product of the individual means for each speaker in each context, which are then compared to the grand mean (averaged across all speakers) for each context. The barplots are presented as proportion of r-ful tokens.

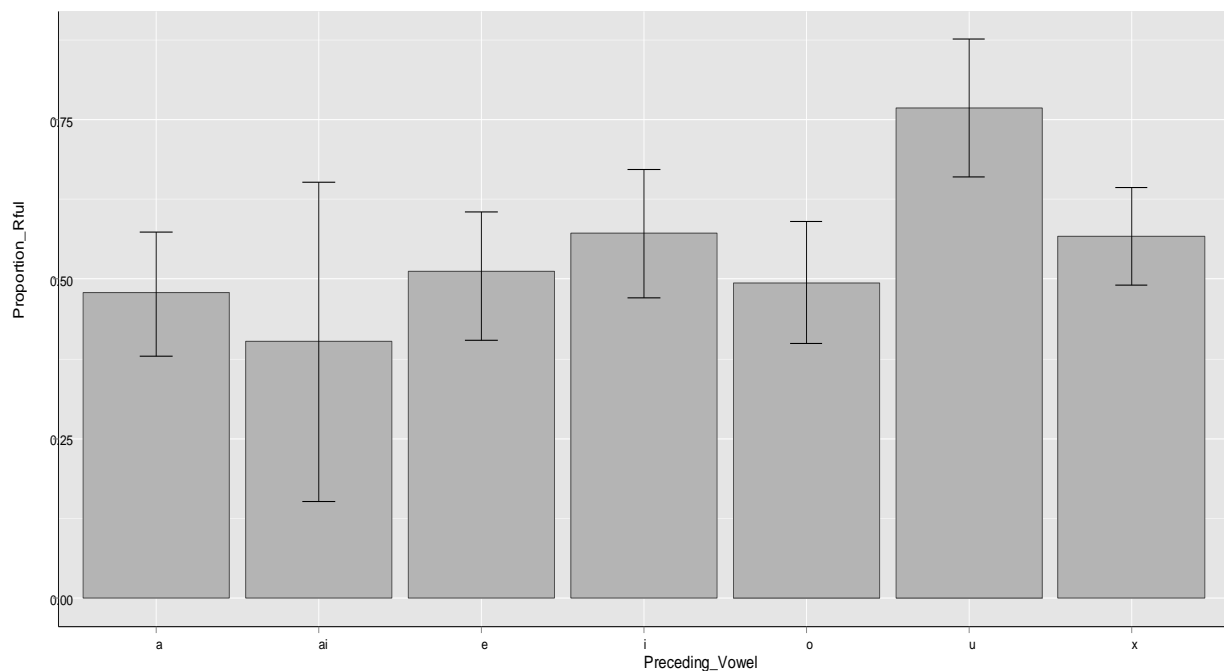
C.1 Proportion r-ful tokens by type of talk



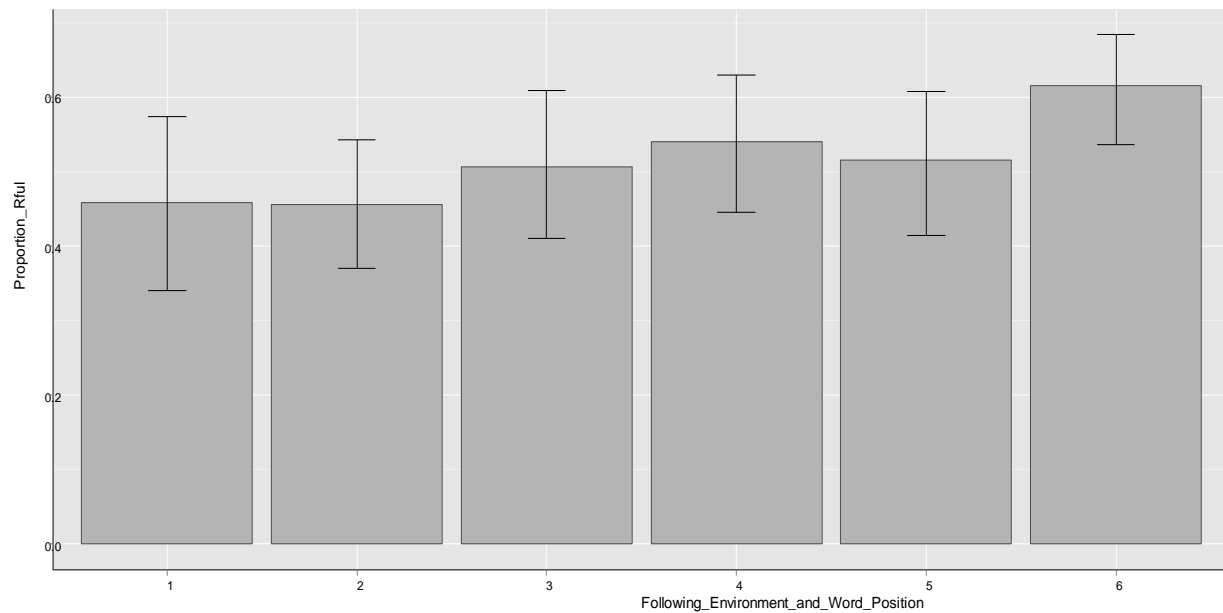
C.2 Proportion r-ful tokens by stress.



C.3 Proportion r-ful tokens by preceding vowel. The (x) represents (ə), at rightmost column. The very wide confidence interval for (ai) is due to the small sample size (N= 16), which makes the sample mean much less likely to reflect the true population mean, so that the confidence interval range is wider to account for the uncertainty.



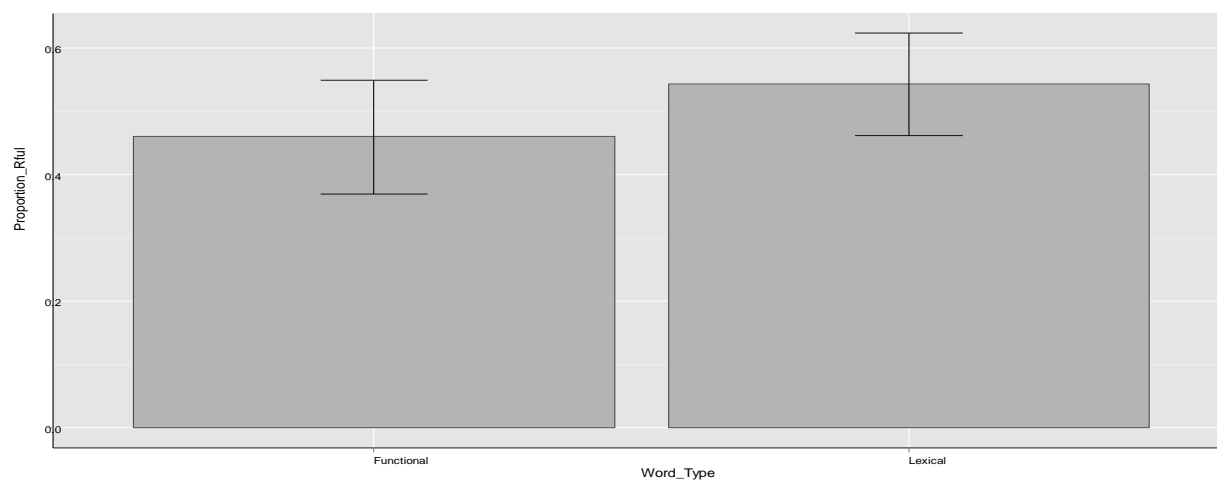
C.4 Proportion r-ful tokens by following environment.



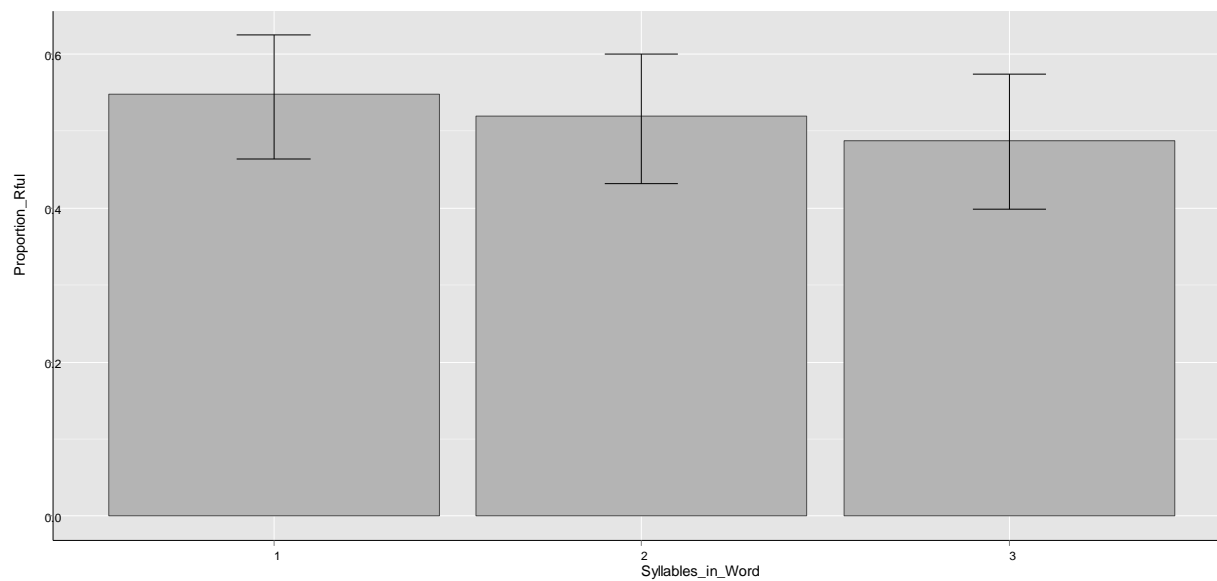
Guide to following environment:

Following Environment + Word Position	Code	N r-less/N total	% r-less
Morpheme-final, following consonant in next syllable (e.g. <i>scholarship</i>)	1	82/160	51%
Word-final, following consonant (e.g. <i>car door</i>)	2	659/1303	51%
Word-final, following pause (e.g. <i>care.</i>)	3	223/489	46%
Morpheme-final, following consonant in same syllable (e.g. <i>cares</i>)	4	145/365	40%
Word-final following vowel (e.g. <i>care about</i>)	5	301/762	40%

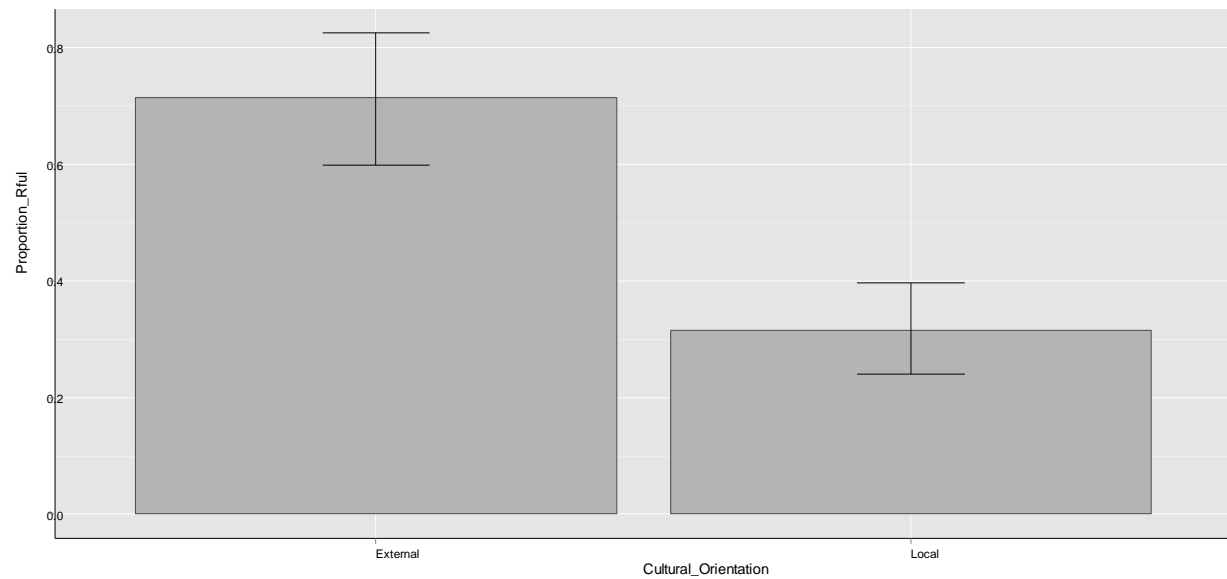
C.5 Proportion r-ful tokens by lexical/ function Word



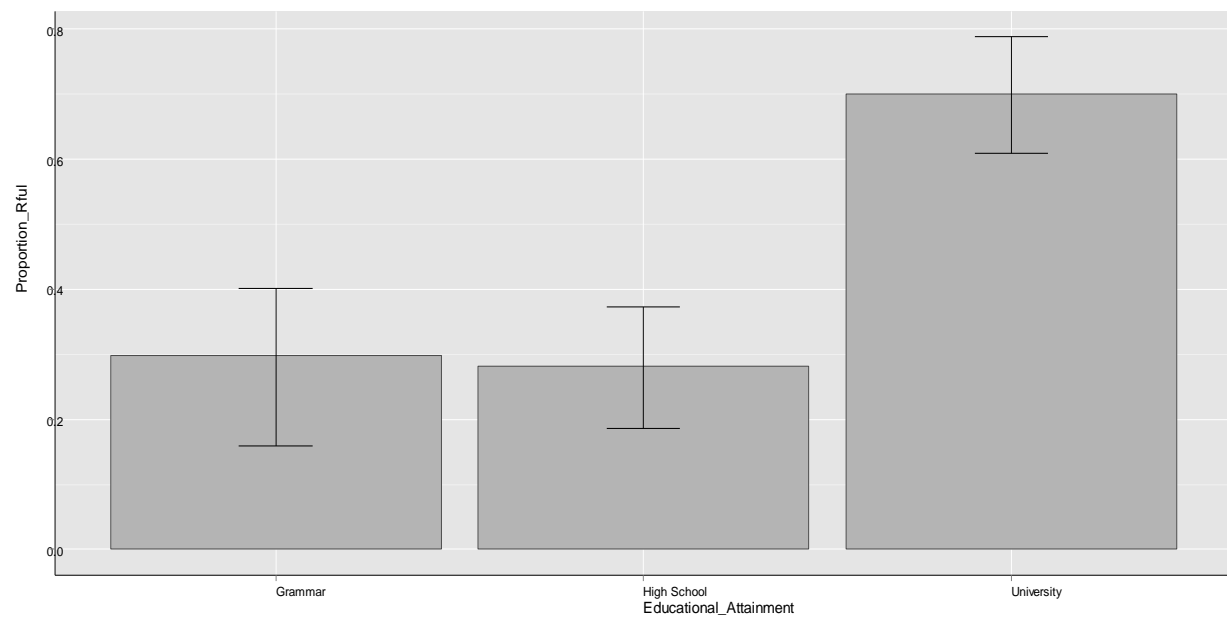
C.6 Proportion r-ful tokens by number of syllables in word.



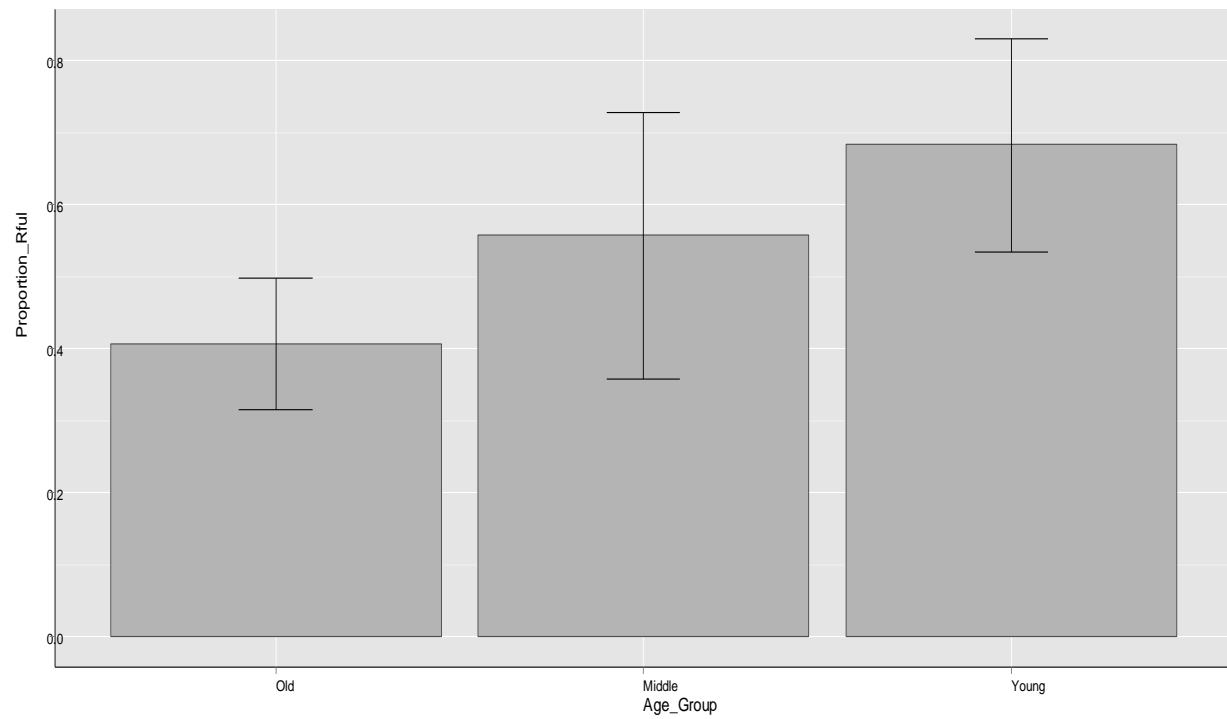
C.7 Proportion r-ful tokens by cultural orientation.



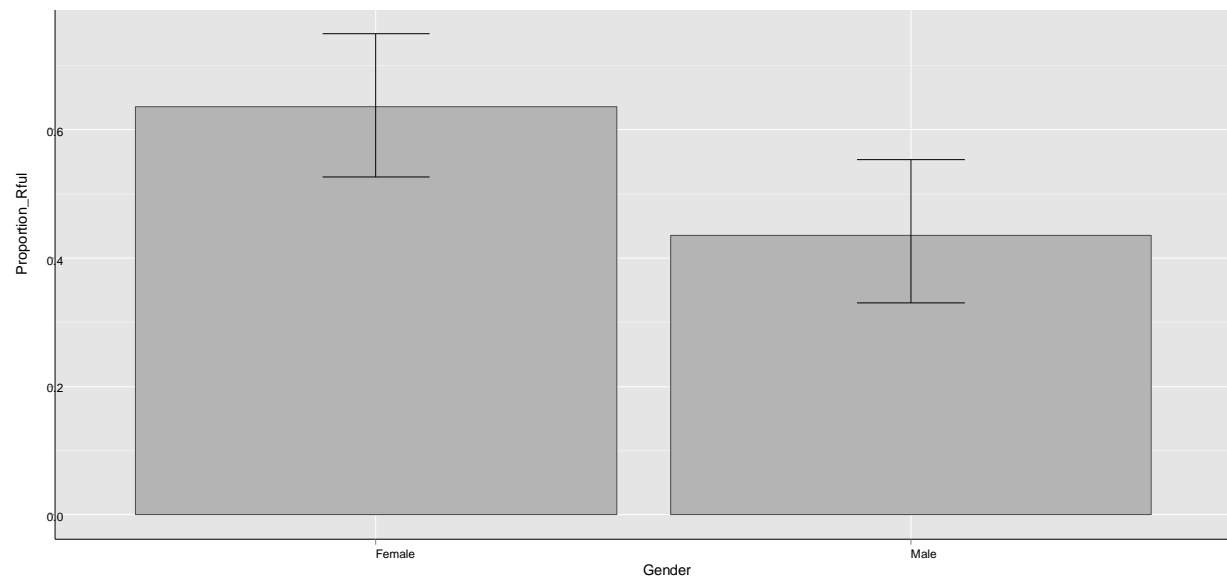
C.8 Proportion r-ful tokens by educational attainment.



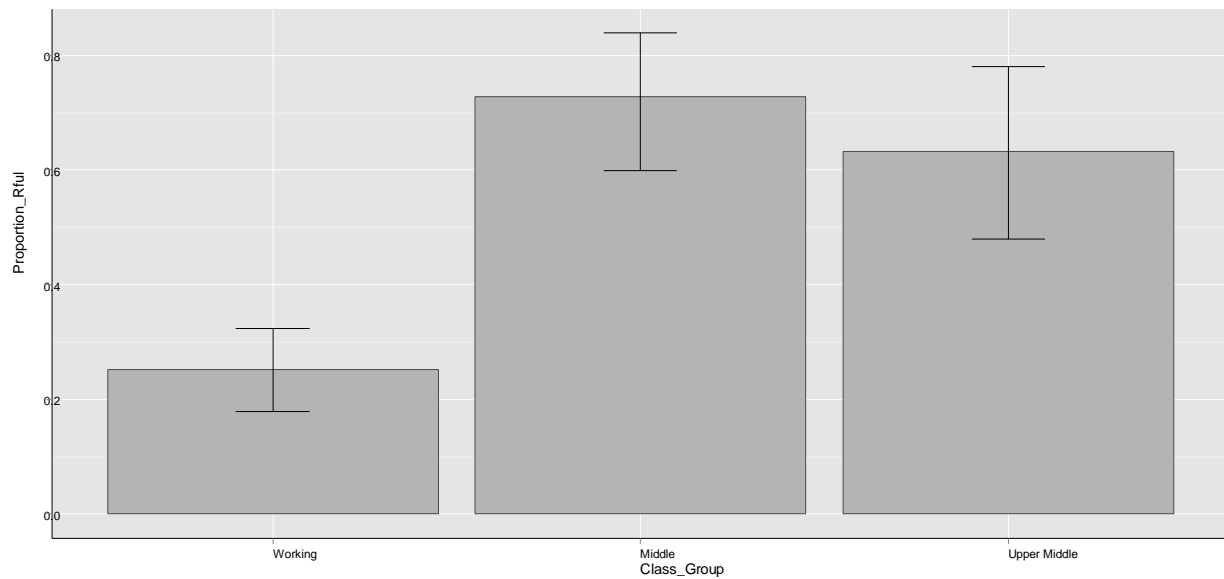
C.9 Proportion r-ful tokens by age group.



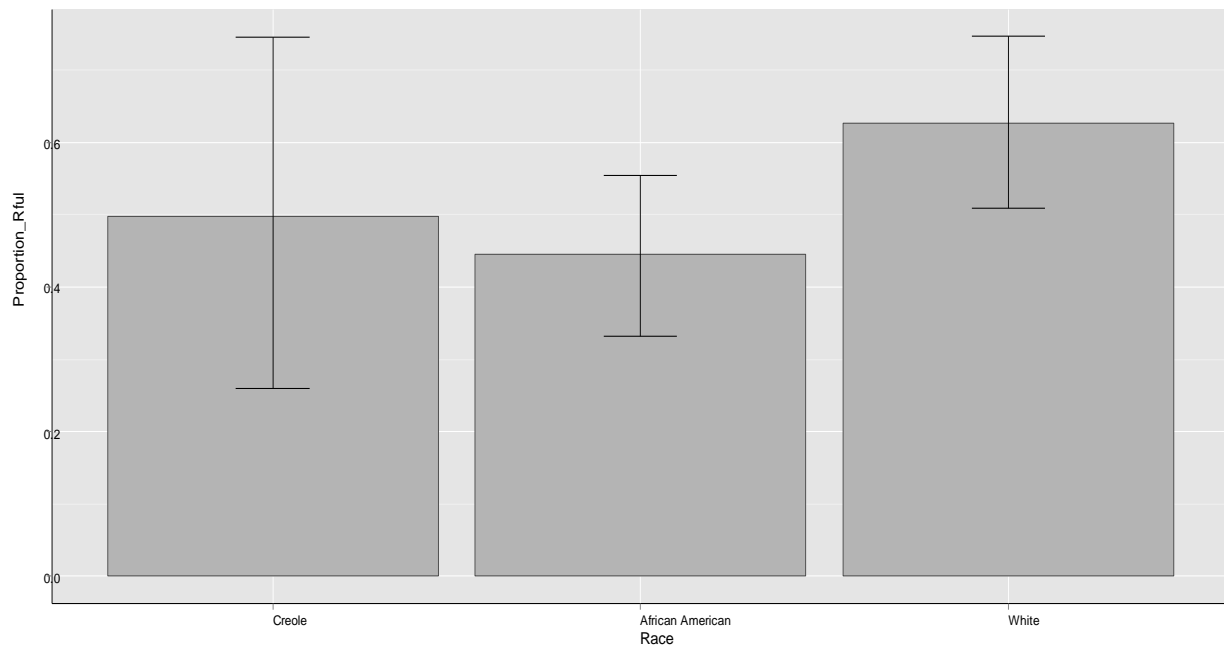
C.10 Proportion r-ful tokens by gender.



C.11 Proportion r-ful tokens by social class group.



C.12 Proportion r-ful tokens by race. As was the case with the preceding vowel (ai) in C.3 above, the wide range in the confidence interval for Creole speakers is due to the small sample size (N=7), vs. 36 African American and 28 White speakers.



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