“I never thought I had an accent until the hurricane”:
Sociolinguistic Variation in Post-Katrina Greater New Orleans

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the White working class vernacular in Greater New Orleans (GNO) has lost ground to extralocal linguistic pressures. Locally salient phonetic features such as raised BOUGHT, r-lessness, and a split short-a system are now rarely heard within city limits. In Upper St. Bernard Parish, and the town of Chalmette in particular, these linguistic features have persisted longer than elsewhere in GNO. However, the fate of this stigmatized variety is unclear following the largescale displacement in this region, caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. While some residents of St. Bernard have returned to rebuild, others have relocated to parts of GNO where these local features are much less common, such as the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain—thereby placing an all-too-literal bridge between relocators’ past in Chalmette, and their present lives on the Northshore. This study provides an updated account of local New Orleans linguistic features while contributing to our understanding of the linguistic effects of migration and displacement by examining sociolinguistic variation in the speech of St. Bernardian returners and relocators. Moreover, I attempt to extrapolate the results of this situation to make overall conclusions about the role of place identity in sociolinguistic variation.
To accomplish these goals, I examined sociolinguistic variation from three speech tasks—interview speech, reading passage, and word list data—for a sample of 57 speakers, balanced across age, gender, and post-Katrina location status (returner, relocator). I focused on three locally salient variables—(oh), (r), and (æ)—as well as a previously undescribed feature, the phonetically conditioned raising and fronting of /aw/ preceding voiceless consonants. I examined these variables acoustically and statistically in order to determine the patterning of linguistic variation according to the social variables of interest: age, gender, social class, post-Katrina location status (returner or relocator), and extra-Chaltamian orientation (calculated by a combination of factors including residential history and orientation to St. Bernard). I also informed my interpretation of these analyses with metalinguistic commentary from participants as well as insights stemming from 9 months of ethnographic fieldwork.

The resulting analysis revealed that none of the variables patterned systematically with post-Katrina location status. That is—whether an individual moved away or returned following the storm did not predict the variation. However, r-lessness and short-a system type varied according to extra-Chaltamian orientation, suggesting that to understand these data requires a more complex analysis of participants’ relationships with the places in question. I propose in my analysis that part of the relationship between sociolinguistic variation and place identity centers on awareness of the link between a linguistic feature and a given place. Overall, the data indicate a change in progress away from using traditional locally salient features such as raised BOUGHT, r-lessness, and a split short-a
system, however the rise of newer local features like (aw) indicate that the “new normal” in post-Katrina Greater New Orleans includes a “new local” in terms of dialect.
Dedication:

To my parents, Rosey Buckley Carmichael and Dennis Carmichael, who shared their curiosity and admiration for the city I was born in, and grew to love.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgments ....................................................................................................................... v

Vita..................................................................................................................................................... ix

Table of Contents.......................................................................................................................... x

List of Tables ..................................................................................................................................... xvii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................................. xix

Chapter 1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

1.1 Locality in New Orleans .......................................................................................................... 4

1.1.1 Tawkin’ like a local .............................................................................................................. 6

1.1.2 Yats .................................................................................................................................... 8

1.1.3 Chalmatians ....................................................................................................................... 10

1.2 Variationist studies of identity ............................................................................................... 12

1.3 Place identity in variationist research .................................................................................... 16

1.4 The current study ..................................................................................................................... 20

1.4.1 Linguistic variables ........................................................................................................... 22

1.5 Summary and layout of the dissertation .................................................................................. 25

Chapter 2. Sociohistorical Background ....................................................................................... 26

2.1 The Crescent City in the beginning ....................................................................................... 27

2.2 Louisiana statehood ................................................................................................................ 30
2.3 The Civil War and Reconstruction-era New Orleans ........................................ 34
2.4 New Orleans at the turn of the century ......................................................... 36
2.5 Mid-century racial tensions: Integration and White Flight .......................... 39
2.6 Chalmette: The new locus of Yat ................................................................. 43
2.7 Pre-Katrina Greater New Orleans: Expansion to the Northshore .............. 46
2.8 Hurricane Katrina and aftermath ................................................................. 48
2.9 Post-Katrina Greater New Orleans .............................................................. 53
2.10 Conclusions ................................................................................................. 54

Chapter 3. Linguistic Description of Chalmatian English .................................. 56

3.1 Varieties of English in Louisiana ................................................................. 57
3.2 Varieties of English in Greater New Orleans ............................................. 59
3.3 Varieties of English in St. Bernard Parish ................................................... 65
3.4 Chalmatian English ...................................................................................... 66

3.4.1 Chalmatian English: Phrasal and lexical features .................................... 67
3.4.2 Chalmatian English: Morphosyntactic features ...................................... 70
3.4.3 Chalmatian English: Phonetic features ................................................... 72
3.5 Conclusions ................................................................................................. 79

Chapter 4. Methodology .................................................................................... 81

4.1 The target population .................................................................................. 82

4.1.1 The sample .................................................................................................. 83
4.2 Ethnographic fieldwork ............................................................................. 86

4.2.1 Participant observation ............................................................................ 86
4.2.2 Fieldnotes .................................................................................................. 88
5.2.1 Places and spaces in Greater New Orleans .................................................. 136
5.2.2 Places and spaces in St. Bernard ................................................................. 140
5.2.3 Places and spaces on the Northshore .......................................................... 150
5.3 Chalmette according to Chalmatians ............................................................... 153
  5.3.1 Chalmatians: What’s in a name? ................................................................. 154
  5.3.2 Language in Chalmette ................................................................................ 159
  5.3.3 Neighbors in Chalmette .............................................................................. 163
5.4 Post-Katrina: “The new normal” after the storm ............................................. 168
  5.4.1 Returners vs. relocators .............................................................................. 170
  5.4.2 Hurricane Isaac ......................................................................................... 150
5.5 Conclusions ....................................................................................................... 174

Chapter 6. (aw) Analysis ....................................................................................... 175
  6.1 Previous research on (aw) in New Orleans .................................................... 175
  6.2 Description of (aw) variation observed in Chalmatian English .................... 177
  6.3 Pre-nasal (aw) .................................................................................................. 179
  6.4 Pre-voiceless (aw) .......................................................................................... 185
  6.5 Discussion ....................................................................................................... 188
  6.6 Conclusions .................................................................................................... 191

Chapter 7. (oh) Analysis ....................................................................................... 192
  7.1 Previous research on (oh) in New Orleans .................................................... 192
  7.2 BOT/BOUGHT merger .................................................................................. 193
  7.3 Raised BOUGHT ............................................................................................ 201
    7.3.1 Linguistic factors ................................................................................... 203
10.1.2 (aw) results........................................................................................................266
10.1.3 (oh) results........................................................................................................267
10.1.4 (æ) results..........................................................................................................268
10.1.5 (r) results...........................................................................................................268
10.2 Linguistic changes in Chalmatian English..............................................................270
10.3 Place and displacement..........................................................................................271
10.3.1 Orientation to place............................................................................................275
10.4 Awareness and linguistic expression of place identity.............................................280
10.5 Final words............................................................................................................285
10.5.1 Broader impacts and future directions.................................................................286
References....................................................................................................................289
Appendix A. Participant Info..........................................................................................304
Appendix B. Interview Schedule....................................................................................306
Appendix C. Reading Passage.........................................................................................311
Appendix D. Word List....................................................................................................313
Appendix E. Vowel plots of pre-nasal, pre-voiced, and pre-voiceless (aw) means by
speaker (all data, unnormalized)....................................................................................314
Appendix F. Vowel plots of BOT-BOUGHT by speaker (all data, unnormalized).....343
Appendix G. Vowel plots of short-a systems by speaker (Word list,
unnormalized)..................................................................................................................372
Appendix H. Table of r-fulness means by speaker (all data)........................................401
List of Tables

Table 1. Varieties of English in Greater New Orleans .................................................. 62
Table 2. Morphosyntactic and semantic features of Chalmatian English ..................... 71
Table 3. Consonantal features of Chalmatian English .................................................... 72
Table 4. Consonantal features of Chalmatian English .................................................... 75
Table 5. Participants according to age, gender, and post-Katrina location status .... 83
Table 6. Token counts for normalization vowel classes .................................................. 105
Table 7. Frank & Max’s (aw) Euclidean distances ......................................................... 179
Table 8. Regression table for Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v ............ 181
Table 9. Regression table for pre-voiced & pre-voiceless (aw) Euclidean distance sums ............................................................................................................................ 186
Table 10. Regression table for Euclidean distance between BOUGHT & BOT ........ 168
Table 11. BOT/BOUGHT merger categorization totals .................................................. 199
Table 12. Regression table for BOT/BOUGHT distance ............................................. 200
Table 13. Regression table for (oh) normalized F1 ....................................................... 203
Table 14. Regression table for environmental constraints .......................................... 219
Table 15. Regression table for split short-a system constraints .................................. 222
Table 16. Short-a system totals ...................................................................................... 228
Table 17. Range of Euclidean distances between normalized F1 & F2 for tense and lax tokens of /æ/, according to short-a system type ...................................................... 230
Table 18. Regression table for split short-a system type ........................................232

Table 19. Regression table for (r).............................................................................248
List of Figures

Figure 1. ‘Ain’t dere no more’ cosmetic bag from Fleuryt Girl ........................................5
Figure 2. Parishes of Greater New Orleans ................................................................. 27
Figure 3. The Neutral Ground of Canal Street in 1857 .............................................. 31
Figure 4. The Immigrant Belt in New Orleans ............................................................. 33
Figure 5. French Market 1900 ..................................................................................... 37
Figure 6. St. Joseph’s Day Altar in the French Quarter, March 2012 ....................... 38
Figure 7. Population of New Orleans, 1770-2003 (From Campanella 2006) .......... 40
Figure 8. Map of Greater New Orleans, organized by parish ..................................... 41
Figure 9. Key roads and waterways around Chalmette, Louisiana ........................... 45
Figure 10. Estimated population change in Greater New Orleans, 1990-1996 (From Wildgen 2000) .......................................................... 47
Figure 11. Ground elevation in New Orleans ............................................................. 50
Figure 12. Black New Orleanians on rooftops in the Lower Ninth Ward ............... 51
Figure 13. Damaged areas of Greater New Orleans by racial composition (Adapted from Logan 2006) .......................................................... 52
Figure 14. Census estimate for sites of St. Bernardian relocation following Hurricane Katrina (Adapted from Lasley 2012) .............................................. 53
Figure 15. Th-stopping in St. Bernard Parish ............................................................... 73
Figure 16. COIL-CURL Merger in Vic & Nat’ly comics ............................................. 76
Figure 17. Hurricane Isaac Flood Line at Middendorf’s..................................................134
Figure 18. Shotgun house (left) and Creole Cottage (right)............................................138
Figure 19. The Industrial Canal and Jackson Barracks....................................................139
Figure 20. Up the road, down the road.............................................................................142
Figure 21. The end of the world, Delacroix Island, St. Bernard Parish (Photo by Anthony Libasci)........................................................................................................143
Figure 22. Down the road tee shirt from Fleury Girl.........................................................145
Figure 23. White Boot Warriors.......................................................................................146
Figure 24. St. Bernard-themed Issue of Desire Magazine..................................................147
Figure 25. “Shhhh...they’re from Chalmette!” ecard.........................................................155
Figure 26. “Welcome to the Chalmation [sic] Nation”......................................................157
Figure 27. “When you can’t understand what a Chalmatian says”.................................160
Figure 28. “Chalmette runnin’ shoes”...............................................................................161
Figure 29. “Is Slidell the new Chalmette???” ...................................................................171
Figure 30. /aw/ means by environment for Frank (left) and Max (right).......................178
Figure 31. Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by speech type.............................182
Figure 32. Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by gender.....................................183
Figure 33. Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by gender and speech type – women (left), men (right)......................................................................................184
Figure 34. Euclidean distance sums by age.......................................................................187
Figure 35. Savannah’s performance of (aw)....................................................................190
Figure 36. Euclidean distance by age................................................................................195
Figure 37. Euclidean distance by social class...................................................................196
Figure 38. Dave, “significant distance” between BOUGHT and BOT ..........................................................197

Figure 39. Daisy, “no distance” between BOUGHT and BOT ..........................................................198

Figure 40. (oh) normalized F1 by preceding segment ..........................................................204

Figure 41. (oh) normalized F1 by number of syllables ..........................................................205

Figure 42. (oh) normalized F1 means by age ..........................................................206

Figure 43. (oh) normalized F1 according to distance between BOUGHT & BOT ....208

Figure 44. Tensing environments for New Orleans English (Labov 2007) ..........214

Figure 45. Tensing environments for NYC (top) and Cincinnati (bottom) ..........215

Figure 46. Tensing environments according to my data ..........................................................217

Figure 47. Gaston’s realization of /æ/ in “bag,” “badge, and “math” .................218

Figure 48. Function words in Savannah’s split short-a system ........................................223

Figure 49. Open syllable constraint in Ellie’s nasal short-a system (left) & Cecilia’s
split short-a system (right) ..................................................................................................................225

Figure 50. Continuous short-a systems ..........................................................................................226

Figure 51. Split (left) and nasal (right) short-a systems ................................................227

Figure 52. Short-a systems according to age .............................................................................233

Figure 53. Short-a systems according to extra-Chalmatian orientation .................235

Figure 54. Inference tree for short-a system types ..........................................................236

Figure 55. R-lessness in the United States (From Irwin & Nagy 2010) .................243

Figure 56. (r) by preceding vowel .............................................................................................250

Figure 57. (r) by morphological environment ........................................................................253

Figure 58. (r) by speech type .......................................................................................................255

Figure 59. (r) by age .......................................................................................................................256
Figure 60. (r) by extra-Chalmatian orientation..............................................................257

Figure 61. Image from Café Press tee shirt.................................................................260

Figure 62. Image from Café Press bumper sticker......................................................261

Figure 63. Social & regional dialect variation (from Trudgill 2000)............................273
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The rich and complex linguistic history of New Orleans can be seen in the signage and street names of the French Quarter, which feature a mixture of French, Spanish, and English influences. Located on the Mississippi River delta, colonial New Orleans historically represented a crucial site for the import and export of goods. As a result, this territory frequently changed hands between French, Spanish, and English rule. In 1803, the United States doubled its size by purchasing the Louisiana territory from Napoleon, however it was not until after the Civil War that New Orleans became a primarily Anglophone city (Brasseaux 2005). Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine arrived en masse throughout the 1800s, followed by waves of immigrants from Sicily and Germany (Campanella 2006). These groups of immigrants often found employment in the fishing and shipping industry of this port city, settling in certain areas of the city where commingling and intermarriage between French, German, Italian, and Irish residents of New Orleans was common (Dillard 1985). As a result these immigrant groups were often defined by the space they occupied, such as the working class neighborhoods of the Irish Channel and the Ninth Ward, where a distinct dialect of English developed from this particular mix of backgrounds. This study seeks to examine that dialect in the current landscape of Greater New Orleans.
Modern-day Greater New Orleans has seen drastic social and political changes over the past decade, primarily due to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and reconstruction efforts following the destruction wreaked by this historic storm. Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana on August 29, 2005, flooding the city of New Orleans and its environs and leaving a wave of chaos in its aftermath due to the slow federal emergency response. The hurricane’s destruction left many residents homeless, causing large proportions of the population to relocate from their previous homes to areas unaffected by the storm, in Louisiana or further. This displacement of individuals who feature a distinctly New Orleanian way of speaking raises questions for the future of that dialect, in the face of not only fewer speakers in their previous homes, but relocated speakers interacting with speakers from different areas who feature their own regional dialects. In this study, I sought to examine the relationship between language and place in this situation of displacement, but also to determine the directionality of linguistic changes with respect to local dialectal features specific to New Orleans.

From the beginning of variationist sociolinguistic research, with its roots in dialect geography, place has been used as an explanatory factor for linguistic variation (Johnstone 2004, 2010). The mapping of regional dialects reveal and reflect details about settlement patterns, contact with speakers of other varieties, and social developments within a given community. Likewise, certain regional linguistic variants can tie a speaker to a locale, echoing that place’s particular history and development. By using language to name places, or talk about them, speakers may transform a geographic entity to a social one (Tuan 1991; Basso
1996a, 1996b), as discussion of place can be a vehicle for talking about identities or behaviors of individuals. Basso (1996a, 1996b) found that stories told about specific places were used to admonish certain negatively viewed behaviors among the Western Apache. Similarly, Modan (2007) analyzed discourse about the neighborhood of Mt. Pleasant in Washington, DC, observing that residents constructed a moral geography of Mt. Pleasant, linking ideological claims to specific geographic territory. By verbally positioning themselves and others with respect to this moral-geographical grid, they were able to devalue and delegitimize certain residents’ claims to Mt. Pleasant. Such conflicts and contestations about the sense of a place are common. Blu (1996) found that in their discussion of local places, the Lumbee Indians of Robeson County, North Carolina focused on the social qualities of a place. In contrast, non-Lumbee residents, without the same historical ties to Robeson County as “homeland,” were more likely to note visual or physical features of the landscape. These findings demonstrate the multiplicity of place interpretations, and of the types of relationships that can be observed between individuals and they places they are from.

In the current study, I examine how speakers linguistically express their identities in relationship to certain places. Since “places and dialects are essentially linked (every place has a dialect; knowing a place means knowing its dialect)” (Johnstone & Kiesling 2008: 6), speaking with a marked regional accent is one way of expressing a place-based identity. Although researchers who work on regional language varieties are in essence studying language and place, very few have attempted to examine the relationship between regional accents and speakers’
relationships with the places they are from. For this reason, Becker (2009:635) calls for “a sociolinguistics of place that complicates the linkages between speakers and the places they are from,” as opposed to approaches that take place as a static, objective factor. I seek to answer this call in the current study, by examining the complex linguistic situation in post-Katrina Greater New Orleans.

1.1 Locality in New Orleans

New Orleans’ sense of locality has always been strong, and has only grown since Hurricane Katrina. There are a number of local traditions specific to New Orleans, or with a manifestation specific to New Orleans, including second line parades, St. Joseph Day altars, red beans and rice Mondays, jazz funerals, twerking, lagniappe, social aid and pleasure clubs, and of course Mardi Gras (and other traditions surrounding Carnival season, such as king cake, krewes, and Mardi Gras Indians). In recent years, and especially post-Katrina, there has been a nostalgia movement within Greater New Orleans, which uses businesses and locales that no longer exist to express a sense of locality and historical ties to the city (Schoux Casey 2013). Local comedic musical group Benny Grunch and the Bunch penned two entire songs about businesses that ‘Ain’t dere no more.’ This phrase is now ubiquitous in New Orleans, appearing in locally inspired products that have seen a surge in production since Hurricane Katrina. For example, the cosmetic bag pictured in Figure 1 is called the ‘Ain’t dere no more’ cosmetic bag, which is on sale at the specialty store Fleurt
girl, whose tag line is “everything New Orleans.”
Figure 1. ‘Ain’t dere no more’ cosmetic bag from Fleurty Girl

The bag features images of popular businesses, brands, and characters from New Orleans’ history. The description from the Fleurty Girl website\(^1\) describes the product as follows: "High-quality cosmetic bag features your favorite brands that ain’t dere no more, from Rosenberg’s to K&B to Pontchartrain Beach." This bag is part of an entire ‘ain’t dere no more’ collection, which includes, coasters, tee-shirts, and bracelet charms decorated with these images.

\(^1\) [http://www.fleurtygirl.net/specialty-shops/ain-t-der-no-more/ain-t-der-no-more-cosmetic-bag.html](http://www.fleurtygirl.net/specialty-shops/ain-t-der-no-more/ain-t-der-no-more-cosmetic-bag.html)

\(^2\) All names used in this paper consist of pseudonyms, picked by participants
Part of the nostalgia movement has also focused on another aspect of locality in New Orleans: language. In addition to the ‘ain’t dere no more’ collection, Fleurtý Girl sells tee shirts that poke fun at local sayings and distinctive lexical items, such as a shirt with a brown paper bag from Schwegmann’s—yet another business that doesn’t exist anymore—with the byline, ‘Makin groceries,’ the local way of saying ‘going grocery shopping’ which is nowadays primarily employed in a self-conscious, performative manner. Another shirt says, ‘if you were a poboy, I’d order you undressed,’ alluding to the local terms for a submarine sandwich prepared without lettuce, tomato, pickles, and mayonnaise. Indeed, to be a local in New Orleans, one must talk the talk. The following section will introduce the local dialect in New Orleans, discussing local perceptions of one of the most salient speech styles in Greater New Orleans, which is also the subject of interest in the current study.

1.1.1 Tawkin’ like a local

New Orleanians are often portrayed in national television or movies as speakers of a drawling Southern-tinged dialect of English. Locally, however, the variety of English associated with the city of New Orleans is more likely to be compared to speech in Brooklyn or the Bronx, as in the following examples from participants in the current study.²

Haylie: “People always think we’re from New Jersey or the Bronx”

Frank: “I travel all over the world and the first thing they ask: ‘are you from New York?’”

² All names used in this paper consist of pseudonyms, picked by participants themselves, in order to protect their anonymity.
Momma B: “People always seem to think we’re from New York, the way we talk.”

Benjamin: “When I was […] waiting tables [downtown] I would deal with a lot of tourists and I would get questions, asking you know, ‘where are you from? New York? Are you from Brooklyn?’”

It is not just locals who have this association, as the following quotes from publications relating to New Orleans illustrate.

*There is a New Orleans city accent…that is hard to distinguish from the accent of Hoboken, Jersey City, and Astoria, Long Island* (Liebling 1961:39)

*For those who have never heard it, you must begin by imagining all of Brooklyn on Quaaludes* (Lyman 1978:iv)

*Mrs. Reilly called in that accent that occurs south of New Jersey only in New Orleans, that Hoboken near the Gulf of Mexico* (Toole 1980:4)

These descriptions derive from a linguist (Liebling), a layperson (Lyman), and a novelist (Toole), demonstrating just how widespread this perception is. Moreover, there is some linguistic support for such associations. To begin with, the dialect features many vocalic features common to the Mid-Atlantic U.S., such as raised BOUGHT and a split short-a system. Furthermore, New Orleans does not participate in the Southern Vowel Shift nor does it contain other notable Southern English features (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). Participants in the current study echoed this sentiment, explaining that the local dialect in New Orleans is distinct from other Southern dialects.

Christian: “I have a much more pronounced accent, I think, New Orleans-y or whatever, Southern, whatever they say. But you know our Southern is different than “Southern Southern.” You know, our’s isn’t like, “hey y’all.” You know. {laughter} Ours is more—I guess, more urban, it’s more Brooklyn-y.”

Acilie: “There’s a Southern accent, and then there’s a New Orleans accent. And the two are very different.”
Mark: “You don’t have the true Southern dialect that you would find in Georgia, or Alabama, you know that kind of thing. Um. It’s more of a Yankee, up North kind of talk. You don’t sound like you’re Southern. Or country. I mean, if you think about it, New Orleans doesn’t sound Southern or country, even though everything around kind of it is.”

There are strong local opinions about speakers with a “New Orleans accent,” who have traditionally been called “Yats,” although my fieldwork indicates that the term has in recent years fallen somewhat out of favor for labeling this particular dialect.

1.1.2 Yats

It is unclear when the label “Yat” came about, but most sources agree that this term is related to the phrase “Where y’at” meaning “how are you?” One theory is that the phrase itself came from jazz musicians greeting each other on the street by asking “where y’at?” with respect to their music venues that night (Coles 2001). Another story that is circulated cites its rumored use in a Ninth Ward public high school in the 1950s labeling a subgroup of students as ‘Yats’ (Eble 2006). Regardless of its origins, the term seems to have been cemented in local vocabulary by the late 1970s/early 1980s (Eble 2003; Mucciaccio 2009).

The speech variety historically linked to the Yat social group is generally characterized in the linguistics literature as the speech of white, working class New Orleanians (Eble 2003, 2006; Mucciaccio 2009). And indeed, the language variety has its roots in the speech of working class German, Irish, and Sicilian immigrants living in New Orleans neighborhoods of the Ninth Ward and the Irish Channel in the beginning of the twentieth century (Coles 1997). Mucciaccio (2009) has theorized that the enregisterment of Yat started with the white, working class residents of the
Lower Ninth Ward, and eventually spread to encapsulate all white, working class residents within Greater New Orleans—in particular those descending from the original Ninth Ward Yats. In the middle of the twentieth century, however, as a result of legislation enforcing integration in schools, many of these speakers fled to the suburbs in a movement largely referred to as “White flight.” The town of Chalmette, located 10 miles downriver from downtown New Orleans, is frequently cited as the home of present-day Yats, if such a thing exists (Robley 1994). Mucciaccio (2009:37) writes of the linguistic and social stereotypes linked to Yats, illustrating the ways that Chalmette as a place has entered into the popular imagination of how these speakers talk, dress, and act.

Y’ats are frequently associated with fishing communities, giving rise to an imagic stereotype that Y’at speakers from Chalmette wear white fishing boots and dirty jeans. Because the dialect differs from Standard American English, the idea that Y’at speakers lack education is pervasive. Many New Orleanians note that the unprofessional nature of Y’at’s blue-collar jobs renders it unnecessary for Y’at speakers to learn to speak “properly.”

Thus there has been transference in the latter part of the twentieth century, during which time the social and linguistic stereotypes linked to Yats have shifted from the Irish Channel and Ninth Ward of New Orleans to the suburban town of Chalmette. And indeed, reflecting the significance of place in this process is the fact that nowadays the term “Yat” is not used as much to describe Chalmette residents who speak with the marked Brooklynese accent described above—rather the term “Chalmatian” has developed in its place, similarly taking on the (often negative) sociolinguistic implications of the word “Yat.”
1.1.3 Chalmatians

The town of Chalmette is situated about 10 miles downriver from the French Quarter of New Orleans, in St. Bernard Parish (in Louisiana, parishes are the equivalent of counties). A primarily white, working class community, Chalmette was hit particularly hard by Hurricane Katrina, which flooded the entire parish and displaced nearly half of the population.

Within Greater New Orleans, the residents of Chalmette—often called Chalmatians—are stigmatized for a number of reasons. One reason is linguistic, because many of these residents speak the stigmatized local dialect described above, a speech pattern that is not as commonly heard within city limits. Another part of the Chalmette stigma derives from the reason for their exodus to St. Bernard, which was to escape integration of previously all-White schools. And indeed, the almost exclusively White pre-Katrina population of St. Bernard Parish ensured de facto segregation in the public schools in the parish. Finally, there are distinctly negative ideas about the social class of Chalmatians, who work primarily blue collar jobs in the factories and oil refineries that dot the landscape of upper St. Bernard Parish. And of course, there is linkage between the linguistic judgments and social judgments described.

Many Chalmette residents seem to have some awareness about the negative social and linguistic stereotypes linked to their hometown. Self-proclaimed Chalmatian writer and artist Rose Marie Sand recited to me from memory the following poem, entitled “The Chalmatian Monologue,” which deals with the open commentary on Chalmette accents (or lack thereof) by upper middle class New
Orleanians—here represented by the wealthy suburb of Old Metairie. Because the poem was recited from memory, interspersed with commentary, I have represented the poem in bold and commentary in italics. Extralinguistic noises or descriptions appear in curly brackets.

The Chalmatian Monologue

Cocktail party small talk in Old Metairie.
Have you...
Oh gosh I’m gonna look this up when the computer goes, gets back up. But—
ohh {sucks teeth}
Have you seen the latest at the CAC?
And Bayona’s eggplant napoleon, have you tried it yet?
Hi I’m Rose, and I’m from Chalmette.
‘Oh well...you don’t sound like you’re from the Parish.’
Has this happened to you and you wanted to perish?
Or...
Ugh! I’m going to remember this. This is going back several years. One day I was riding on the back of my husband’s motorcycle and one too many people did that “oh, well, you’re from the Parish?” thing. So I ended up writing this poem. And I will remember it because it was extremely meaningful, even though—maybe it’s this mic on my face.
Or join Chalmatians’ Anonymous?
Well hide if you must, but I won’t go without a fuss.
Sure we drop our R’s and the occasional G.
People are family and that’s enough for me!
{voice catches as she gets choked up}
Okay well I’ll get back to that when I remember more of it. {laughs} And that’s how I ended it:
By birth or by choice {voice catches again}...Chalmatians rejoice

Not only does Rose—who no longer lives in Chalmette, since Hurricane Katrina—become emotional as she recites the poem, but she also discursively links being Chalmatian to certain speech patterns (“we drop our R’s and the occasional G”), and

3 Reproduced with permission from the author.
to the shame of being from Chalmette ("join Chalmatian's Anonymous"). However, she ends the poem with mention of strong family ties, finally adopting the title of Chalmatian as a term of pride. The apparent conflict between feelings of shame and pride linked to being from Chalmette, and using local speech patterns, is what makes this community ideal for examining theories of place identity within a variationist sociolinguistic framework.

1.2 Variationist studies of identity

Early variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. Labov 2006[1966]; Wolfram 1969; Trudgill 1974, 1988; Milroy 1980) can be viewed as a response to the Chomskyan (1965:3) principle that the subject of study in linguistics ought to be limited to “an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community.” In commentary added in the 2006 reprinting of *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Labov seemingly responds to this idea, writing that what unites studies that analyze variation quantitatively is a belief that “considerable insight can be gained into the structure of language by the study of linguistic variables, usually in spontaneous speech, rather than by accepting the limitation to invariant behavior that is characteristic of introspection” (380). Thus the goals of early variationist sociolinguistics were specifically linked to integrating variation in production into models of linguistic structure.

Researchers like Rickford (1986, 1987) and Eckert (1989, 2000) sought to complexify the social component of their respective community-based analyses of a
Guyanese sugar plantation and a Detroit area high school. Although community-based studies conducted by Rickford and Eckert followed in the early variationist tradition of examining broad generalized categories such as gender and class in their analyses, they also took into account local distinctions that related to these categories. Rickford’s analysis of linguistic features along the Guyanese Creole continuum incorporated knowledge about local social distinctions that Rickford called Estate Class (EC) and Non-Estate Class (NEC). EC members included those workers on the lower rungs of the hierarchy at the plantations, while NEC groups comprised both drivers and foremen at the plantations, and workers not associated with the plantations at all (such as clerks, shopowners, etc). Rickford interpreted the use of basilectal Guyanese Creole by EC speakers not as an inability to speak standard English, however, rather as “a revolutionary act, as a means of emphasizing social solidarity over individual self-advancement” (Rickford 1986:218). In Eckert’s study of a Detroit area high school, she noted that social groups organized around broader categories that she dubbed “jocks” and “burnouts.” Affiliation with one group or the other was expressed through a number of sign systems aside from language use, including territory (orientation to spaces within the school and community overall), adornment (clothing, hairstyles), and practices (extra-curricular activities). Eckert found that at Belten High, the “jock” and “burnout” groups discovered through ethnographic fieldwork, when combined with gender, better explained the observed linguistic variation than parents’ socio-economic class. Eckert interpreted this linguistic patterning as expressing adherence to local versus extra-local norms, in light of practices she observed, such
as extra-curricular activities within the high school environment versus “cruising” around town.

As variationist research has shifted towards the examination of sociolinguistic meaning, ethnographic methods have been increasingly employed. Indeed, ethnography can be broadly construed as the study of (culturally-specific) meaning, thus making ethnographic methods such as participant observation an ideal tool for examining the social meaning of linguistic variation. As Eckert (2000:74) explains,

> Because meaning is made in day-to-day practice, much of it tacitly, the study of social meaning requires access to this practice. Surveys, questionnaires, and experiments all have important places in the study of language in society. But they generally presuppose and test categories and meanings, rather than discovering them.

Recent work in variationist sociolinguistics, sometimes called the Third Wave of variation studies, examines “variation as a resource for the construction of social meaning” (Eckert 2012) rather than a non-agentive reflection of one’s position within society. Because of the focus on individual agency and construction/reproduction of sociolinguistic meaning in practice, third wave studies have tended to embrace ethnographic methods. Of this “ethnographic turn,” Rose (2006:4) writes:

> As analysts, we cannot enter communities armed with preconceived notions of social meaning. Because meaning is locally produced, the ways in which linguistic variables link to such meanings must be discovered through methods which bring us closer to the lifeworlds of the speakers whose language we study.

Studies carried out by Rose and others (e.g. Kiesling 1998; Podesva 2007; Mendoza-Denton 2008) have exemplified the third wave approach within the study of
sociolinguistic variation, by drawing from ethnography in various ways to examine the social meaning of linguistic variants within specific communities.

Kiesling spent over a year with a fraternity at a University in Northern Virginia, observing interactions between Brothers in various settings. Kiesling used insights from his ethnographic fieldwork to consider the effect of specific speakers’ personalities on their (ING) usage, connecting these patterns to larger scale male discourses.

Similarly, Rose engaged in participant observation at a senior center in Wisconsin, taking meals with residents and joining in leisure activities such as exercise classes, ceramics group, and game-oriented gatherings like Wednesday afternoon bingo and regular games of poker. To understand patterning of (dh) and (th) stopping, Rose examined linguistic performance and overt commentary about this feature, combining these analyses with an examination of interviews in which the theme of “hard work” was frequently referenced, and linked to farming and German heritage.

In Podesva’s work on falsetto and gay personae, he approached capturing recordings of an individual speaker’s everyday life in a novel way: he instructed his acquaintance, Heath, to record himself in a variety of contexts. As a result, Podesva was able to observe and document Heath’s linguistic practices in a number of settings. Podesva’s resulting interpretation of Heath’s variable use of falsetto took into account the localized, specific meaning of falsetto in different environments to understand the role of this linguistic resource in Heath’s everyday life.
Studying the linguistic and social practices of Chicana gang members, Mendoza-Denton completed two years of ethnographic fieldwork in a California high school. In her book, *Homegirls*, Mendoza-Denton detailed not only her ethnographically informed data collection and analysis, but she also noted her missteps along the way, identifying how her own biases and stereotypes affected her interactions with participants and her interpretation of her data. Mendoza-Denton's main social findings in her fieldwork surrounded around the division of Norteña and Sureña, however she found that /ɪ/-tensing patterned more by coreness in either gang, than by the gang divisions themselves. In this way, Mendoza-Denton’s ethnographic fieldwork informed her interpretation of linguistic variation, while her linguistic analysis informed her interpretation of the social dynamic at Sor Juana High School.

In the current study I follow in this third wave tradition, combining ethnographic methods with variationist analysis in order to examine the role of place-based personal identity in sociolinguistic variation.

1.3 Place-based personal identity in variationist research

Expression of personal identity involves employing a constantly evolving—and often locally-defined—set of social and cultural resources, which may be emphasized to differing levels across various social situations (Eckert 2000, 2008; Podesva 2007). A speaker’s personal identity may often be linked to place, since (1) everyone is “from somewhere” and (2) expressing a connection with a given place
allows for individuals to index certain aspects of that location—for example, a “tough” neighborhood or an “elite” subdivision—to point to those qualities in themselves. The places towards which individuals orient are generally hometowns or adopted hometowns, but they can also run the gamut of locales that one wishes to be associated with, especially in situations of crossing or appropriation (Rampton 1995). Because the constellation of social features associated with a given locale are often complex and viewed differently by insiders and outsiders (or even by individuals from the same place, e.g. Modan 2007), place-based personal identity may differ across speakers, even as they express claims to the same locale.

Language practices offer a crucial resource for individuals to express place-based personal identity, since there are strong ties between place and regional dialect (Johnstone & Kiesling 2008). Regional linguistic variants may be employed by speakers as a way of expressing being “from somewhere,” but also to express a tie to the social qualities associated with that place. The existence of such associations in the public imagination have been made clear in particular by research in perceptual dialectology (e.g. Preston 1989, 1996, 1999; Hartley & Preston 1999): Southern U.S. English speakers are often described as “lazy,” speakers from California as “laid back,” and so forth. And many speakers take advantage of these associations between language, place, and social qualities, by expressing their place-based personal identity linguistically. For example, in the city of Pittsburgh, the pronunciation of words such as “downtown” with monophthongal /aw/ (“dahntahn”) has entered into many speakers’ awareness of local speech patterns, and is frequently actively employed and commodified to index a
Pittsburgh-linked, working class identity (Johnstone, Bhasin, & Wittkofski 2002; Johnstone Andrus, & Danielson 2006). The expression of place identity can also be located at a more local level, as Becker (2009) found with variation in (r) on the Lower East Side. Becker noted increased levels of r-lessness in the speech of Lower East Siders when talking about neighborhood issues, which Becker interpreted as a linguistic expression of Lower East Side identity. In some cases, language can be used to express links to places on multiple levels, as in the hemispheric localism expressed by Latina gang girls in California (Mendoza-Denton 2008). Mendoza-Denton defined hemispheric localism as “the projection of neighborhood-based, spatialized discourses of ‘turf’ onto broader domains that play out debates over race, immigration, modernity, and language” (104). She noted that linguistic practices represented just one resource for expressing allegiance to different place-linked ideologies.

Since places are complex social constructs, a place-linked linguistic feature can come to index a multifaceted web of associations tied to that place. Solomon (1999) examined (y) in Yucatán Spanish in Vallidolid, concluding that variant choice reflected affiliation with urban centers versus rural locales. She found that groups with greater urban orientation favored “strong y” ([ʒ] and related variants) as a part of more general distancing from linguistic and social practices they view as characteristic of rural (and thus poor, uneducated, etc) speakers. Rose’s (2006) analysis of variation at a Wisconsin senior center drew connections between rates of (dh)-stopping and popular discourses about farming and living off the land. She found that (dh)-stopping was tied to the community’s conception of what it meant
to live there. Research on Martha’s Vineyard initially conducted by Labov (1972[1963]) suggested that the spatial distinctions of “up-island” or “down-island” were significant, as were whether participants had negative feelings towards the Vineyard or desired to leave the island. These place-linked factors were included in analyses of /ay/ and /aw/ centralization, which indicated that the speakers who produced the highest rates of centralization were those “up-island” residents who had positive feelings about Martha’s Vineyard. Blake & Josey (2003:481) followed up on this research 40 years later, finding that “with a change in the socio-economic structure of the Vineyard, locals’ allegiance to a traditional way of life has diminished. As a consequence, there has been a decline in the linguistic marking of opposition to non-local populations.” That is, when the role of place in locals’ identity changed, their use of linguistic indicators linked to the island followed suit.

Place-linked identities can become highlighted in a community for various reasons: it may be in response to struggles over defining a place (Modan 2007; Becker 2010), or contact with outsiders (Labov 1972[1963]; Lane 1998; Johnstone et al 2006). For example, Lane (1998) found that the speakers in the Danish town of Thyborøn who spoke with the most traditional, regionally-marked accents were those same speakers who had the most dealings outside the town. Johnstone et al (2006) documented a similar pattern in the development of Pittsburghese, which did not become an enregistered speech variety until increased geographic mobility following World War II resulted in more interactions between Pittsburghers and speakers from other places. Research on diphthong centralization in Martha’s Vineyard has documented that the influx of outsiders into a previously isolated area
may strengthen the desire to linguistically express ties to that place (Labov 1972[1963]; Blake & Josey 2003). The displacement following Hurricane Katrina has resulted in increased contact with outsiders as well as foregrounded place ideologies, the combination of which is quite likely to render salient the role of place in linguistic identity expression.

1.4 The current study

There is an unfortunate dearth of research on varieties of English spoken in New Orleans (Eble 2006). One of the goals of this study, thus, was to fill the gap in the linguistics literature on this region of the United States by describing the current state of Chalmatian English, and by documenting newer linguistic developments in the post-Katrina landscape.

Another goal was to examine theories of place-based personal identity and sociolinguistic variation, in a situation in which place is contested—where individuals have differing claims to certain places, but also different relationships with them. To accomplish this task, I examined the speech of 57 Chalmatian English speakers, half of whom returned to rebuild in St. Bernard Parish following Hurricane Katrina, and half of whom relocated to other areas in Greater New Orleans, where locally salient Chalmatian English features are less common. Returners have opted into what Schoux Casey (2013) calls a “100% volunteer population.” Such a situation may result in strong ideologies related to being from Chalmette and returning there after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, as the
following excerpt from Mucciaccio’s (2009) interviews with New Orleanians suggests.

Laurel Duope: [talks about doing some sales for her business in Chalmette; some people there were wearing shirts bearing the word ‘Chalmatian’] they’re proud of being called ‘Chalmatians’
Gina DeNovis: before Katrina they weren’t. Before Katrina they’s bust you in the jaw
Francesca Mucciaccio: but after they are?
GD: they are
LD: yeah, because they defeated something.

It is possible that such ideologies relating to expressing a link to Chalmette
(linguistically or otherwise) also extend to relocators, who could ramp up or
exaggerate their Chalmette-linked linguistic features as a reaction to their physical
movement away from the place with which they wish to identify. Or, in contrast,
they may eschew the locally stigmatized features of Chalmatian English, opting
instead to shift towards broader local norms. Thus the range of Chalmette-linked
variants in the speech of these participants may be predicted not only by speakers’
current location, but also by their desire to affiliate with that location. As Le Page &
Tabouret-Keller (1985: 181) write, “the individual creates for himself the patterns
of his linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the groups with which from time
to time he wishes to be identified or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes
to be distinguished.” This study extends this theory from social groups to places
(which are, of course, imbued with social qualities and stereotypes just as groups of
individuals are). Thus the question at the crux of this study is: how does affiliation
with Chalmette—whether in terms of literal residence there or by other measures of
affiliation—affect use of Chalmatian English features?
To answer these questions, I employed an ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis, since ethnographic methods are particularly suited to the study of sociolinguistic meaning, which is produced in everyday interactions (Kiesling 1998; Eckert 2000; Rose 2006; Podesva 2007; Mendoza-Denton 2008). My observations of everyday activities in Greater New Orleans allowed me to uncover and understand the sociocultural structures motivating locally meaningful actions and patterns of behavior within Chalmette, rather than presuppose the importance of certain social factors. Determining locally salient social categories then framed my interpretation of the linguistic data collected in this study.

1.4.1 Linguistic variables

I focused on four phonetic features of Chalmetian English. Part of the motivation for examining phonetic features is because one way of expressing a place-linked identity is by having a regional accent, or pronunciations specific to one’s home region. Indeed, for many speakers “having an accent” means being “from somewhere” (Johnstone & Kiesling 2008), in a salient way that often elicits explicit commentary. Since this study centers on linguistic expression of place identity, the phonetic level represents a potentially important site of place-linked identity construction. Another reason for focusing on the phonetic level is due to the lack of documentation of the dialects of Greater New Orleans. There is almost no acoustic phonetic research on this dialect outside of what was done for the Atlas of North American English (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006), so there is some responsibility to follow up on some of the impressionistic research that has been completed on this
dialect. Moreover, since much of the recent research focused on this dialect has focused on the loss of locally salient linguistic features (e.g. Mucciaccio 2009; Schoux Casey 2013), there is also some urgency to the documentation of the linguistic patterns native to this region, before shifts in language patterns erase the evidence of these historically attested features. Three of the phonetic features in this study have been documented or otherwise attested in previous linguistic research:

- (r) – Non-rhoticity, or r-lessness (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Brennan 1983; Coles 1997, 2001, 2004; Eble 2003, 2006; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009; Schoux Casey 2013)
- (oh) – Raised BOUGHT (Labov 2007)
- (æ) – Split short-a system (Labov 2007).

A fourth feature in the current study consists of variation in pronunciation of (aw), of which I found no mention in the literature. (aw) may be variably pronounced with a raised and fronted overall trajectory preceding voiceless consonants, or with a raised and fronted nucleus preceding nasal consonants. In other speech communities a following voiceless consonant triggers phonetic variation such as Canadian raising (e.g. Joos 1942) and centralization (e.g. Kurath & McDavid 1961).

Similarly, although pre-nasal nucleus-tensing has not been previously studied in GNO, it has been examined in Charleston (Baranowski 2007), Philadelphia (Labov 2001), and Toronto (Chambers & Hardwick 1985).

What I am referring to as the BOUGHT vowel represents phonological open-o or /ɔ/. Although in many varieties of American English, this vowel is merged with the BOT vowel /ɑ/, Labov (2007) notes that for many New Orleanians in the Atlas of

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4 Throughout this study I will refer to variability in pronunciations of /a/, /ɔ/, /æ/, and /au/ using parentheses around orthographic (r), (oh), (æ), and (aw), respectively.
North American English (ANAE), BOUGHT and BOT are unmerged. What’s more, in many cases the nucleus of /ɔ/ for some New Orleanians was raised, resembling a pattern common in the Mid-Atlantic states.

Split short-a systems have been examined throughout the United States, in locales such as New York City (Labov 2006[1966]; Labov 2007; Becker & Wong 2009; Becker 2010), Philadelphia (Labov 1989, 2001), Cincinnati (Boberg & Strassel 2000), and Columbus (Durian 2012). Notably, the short-a systems described in these places differ from each other in terms of linguistic constraints. The Classic Labovian split in NYCE features tensing preceding voiced stops, voiceless fricatives, and non-velar nasals, while Philadelphians tense before nasals and front voiceless fricatives /f, θ, s/; in Cincinnati, speakers tense before nasals, fricatives, and the voiced stop /d/, while in Columbus speakers tense before nasals, voiced stops, and voiceless fricatives. What unites these systems is the seemingly random phonetic constraints that trigger tensing, which result in complex short-a systems.

Variable non-rhoticity, defined as the variable presence of historic/orthographic <r> in syllable coda position, is often referred to as (r). Within the United States, (r) has been studied in Detroit (Wolfram 1969), Alabama (Feagin 1990), Boston (Irwin & Nagy 2007), and New Hampshire (Nagy & Irwin 2010), although perhaps the most well-known study of (r) is Labov’s (2006 [1966]) oft-cited New York City department store study.

It should be noted that these last three features of r-lessness, raised BOUGHT, and a split short-a system, all previously attested in New Orleans English, have been observed in New York City English, by Labov (2006[1966]) and Becker (2010).
Previous work on NYCE provides an interesting point of comparison with Chalmatian English, which is spoken more than a thousand miles from New York, in this fellow port city located in the Deep South as opposed to the Northeast. As participants noted, the New Orleans accent is distinctive within the South. Thus these features merit examination, to better understand this dialect’s place within the broader linguistic landscape in the South, and in the United States as a whole.

1.5 Summary and layout of the dissertation

In this chapter, I have introduced the questions of interest in this dissertation, addressing past research in this vein. Chapter 2 presents the sociohistorical background for the development of Chalmatian English within Greater New Orleans. In chapter 3, I provide a detailed linguistic description of this speech variety, situating it within the greater region. Chapter 4 identifies the methods used to obtain and analyze the data used for this study. In chapter 5, I introduce concepts uncovered through ethnographic fieldwork, which frame the quantitative analysis I present in chapters 6 through 9, which present the results of analyses performed on (aw), (oh), (æ), and (r), respectively. Finally, in chapter 10, I discuss the overall patterns in results, relating them to sociolinguistic theory and stating the broader implications of this study, as well as identifying areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2. SOCIOHISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The particular historical, geological, and geographic circumstances in Greater New Orleans set the scene for the current day social setting in the region. As New Orleans has expanded throughout its history, surrounding suburban areas became populated by previous city-dwellers, mirroring developments in other American cities (Beauregard 2006).

Figure 2 presents a map of Louisiana with a box around Greater New Orleans, a census-designated area including Orleans (city of New Orleans), Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany Parishes. The parish system, and the biblical names of the parishes themselves, reflects the strong Catholic background in the region.

In this chapter, I provide a broad background of the socio-historical events that have created the particular sociolinguistic situation in Greater New Orleans that is the focus of this study. First I detail the evolution of New Orleans from its humble start as a French colonial outpost through its acquisition by the United States, and up through Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Era. Then I discuss the development of the suburban communities found in St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parish, which form the geographic focus of this study. Finally, I recount the events surrounding
Hurricane Katrina, to provide a backdrop for introducing the social situation in Post-Katrina Greater New Orleans.

Figure 2. Parishes of Greater New Orleans

2.1 The Crescent City in the beginning

The city of New Orleans is situated on a crescent-shaped plot of land sandwiched between the Mississippi River and the vast expanse of Lake Pontchartrain, which
measures approximately 25 miles across at its widest point (US Army Corps of Engineers 1963). Although at the time of settlement, major portions of the city—in particular the higher land where the current-day French Quarter is located—were situated well above sea-level, subsidence and erosion have resulted in a distinctive “bowl” shape to the city, with both natural and man-made levees surrounding the now distinctly low-lying metropolis (Campanella 2006). New Orleans is currently the only major city below sea level in the United States (Leavitt 1982).

The history of New Orleans is marred by disease, natural disasters, and conflicts between the various groups fighting for this precariously-situated territory. Located at the delta of the Mississippi River, New Orleans represented a vital port for trade in the Caribbean. This inhospitable marshland was also highly sought after because it represented the point of control for the entire Mississippi Valley during a time when most travel and trade occurred via waterways, not by land. And perhaps most crucially during the time of European colonial empires in North America: this land stood between the European powers who had established colonies on the East Coast of modern-day United States, and their expansion into the West. Pre-colonial inhabitants included the Choctaw and the Houma Indian tribes, whose limited effect on the linguistic landscape of New Orleans is seen in certain place names, such as the St. Tammany Parish town of Abita Springs (literally “Springs Springs”) and the famously unpronounceable street name: Tchoupitoulas Street (Leavitt 1982).

In 1682, René-Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle became the first Frenchman to navigate the Mississippi River down to the Gulf of Mexico, claiming the territory in the name of the French King Louis XIV. Due to the harsh terrain and inhospitable
conditions in this semi-tropical marshland, it was not until 1699 that the Canadian-born brothers Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d’Iberville and Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville were able to establish permanent settlements in the coastal Louisiana territory (Brasseaux 2005). Iberville died of yellow fever in 1706, but in 1718 his younger brother, Bienville, would go on to establish New Orleans, which became the capital of the colonial government in 1721 (Wall 1990). During this time, the population of the Louisiana territory was augmented as a result of an unprecedented—and purposely misleading—publicity campaign directed by unscrupulous Scottish financier John Law in the early 1700s (Leavitt 1982). This campaign sought to reverse the negative image Louisiana had acquired in France, where it was thought of as a dangerous and undeveloped swamp. The population of voluntary settlers was further supplemented by forced immigration of convicts, prostitutes, and indigents, which resulted in the immigration of more than 7,000 new European settlers between 1717 and 1721 (Brasseaux 2005).

In the late eighteenth century an important social group arrived in Louisiana: the Acadians—or as they are commonly known in Louisiana, Cajuns. Following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the French territory of Acadia (modern-day Nova Scotia and Newfoundland) came under British rule. The Acadians and the British had strained relations in this region of modern-day Canada over the next forty years, finally resulting in the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755. Believing that Louisiana was still a French territory, many of the Acadians found their way to the port city of New Orleans over the next thirty years, seeking refuge, however the territory was sold to Spain in the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1762. Spain governed the
Louisiana territory for only 34 years, with minimal linguistic effect as a consequence of the lack of Spanish immigrants during this time (Griolet 1986). There was, however, an influx of Canary Islanders (Isleños) in St. Bernard Parish in the late 1700s (Leavitt 1982), the descendants of whom still inhabit the lower portion of the Parish, mainly earning their livelihood by fishing, as their ancestors did.

2.2 Louisiana statehood

In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon. Nine years later, on April 30, 1812, Louisiana would become the 18th state to join the Union. During this time, language shift from French to English was occurring on a larger scale, as an influx of Anglophones arrived from other Southern U.S. states, causing Louisiana’s population to double between 1810 and 1820 and resulting in the French language losing its majority status (Rottet 1995). Though Louisiana had become a part of the United States, the US was waging their own battle against the British for their sovereignty in the War of 1812. The last battle of the war took place in 1815 in Chalmette, Louisiana, when the British attempted to take control of New Orleans. Major General Andrew Jackson led the American troops to a decisive victory over the British in the Battle of New Orleans, which marked the end of foreign attempts to reclaim the territory—as well as cementing New Orleans’ position as a crucial addition to the United States.

5 The War of 1812 had officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent two weeks prior to the Battle of New Orleans, however the sizable victory over the British won commanding officer Major General Andrew Jackson, and the city of New Orleans, a place in history.
Even as part of the US, Louisiana maintained many French social, cultural, and linguistic qualities (Griollet 1986). Because of the increasingly strong presence of Anglo-Americans throughout the 1800s, early statehood was a time of rising tensions in New Orleans between the Creoles, the original French inhabitants, and the Américains—the Anglo-American arrivals. For the most part, Creoles lived in the French Quarter, located just downriver of the city divider, Canal Street, and Anglos lived upriver in Uptown New Orleans (Campanella 2010). So strong was the hostility between these groups, that the median strip running down Canal Street (Figure 3)

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During this time period, the word “Creole” denoted wealthier New Orleanians of French ancestry; however, as time passed, this word came to be appropriated by the mulatto and Free Black populations of New Orleans such that in modern-day New Orleans it is generally used to indicate lighter-skinned, often wealthier, residents of at least partial African American ancestry.
came to be called the “Neutral Ground,” acknowledging this cultural divide but encouraging nonviolence between the opposing groups in this space7 (Schoux Casey 2013).

The mid-1800s brought more newcomers than just Américains migrating westward. Indeed, from the 1837 to 1860, the port city of New Orleans regularly ranked second only to New York City in terms of immigration (Campanella 2010). Within this time period arrived another cultural group crucial to the development of New Orleans: the Irish. While the Irish were Catholic like the French, and spoke English like the Anglo-Americans, their presence in New Orleans was not welcomed by either of these more socially and economically dominant groups. Working mostly as laborers, roustabouts, and dock workers, the Irish settled throughout the city—primarily in less desirable parts of town, along the riverfront or in the low-lying “back-of-town” marshes towards Lake Pontchartrain (Campanella 2010). However, in the popular imagination, the area along the riverfront in Uptown New Orleans known as the Irish Channel was the historical epicenter of Irish within New Orleans. In actuality, this neighborhood was equally populated by German immigrants, who also arrived in large numbers during this time period (Campanella 2006). On the other side of downtown New Orleans, in the Marigny and Bywater (8th and 9th Wards) was the highest concentration of German immigrants, earning the area the nickname, “Little Saxony.” The Irish Channel and Little Saxony form bookends of what Campanella (2006, 2010) called the “Immigrant Belt,” areas of immigrant settlement surrounding downtown New Orleans, as seen in Figure 4.

7 The legacy of this usage may be seen in modern-day New Orleans, where “neutral ground” is the local, unmarked term for all median strips (Eble 2006).
By 1840, New Orleans was the third largest city in the U.S., with a population of 102,000 (Leavitt 1982). Of this number, sixty percent of residents were White—bumped into the majority by the newly arrived Irish and German immigrants—twenty percent were Black slaves, and another twenty percent free people of color (Campanella 2010). This categorization of residents reflects a three-tiered system, similar to those found in other Caribbean settlements but unlike the binary Black vs. White divisions found throughout the rest of the American South (Campanella 2006). As issues of slavery and states rights came to the fore in the mid-1800s, this tripartite division in New Orleans would eventually adapt to broader U.S. patterns.
2.3 The Civil War and Reconstruction-era New Orleans

The mid-1800s were marked by ever increasing hostility between slave and free states, as the U.S. was forced to make decisions about the status of new States as they expanded westward. Louisiana was staunchly opposed to the abolition of slavery, and with good reason: as a result of slave labor, New Orleans had become the wealthiest metropolis in the American South, and the largest cotton market in the world (Leavitt 1982). The 1860 election of anti-slavery proponent President Abraham Lincoln incited the beginning of the Civil War, as South Carolina seceded from the United States in December of 1860, before Lincoln even took office. On January 26, 1861, Louisiana followed suit, becoming the sixth Southern state to join the Confederacy.

Before the Civil War, Louisiana had more free people of color (gens de couleur libres) than any other state in the American South (Wall 1990). The designation free people of color was applied to slaves that had been manumitted, the offspring of previously freed slaves, and offspring resulting from relations between slaves and individuals of European descent. It was quite common within Louisiana for French Creoles to take African or mixed mistresses (placées), resulting in a large population of mixed race (mulatto) Louisianans who enjoyed many of the same privileges as Whites—indeed the majority of free people of color were educated, owned property, and worked skilled jobs as artisans and merchants (Leavitt 1982; Brasseaux 2005). In some cases, free people of color even owned slaves themselves (Campanella 2006). The liberation of slaves caused a predicament for the three-tiered caste system of Louisiana, by effectively removing the institutional distinction between
the free people of color and slaves. As a manner of distinguishing themselves from newly freed slaves, the often mixed-race individuals who had previously identified as free people of color adopted the label “Creole” to accentuate their European parentage (Powell 2012). To this day, this cultural group is a dominant force within the city of New Orleans, with a number of celebrated musicians, chefs, and cultural icons claiming Creole heritage.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, emancipated slaves migrated to New Orleans en masse, practically doubling the city’s Black population over the next decade (Campanella 2010). Similar to the Irish, these new arrivals worked as laborers and dockworkers, and were mostly relegated to the swampy terrain in the back-of-town—an area of New Orleans that remains primarily Black to this day (Campanella 2006).

Racial tensions continued to mount in the late 19th century as New Orleans transitioned from the historical tripartite racial divisions to the post-war binary Black vs. White distinction. This conflict came to a head in the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case of 1896, which cemented the “separate but equal” doctrine within Louisiana and throughout the United States. Homer Plessy was a Creole of Color, but was technically considered Black under the strict definition of the law. Plessy sat in a “Whites only” train car leaving from New Orleans bound for Covington, Louisiana, and refused to relocate to the “Blacks Only” car, which resulted in his incarceration and fining. This case is widely considered “the concluding chapter of the Americanization of New Orleans’s Caribbean-influenced system of racial identity” (Campanella 2010: 80), as the ruling officially categorized
Creoles of Color as Blacks, essentially enforcing the Black versus White binary in Louisiana.

2.4 New Orleans at the turn of the century

The turn of the century saw the arrival of even more new immigrants joining the “gumbo pot” of New Orleans. Waves of immigrants from Italy arrived in the 1900s, adding to the populations of French, Irish, German, and African heritage already established in the city. Unlike Italian populations that immigrated to other urban centers in the U.S., the Italians in New Orleans came almost exclusively from Sicily. As a result, *Piccola Palermo* “Little Palermo” was the name for the area of the lower French Quarter in which this population was concentrated (Campanella 2006). This section of town, adjacent to the French Market (Figure 5) where Italian grocers vended their produce, was largely decried by outsiders as a slum characterized by filth and violence (Campanella 2006).
In the late 1900s, Sicilians followed patterns of other post-immigrant “White” populations in Greater New Orleans by dispersing to suburban towns in Jefferson and St. Bernard Parish, with “[t]he single most Italian census tract in the metropolitan area in 2000, in both absolute (1,399) and relative numbers (33 percent) [...] in Chalmette” (Campanella 2006:333). The Italian population's impact on local culture can still be seen in the Italian Catholic community's annual celebration of the Feast of St. Joseph's, on which elaborate altars—often featuring edible offerings—can be found throughout the City, such as that pictured in Figure 6.
Previous to their migration outside the city, newly arrived immigrants—Italian and otherwise—found employment in the fishing and shipping industry of this port city, settling in areas along the Immigrant Belt, where commingling and intermarriage between the French, German, Italian, and Irish residents of New Orleans was common (Dillard 1985). As a result these immigrant groups were often defined by the space they occupied, such as the working class neighborhoods of the Irish Channel and the Ninth Ward—commonly cited as the birthplace of the cultural group that would come to be known as Yats (e.g. Coles 2001; Mucciaccio 2009).

Yats are highly linked with a distinctive way of speaking, which resembles a Brooklyn accent (Lyman 1978). In *The Yat Dictionary*, Champagne (2012:127)
defines the title term as, “a version of English spoken in New Orleans. A Yat speaker is someone who speaks with the accent. Associated most closely with the White working class” [emphasis added]. This social group was highly associated spatially with the neighborhoods of the Irish Channel and Ninth Ward, until White flight led to the dispersion of Yats from these neighborhoods into surrounding suburbs (Starnes 1994; Mucciaccio 2009).

2.5 Mid-century racial tensions: Integration and White Flight

The Civil Rights movements of the 1960s brought new national initiatives enforcing the desegregation of schools (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954) and public facilities (Civil Rights Act of 1964). During this time, many White New Orleanians migrated to suburban towns outside of Orleans Parish limits, as a means of enacting de facto racial segregation. As a result of this “White flight,” public school systems in Orleans Parish featured a one-to-one ratio of black to White students in 1957, rising to five-to-one in the early 1980s, to nineteen-to-one in the 2000s (Campanella 2006).

To this day, the population of Orleans Parish has a significantly higher Black population than any of the surrounding, suburban parishes (2010 census). Figure 7 documents this distinct shift in demographics within city limits during the latter portion of the twentieth century.
“White flight” thus shifted the geographic center of Yats from the Irish Channel and the Ninth Ward to suburban communities in the parishes adjacent to New Orleans. Figure 8 illustrates the organization of GNO parishes. Recipient sites of “White Flight” include Jefferson Parish to the west of Orleans Parish, and St. Bernard Parish to the east.\(^8\)

\(^8\) While St. Tammany Parish to the North of Lake Pontchartrain was not a heavy site of White flight in the 1960s (likely due to the fact that the Causeway Bridge spanning Lake Pontchartrain had only just opened at that time), there has been largescale migration of White GNO residents to the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain over the past fifty years (Lasley 2012).
Robley (1994:33) describes how the movement from these previous Yat strongholds came to shift from the old Immigrant Belt towards outlying suburban areas (what Campanella 2006 calls “The New Immigrant Belt”):

*During the 50’s through 70’s, many of the inner-city neighborhoods, like the Irish Channel and the Ninth Ward, experienced the loss of residents to surrounding communities like Metairie (to the west of New Orleans) and Chalmette (to the east of the Ninth Ward). Yat [English] began to influence the speech patterns of the suburban populations. The families moved out of the original Yat neighborhoods and the social identification of Yat neighborhoods by speech variety began to change.*
While there are still some local associations between Yat cultural and linguistic features and the towns of Metairie and Kenner in Jefferson Parish, the town of Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish is currently viewed as the locus of this language variety (Mucciaccio 2009). Part of the reason for this patterning is because Metairie and Kenner—dotted with subdivisions and chain stores, and connected to the rest of New Orleans by Interstate 10—came to be local centers of commerce with a constant flow of newcomers. In contrast, upper St. Bernard remained isolated and less developed, with the majority of its residents tracing back to the original immigrant neighborhoods of the Ninth Ward. For this reason, the population of Jefferson Parish is also more diverse than St. Bernard Parish which featured a population that was 80-90% White leading up to Hurricane Katrina, compared to Jefferson Parish’s 60% White population (Census 2000).

The shift from the Ninth Ward to St. Bernard happened gradually over time, however the initial stream of migration was precipitated by school integration in 1960. The first day Black students were enrolled at two Ninth Ward elementary schools, McDonough 19 and William J. Frantz Elementary School, was November 13, 1960. Of this day, Reckdahl (2010) wrote,

_Around 10 that morning, as the word spread, White parents rushed to both 9th Ward schools to remove their children. A few hours later, all the White children were gone for good from McDonogh 19. According to School Board data, at least half ended up on free buses that took them every day from the 9th Ward to nearby St. Bernard Parish for classes in an industrial building that had been converted into an all-White school called the Arabi Elementary Annex._

St. Bernard Parish was at that point led by segregationist Leander Perez, who invited White residents of the Ninth Ward to enroll in St. Bernard schools, thereby cementing their eventual migration there. The mass exodus of White, working class
Ninth Warders to St. Bernard Parish was aided by the presence of factory jobs at the Domino Sugar Factory and (now closed) Kaiser Aluminum, and later by the addition of two oil refineries, which still employ much of St. Bernard’s population.

2.6 Chalmette: The new locus of Yat

Chalmette is a primarily White, working class community located just east of the Lower Ninth Ward in Upper St. Bernard Parish, the more heavily populated portion of St. Bernard Parish bordering on Orleans Parish. In 2000, Chalmette featured a population of 31,910 residents, out of a total of 67,229 for St. Bernard Parish. Altogether, Chalmette and the neighboring Upper St. Bernard towns of Arabi, Meraux, and Violet on either side accounted for 88% of the population of St. Bernard Parish, according to the 2000 census. The 2000 census reports 88% White residents for the parish as a whole, and for the central town of Chalmette, that proportion was closer to 93%. The median income in pre-Katrina Chalmette was $17,480—which is slightly higher than the median income for Louisiana at that time, but much lower than the U.S. average (2000 census).

The post-Katrina population in Chalmette is 16,751, out of a total of 35,897—thus both the town of Chalmette and the parish as a whole saw a nearly 50% population decrease after the storm (2010 census). Post-Katrina Chalmette is also less overwhelmingly White, although White residents remain the majority group at 76% of the population (2010 census). The per capita income in post-Katrina Chalmette is $21,808, below the median income both for the state of Louisiana and
the United States as a whole (U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008-2012). Currently, 18% of the population of Chalmette lives below the poverty line, compared to 12% before Katrina (U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008-2012; 2000 census). Thus there have been some demographic shifts within Chalmette since Hurricane Katrina, though on the whole the town has remained primarily White and working class.

From its early development to its contemporary state, Upper St. Bernard has remained somewhat isolated from the rest of GNO. Part of this isolation is geographic. St. Bernard Parish is separated from Orleans Parish by Jackson Barracks, a Louisiana National Guard base that straddles the line between the towns of Arabi and Chalmette and the Lower Ninth Ward. Upper St. Bernard is also waterlocked, with the Mississippi River to the South, the Violet Canal (and eventually the Gulf of Mexico) to the East, the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MR-GO) to the North, and the Industrial Canal (which separates the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward) to the West. Additionally, there are only two roads that lead into St. Bernard Parish from the Ninth Ward: North Claiborne Street, which turns into Judge Perez Boulevard at the border of Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, and St. Claude Avenue, which turns into St. Bernard Highway. These two roads run parallel to each other, following the Mississippi River through the St. Bernard towns of Arabi, Chalmette, Meraux, Violet, and on down the road. The only other way in and out of the parish is north across the Paris Road bridge to New Orleans East, and South on the Paris Road ferry to the West Bank. These geographic relationships can be observed in Figure 9.
St. Bernard’s isolation is also social, and in many ways self-imposed. As mentioned, the initial population of Upper St. Bernard was the result of White flight, meaning that almost the entire population of the parish was White for much of the history of its settlement. St. Bernard Parish’s only bordering land is the Lower Ninth Ward, which has been a predominantly Black neighborhood since the latter half of the twentieth century. Local St. Bernardians make no secret of their distrust and fear of this area, which must be traversed to reach other parts of the city. Moreover, participants in my study recounted stories of how Black New Orleanians would not dare to cross the train tracks that separate St. Bernard Parish from the Lower Ninth Ward. Such stories indicate that there was little interaction between St. Bernardians
and the neighboring Orleans Parish residents. This dynamic resulted in an incredibly insular community in Upper St. Bernard, in which dense, multiplex networks are common. The movement of Yat English speakers into St. Bernard Parish, coupled with their subsequent social/geographic isolation, may be the reason that certain linguistic features persisted in this area while being largely lost within city limits, and only marginally present in other suburban areas that came to be populated by Yats, like Metairie in Jefferson Parish (Mucciaccio 2009).

2.7 Pre-Katrina Greater New Orleans: Expansion to the Northshore

The 1980s and 1990s saw continued dispersal of the population of New Orleans to the suburbs. However, it was not just a case of “White” flight during this time period. Vietnamese refugees, welcomed by the Catholic Archdiocese, settled in New Orleans East, along with a sizeable Black, working class population (Campanella 2006). Middle class black families and the meager Hispanic population of the city were settling in the western suburbs of Metairie and Kenner in Jefferson Parish (Campanella 2010). In response, some of the White population from the western suburbs moved to the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain, in St. Tammany Parish (Lasley 2012). Thus, as expansion continued, so too did de facto segregation.
Before the late twentieth century, St. Tammany Parish was primarily a sparsely populated collection of rural towns. As a part of Eisenhower’s Federal Aid Highway Act, in 1956 the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway bridge was built across the widest section of the lake, connecting St. Tammany Parish to metropolitan New Orleans (Campanella 2010). Spanning a distance of nearly 24 miles, the Causeway is the longest continuous bridge over water in the world (Guinness World Records 2013). Despite the presence of the bridge, expansion to the “Northshore” of Lake Pontchartrain was minimal until the New Orleans crime waves of the 1980s and 1990s (Campanella 2006). By 2000, the population of St. Tammany Parish was nearing 200,000, nearly doubling from the 1980 to the 2000 census (see Figure 10).
for an indication of this population gain in the 1990s). The Northshore had become the premier bedroom community for New Orleans’ White elite, with the pre-Katrina make-up of St. Tammany Parish 87% White and featuring the highest median household income in the state of Louisiana (2000 census).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the issue of coastal erosion came to the fore, and the City of New Orleans began to consider how the loss of wetlands, the subsiding of levees, and rising sea levels might affect New Orleans’ position in the case of a Category 4 or 5 hurricane. Narrow misses by Hurricane Georges in 1998 and Hurricane Ivan in 2004 led to some developments in planning, such as the implementation of “contraflow,” which aided in the early evacuation of more vulnerable areas and offered multiple routes for those evacuating the city (Campanella 2006). These efforts did little to prevent the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, which in 2005 ravaged the city of New Orleans, and much of the Gulf Coast.

2.8 Hurricane Katrina and aftermath

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in St. Bernard Parish, following a path up the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As the costliest natural disaster and the third most deadly hurricane in the history of the United States, Hurricane Katrina was directly responsible for 1,200 deaths throughout the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi (Blake et al 2011). In particular, New Orleans suffered catastrophic devastation when the levee protection system failed on August 30, 2005, causing floodwaters throughout the city which would sit for weeks before
pumps could catch up with the water that had settled throughout the bowl-shaped city.

Hurricane Katrina began as a Tropical Depression in the Bahamas, making an initial landfall in Florida on August 25, 2005, as a Category 1 hurricane. Originally projected to make a turn and hit the Florida panhandle, Hurricane Katrina instead built up to a Category 5 hurricane due to unusually warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico, and continued on a path towards the Louisiana/Mississippi border. When it became clear that Hurricane Katrina would not be turning and would make a direct hit on New Orleans, mandatory evacuation of the city was ordered, a mere two days before Hurricane Katrina made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane (Townsend 2006). For this reason, nearly 100,000 individuals remained in the city when Katrina hit, many of whom lined up outside the Superdome and the Convention Center, both identified as evacuation centers, and both of which featured horrifying conditions in the days following the storm (Levitt & Whitaker 2009).

While Hurricane Katrina featured high winds, peaking around 145 miles per hour, the real damage came from the storm surge, which topped or breached nearly every levee in the city (Campanella 2006). Since much of the city is below sea level, as Figure 11 demonstrates, once the city flooded there was nowhere for the water to go. The Congressional Research Service estimated 77% of Orleans Parish, and 97% of St. Bernard Parish, were affected by the flooding (Gabe et al 2005). Levee breaches along the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MR-GO) and the Industrial Canal inundated low-lying St. Bernard Parish from the North and the West. Making
matters worse in upper St. Bernard was Murphy Oil’s 65,000-barrel crude oil spill which affected almost 1,700 homes around the refinery (Lasley 2012).

Although the entire metropolitan area was in dire straits, the majority of the news coverage centered on the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. The Lower Ninth Ward was one of the lowest-lying, and most poverty-stricken areas in New Orleans. It was also predominantly Black, and the footage of stranded Black New Orleanians on rooftops, as shown in Figure 12, led to a foregrounding of racial disparities in GNO.
The government’s response to Hurricane Katrina is widely regarded as a failure, as confusion and miscommunications between New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, and President George W. Bush led to delays in aid to New Orleans. The city was thrown into a state of chaos in the days and weeks following Hurricane Katrina’s destruction, with looting and general lawlessness becoming widespread throughout the city. And all of these events happened under intense media scrutiny. As Campanella (2006:392) states,

> [t]he shocking spectacle of a modern First World society coming apart at the seams, within the borders of the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, was broadcast as lead story worldwide, repeatedly, for days and weeks.

Because the majority of the individuals featured on the news facing dehydration, heatstroke, and even violence in the bedlam following the levee breach were Black residents, the slow response was perceived by some (including Kanye West, in his infamous “[President] Bush doesn’t care about black people” outburst) as having racial motivations (Elliott & Pais 2006; Logan 2006). Figure 13 demonstrates that...
there was, indeed, racial patterning to the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, with predominantly black portions of the city disproportionately affected by flooding. Furthermore, Katrina-related mortality rates in Orleans Parish were 1.7 to 4 times higher for Blacks than for Whites (Brunkard et al 2008).

Complicating already complex recovery efforts was Hurricane Rita, which struck a month after Hurricane Katrina, re-flooding the city. By the end of Hurricane season, over 300,000 homes along the Gulf Coast were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, leading to widespread relocation of pre-Katrina GNO residents (Townsend 2006).

Figure 13. Damaged areas of Greater New Orleans by racial composition (Adapted from Logan 2006)
2.9 Post-Katrina Greater New Orleans

Although all of GNO has been slow to repopulate since Hurricane Katrina, the damage to St. Bernard Parish—and fear of future flooding due to hurricanes—has resulted in a particularly sharp population decrease, due to permanent relocation of these previous residents. Pre-Katrina St. Bernard featured about 67,000 residents (2000 census), while post-Katrina counts put the population at around 36,000 (2010 census)—a 50% population decrease since the storm. As Figure 14 demonstrates, many of these relocated pre-Katrina St. Bernardians have resettled on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain, in the St. Tammany Parish towns of Slidell, Covington, and Abita Springs.

![Figure 14](chart.png)

**Figure 14.** Census estimate for sites of St. Bernardian relocation following Hurricane Katrina (Adapted from Lasley 2012)
In contrast with the population decline in St. Bernard Parish, population counts in St. Tammany Parish have continued to rise following the storm, going from 191,000 (2000 census) to 233,000 (2010 census). Although this population increase simply follows the trajectory for St. Tammany preceding Katrina, popular perception indicates that pre-Katrina residents of St. Tammany view the influx of St. Bernardians as responsible for current “overcrowding” in the previously rural parish. This perception has resulted in some friction between pre-Katrina St. Tammany residents and relocated St. Bernardians (sometimes jokingly called “St. Tammanards” as a blend of the names of St. Tammany and St. Bernard Parishes). Although many relocated St. Bernardians have retained ties in St. Bernard Parish, they now interact with Northshore residents on a daily basis, leading to a new community with mixed geographic, economic, and linguistic heritages—and setting the stage for the current study.

2.10 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided social and historical context for the current study. The evolution of New Orleans from a French colonial outpost, to an immigration capital of the United States, to the epicenter of the costliest natural disaster in the history of the US, provides a backdrop for the current sociolinguistic situation under examination.

The historical French presence in New Orleans, as well as the later influx of Irish, Italian, and German immigrants, is responsible for many of the linguistic and
cultural patterns within GNO—including the White, working class dialect being
examined in this study, which will be considered in further detail in Chapter 3. Part
of the reason behind the development of distinct race- and class-based associations
with this dialect is due to the history of racial segregation within New Orleans
detailed in this chapter. I have described the pre-integration social divisions
between White and Black/Creole populations in New Orleans, as well as the “White
flight” of many White, working class New Orleanians to suburban towns such as
Chalmette in the 1960s. These factors have contributed to the White, working class
speech variety examined in this study becoming established in the local imagination
as a separate and distinctive linguistic entity within GNO, as will be further
illustrated in Chapter 3. The most recent stage in the evolution of the sociolinguistic
situation in GNO consists of the events of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. To
situate the population shifts and movements since the storm—the linguistic effects
of which are one of the foci of this study—I have introduced in this chapter the
socio-demographic features of pre- and post-Katrina St. Bernard and St. Tammany
Parishes, as well as describing the events of the storm’s immediate aftermath.

In detailing the historical evolution of socio-demographic patterns in Greater
New Orleans, I have sought to frame my analysis of contemporary sociolinguistic
variation in the region as part of the progression from GNO’s fraught and
complicated past to its equally complex present-day instantiation “after the storm.”
Chapter 3. Linguistic Description of Chalmatian English

The variety of English examined in this study is historically associated with White, working class speakers in New Orleans—and more recently, in the town of Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish. In this chapter, I describe the linguistic features that distinguish this speech variety from other local Louisiana dialects of English, detailing the research on language in Louisiana over the past century. Throughout this study, I refer to the White, working class dialect in GNO as Chalmatian English, to express its relationship to the town of Chalmette: not only is the dialect still currently spoken in Chalmette, but it is also locally associated with this town, even after the relocation of many Chalmatian English speakers to the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain (Mucciaccio 2009). The overarching goals of this chapter are to introduce the reader to the linguistic features of Chalmatian English and to situate the current study within the broader linguistic landscape of Louisiana. Thus I begin by describing varieties of English in Louisiana, narrowing in on varieties of English found in GNO, and finally those spoken in St. Bernard Parish more specifically. In the final sections, I describe the linguistic features that characterize Chalmatian English and summarize previous research that has examined these features within GNO.
3.1 Varieties of English in Louisiana

Dialects of English in Louisiana are relatively understudied, in comparison with speech varieties in the Northeast (e.g. Labov [1966]2006, 1989; Nagy & Irwin 2010) and Midwest (e.g. Wolfram 1969; Gordon 2001; Durian 2013), and even elsewhere in the South (e.g. Feagin 1990; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1997; Johnstone 1999). A handful of largescale survey studies (Labov et al 2006; Pederson et al 1986-93) and Masters theses (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971) have produced general descriptions of speech varieties throughout the state, identifying major dialect boundaries separating North and South Louisiana, the former of which contains many dialectal features found in the rest of the American South.

Within South Louisiana, there are major linguistic differences between the varieties of English spoken in rural areas and those spoken in the urban center of New Orleans (Rubrecht 1971; Pederson et al 1986-93). The distinction between urban and rural English dialects in Louisiana has to do somewhat with the particular settlement histories of these areas, but also with the way that language shift from French to English occurred (see Picone 1997). Much of rural South Louisiana is a part of Acadiana, also known as the French Triangle, where Cajun French and Louisiana Creole were historically—and in some cases, are still presently—spoken. Cajun French is a variety of French heavily influenced by Acadian settlers displaced throughout the 1700s during Le Grand Dérangement, when England took control over the previously French colonies in Eastern Canada, sending the Francophone residents of Acadia (modern-day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) into exile in the process. Up to that point, Acadia had been the recipient
of French settlers mainly from the West-Central provinces of France, Poitou and Saintonge (Poirier 1928; Brasseaux 1992; Le Menestrel 1999), which at the time featured dialectal differences from what would become the Parisian standard in France. These dialectal peculiarities have remained in the French spoken throughout Acadia and Louisiana (Valdman et al 2005). Many of these French-speaking Acadian refugees arrived in the port city of New Orleans, but quickly moved westward to become farmers and fishermen along the bayous and swamps of Southwest Louisiana (Brasseaux 2005). Also present in rural Louisiana were populations of slaves and free people of color, some of whom spoke Louisiana Creole—a French-based Creole, with influences from African and Native American languages (Klingler 2003)—and others of whom spoke English (Picone 2003).

In modern-day Acadiana, the varieties of English spoken include Creole African American Vernacular English (CAAVE, cf Dubois & Horvath 2003) and Cajun English, which more or less pattern along ethnic boundaries between Black and White rural Louisianans, respectively (Wroblewski et al 2009). CAAVE is characterized by African American Vernacular English (AAVE) features as described in other speech communities (e.g. Wolfram 1969; Rickford & Rickford 2000), with additional features from Louisiana Creole, such as high rates of th-stopping and monophthongal BITE, BIDE, BOUT, and BOY (Dubois & Horvath 2003). Like CAAVE, Cajun English features th-stopping and French-influenced vowel realizations, in addition to unaspirated voiceless stops and Cajun French-influenced syntactic constructions (Rubrecht 1971; Scott 1992; Dubois & Horvath 1998, 2000; Carmichael 2013). While there are some similarities between Cajun English, CAAVE,
and the dialects of English spoken in GNO, political and prescriptive pressures resulted in French being abandoned in New Orleans long before these rural areas, so French influence on English dialects in GNO is more limited (Brasseaux 1992; Picone & Valdman 1995; Campanella 2006).  

3.2 Varieties of English in Greater New Orleans

Many New Orleanians are acutely aware of local dialectal distinctions, in general linking these patterns to race, class, and neighborhood (Kolker & Alvarez 1984; Eble 2003). Perhaps because of this strong local linguistic consciousness, much of the research on language varieties in Greater New Orleans has focused more on the social associations or popular perceptions about these language varieties than on systematic analysis of linguistic features (e.g. Kolker & Alvarez 1984; Greenfield 1994; Starnes 1994; Coles 1997). For example, in their groundbreaking documentary film, Yeah, You Rite!, filmmakers Kolker & Alvarez (1984) sought to document the varieties of English within New Orleans. Based on local perceptions and input from linguists, Kolker & Alvarez settled on the designations of “Uptown White,” “Downtown White,” and “Black” (with Uptown/Downtown standing in for class distinctions between upper middle class “Uptowners,” and working class “Downtowners”). Throughout the documentary, Kolker & Alvarez demonstrate the local stigma associated with “Downtown White” and “Black” dialects—most often referred to in the linguistics literature as Yat English and AAVE, respectively.

9 Although New Orleans’ “French connection” has been commodified to a certain extent, particularly in recent years, as Eble (2009) points out.
Further evidence of the lesser social value attributed to these dialects comes from Greenfield (1994), who administered a survey comparing attitudes towards the two dialects. Greenfield found that speakers of Yat English and AAVE received negative judgments such as, “uneducated and low class,” but were also described with some positive terms like “fun-loving.” Similarly, Coles (1997) examined radio call-ins for local linguistic features, concluding that Yat English features were used to build solidarity. Such low status, high solidarity associations are common in language attitudes studies examining socially stigmatized language varieties (e.g. Luhman 1990; Preston 1996, 1999). Starnes (1994) found that such was the stigma of Yat English that even linguistic features not specific to the dialect (such as use of “um,” “uh,” or “like”) were described by listeners as being related to the overall laziness and lack of education associated with speakers of this variety.

Despite strong popular opinions about the distinctiveness of the local dialect(s) in New Orleans, until recently the majority of published linguistic work outside of attitudinal research consisted of folk descriptions featuring lists of lexical items or grammatical features specific to GNO dialects of English (e.g. Blanton 1989; Eble 2003, 2006). However, a general pattern is clear throughout the literature, which is the distinction between Black and White dialects in New Orleans (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Kolker & Alvarez 1984; Mucciaccio 2009; White-Sustaíta 2012), and a further distinction between upper middle class White varieties of English, and the nonstandard White, working class dialect, referred to as “Downtown White” in Yeah, You Rite! (Kolker & Alvarez 1984) but Yat English in much of the rest of the linguistics literature (Mucciaccio 2009; White-Sustaíta 2012).
To these distinctions, some researchers add the dialects of Creole English, a dialect of English spoken by the ethnic Creole population of New Orleans (White-Sustaíta 2012; Schoux Casey 2013), and a version of Southern White English (White-Sustaíta 2012). The latter flourishes throughout St. Tammany Parish on the Northshore, and to a limited extent on the Southshore in the Western suburbs of Metairie and Kenner.\footnote{This claim is based on my six years living in the Greater New Orleans region, off and on, during which time I rarely encountered GNO natives who spoke a variety of Southern White English except in some cases on the Northshore or Western suburbs; I cannot say with certainty whether the individuals I encountered were transplants from elsewhere, but I can confidently attest to the notable lack of Southern White English within New Orleans proper, and within St. Bernard Parish.} There has yet to be any linguistic study specifically focused on documenting Creole English as a distinct variety within GNO, however, and thus in my estimation its inclusion in descriptions of speech varieties in GNO (e.g. White-Sustaíta 2012; Schoux Casey 2013) likely represents a social/perceptual—rather than linguistic—distinction. Table 1 (adapted from White-Sustaíta 2012) presents the varieties of English present in Greater New Orleans, along with brief descriptions of their racial, class-linked, and spatial associations.

The White, working class dialect in New Orleans, with its Brooklyn-tinged phonological features within the heart of the American South, has provoked interest from linguists and locals alike. Perhaps as a result of its reputation marking New Orleans as "that Hoboken near the Gulf of Mexico" (Toole 1980:4), this dialect is often treated within linguistic research as “The New Orleans Dialect” (e.g. Coles 1997; Eble 2003, 2006; Labov 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Race/Class associations</th>
<th>Spatial associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yat English (&quot;Downtown White&quot;)</td>
<td>White, working class</td>
<td>Historically “downtown” (Ninth Ward). Currently St. Bernard Parish, in particular the town of Chalmette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream U.S. English</td>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>“Uptown”, Metairie/Kenner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAVE/Creole English</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>City-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern White English</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>“Uptown”, Metairie/Kenner, Northshore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Varieties of English in Greater New Orleans

Scholars disagree about the exact source of “Brooklyness”-sounding linguistic features such as r-lessness, a split short-a system, and pronunciation of “bird” and “word” with /ay/. Berger (1980) argued that this latter pronunciation in particular spread to NYCE from New Orleans as a result of extensive economic and cultural exchanges between the two port cities throughout the 1800s. Similarly citing the contact between these two cities, Labov (2007) argued precisely the opposite of Berger, maintaining that the directionality of the diffusion of the split short-a system

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11 While there may be further race or class distinctions within GNO, there is not enough sociolinguistic research on these varieties for me to include any further social detail than what is provided here, which is based on the scant research there is that documents different varieties within GNO (e.g. Kolker & Alvarez 1984; White-Sustaita 2012). It is furthermore crucial to note that this table documents the local race/class-based associations, and does not necessarily suggest that a given variety is limited to speakers in the social groups described.
was from NYCE to New Orleans English. In contrast with these hypotheses, Dillard (1985) proposed a dialect-internal process of pidginization, creolization, and subsequent decreolization, which he claimed took place amongst working class immigrants on the Mississippi River docks, spreading a version of Maritime English throughout the coastal United States. Historically linked to the dock-adjacent Ninth Ward and Irish Channel\textsuperscript{12} neighborhoods, speakers of this language variety are now most commonly found in suburban St. Bernard Parish (Coles 2001; Mucciaccio 2009).

There also exists within Greater New Orleans a local version of Mainstream U.S. English, more or less indistinguishable from so-called “standard” varieties in other parts of the United States, except perhaps for some New Orleans-specific grammatical structures and lexical items. This variety is present throughout the city, spoken by residents of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, but it is perceptually linked to White upper-middle class speakers who are oriented towards supra-local norms (White-Sustaíta 2012).

A local dialect of African American Vernacular English is spoken by the majority of New Orleans’ Black population. As mentioned, some researchers distinguish between the language varieties of Blacks and Creoles within Greater New Orleans, however there exists virtually no scholarship on these speech

\textsuperscript{12} In his 1971 study, Rubrecht even divided his sample of New Orleanians between Irish Channel residents, and all other New Orleanians (which comprised one Black/Creole man and one White woman from Uptown New Orleans—thus reflecting an organization more or less similar to that of the \textit{Yeah, You Rite!} distinctions).
varieties. New Orleans AAVE thus represents a crucial subject of study for future research.

Southern White English also represents a virtually unstudied speech variety within Greater New Orleans. Labov (2007) notes that New Orleans English features some Southernisms such as limited /ai/-monophthongization, /ou/-fronting, and resistance to the low-back merger, but otherwise does not participate in the Southern Vowel Shift. As the metropolitan population expands to the Northshore, which borders on regions with Southern White English features (Rubrecht 1971; Pederson et al; Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006), it is likely that examination of features linked to Southern White English will become more relevant to understanding the development of dialectal variation in Greater New Orleans.

Despite seemingly strong race- and class-based linguistic differences in Greater New Orleans according to descriptions above, there is a fluidity to the linguistic features used by different groups within GNO. For example, although AAVE is strongly associated with Black New Orleanians, some White musicians or performers who identify more with African American culture make use of prosodic and lexical AAVE features (Schoux Casey 2013). Similarly, due to the multiple indexical values associated with working class linguistic features such as r-lessness and th-stopping, these features are often performed by middle class speakers to

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13 There are a handful of studies that examine AAVE, including a Masters thesis comparing rates of r-lessness between Black and White New Orleanians (Brennan 1983), a paper examining New Orleans AAVE-speaking schoolchildren in contrast with AAVE speakers from other locations in the U.S. (Charity 2007), and a dissertation on AAVE question structure that happened to situate data collection in New Orleans (White-Sustaïta 2011)—none of which provided detailed descriptions of features that distinguish New Orleans AAVE from other varieties throughout the U.S.
index informality, playfulness, localness, or authenticity (Coles 1997; Schoux Casey 2013). I note these exceptions in order to frame the linguistic groups identified in this section as reflecting tendencies and generalities, rather than absolute rules of distribution across social groups.

3.3 Varieties of English in St. Bernard Parish

The only linguistic scholarship that exists focusing on St. Bernard Parish is Coles’ (2001, 2012) work on the appropriation of Yat English features by Isleños, who are residents of lower St. Bernard Parish descended from original Canary Island settlers. The Isleños carry on the tradition of working as fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico, even as they have lost the linguistic tradition of speaking Spanish. Of their linguistic choices, Coles (2001:12) writes that “because most Isleños are not fluent in their dialect of Spanish, they speak [Yat English]...which conveys the elements of their community which they consider important: authenticity, long term residence in Louisiana, and uniqueness to the New Orleans area.” During the course of my fieldwork, I had some contact with Isleños from lower St. Bernard and can corroborate Coles’ account, although local perceptions within the parish suggest that there are linguistic differences between upper and lower St. Bernard—perhaps indicating a comparative study is in order in future research.

The Isleños are not the only users of Yat, or White working class linguistic features. According to public perception in GNO, upper St. Bernard Parish constitutes the highest concentration of modern day Yats (Mucciaccio 2009), or
speakers of the White, working class speech variety in GNO. As one of Mucciaccio’s (2009:63) participants put it, “everybody blames St. Bernard” for the stigmatized dialectal features in GNO. Thus, while this dissertation marks the first systematic examination of the linguistic features of Chalmatian English, the variety is strongly enregistered within Greater New Orleans, and linked to historical varieties described as “Yat English.”

3.4 Chalmatian English

The following description of Chalmatian English draws from my own fieldwork in Chalmette, combined with the results of linguistic studies within Greater New Orleans which document similar features in local speech varieties. While none of these linguistic studies examines Chalmatian English specifically, they describe or take as a subject of study “Yat English” (Blanton 1989; Coles 1997, 2001, 2004; Eble 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012; Mucciaccio 2009; White-Sustaíta 2012) or “New Orleans English” spoken by White, working class individuals (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Brennan 1983; Labov 2007; Schoux Casey 2013). Since Chalmatian English has its roots in the White, working class vernacular of New Orleans, and is spoken in communities associated with Yat culture, it is reasonable to treat these studies as a resource for developing a description of Chalmatian English. Thus, in the sections that follow, I describe phrasal, lexical, morphosyntactic, semantic, and phonetic features of Chalmatian English, noting when my own observations coincide with descriptions in the literature.
3.4.1 Chalmatian English: Phrasal and lexical features

There are very few lexical items that appear to be unique to Chalmatian English.

Some words that circulate through GNO refer to St. Bernard-specific qualities or social groups, such as *Chalmatian* (variably ‘a slur indicating someone from Chalmette’, or ‘proud resident of Upper St. Bernard Parish,’ depending on context) and *Da Parish* (‘St. Bernard Parish’). Another term heard throughout GNO, but often cited as St. Bernard-specific, is “bra” [bær] (‘bro(ther),’ a locally salient way of addressing other males). Other terms frequently cited within the community as specific to Chalmatian English are *locker* to mean ‘closet’, *muffin* to mean ‘cupcake’, and *grip* to mean ‘suitcase.’

Two lexical items with nonstandard pronunciations in Chalmatian English are *sink* as [znɪŋk], as well as metathesis of *ask*, pronounced as [æks] (Mucciaccio 2009). While some speakers mentioned “zink” as being relegated to older generations, or to those being playful, I heard this pronunciation used unselfconsciously by speakers as young as forty years of age within Chalmette.

Metathesis of *ask* is common to many nonstandard varieties of English. Interestingly, a number of participants in the current study feature tensing of /æ/ in this lexical item, despite the fact that _k is not a tensing environment—even though _s is. Thus, for some speakers “ax” and “aks” constitute a minimal pair.

Some terms that are used by Chalmatian English speakers that are common throughout South Louisiana include the lexical item *y’all* to refer to second person plural subjects, as well as words for Louisiana-specific foods, such as *gumbo* (‘a

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14 LaBorde (2012) cites an attestation of ‘locker’ in Metairie, as well.
seafood or sausage stew served over rice’), *jambalaya* (‘a spiced rice and meat dish, flavored with onion and tomato’), and *dirty rice* (‘rice mixed with spices and chopped chicken livers’) (Eble 2003, 2012). Foods that are not specific to Louisiana, but which feature local dialectal names include *red gravy*, which is used to refer to tomato-based pasta sauce (contrasting with traditional brown gravies), and *po boy*, the term for large sandwiches on French bread—the latter of which must also be designated as *dressed* (‘served with lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise’) or *undressed* (‘served plain, ungarnished’) (Coles 1997).

Also present in Chalmatian English, are terms relating to the longstanding Catholic traditions in the region, in particular surrounding Carnival season. Some examples of such lexical items are *parrain* (‘godfather’), *Mardi Gras* (‘Fat Tuesday,’ the day before Ash Wednesday), and *king cake* (‘iced, ring-shaped cakes with a small plastic baby inside,’ which are eaten from Epiphany until Ash Wednesday, and which feature symbolism meant to evoke the baby Jesus and the three kings) (Eble 2006).

Although Chalmatian English is less influenced by French than Cajun English or CAAVE are, there do exist some lexical items with French origins, such a *beignet* (‘rectangular doughnut covered in powdered sugar’), *étouffée* (‘thick, roux-based stew, generally made with shellfish and served over rice’), and pronunciation of *mayonnaise* as [mænɛz], more closely resembling the French pronunciation [majɔnez] (Eble 2009). The use of *make* in nontraditional contexts is also likely related to the presence of French, and specifically the verb *faire* ‘make/do.’ The French origin of this usage is seen most clearly in the example of *make dodo*, an
incomplete translation of the French child-directed speech idiom, faire dodo (with dodo representing a shortened and reduplicated form of the French verb dormir ‘sleep’). As mentioned, making groceries is generally only used in a performative manner in Chalmette, however make [age] ‘turn [age]’ is common in Chalmatian English (e.g. “They threw Anna a big party when she made 16”) and throughout GNO (White-Sustaíta 2012).

When asked for examples “how Chalmatians talk,” many locals list phrasal features also commonly associated with Yats. For example, locals often mentioned the infamous phrase, where y’at? meaning, “how are you?”, along with phrases like your momma and dem and making groceries—all of which also appear in the literature on Yat English (Coles 1997; Eble 2003, 2006; Mucciaccio 2009). These phrases appear to have attained stereotyped status, and as a result are usually uttered in Chalmette with a performative tone, rather than integrated in free-flowing speech.

There are also some examples of unique semantic developments for certain lexical items, which feature usages apparently unique to GNO. One of these semantic developments consists of using already rather than before to indicate ‘at least once,’ as in the example, “have you been to Commander’s Palace already?” to ask if one has ever been to Commander’s Palace restaurant. Such usage has not been documented in the literature on varieties of English in Louisiana, but it was encountered in Chalmatian English over the course of my research. I have heard this usage in Cajun English, as well, and it mirrors use of déjà ‘already’ in French, thus it is likely a French relic in South Louisiana. Similarly, Blanton (1989:781) mentions use of still
in GNO to mean ‘all the same’ or ‘nevertheless,’ as in the example, “I thought I was picking up the white wine instead of this red. It’s still good (though).” Blanton cites this as an example of semantic change, without making the connection that *toujours* ‘still’ in French may also be used to mean, ‘nevertheless,’ suggesting that this usage also represents French influence. During my time in Chalmette I never encountered this usage of *still*, however these two examples seem to suggest there is work to be done on French semantic influence in South Louisiana.

While many lexical items in Chalmatian English are shared with varieties of English spoken throughout GNO and South Louisiana more broadly, these same words are often cited in Chalmette as examples of the “uniqueness” of local culture and speech types.

3.4.2 Chalmatian English: Morphosyntactic features

Examples of morphosyntactic features of Chalmatian English are presented in Table 2. As with the lexical items identified, many of these features are also shared with speakers of other English varieties spoken throughout the state of Louisiana. For example, zero copula and nonstandard negation are present in CAAVE and AAVE (Wolfram 1969), while reduplication and pronoun repetition are common in Cajun English (Dubois & Horvath 2000).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero copula (Mucciaccio 2009; Carmichael 2012; White-Sustaíta 2012)</td>
<td>“They stupid”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of subject-verb inversion (Mucciaccio 2009; Carmichael 2012; White-Sustaíta 2012)</td>
<td>“Where she was?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of auxiliary “do” (Mucciaccio 2009; Carmichael 2012; White-Sustaíta 2012)</td>
<td>“How she looks?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonstandard negation (negative concord &amp; use of ain’t) (Mucciaccio 2009; Carmichael 2012; White-Sustaíta 2012)</td>
<td>“It ain’t there no more”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of subject-verb agreement (Mucciaccio 2009; Carmichael 2012)</td>
<td>“It don’t matter”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun repetition (Blanton 1989; Carmichael 2012)</td>
<td>“I don’t like that, me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduplication (Carmichael 2012)</td>
<td>“That dessert was rich rich”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Morphosyntactic and semantic features of Chalmatian English

Morphosyntactic patterns in GNO are less frequently documented than lexical and phonetic features. Blanton (1989), Mucciaccio (2009), Carmichael (2012), and White-Sustaíta (2012) provide perhaps the most fleshed out descriptions of the grammatical features in GNO, though all of these works present only brief mention or singleton examples of features rather than in-depth examination. It should be noted that some features documented in these works, such as habitual be
(Mucciaccio 2009) and feel to believe to express ‘I believe beyond all doubt’ (Blanton 1989), were never heard in Chalmette and thus were not included in this table.

3.4.3 Chalmatian English: Phonetic Features

Some consonantal features of Chalmatian English include r-lessness, th-stopping, l-vocalization, and consonant cluster reduction. Examples of these pronunciations are presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>r-lessness</strong></td>
<td>Absence of historic/orthographic &lt;r&gt; in post-vocalic, syllable coda position</td>
<td>Car [ka:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>th-stopping</strong></td>
<td>Realization of /θ/ and /ð/ as stops [t] and [d]</td>
<td>Thing [tŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Coles 1997, 2001, 2004; Eble 2003, 2006; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009; Schoux Casey 2013)</td>
<td>That [dæ?]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>l-vocalization</strong></td>
<td>Realization of coda /l/ as (lengthened) vowel or semi-vowel [w]</td>
<td>Fall [faw]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mucciaccio 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cold [kɔ:d]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consonant cluster reduction</strong></td>
<td>Deletion of the final element of a consonant cluster</td>
<td>Last [laes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mucciaccio 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Left [lɛf]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Consonantal features of Chalmatian English
Consonant cluster reduction, th-stopping, and l-vocalization are common in many nonstandard dialects of American English (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006; Hall-Lew 2009). R-lessness is a feature of other English varieties in the region, such as Cajun English (Dubois & Horvath 2000) and Southern US English (Feagin 1990), but is also heard in the Northeast (Labov [1966]2006; Becker 2009; Nagy & Irwin 2010).

Th-stopping, or the realization of /θ/ and /ð/ as stops [t] and [d], comes up both in literature on the language variety and in parodies such as Bunny Matthews’ Vic & Nat’ly cartoons. /ð/-stopping appears to be more common than /θ/-stopping in New Orleans English (Reinecke 1951; Mucciaccio 2009), and it is also more frequently parodied, in signs such as that pictured in Figure 15 which reads “Best Meat in Da Parish.”

![Breaux Mart](image)

**Figure 15.** Th-stopping in St. Bernard Parish
One of the most commonly cited features of White, working class English in New Orleans is r-lessness, or vocalization of /ɹ/ in post-vocalic positions (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Brennan 1983; Coles 1997, 2001, 2004; Eble 2003, 2006; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009; Schoux Casey 2013). Studies of (r) completed at thirty year intervals, in 1951 (Reinecke), 1983 (Brennan), and 2013 (Schoux Casey) indicate that r-lessness is receding in Greater New Orleans, with r-ful pronunciations representing a prestige marker in the region.

While l-vocalization is common throughout the US, for some Chalmatian English speakers even non-coda /l/ may be realized as [w], with pronunciations of *light* as [waɪʔ] in Mucciaccio’s (2009) thesis, and *cleaning* as [kwiɪŋ] noted in my own fieldwork.

Many Chalmatian English vocalic features identified in the literature resemble features of NYCE, for example raised BOUGHT, a split short-a system, and distinct MARRY-MERRY vowels. Also present in Chalmatian English, however, are Southern US English features such as /ai/-monophthongization and fronted /ou/ and /u/. One feature that seems specific to New Orleans but which appears to be receding is the COIL-CURL reversal, in which words like “joint” are pronounced [dʒə-nɪʔ] while words like “third” are pronounced [θə-d] (this latter pronunciation is also present in NYCE (Labov [1966]2006)). Finally, one vowel feature uncovered in the process of data collection is the variable pronunciations of /au/, which appear to be dependent on the following phonetic environment. Table 4 identifies these vocalic features and provides examples.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raised BOUGHT</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Reinecke 1951; Cole 1997; Eble 2006; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009)</td>
<td>Realization of /ɔ/ with a raised nucleus</td>
<td>Bought [bɔʔ]&lt;br&gt;Law [lɔː]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Split short-a system</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Reinecke 1951; Labov 2007)</td>
<td>Tensing (raising and fronting) of /æ/ before nasals, voiced stops /b/ and /d/, and voiceless fricatives; tensing may be blocked in open syllables</td>
<td>Bad [bæd]&lt;br&gt;Crash [kraʃ]&lt;br&gt;Granite [ɡænɪʔ]&lt;br&gt;Manage [mænɪdʒ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unmerged MARRY-MERRY</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Rubrecht 1971)</td>
<td>Retention of distinction between pre-rhotic /æ/ and /ɛ/</td>
<td>Parish [pærɪʃ]&lt;br&gt;Fairy [fɛɹi]&lt;br&gt;Ferry [fɛɹi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>/aɪ/-monophthongization</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Cole 1997)</td>
<td>Realization of /aɪ/ as [aː]</td>
<td>Fly [flaː]&lt;br&gt;Ride [raːd]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>/uʊ/ and /u/-fronting</strong></td>
<td>Realization of /uʊ/ as fronter [ʊʊ] and /u/ as fronter [ʊ]</td>
<td>So [sʊʊ]&lt;br&gt;Road [rʊʊd]&lt;br&gt;rude [rʊd]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Vocalic features of Chalmatian English*
The COIL-CURL reversal consists of the pronunciation of words in the COIL class with the r-colored vowel [ɜ] and CURL words with a non-rhotic diphthong variously described as [ɜɪ], [əɪ], or [ɔɪ] (Rubrecht 1971; Coles 1997, 2001; Eble 2003; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009). In my sample, I only heard this feature in the speech of residents over the age of 80. This feature is highly stereotyped, and used in local dialect humor, as seen in Figure 16, which presents a mug sold at Harkins Flower Shop in New Orleans, illustrated with traditional Yats Vic and Nat’ly, drawn by Bunny Matthews. Note also that the title of this drawing, *Vic & Nat’ly’s Nint’ Ward Axioms*, makes reference to the old home of Yat English, rather than Chalmette, perhaps indicating further the dated nature of this feature.

![Figure 16. COIL-CURL Merger in Vic & Nat’ly comics](image)
Labov (2007:365) remarked that BOUGHT-raising in New Orleans resembled that found throughout the Mid-Atlantic states, writing, "New Orleans displays [a] feature that is uncommon in the South: the raising of /oh/ in law, cost, hawk, and so forth to mid back and lower high position." While the raising of BOUGHT is not expressly identified in other previous studies, Reinecke (1951), Coles (1997), Eble (2006), and Mucciaccio (2009) all note unmerged BOUGHT/BOT in Yat English.

Although several past studies present data that reflect a split short-a system in New Orleans (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Mucciaccio 2009), /æ/ realizations in New Orleans were not analyzed as a system until Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) and Labov (2007). Unlike in a nasal short-a system, in which short-a tenses pre-nasally but is lax elsewhere, Labov (2007) wrote that tensing of short-a in New Orleans English occurs before nasals, voiced stops /b/ and /d/, and voiceless fricatives. Furthermore, in open syllables—even pre-nasally—/æ/ is lax as well, although Labov notes that this constraint is being lost for younger speakers.

Another feature more common in the Mid-Atlantic U.S. than in the South is unmerged MARRY-MERRY. In most dialects of US English, the /æ/ of MARRY and the /ɛ/ of MERRY are merged with /e/ before intervocalic /ə/, however in the Mid-Atlantic United States these vowel classes have remained unmerged to varying extents (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). In Chalmatian English, there is not a three-way distinction between MARRY, MARY, and MERRY, as in some Mid-Atlantic dialects because MARY and MERRY are merged towards /ɛ/ (e.g. area [ɛɾjə]). However, the vowel in MARRY remains distinct as /æ/—most noticeable in the local pronunciation of Da Parish as [də pæːɪʃ]. The only mention of this distinction in the
literature comes from Rubrecht (1971), who noted that one of his New Orleanian informants featured “/ɛ/ in care [kɛə] but /æ/ in carry [kærɪ]” (226). This pronunciation may reflect the open syllable constraint at work, functioning as a part of the overall constraints on speakers’ short-a systems.

Most studies of English in Greater New Orleans focus on the Northeastern-sounding features, since they are so remarkable within the deep South; however, there are some vocalic features that more resemble Southern US English. For example, the Chalmatian English features of /aɪ/-monophthongization (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Coles 1997), /oʊ/-fronting, and /u/-fronting are documented throughout the Southern US (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). The presence of these Southern vowel features are likely the reasons that Chalmatian English is commonly described by locals as a mixture of Northeastern and Southern influences (e.g. Lyman 1978).

The final vocalic feature I will address here is not present in the literature on New Orleans English, rather it was identified in my fieldwork, and that is variation in realizations of /au/. Within Chalmatian English (and more broadly throughout GNO), /au/ is variably realized with a fronted nucleus before nasal consonants, and with an overall raised and fronted trajectory (that is, both the nucleus and offglide are raised and fronted) before voiceless consonants. This variation has not been described within GNO up to this point.
3.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have described the linguistic landscape in Greater New Orleans and Louisiana more broadly. While there is some French influence behind Chalmatian English lexical items, on the whole the White, working class dialect in GNO shares very little in common with the French-tinged dialects of English spoken in French Acadiana and the rest of South Louisiana (e.g. Cajun French, CAAVE). Rather, Chalmatian English sounds more like varieties of English spoken in the Northeast, which has spawned a number of hypotheses about how this resemblance developed (Berger 1980; Dillard 1985; Labov 2007).

While New Orleans proper features some dialectal diversity outlined in this chapter, the research completed on St. Bernard Parish suggests a more homogenous linguistic landscape, perhaps due to its homogenous racial and socioeconomic dimensions. As a result, the White, working class variety of English in GNO has become associated with the town of Chalmette, where the heaviest concentration of speakers is found; for this reason, and because this population forms the focus of this study, I call the speech variety Chalmatian English. Crucial to note is that Chalmatian English features may also be heard within city limits, and by speakers who are neither White nor working class, however the predominant social associations with this dialect are with White, working class Chalmatians. And while some features of Chalmatian English have been appropriated and commodified within GNO, these are not always employed in ways that specifically link them to Chalmette or to White, working class personae. Sometimes these
features are used simply as general representations of “localness” in GNO (Schoux Casey 2013).

Another goal of this chapter was to provide a description of Chalmatian English, the variety of interest in this study. To this end, I have documented the research completed on linguistic features of Chalmatian English considered distinctive by past research and locals. Most previous studies have focused on lexical, phrasal, and phonetic features of the White, working class variety in GNO, with little research on the morphosyntactic features of this dialect. Indeed, part of the reason I chose to focus on phonetic features in the current study is because of the greater detail afforded to these features by past studies, providing some background to work from. In the following chapter, I will provide further detail about the particular variables being examined in this study.
In this chapter, I describe my methods for data collection and analysis. Over a period of 9 months, I conducted participant observation in the upper St. Bernard Parish towns of Chalmette, Meraux, and Arabi, supplemented by limited observations in other areas of GNO, such as New Orleans proper, the West Bank, Metairie, and the Northshore. My participation in the community led to contact with individuals that became the sample for the linguistic data examined in this study. The main source of linguistic data consisted of interviews completed in participants’ homes or in other establishments within GNO such as coffee shops or restaurants. Interviews lasted anywhere from one to three hours, depending on the participants’ schedule and desire to continue talking. At the end of interviews, metalinguistic commentary was elicited and participants were asked to read a passage and word list, to ensure adequate token counts for each variable. I examined four linguistic variables, which I identify in this chapter, detailing my analytic methods. I also identify the social variables examined, providing descriptions of how the social factors were measured and/or calculated.
4.1 The target population

The target population for this study was broadly defined as pre-Katrina residents of Chalmette, Meraux, or Arabi, Louisiana in Upper St. Bernard Parish. I specify pre-Katrina residents because of the large-scale population shifts following the storm. One result of this population shift is that many pre-Katrina St. Bernardians have moved away since the storm. Another consequence is that there are a number of newcomers in Chalmette and surrounding towns, coming from various places, including lower St. Bernard, Orleans Parish, and outside GNO (as was often the case with post-Katrina laborers or volunteers who settled in the area after the recovery effort). These newcomers were not targeted for the study, since their speech patterns would not be reflective of the area of interest. Previous residents of upper St. Bernard Parish who grew up (and thus acquired English) in the area but have since moved away were, however, included in the target population.

Many pre-Katrina St. Bernardians relocated to the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain, settling in the suburban towns of Covington, Mandeville, Abita Springs, and Slidell. The movement *en masse* to the Northshore was a common topic of conversation in Chalmette, making it clear that it was a relevant social event in the area, so this population in particular was targeted for my study, although individuals who had relocated to elsewhere in GNO were not excluded from my sample.
4.1.1 The Sample

Participants were recruited at various local events, and through the friend-of-a-friend technique (Milroy 1980), which is a variety of snowball sampling. As I met individuals within the community, I asked if they had recommendations for friends or family I could get in touch with for interviewing. This method was particularly well suited for such a small, tight-knit community, in which there was widespread distrust for outsiders—especially those asking about Hurricane Katrina, since locals explained that many journalists made money off individuals’ pain. Moreover, this method of recruitment was crucial for finding Chalmette residents who had moved away since Hurricane Katrina.

There were 57 participants in this study: 32 women and 25 men. 29 of the participants had returned to St. Bernard to rebuild following Katrina, and 28 had relocated to elsewhere in GNO. The participants were distributed roughly evenly across age groups by decade, with the overall range of 18 to 85 years of age. In collecting the sample of speakers for the current study, I was careful to balance age and gender across returner and relocator groups, as demonstrated in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relocators</th>
<th>Returners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>N=5 (3 women, 2 men)</td>
<td>N=7 (3 women, 4 men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>N=12 (5 women, 7 men)</td>
<td>N=14 (9 women, 5 men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>N=11 (7 women, 4 men)</td>
<td>N=8 (5 women, 3 men)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Participants according to age, gender, and post-Katrina location status
Balancing for ethnicity was neither necessary nor possible, since all participants identified as White, except for one participant who defined herself as half White and half Hispanic. Because St. Bernard was an ethnically homogeneous community before the storm (with the pre-Katrina population of Chalmette over 90% White according to the 2000 census), the sample for this study reflects that demographic history. Participant names used throughout this study consist of pseudonyms, selected by the speakers themselves.

Given the demographic history of movement into and out of Chalmette, I completed interviews with participants of various residential histories; however there were several common patterns in participants’ time spent outside St. Bernard Parish that can be attributed to historical trends within Greater New Orleans. To begin with, because many older participants had grown up in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, moving to Chalmette in the 1960s and 1970s, many of my interviewees older than 45 had spent some time living in New Orleans proper before moving to Chalmette (with the amount of time spent in the city dependent on their age). In addition, some interviewees had spent some amount of time living elsewhere, either for college or as a military assignment. As a general rule, I only included in my sample participants who spent a significant portion of their younger lives (birth to 18 years of age) in Chalmette, or in the surrounding towns of Arabi and Meraux, or in the Ninth Ward if they were over sixty. One notable exception is Christian, who grew up in the neighboring New Orleans East but had significant ties to the Ninth Ward and to Chalmette as a child. Furthermore, Christian moved to Chalmette in his early twenties and had lived there for over twenty years at the time
of his interview, and he is now considered an active and essential member of the community. He and others I spoke to described him as a Chalmatian, and he told me that many Chalmette residents were surprised when they discovered he had not lived there his entire life.

The sample of what I am calling *returners* comprises the participants who grew up in Upper St. Bernard, and who returned there after Katrina. Because all St. Bernard residents were evacuated from the Parish for some amount of time following the storm, these participants were all displaced for a matter of weeks to years before ultimately resettling in St. Bernard—often in their same home, but sometimes in a different property. The participants I refer to as *relocators* consist of previous residents of Upper St. Bernard Parish who grew up (and thus acquired English) in the area, but who did not live there following the storm. The majority of study participants who relocated moved to the Northshore towns of Covington, Mandeville, and Slidell, although there are also relocators who have moved to New Orleans, the West Bank (across the Mississippi River from New Orleans and St. Bernard), Metairie, and farther Northshore communities such as Hammond in Tangipahoa Parish. Notably, four of the relocators (Roger, Lance, Katherine, and Victor) opted into moving away from St. Bernard before Hurricane Katrina, without the impetus of a natural disaster.
4.2 Ethnographic fieldwork

An ethnographic approach allows for uncovering the sociocultural structures motivating locally meaningful actions and patterns of behavior within a community.

As the American Anthropological Association (AAA) writes, ethnography consists of:

*the researcher's study of human behavior in the natural settings in which people live. Specifically, ethnography refers to the description of cultural systems or an aspect of culture based on fieldwork in which the investigator is immersed in the ongoing everyday activities of the designated community for the purpose of describing the social context, relationships and processes relevant to the topic under consideration* (AAA Executive Board 2004).

Methods commonly associated with ethnography include direct and participant observation, structured and unstructured interviewing, and the examination of other cultural objects, such as stories, music, media, and texts produced and reproduced within the community of interest (Bernard 2006[1994]). In this section, I describe my strategies for collecting data in Greater New Orleans. A detailed description of relevant findings from this ethnographic fieldwork is provided in Chapter 5.

4.2.1 Participant observation

In order to immerse myself in the community, I participated in a number of local events and activities, such as festivals, interest groups, sports organizations, and family gatherings over the nine months I spent in Greater New Orleans. During this time, I observed behavior while completing my daily routine in Chalmette—whether shopping for groceries, working in a coffee shop, working out at the gym, or grabbing a meal with a friend.
In the early stages of data collection, I spent time in restaurants, coffee shops, and bars in Upper St. Bernard, observing public behavior of locals, and writing in my fieldnotes at the end of the day what I had noticed in terms of linguistic and social patterns. During this time, I was gathering broader, general information about what forms of social and linguistic expression I encountered, and from whom, in order to determine what might be the locally salient social/linguistic categories in Upper St. Bernard.

I was able to meet some families in Upper St. Bernard through my roommates, who had grown up in the towns of Chalmette and Arabi. These families often invited me to social events where I was able to broaden my initial contact, however the majority of participants were encountered through extensive volunteering opportunities I took advantage of in the Parish. I regularly read the St. Bernard newspapers to determine when local festivals took place, at which I volunteered my services; for example, I served beverages at the Isleño Fiesta and the Chalmette Crawfish Festival, and I manned game tables at the Prompt Succor Tomato Festival and the Chalmette High School All Night Graduation Party. Volunteering at these events allowed an opportunity to observe more public behavior, but also to participate in the community with other volunteers and festival attendees. After my first few months of fieldwork, I began attending regular meetings for local interest groups such as Kiwanis, the Chit Chat Club, and Voices of St. Bernard, as well as more informal regular gatherings such as karaoke nights and a weekly pool tournament group. I also volunteered in Chalmette as a swim coach, a little league baseball coach, and assistant director for a Senior Citizens’ variety show.
Participating in a wide range of local activities provided me access to participants across age groups and interests, however I was careful not to recruit too many participants from any single activity or event, in order to keep my sample from becoming skewed towards a particular social network of residents. I treated every participant as a source for future participants, asking for contact information of their friends, family, and colleagues that might be willing to be interviewed, so that I could also get access to participants who may not be as active in the community.

In addition to the activities described above, I spent a month living with a family in Chalmette between living arrangements, during which time I was able to better understand what everyday life is like in a household located in post-Katrina Chalmette. I also spent considerable time at the homes of several relocators who had moved to the Northshore, allowing me to gain perspective on how life there differed from—or in some cases, resembled—life in Chalmette (see Chapter 5).

4.2.2 Fieldnotes
While I attempted not to rely entirely on note-taking while spending time in the research community—since as Agar (1980:112) noted, “while you’re scribbling furiously, other things are going on.”—I generally carried with me a small notebook to jot down thoughts throughout the day, so that I could document direct quotes if needed. I also took notes on my phone, as a less conspicuous form of taking in vivo notes—since a young woman typing into a phone is a relatively common and unremarkable sight.
I documented my observations in greater detail by typing up fieldnotes into separate word documents on a daily basis. Setting aside time each night to reflect on my experiences in the day was crucial to understanding how my own assumptions and biases may have colored my impressions throughout the day. These daily entries furthermore chart the development of certain insights in the community that evolved over time, while providing a precise record of my interactions in the community. These notes also provided an opportunity to go back and forth between the actual data I was collecting—as well as my interpretation of its local significance—and my constantly evolving hypotheses about sociolinguistic patterning in GNO. At the end of fieldwork, my fieldnotes included 163 separate entries with an average of 4 typed, single-spaced pages per entry. Entries often included summaries of the day’s activities, descriptions of events attended, and copies of e-mails, texts, or Facebook posts received from locals, along with reactions to interactions, descriptions of my overall mindset, and evolving hypotheses about the meaning of social and linguistic practices encountered.

4.3 Linguistic data

The primary source of linguistic data for this study consisted of sociolinguistic interviews, all of which I conducted throughout the course of my fieldwork stay. The majority of interview modules covered topics related to participants’ lives before and after Hurricane Katrina, and their experience during the immediate aftermath of the storm (see Appendix B). The last interview modules focused on perceptions of
Chalmette as a place within GNO, and Chalmatian English as a speech variety within the linguistic landscape (examined in detail in Chapter 5). Finally, all participants were recorded reading a reading passage and word list featuring minimal pairs (see Appendices C and D).

This data collection design reflects an attempt to strike a balance between a number of concerns that are relevant to any study of phonetic variation: (1) it is necessary to record enough speech to capture adequate tokens of the variables in question; (2) the recordings produced must be of high enough quality for acoustic analysis; and (3) in order to make claims about the everyday linguistic practices of a community, one seeks to capture naturalistic speech, preferably in a context that makes the data from multiple participants comparable (Wolfson 1976; Labov 1984).

To address the first concern, I devised a reading passage and word list that specifically targeted the variables of interest, especially in environments that were difficult to elicit in adequate numbers within free-flowing speech. There are, of course, some issues with using read speech as the subject of study in sociolinguistic research, which will be discussed in 4.3.2.

The second two concerns were related to each other, in that the equipment necessary to capture high quality recordings (described in 4.3.3) do not generally contribute to comfortable, naturalistic interactions. Rather, the presence of recording equipment, and of the researchers themselves, tends to heighten attention paid to speech and thus produces situations of hypercorrection or other speech alterations (Labov 2006[1966]). The perennial question of sociolinguistic research has centered on this issue, dubbed *The Observer’s Paradox* by Labov (1972): how
can a researcher observe the way people speak when they are not being observed? One solution is to record participants in naturally-occurring interactions without the researcher present. However, again the issue of recording comes into play, since the equipment still provides evidence of observation even when the researcher not present in the room. Additionally, recording naturally-occurring interactions would introduce a different set of problems from interviews. To begin with, in interviews I was able to control the participants (me plus the interviewee) and the frame of the interchange, whereas simply turning on a recorder during an interaction could capture any range of speech situations, from friendly small talk to heated arguments to complete silence—which could affect linguistic choices in any number of ways. Although the speech type elicited in this study likely differs in some way from an intimate conversation between two lifelong friends, I put effort into creating a relatively casual, unmonitored speaking environment, as will be described in 4.3.1.

4.3.1 Linguistic data: Interviews
The goal of a sociolinguistic interview, as defined by Labov (1972; 2006[1966]), is to elicit the “vernacular,” which he describes as the language used among intimates or friends. Although there have been a number of critiques about the concept of an “authentic vernacular” (see Schilling 2014), the idea of eliciting unmonitored—or at the very least, less monitored—speech is a trademark of sociolinguistic research. One of the most common ways this is achieved by variationist researchers is through interviewing. Interviews are a distinct type of speech event, differing structurally from other interactions such as conversations, lectures, or monologues
(Spradley 1979), which creates a dilemma when using interviews as a source of sociolinguistic data:

*the fact that the interview is a speech event in our society makes it legitimate to ask questions of a personal nature of total strangers, but at the same time severely limits the kind of interaction which may take place within it, and therefore the kind of data which one can expect to collect.* (Wolfson 1976:190)

While interviews feature some structural similarity to conversations (e.g. turn-taking, backchanneling, etc), the main difference is the status of and relationship between the speakers. In conversation, crucially, both speakers are of the same standing, whereas interviews promote a power differential favoring the interviewer (Labov 1984). Researchers have taken different approaches to accounting for this power dynamic. Wolfson (1976) and Briggs (1986) promoted reflexivity, with the researcher considering the participants’ potential interpretations of the exchange, and how the interviewers’ position in the speech community affected the interaction. Labov (1984) and Mishler (1986), in contrast, recommended a proactive approach to interview behavior. Labov suggested that interviewers monitor their wording and pronunciation in order to remove evidence of “bookishness,” and Mishler similarly pointed to the importance of framing the speech event through question wording. In my fieldwork, I employed both methods by monitoring my social and linguistic behavior in-interaction as well as later reflecting upon how my presence in the interview and my relationship with particular participants affected our interaction.

During interviews, I took care to elicit narratives, in order to prompt free-flowing speech with attention directed towards the recounting of events. Labov & Waletsky (1967) demonstrated the usefulness of eliciting stories, or narratives,
from participants for sociolinguistic analysis. In their methodology, interviewers informally asked for participants to recount any “life-threatening experiences,” and method that came to be known as the danger-of-death technique. Labov (1972) reported that participants tended to be so preoccupied in their descriptions of these events that they were less likely to closely monitor their speech practices. In the current study, narrative elicitation was achieved by asking participants about their experience during Hurricane Katrina, during which time most participants were displaced. In asking for Katrina stories, I sought to direct participants more towards the content of their utterance than the form. Another topic pursued was what participants’ lives were like growing up in St. Bernard Parish, and what their lives were like post-Katrina. These topics were animatedly discussed within interviews and in other interactions observed in St. Bernard Parish, since the effects of Hurricane Katrina frequently came up naturally in unrecorded conversations between residents of GNO.

Towards the end of the interview—in order to avoid drawing the participants’ attention to their own speech patterns before this point—the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of speech in St. Bernard Parish and in GNO in general. One way of establishing the social perception of Chalmatian English linguistic features is by eliciting this kind of metalinguistic commentary. This method is best suited for documenting linguistic stereotypes, since speakers

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15 Because many residents of St. Bernard Parish endured significant trauma during and after Hurricane Katrina, participants were not urged to talk about their experiences if they did not wish to do so. However, a number of participants freely spoke of their hardships and some even expressed gratitude after the interview for having the opportunity to convey their stories.
can only comment on features of which they are aware (Labov 2006[1966]).

Participants were also asked about the term “Chalmatian,” in order to understand how this term relates to the lives of the participants, since this word came up through the course of initial research into the literature, as well as in fieldwork, with varying social associations attached to it.

4.3.2 Linguistic data: Reading passage and word list

The reading passage and word list were devised after four months of intensive presence in the community. Both were specifically engineered to target features of interest that I was concerned I would not acquire adequate token counts of in interview speech alone. I generated a list of target words in consultation with The Carnegie-Mellon Pronunciation Dictionary (Weide 1994). These target words were incorporated in a story about the locally relevant event of a fishing trip (constituting the reading passage; Appendix C) and a list of minimal pairs capturing the sounds of interest (the word list; Appendix D).

Part of the motivation for including read speech in this study was to control the words elicited; with this method, I was able to collect the same words, in the same speech context, from each speaker, providing a clear point of comparison in their realizations of a given variable. Another reason for inclusion of the reading passage and word list in this study was due to concerns about collecting adequate tokens of phonetic variables to examine. In particular, rarer vowels such as /aw/ and /ɔ/ were less common in interview speech data.
The advantages of the reading passage and word list, however, must be balanced with certain concerns about analyzing read speech for sociolinguistic variation. To begin with, read speech differs from spontaneous speech in terms of both production and cognitive processing. Most studies have found specifically prosodic differences, in terms of speech rate, intonation, and pauses (Kowal et al. 1975; Howell & Kadi-Hanifi 1991; Kendall 2013). Because the variables I am examining are not dependent on prosodic factors (as, for example, vowel duration would be), I was not concerned with the phonetic differences between interview speech and the reading passage/word list. I was, however, concerned about the fact that reading a passage or list of words is a qualitatively different speech event from conversing with another speaker. Some researchers have even argued that read speech constitutes a distinct register of speaking, in stylistic terms (see Schilling 2014). But of course, this idea of read speech as a separate style also contributed to its initial inclusion in interview modules.

Use of reading passages and word lists dates back to Labov’s early methodology, which employed these tasks to manipulate how much attention participants paid to their speech. The reason attention paid to speech was such an important dimension in Labov’s research is because he noticed that stigmatized sociolinguistic variants tended to appear in lower rates in more formal situations, when speakers modified their speech in a self-aware manner. Based on patterns in his data and other studies, Labov (1972) hypothesized three levels of sociolinguistic variants, according to awareness: indicators, markers, and stereotypes. Indicators may pattern across social factors, but they are below the level of awareness and are
thus not employed stylistically—and would therefore not change in rates of usage when greater attention is directed to speech. Markers feature greater awareness and are therefore available for stylistic manipulation. And stereotypes are available for conscious commentary and mimicry. Based on Labov’s attention to speech model, markers and stereotypes are likely to be manipulated when greater attention is directed to speech. Specifically, stigmatized linguistic variables that have risen to the level of markers and stereotypes would be actively suppressed in speech styles that directed the most attention to speech. Because ethnographic fieldwork and preliminary reflections on metalinguistic commentary indicated that there are differing levels of awareness associated with the linguistic variables of interest in this study, there appeared to be a value in manipulating attention paid to speech, in order to assess this intuition, by observing the variation across speech types. For this reason, speech type was included in models of linguistic variation to determine whether participants altered their rates of variation when more attention was directed to their speech.

There have been a number of critiques of using the attention to speech paradigm to examine sociolinguistic style-shifting (Bell 1984; California Style Collective 1993; Eckert & Rickford 2001; Irvine 2001; Moore 2004). And indeed, in terms of the various resources for identity expression and the complex social processes involved in style-shifting, the attention to speech model is undeniably one-dimensional. However, Labov (2006[1966]) was clear in his assertion that he never intended the attention to speech model to be a way of conceiving of sociolinguistic style. Since I similarly do not seek to draw conclusions about styles
or registers in Chalmatian English based on the analyses presented in this study, results across the different speech types should be interpreted strictly in terms of awareness and attention to speech. Although style-shifting in Chalmatian English is of interest to examine in future studies, it is my opinion that some initial research must be completed establishing the axes of variation before it would be possible to understand how these variants are manipulated in interaction for social ends.

4.3.3 Linguistic data: Recording Considerations

Interviews were recorded in WAV format with a Zoom H4 handy recorder. Participants wore a Shure SM10A unidirectional headset microphone while a Crown Audio Sound Grabber II microphone set next to the recorder captured other speech and interaction. The linguistic data analyzed in this study was that from the Shure SM10A microphone, which captured a recording of quality necessary for performing acoustic analysis, without background noise that could introduce additional formant tracking errors in Praat.

4.4 Analysis: Linguistic Variables

In this section I describe the methods for linguistic analysis. First, I introduce the four phonetic variables of interest, and then I describe in detail how the linguistic data were processed and coded for acoustic and/or statistical analysis.
4.4.1 The linguistic variables

The phonetic features I examined in this study consist of:

1. *(aw)* – raising and fronting of the trajectory of */aw/* preceding voiceless consonants, and raising of the nucleus of */aw/* preceding nasal consonants
2. *(oh)* – raising of */ɔ/*
3. *(æe)* – split short-a system featuring phonetic and grammatical triggers for æ-tensing
4. *(r)* – variable post-vocalic r-deletion or vocalization

While these last three variables have been historically attested in the English spoken in Greater New Orleans, variation in *(aw)* was not mentioned in previous literature on New Orleans English(es), and was rather noted during fieldwork completed in GNO and thus considered for analysis.

For some speakers, the diphthong */aw/* may be variably realized with a slightly raised and fronted trajectory (that is, with both nucleus and offglide raised and fronted) preceding voiceless consonants and with a tensed (raised and fronted) nucleus pre-nasally. While both forms of variation have been attested in speech communities in Canada and the Northeastern United States (*Joos 1942; Kurath & McDavid 1961; Labov 2001; Chambers & Hardwick 1985*), neither form of variation has been documented within Greater New Orleans. To document this variation, F1 and F2 measurements from various points in the vowel trajectory are generally used.

What I refer to as *(oh)* or the BOUGHT vowel represents phonological open-o or */ɔ/*. Although in many varieties of American English, this vowel is merged with BOT, or the vowel */a/*, in Chalmatian English, BOUGHT and BOT have been reported as unmerged (*Labov 2007*). Moreover, in this speech variety BOUGHT may also be realized with a raised nucleus, a feature which has been documented in the
Northeast, and is particularly associated with New York City (Labov 2006[1966]; Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006; Becker 2010, 2011). In his analysis of raised BOUGHT in NYCE, Labov developed a 6-point scale to impressionistically determine vowel height. More recent advances in acoustic analysis have allowed for use of F1 as an acoustic measure of BOUGHT-raising (Becker 2010, 2011).

Potential realizations of (æ) are located along the F1/F2 continuum, usually described in terms of lax (more centralized) to tense (raised and front) realizations. Becker (2010) explains that although “tense” and “lax” are commonly used as cover terms to describe this phonological distinction, the actual phonetic correlates of these descriptors are quite complex. As Labov, Ash, & Boberg (2006:16) described, “the feature [±tense] is a cover term for a complex set of phonetic features: extended duration and extreme articulatory position with an accompanying increase of articulatory effort. This is realized acoustically as an F1/F2 location near the outer envelope of the available acoustic space.” I follow Becker and Labov, Ash, & Boberg’s descriptions and usages of “tense” and “lax” to conceptualize the potential realizations of (æ) in terms of movement in F1/F2 space. Some analyses of short-a systems have been impressionistic in nature—with Labov (2006[1966]) for example using a 6-point scale and Boberg & Strassel (2000) using a 3-point scale to categorize tokens of (æ) as tense or lax—while others have used acoustic measures of peripherality, mainly relying on F1 measurements to gauge tenseness (Becker & Wong 2009; Becker 2010). A common strategy is to plot the tokens in F1/F2 space in order to categorize the systems as a whole, or otherwise impressionistically
assess the constraints on the system (Boberg & Strassel 2000; Labov 2007; Durian 2012).

\( r \) or r-lessness may be defined as the variable absence of historic/orthographic \(<r>\) in post-vocalic, syllable coda position, whether followed by a consonant (e.g. “card”) or word boundary (e.g. “car”) (Nagy & Irwin 2010). Variable r-lessness has been studied in a number of U.S. dialects (Wolfram 1969; Feagin 1990; Labov 2006[1966]; Nagy & Irwin 2007; Becker 2009; Irwin & Nagy 2010). It is most frequently examined as a binary, categorical variable—is /ɹ/ pronounced or not?—however, recent research has examined F3 height as an acoustic measure of r-lessness (Yaeger-Dror 2010; Thomas 2011).

4.4.2 Data Processing

The linguistic data for this study came from interviews, a reading passage, and a word list. While I analyzed all tokens of the four phonetic variables that appeared in the reading passage and word list, most interviews lasted over two hours, so it was necessary to choose just a portion of the interview to analyze. Thus fifteen to thirty minute segments of the interviews were selected for transcription and analysis. In an attempt to capture less self-conscious speech, I did not select any interview speech segment occurring within the first five minutes of recorded interaction, allowing for participants to become more comfortable—and thus less likely to monitor their speech closely—in the interview context. Another gauge of comfort I used in selecting interview speech for analysis was whether participants dominated the conversation, speaking fluidly in the form of a narrative (Labov 1984); in the
majority of cases, these portions of the interview consisted of stories of Katrina evacuation, or of returning to St. Bernard for the first time after the storm, because many participants chose to tell extended and detailed stories about these experiences. As mentioned, because participants were not pushed to discuss their Katrina experiences, some interview portions cover discussions of childhood or stories about their lives pre-Katrina, so the narratives selected were not controlled for topic. Schoux Casey (2013) included both Katrina narratives and “interview chat” in her analysis of (r) in New Orleans and did not find significant differences between the two contexts, providing evidence that interview narratives covering Hurricane Katrina and other topics represent comparable linguistic events, in terms of the linguistic variation encountered in these narratives.

The selected segments of interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word, using NCH Express Scribe software to manipulate the playback of the recordings. I transcribed the majority of these segments, with help from undergraduate interns, whose transcripts I verified before submitting them to the Penn Phonetics Lab Forced Aligner (Yuan & Liberman 2008). The aligner uses acoustic models of American English along with a phonological dictionary (Carnegie Mellon University Pronunciation Dictionary) to convert transcriptions of a recording into phonetic segmentation. From a recording and corresponding transcription, the aligner generates a Praat (Boersma 2001) textgrid that matches up to the corresponding segment in the recording, thereby saving the time and effort required to hand-mark each token of a given variable. That said, the aligner is not perfect. To begin with, it

16 This is perhaps in part because participants were told that my research pertained to their experience following Katrina.
works from an acoustic model based on Supreme Court judges, who are not
speakers of Chalmatian English and thus do not share the same
phonetic/phonological inventory as my speakers. Furthermore, it is still in its early
stages of use by sociolinguists, so there is not standardized methodology for
verifying the accuracy of its alignment. Because of these issues, every token of the
four variables was checked by hand in Praat, to ensure for properly marked
boundaries. In some cases the initial hand-correction was performed by
undergraduate interns, but in these cases I completed final verification, so every
textgrid was ultimately reviewed by me before vowel measurements were extracted.

For each variable, only the first three tokens of a given word were included in
my analysis, in an attempt to control somewhat for lexical item. Extraction of
acoustic measurements was automated through use of Praat script. For this reason,
it was necessary to verify that measurements were taken properly, which was done
by examining every token outside of 3 standard deviations of the mean for each
vowel class before normalization (see 4.4.3)—which of course meant that even
though I calculated standard deviation across speakers, I had to do so within gender
groups, since men and women’s mean measurements differed from each other as a
result of physiological differences. While this technique generally captured most
measurement errors, to increase my confidence that I had caught the majority of
errors I documented all tokens outside 2 standard deviations of the mean for each
vowel class as well, double-checking the extreme high and low formant scores
within this group. This double-checking did uncover a handful of mismeasurements
that were not quite outside the 3 standard deviation mark. As a final check, I plotted
all vowels in the F1-F2 space to confirm that there were no remaining
mismereasurements extreme enough to affect the patterning of results. Thus while the
methods described above do not ensure that my data features zero measurement
errors, I am confident that if any mismereasurements remain, they will not skew the
results strongly.

For mismereasurements, I hand-corrected measurements, which generally
required taking measurements at the closest clear formant structure to the desired
location (in the case of creaky voice) or changed the settings somewhat, generally in
terms of the maximum formant or number of formants on Praat (to counteract
formant tracking errors). Fewer than a hundred tokens total required hand-
correction for formant measure, the majority of which were due to issues such as
creaky voice or formant tracking errors.

4.4.3 Normalization

In order to analyze the vocalic variables of (oh), (aw), and (æ) across subjects, it was
necessary to normalize for differences in vocal tract length. The goal of
normalization techniques is to minimize variation due to physiological differences
between speakers—in particular differences between men and women—without
eliminating socially meaningful differences in vowel quality (Adank et al 2004).

There are both speaker-intrinsic and speaker-extrinsic methods for accomplishing
this task. For the current study, data was normalized following the Lobanov method,
a speaker-intrinsic normalization method, which is advantageous when working
with smaller data sets (Thomas & Kendall 2009). The algorithm for Lobanov
normalization is essentially a z-score transformation that uses the mean and standard deviation of the first two formants for a given speaker. The algorithm is provided in (1) below, where the normalized formant value $z$ is calculated by subtracting $\mu$—the mean formant value across all vowel tokens for that speaker in that speech type—from $f$, the un-normalized formant value (in Hz) for a given vowel token, divided by the standard deviation $\sigma$ for that formant across all vowel tokens for that speaker in that speech type.

$$z = \frac{f - \mu}{\sigma}$$

To normalize to the center of each speaker’s vowel space, F1 and F2 values at the 50% point for tokens of the “corner” vowels in BEAT, BAT, BOT, and BOOT, along with mid-vowels BOAT and BAIT, were extracted from the reading passage and interview speech recordings for each speaker.\(^17\) Token counts for each vowel class are presented in Table 6.

\(^{17}\) Because the word list did not feature adequate token counts of the requisite vowels for normalization, reading passage tokens were used to normalize word list data.
Table 6. Token counts for normalization vowel classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel class</th>
<th>Reading Passage (total)</th>
<th>Reading Passage (per speaker)</th>
<th>Interview (total)</th>
<th>Interview (per speaker)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEAT</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>8-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAIT</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>8-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAT</td>
<td>3352</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>28-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>8-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOAT</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>8-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOT</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>8-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I attempted to extract measurements for around 10 tokens from each vowel class in each speech type, however due to the abbreviated length of the reading passage and individual deviations, sometimes token counts were lower than 10. Note that in both the reading passage and interview speech, there were more tokens of BAT than of other vowel classes, due to its status as a variable of interest within the current study. To correct for any possible skewing of the normalized vowel measurements, when calculating mean F1 and F2 for each speaker, I first calculated the mean F1 and F2 within each vowel class, then took the mean of these means. Thus $\mu$ represents an equally weighted mean across vowel classes, within a given speech type. Similarly, $\sigma$ represents the standard deviation of the means across each vowel class, within a given speech type.

For the most part, vowel class was determined based on marking by the Penn Forced Aligner, which draws from the Carnegie Mellon University Pronunciation Dictionary, however some differences within this particular dialect of study were noted—namely, *on* and *off* are in the BOUGHT class, not the BOT class (see Becker
2010 for a detailed discussion about how BOUGHT/BOT vowel classes vary across American English dialects).

4.4.4 Coding and statistical analysis

The patterning of all four linguistic variables was examined through the generation of regression models specific to each variable. In these models, I tested the predictive power of the social variables to be described in Section 4.5, as well as linguistic considerations specific to each variable (identified below). Further details about statistical analyses and sub-analyses are identified in the results chapters for the respective variables.

For (aw), I marked all of the tokens from the reading passage and word list, as well as the first 30 tokens of (aw) in the transcribed portion of the interview, measuring F1 and F2 at the 25% and 75% point in the segment to capture the quality of the nucleus and off-glide of the vowel. Marking resulted in a total of 566 tokens of (aw) from the word list (~10 per speaker), 1,656 tokens from the reading passage (~30 per speaker), and 1,629 tokens from interview speech (~30 per speaker), for a total of 3,851 tokens overall. To determine whether a given token of (aw) represented the local variant, I took measurements of nucleus and off-glide height and backness—indicated by F1 and F2 measurements taken at the 25% and 75% points. For each speaker in each speech type (interview speech, reading passage, and word list), I calculated the mean normalized F1 and F2 for the nucleus, and mean normalized F1 and F2 for the off-glide, of pre-voiced versus pre-voiceless tokens of (aw). I then calculated the Euclidian distance between the mean
normalized F1 and F2 of pre-voiced and pre-voiceless nuclei, and the Euclidian
distance between the mean normalized F1 and F2 of pre-voiced and pre-voiceless
off-glides for a given speaker within a given speech type. Finally, I took the sum of
these two Euclidian distances as the measure of raising and fronting for each
speaker in each speech type. Thus I had one sum of Euclidean distances for each
speaker in interview speech, reading passage, and word list conditions. The formula
for calculating the sum of Euclidean distances is provided in (2), where $nvl$ is pre-
voiceless nucleus, $nv$ is pre-voiced nucleus, $ovl$ is pre-voiceless offglide, and $ov$ is
pre-voiced offglide.

\begin{equation}
\sum \text{Sum of Euclidean distances} \nonumber \\
\sqrt{(F_{1_{nvl}} - F_{1_{nv}})^2 + (F_{2_{nvl}} - F_{2_{nv}})^2} + \sqrt{(F_{1_{ovl}} - F_{1_{ov}})^2 + (F_{2_{ovl}} - F_{2_{ov}})^2}
\end{equation}

For pre-nasal (aw) variation, the F1 measurement at the 25% point was sufficient to
determine whether speakers feature the local variant in their speech, since fronting
of the nucleus is the major indicator of pre-nasal tensing.

I marked all non-pre-rhotic (cf Becker 2010; Clark & Hillenbrand 2007)
tokens of BOUGHT from the reading passage and word list, along with the first 20
tokens of BOUGHT in the transcribed portion of each interview. Marking resulted in
a total of 284 tokens of (oh) from the word list (~5 per speaker), 1,889 tokens from
the reading passage (~33 per speaker), and 1,176 tokens from interview speech
(~20 per speaker), for a total of 3,349 tokens overall. To analyze whether these
tokens represented raised BOUGHT, F1 measurements of BOUGHT tokens were
taken at the 50% point in the vowel as an indicator of vowel height. Because
voiceless segments and shorter words favor BOUGHT-raising (Becker 2010),
linguistic constraints coded for included preceding and following context (including
adjacent word boundaries), as well as number of syllables (monosyllabic or
polysyllabic).

All tokens of (æ) from the reading passage and word list, along with the first
30 tokens of (æ) in the transcribed portion of each interview, were marked in
PRAAT. Marking resulted in a total of 1,717 tokens of (æ) from the word list (~30
per speaker), 3,349 tokens from the reading passage (~58 per speaker), and 1,732
tokens from interview speech (~30 per speaker), for a total of 6,798 tokens overall.
Measurements of F1 and F2 at the 50% point of each vowel token were extracted, as
indicators of tensing (Becker & Wong 2009). I coded for following phonetic
environment, syllable quality (open or closed), number of syllables (monosyllabic or
polysyllabic), word type (function or content word), and syllable position (whether
initial, medial, or final), because of findings by Labov (2006[1966]) and Becker
(2010) indicating these factors as potential predictors of tensing.

I coded as either r-ful (r-1) or r-less (r-0) all tokens of (r) from the reading
passage and word list, along with the first 50 tokens of (r) in the transcribed portion
of each interview. Marking resulted in a total of 964 tokens of (r) from the word list
(~17 per speaker), 4,493 tokens from the reading passage (~80 per speaker), and
2,865 tokens from interview speech (~50 per speaker), for a total of 8,322 tokens
overall. Since analyzing this variable involved impressionistic coding\textsuperscript{18}, I had two undergraduate interns from Ohio independently code a sample of 400 (r) tokens from all three conditions (5% of the total corpus) to assess agreement between my perception of each token and their perception. The sample was balanced across preceding vowel classes and speakers. Intercoder reliability analysis revealed 80% agreement, with a kappa statistic of .73 (Kappa statistics of over .7 indicate good intercoder reliability according to Clopper 2011). Because past studies of (r) have found an effect of preceding vowel (Wolfram 1969; Irwin & Nagy 2007; Nagy & Irwin 2010), I attempted to capture tokens of each vowel class, coding according to the classes identified in Nagy & Irwin (2010): START /a/, SQUARE /e/, NEAR /i/, FORCE /o/, FUR /ɜ/, and LETTER /ɚ/.\textsuperscript{19} Thus preceding vowel was coded for, along with following environment (consonant, vowel, or pause), word type (lexical vs. non-lexical).

\textsuperscript{18}While I considered using an acoustic measurement of F3 as an indicator of constriction, I eventually settled on simply coding r-lessness impressionistically. I chose this method in part because of inconsistent results in the use for second and third formant measurements in past studies of (r), such as Irwin & Nagy (2007:138), who also coded (r) impressionistically, writing: Spectrograms were examined with the hope that convergence of the second (F2) and third formant (F3) would provide a useful cue to physiological constriction, but we found inconsistent support for that concept: some tokens where we clearly hear constricted [r] show non-convergent F2 and F3. Conversely, some clear cases of vocalization show convergence of the two formants.

Similarly, Nagy & Irwin (2010:250) included formant measures as a continuous dependent variable in a series of regression analyses, writing that “this method shed no further light on the variation.” That said, my intent here is not to assert that acoustic analysis of the data in the current study would “shed no further light” on variation in Chalmatian English, simply that conflicting accounts of the reliability of F3 as an indicator of r-fulness suggest that acoustic measures of r-fulness should be checked with auditory perception, so I am taking impressionistic marking as the starting point in the current study.

\textsuperscript{19}Nagy & Irwin also included “CURE /u/” in their analysis, however in my data pre-rhotic /u/ was merged with pre-rhotic /o/ for most speakers, so I marked all tokens of pre-rhotic /u/ or /o/ as “FORCE /o/.”
function word), and morphological environment (word-final, morpheme-internal in a closed syllable, morpheme-internal in an open syllable, morpheme-final in a closed syllable, and morpheme-final in an open syllable), based on findings from previous studies of (r) (e.g. Becker 2009; Nagy & Irwin 2010; Schoux Casey 2013).

4.5 Analysis: Social Variables

One goal of variationist sociolinguistic studies is to determine the influence of certain social factors on linguistic variation. While number of macro-level social factors—such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class—have been shown across diverse populations to correlate with linguistic variation, recent studies have taken care to include locally relevant considerations as well (see discussion in 1.2). The current study similarly combines macro-level social distinctions with micro-level social factors uncovered during ethnographic fieldwork in order to uncover the sources of variation in this community. The variables identified in this section include participant age, gender, and social class, as well as post-Katrina location status and extra-Chalmatian orientation, which will be described in detail below. While ethnicity is another social dimension along which language practices typically vary, all the participants in this study identified as White (or part White), due to the nature of the population being sampled, so this factor was not included as a social variable.
4.5.1 Age

Because one of the main research questions in this study has to do with the fate of this language variety, age is a crucial factor to capture. Synchronic studies of language change use apparent time to capture changes in progress, and similarly this study interprets differences between younger and older speakers in terms of the evolution of this dialect. Age at time of interview was recorded for each speaker, ranging from 18-85, with both median and average participant age falling at 46 years. Age was treated as a continuous variable in statistical analysis.

4.5.2 Gender

The sample was approximately balanced by participant gender, with 31 women and 26 men interviewed. No speaker stated a gender-identification outside of the male-female distinction, so this factor was treated as binary in statistical analysis.

4.5.3 Social class

Because Chalmatian English is decidedly associated with a working class identity, social class represents another important factor to examine. Although St. Bernard Parish is frequently described as a blue-collar community by scholars (e.g. Mucciaccio 2009) and locals (e.g. Warren 2009) alike, as in any town there is some variation in terms of education and occupations within the community. For this reason, social class was quantified by combining information culled about participants’ educational background and occupation, in combination with another
social variable that ethnographic fieldwork indicated was an important social categorization tool: whether participants attended public or Catholic high schools.

Education was coded into the following categories, each assigned an ordinal number value:

1  High school only
2  Some college
3  Currently in college
4  Finished college
5  Completed (some) graduate work

All participants finished high school, so there was no need for a category lower than 1. 22 participants completed high school only, and 14 were college graduates. 10 participants had pursued some post-graduate education. The median education score was 3, and the mean was 2.74.

Occupation was coded according to the categories identified by Labov (2001:61), reproduced below:

1  Unemployed
2  Blue-collar (unskilled)
3  Blue-collar (skilled)
4  White-collar (merchant, foreman, sales)
5  White-collar (proprietor, manager)
6  Professional (owner-director of large firm)

Classification into these groups was accomplished through consultation with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) prestige scores (Keiko & Treas 1990), which assigns prestige scores to occupations from the 1980 census. Some typical examples of occupations coded into the occupation categories are provided below:
A number of local considerations were taken into account in the occupation categorization of participants in the current study. To begin with, many participants had experienced job changes following Hurricane Katrina (or had simply featured a number of different jobs over the course of their lives). For this reason, participants’ entire work history, and not just their current occupation, was considered in their classification. Thus no participant was categorized as unemployed. The few lifelong housewives in my sample (N=2) were categorized according to their husband’s profession. In addition, because many schoolteachers worked for the private elementary school(s) in the Parish, they did not complete teaching degrees or receive special training to attain these positions, so teachers were all categorized as 3, blue-collar (skilled). Current college students (N=6) were categorized as 4, under the assumption that these participants would pursue white-collar positions upon graduation.

High school type, the final consideration in coding social class, was coded as a binary variable, with 0 assigned to participants who attended public school (or were homeschooled20) and 1 point assigned to those who attended Catholic schools.

Perhaps due to the Irish, Italian, and French backgrounds of many White residents

20 Only one participant was homeschooled. She was categorized with public school students because in terms of local prestige, homeschooling does not clearly point to higher class associations as Catholic schools do.
of GNO, almost all my informants were Catholic. While there are a handful of non-Catholic private schools in GNO, none of my participants attended these schools. Thus the distinction between public and private schools is more accurately described as public versus Catholic schools. Indeed, a common local joke consists of asking, “what religion are you? Catholic or public?” Within GNO, more common than asking where someone is from is asking what high school they went to (Eble 2006; Schoux Casey 2013), with the answer usually interpreted in terms of social class information—public school implying a lower social class background than Catholic schools, in the hierarchy (Mucciaccio 2009). Historically, sending children to Catholic schools also created a form of de facto segregation—this is reflected in my sample in that I have no participants who attended public schools in New Orleans after 1965.

Class calculations thus consisted of adding the education score (1-5), the occupation score (1-6), and the high school score (1 or 0). A higher class score indicates an elevated social class, compared to lower scores. The lowest score any participant received was 3, indicating a public high school graduate who had completed no college coursework and worked an unskilled blue-collar job (N=9). The highest class score was 11, earned by two men who had both attended private high schools, completed graduate work, and worked as a CPA and college professor, respectively. The average overall class score was 6.5, with a median of 7.
4.5.4 Post-Katrina location status

In order to answer questions about the linguistic effects of speaker migration, another important social variable is related to post-Katrina displacement. The basic distinction between participants who moved back to St. Bernard after the storm, versus those who relocated to somewhere else in GNO, is not only clearly related to this study's research questions, but was also identified during ethnographic fieldwork as a crucial distinction within the population of interest. Repeated narratives from both returners and relocators framed the opposite group (in some cases, with a clear tone of disdain) as having made a different choice, or gone a different direction, than their own group. I refer to this factor as post-Katrina location status. Each participant was classified into one of these two categories based on their current residence—simplified into St. Bernard versus elsewhere in GNO. Returners who moved back into their original pre-Katrina home were not distinguished from those who bought and renovated another home in St. Bernard Parish (a common occurrence). Similarly, some distinctions within relocators are not captured by this categorization, mostly due to limitations on sample size and scope of the current study. For instance, while the majority of relocators (22 out of 28) lived on the Northshore in St. Tammany Parish at the time of their interview, it is worth noting that one relocator lived on the West Bank, two lived in Metairie, and three lived in New Orleans proper. Additionally, two relocators on the Northshore lived in Ponchatoula, which is in Tangipahoa Parish, just West of St. Tammany Parish. While none of these groups is large enough to test separately, it is possible that their experiences outside of St. Bernard differed from those of St. Tammany
relators. Moreover, two of the New Orleans relocators and the two Metairie relocators differ from the other relocators in that they moved away from St. Bernard preceding Katrina, of their own volition. This distinction is thus important to capture in analysis of linguistic patterns, which is what the final social variable I will introduce attempts to accomplish.

4.5.5 Extra-Chalmatian orientation

Some post-Katrina relocators expressed that they had wanted to leave St. Bernard Parish before the storm, explaining that the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina merely offered the opportunity to act on this desire. In contrast, some returners expressed feelings of being “stuck” in St. Bernard due to financial constraints relating to the storm. When investigating sociolinguistic variation that may be tied to place, it is crucial to capture not just current physical location, but also distinctions between individuals’ orientation to their previous and current homes, which may have an effect on linguistic choices insofar as the motivation to adopt extra-local norms.

Many previous studies of sociolinguistic variation have found that orientation to local versus extra-local linguistic norms affect use of regionally marked linguistic variants, even in situations that do not involve displacement of speakers. For example, in his study of Martha’s Vineyard, Labov (1972[1963]) found that the speakers who produced the highest rates of centralized /ay/ and /aw/ were residents that lived “up-island”—who were more isolated than residents of down-island towns—and those speakers that expressed a desire to stay on Martha’s Vineyard. As Labov argued, speakers who wished to stay on the island had a greater
motivation to adhere to the local, centralized norm than speakers who wished to leave and secure employment elsewhere, where centralized diphthongs were less common. Additionally, in her analysis of three working class neighborhoods in Belfast, Milroy (1980) developed the notion of social networks, which can be loosely defined as the set of people an individual interacts with in various spheres of their life (work, home, etc). Milroy demonstrated that speakers with denser social networks—those who interacted with the same groups of people across different spheres of interaction—tended to adhere more closely to local linguistic norms, whereas speakers who interacted with many different individuals adhered to extra-local norms. Similarly, Eckert (1989, 2000) found that social groups at a Detroit area high school organized around broader categories that she dubbed “jocks”—those students who participated heavily in extra-curricular activities and intended to go to college outside of the area—and “burnouts”—students who did not participate in school-organized activities and intended to spend their lives in the area. While jocks adhered more to extra-local linguistic norms, burnouts featured higher rates of Northern City Shift features, a local sound change in progress in the upper Midwest. Eckert interpreted these linguistic patterns in terms of each groups’ orientation towards Detroit area linguistic norms. Examining another situation featuring the physical movements of speakers, in their work on migration of Appalachian English speakers, Hazen & Hamilton (2008) found that migration status on its own was not a strong predictor of linguistic variation, for either phonological and syntactic variables. Rather, they argued, adoption of extra-local speech patterns was highly
dependent on the individual, and on interactions with other social factors such as education and family-specific norms.

Within New Orleans English in particular, there have also been indications that local orientation affects linguistic practices. Schoux Casey (2013) categorized the speakers in her sample as “internally” or “externally” oriented, based on analysis of their discourse during interviews. Speakers who focused on New Orleans-centric events, and who spoke in first person about the events surrounding local issues, were categorized as internally-oriented, while those who spoke in third person or framed local events in terms of national issues were classified as externally-oriented. Based on these divisions, Schoux Casey found that orientation was a significant predictor of r-lessness, a variable also being examined in the current study.

In their treatment of (extra)local orientation, most of the studies mentioned have relied on categorization into binary groups (e.g. Eckert 1989, 2000) or qualitative analysis of speakers’ orientation (e.g. Hazen & Hamilton 2008), or both (e.g. Schoux Casey 2013). While such methods certainly shed light on distinctions between locally versus extra-locally oriented speakers within a speech community, there are some disadvantages to these approaches. Binary distinctions may obscure more subtle social variance within a community, by enforcing categorization into one of two possible groups. While qualitative analysis of orientation allows for more multifaceted and gradient distinctions, it is not able to be included in statistical models of variation. For these reasons, I sought to develop a measure of (extra)local orientation in the current study that featured a rigorous quantitative calculation of relevant factors for scoring orientation.
Quantifying something as complex and subjective as one’s orientation to a given place is no trivial task. In Solomon’s (1999) work on sociolinguistic variation in Yucatán Spanish in Vallidolid, she found that traditional social variables such as age, class, education, and speech style did not adequately capture the variation she encountered in her data. To fill the gap between the observed variation and her explanatory measures, Solomon used insights from her ethnographic fieldwork to determine that examining participants’ orientations towards larger urban centers would be a fruitful direction. She developed a manner of quantifying orientation to urban and rural locales, which she called the “cosmopolitan orientation index.” The index was calculated by assigning the speaker in question 1 point for each affirmative answer to the following questions:

a. Has the consultant lived in Mérida, Cancún, or another large Mexican urban community for more than one year (i.e. for work or for school)?
b. During our interview, did s/he express overt positive and enthusiastic attitudes toward one or more of these areas (e.g., commenting on how happy s/he was to live there, emphasizing the advantages of these areas over Valladolid, etc.)?
c. Is s/he planning to move one of these places?
d. Does s/he go to at least one of these places regularly for work?
e. Does s/he go to at least one of these places regularly for pleasure (vacation, to visit friends or family, etc.)?
f. Does s/he deal regularly with people from these areas or from abroad in his/her work in Valladolid?
g. Does s/he report not using Maya conversationally?

While Solomon’s goals in developing this index were specific to her particular study, I would argue that such indices—when extended to other sociolinguistic studies of identity and place orientation—provide a valuable tool for advancing the study of
language and place. With this broader objective in mind, I developed a similar index of extra-local orientation, which I call “extra-Chalmetian orientation”—that is, orientation to extra-local areas rather than orientation to Chalmette (and possibly also to Chalmette-based linguistic norms). With this measure, I attempt to quantify some distinctions that existed in the population even before Katrina, which in some cases may trump the migration of St. Bernardians to the Northshore. Extra-Chalmetian orientation also captures the difference between the relocators who voluntarily relocated preceding Hurricane Katrina, those who wanted to move before but never had the chance until the storm hit, and those who were forced to move following the hurricane but wish to return to Chalmette, and still work or otherwise participate in Chalmette networks.

The extra-Chalmetian orientation consists of points assigned to each participant according to stance and exposure, as follows:

(a) Chalmetian Identification Index
   -2 Identifies explicitly and enthusiastically as Chalmetian
   -1 Identifies as Chalmetian, qualified (e.g. “I guess”)
   0 No data
   +1 Identifies as non-Chalmetian, qualified (e.g. “I guess”)
   +2 Identifies explicitly and enthusiastically as non-Chalmetian

(b) Desire to leave St. Bernard
   -1 Never wanted to leave/always knew would return
   0 No explicit statement about desire to leave St. Bernard
   +1 Wanted to leave/happy to have left

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21 N=1; one participant who had to cut his interview short and was never able to reschedule.
22 N=13, because this was not a topic that I explicitly brought up during interviews; This was a category motivated by the sheer number of participants who discussed it.
(c) Residential history\(^{23}\)
+5  Left St. Bernard of their own volition\(^{24}\)
+1  Within GNO for under 5 years
+2  Within GNO for over 5 years
+5  Within GNO for over 10 years
+5  Outside of GNO for under 5 years
+7  Outside of GNO for over 5 years
+10 Outside of GNO for over 10 years
+1  Evacuated & spent at least 1 year somewhere outside of GNO

(d) Schooling\(^{25}\)
-1  Attended HS within St. Bernard
+1  Attended HS outside of St. Bernard
+1  Attended college outside of St. Bernard, but in Louisiana
+2  Attended college outside of Louisiana

(e) Workplace\(^{26}\)
Works in St. Bernard -1
Works outside of St. Bernard +1

\(^{23}\) If participant lived elsewhere in GNO up until 1965, these years do not count towards their extra-Chalmartian orientation totals, since the population in question did not move as a group to St. Bernard until after integration. Furthermore, for relocators their post-Katrina time away from St. Bernard is not included in this count, since this information is already encoded in returner/relocator status. In addition, because time spent at college is already encoded in (d), years spent living elsewhere for college are not included in this count. Similarly, since all St. Bernard residents were displaced for some period of time following Hurricane Katrina, participants are only assigned a point if they spent over a year somewhere outside of GNO.

\(^{24}\) Those who relocated as a child or because there were stationed somewhere with the military did not receive these extra points.

\(^{25}\) As was the case with (c), if participants attended high school outside of St. Bernard \textbf{before} 1965, they are assigned 0 points, as that was the norm in the community preceding integration. In addition, if participants did not attend college, or continued to live in St. Bernard while attending college, they are assigned 0 points.

\(^{26}\) If retired, the participant was assigned the points for their old occupation. College/high school students were assigned no points for workplace, since their school location was already encoded in (d).
Note that (a) and (b) address stance towards Chalmette/St. Bernard, as expressed during interviews, while (d)-(e) consist of objective data about the locations in which participants spend—or have spent—time. (c) is a combination of both kinds of information, since it is encoded in (c) whether the participant left St. Bernard out of their own volition, as they expressed to me, but also includes objective information about their time living away from St. Bernard. Thus, extra-Chalmatian orientation encodes both subjective representation of one’s relationship with St. Bernard, as well as objective measures of exposure to extra-local language varieties through everyday interactions. The reason these two seemingly different types of measures were combined into extra-Chalmatian orientation is because participants explained to me that being Chalmatian is not only identifying with Chalmette as a place and participating in Chalmette’s social structure, it also relates to actively avoiding interactions with outsiders (as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Thus, for Chalmatians, seeking out exposure to outsiders in some sense is a stance-taking action, expressing an orientation to outside norms and interests.

Part of the reason this scale features the potential for zero points for stance-related measures (a) and (b) derives from the nature of the interviews. Although I attempted to cover every module with each participant, practical aspects of interviewing sometimes precluded doing so—as when a participant unexpectedly cut an interview short, or in contrast spoke in such detail about one topic that there was not sufficient time to address all the topics desired. Thus to make the extra-Chalmatian orientation as accurate as possible, I included the possibility of “no answer” so that this inconsistency across participants would affect the index as little
as possible. In the case of (b) desire to leave St. Bernard, often this topic came up organically during interviews—so that generally if it did not come up, it is likely that the participant did not feel very strongly either way, which is worth capturing.

The extra-Chalmatian orientation functions such that, for example, relocator Roger who went to high school in New Orleans, moved to the city from Chalmette once he graduated high school, and explicitly expressed that he does not self-identify as a Chalmatian, receives a score of 15. In contrast, relocator Jennifer, who also went to high school in New Orleans but who lived in St. Bernard for her whole life up until Katrina—at which point she only moved to the Northshore out of necessity— and who still continues to commute to Chalmette for work, but provides a qualified description of herself as Chalmatian, receives a score of 0. Returner Allie, who attended high school within St. Bernard, lived there her entire life except for three years in Maryland as a child and one year displaced by Katrina, and who explicitly and enthusiastically identifies as a Chalmatian, also receives a score of 0.

This social variable was of particular interest to quantify in order to develop a measure of orientation to St. Bernard, in contrast with the more objective measure of post-Katrina relocator status, which does not capture the nuance of each participant’s experience with St. Bernard Parish. Another goal was to provide a methodology for future researchers of place to combine local measures of stance and exposure to place(s) of interest so that such a measure could become more or less standardized in studies of place, and—crucially—included in statistical models of sociolinguistic variation. That said, because ethnographic considerations were taken into account in defining orientation to St. Bernard in the current study—and I
would argue should be taken into account in any study of sociolinguistic variation and place—this measure is not, nor should it be, perfectly replicable in a study of another locale.

4.5.6 A final note about social variables

In this study, I have two measures of “place”—one corresponding to participants’ physical location of residence at the time of their interview, post-Katrina relocator status, and one corresponding to their orientation toward their pre-Katrina home of Chalmette, extra-Chalmatian orientation. To ensure that these two factors are not measuring the same thing, I conducted a Fisher’s exact test on post-Katrina relocator status and extra-Chalmatian orientation, which resulted in a p value of 0.37, indicating that these two variables are not correlated.

Additionally, I wanted to test correlations between post-Katrina location status and social class, since there are local associations between relocators and higher class levels, as illustrated in the following quote from returner Ed.

Ed (returner): The majority of the population that didn’t come back was that upper middle class, even some higher income levels—housings, that people just had other means so they moved away to, they moved predominantly the Northshore.

I performed a Fisher’s exact test on these two factors as well, which resulted in a p value of 0.49, meaning that post-Katrina location status and social class are not correlated and thus do not provide two ways of measuring the same thing.
4.6 Conclusions

In this section I have described the methods for data collection and analysis, identifying the social and linguistic variables examined in the current study. I completed ethnographic fieldwork in Greater New Orleans during a period of nine months, eliciting interview data, reading passages, and word lists from 57 participants recruited through the “friend-of-a-friend” method of snowball sampling. The three vocalic variables in this study, (aw), (oh), and (æ) were measured acoustically, while (r) was coded impressionistically. I analyzed these data using regression models which included relevant linguistic factors specific to each variable, as well as the following social factors: participant’s age, gender, social class, post-Katrina location status, and extra-Chalmatian orientation. The patterning of these analyses will be explored in the following chapters.
This chapter examines the local social categories uncovered through the course of ethnographic fieldwork in St. Bernard Parish, and throughout Greater New Orleans. Because my research questions involved examining the relationship between certain places and the linguistic features tied to them, it was crucial to observe the ways that individuals in the research community carved up space, delineating their sociolinguistic world. This allows me to connect the spatial, the social, and the linguistic, since “place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game—a force with detectable and independent effects on social life” (Gieryn 2000:466).

Social geographers conceive of “place” as a physical space that has been imbued with social significance (Cresswell 2004), connotations that build over time, and through interactions with others (Basso 1996a, 1996b). For this reason, part of my role as ethnographer was to observe the place-making behaviors and interactions that defined post-Katrina Chalmette, as well as the spaces inhabited following the tragedy and displacement after the storm. Furthermore, it was critical to document the divisions that existed in the community preceding Katrina, as well as their evolution leading up to the time of my study.
In this chapter, I describe reported perceptions of pre-Katrina St. Bernard Parish, focusing on Chalmette and the rest of Upper St. Bernard in particular. I also discuss post-Katrina divisions between those who returned to the parish after the storm and those who relocated—many of whom to the Northshore—as well as linguistic and social features associated with being a “Chalmatian,” which comprises a salient set of characteristics within St. Bernard Parish and in GNO more broadly.

5.1 The ethnographic process
Ethnographic fieldwork requires a distinct openness to the object of study, as predictions and even basic categories being examined evolve in response to “key moments” in the field that call for the researcher to adjust their perspective. From the start, I had a general idea of the linguistic and social features I wanted to examine in St. Bernard Parish, though my willingness to pursue to other avenues of interest is what determined the final shape of this study. Embracing this openness to possibility, I spent my first month simply observing what life is like in the parish. I sipped coffee at the local PJ’s coffee shop, took meals at Par Three Diner, and accepted every invitation to participate in activities that friends in Chalmette offered, all the while keeping a keen eye on interactions I witnessed. In this section, I will describe how I found my “story,” or research topic, reflect on my role as researcher, and detail how I built local ties in the community.
5.1.1 Finding the story

When entering a research community, it is crucial to have a rationale for the study to report to individuals that you encounter. This rationale must be designed not only to evade suspicion about your intentions, but also to create opportunities for individuals to direct you to participants or other resources to aid in research goals. Because I didn’t want to inadvertently affect how participants spoke by telling them I was examining the dialect, I began my research with the rationale that I was studying what it’s like to live in Chalmette.\footnote{While I never concealed the fact that I was a linguist, I attempted to keep the focus off language practices by describing my interests as “what it’s like to live in Chalmette—from everyday life, to traditions, to how people speak.”} The first time the words left my lips, I realized how odd and uncompelling they sounded. My initial encounter telling a Chalmette resident my rationale occurred at the St. Bernard Center for Tourism, less than a week into my fieldwork. I was picking up pamphlets to see how the community was presented to outsiders. The woman working at the desk was gregarious and helpful, filling my arms with pamphlets, but responded with a confused face when I presented her with my rationale: “I am studying what it’s like to live in Chalmette.” After a beat, the woman launched into her Katrina Story, which I later discovered was a common speech event in the parish. The woman explained the changes in the parish since the storm, looking to me for approval that these were the sorts of narratives I was seeking. I didn’t know it at the time, but they were—or at least, should have been.

During my early days on-site, I also spent time driving around side streets in Chalmette, observing what types of homes there were and noting any differences
between neighborhoods. I was looking for any salient local divisions, or patterns in comparison with socio-demographic/physical organization I experienced elsewhere in Greater New Orleans. During these drives, I couldn’t help but notice how strangely houses seemed to be placed within these communities. Some houses were on enormous plots of land that looked like they could fit a whole other house on the property. Other blocks were completely empty, just a long patch of grass, which I thought to myself could use some benches or paths if they were to serve as a proper park. It was not until I noticed that some of these large swaths of grass had concrete platforms on them that I realized: these were plots of land that previously hosted homes, which had been razed since Katrina. Even though seven years had passed since Hurricane Katrina, and most of the rest of the city had recovered, in Chalmette the effects were still visible and encountered by local residents on a daily basis.

The final moment in ethnographic fieldwork that convinced me that my questions needed to be centered on the events following Hurricane Katrina was when I began recruiting participants. I was chatting with a good friend in Chalmette about her acquaintances, to generate a list of potential interviewees. She rattled off a list of names faster than I could write, and then added nonchalantly, “of course, they’re on the Northshore now. Does that matter?” I paused, unsure of the answer to this question. “Do you still consider them to be Chalmatians?” I finally asked. She responded in the affirmative without hesitation, and from then on I included Northshore Chalmatians in my sample, eventually building towards answering questions about the linguistic differences—or lack thereof—between those who returned to Chalmette and those who relocated post-Katrina.
5.1.2 My role as researcher

An important part of performing ethnographic fieldwork is being reflexive about one’s own effect on data collection. Being a young, White female allowed me access to the population of Upper St. Bernard in a way that for example being a Black male, or an older researcher, may not have. But it also limited me in some ways, since for example I naturally had greater access to the female population of St. Bernard than the male population (reflected in the fact that I have slightly more female participants in my sample than male). I also had little access to the small pre-Katrina Black population of Upper St. Bernard (similarly reflected in my sample).

I often overheard participants and friends in Upper St. Bernard refer to me as, “that little girl who needs help with her research project,” which ended up being useful in terms of framing me as someone unthreatening in a position of need, and also mitigating my role as a university researcher conducting official business. Such mitigation brings up another piece of my own identity that may have affected my data collection, which is that my own speech betrays an upper middle class, highly educated, non-local background. Thus my speech (and likely other mannerisms) put me at odds with my research population: a working class community in which many residents do not have college degrees and generally remain in the same region as their parents or grandparents. For this reason, during interactions I tried to de-emphasize these features of my identity, and instead called attention to points of similarity with members of my research community; for example, I am Irish Catholic, born in New Orleans, and grew up in the South. I also lived in New Orleans for 5
years from 2003-2008 and as a result possess a good deal of local knowledge about food, music, and other traditions such as Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest.

During my previous time in New Orleans, I was a student at Tulane University, in Uptown New Orleans—both of which are locally associated with privilege and pretension. When it arose in conversation that I attended Tulane, I stressed that I had been a hard-working student on scholarship, whose experience spanned pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans (thus also avoiding presenting myself as a post-Katrina carpetbagger). The fact that I had my own Katrina story was an advantage in this research, since I was able to identify with stories about battling evacuation traffic or dealing with power outages, and proffer my own experiences in conversations about the storm. Following Hurricane Isaac in August 2012, I made a point of volunteering extensively in St. Bernard, which helped reinforce my status as an active, invested member of the community who understands the struggles that one encounters following a major natural disaster. Indeed, I was frequently referred to as an “honorary Chalmatian” by the friends I made during my fieldwork, which acknowledges both my acceptance as “one of them” in terms of pride, but also in terms of struggle.

5.1.3 Building local ties

Over the course of nine months, I attempted to work my way into the community through various avenues (identified in Chapter 4), to ensure that my subject pool was not limited to a single social network within Upper St. Bernard. One strategy I used was to keep a spreadsheet of how I met interviewees and key informants in the
community, to ensure that no one source was being oversampled. I also noted when individuals I had met from one activity or realm in the parish knew someone I had previously met another way (which happened often in this tight-knit community).

My initial entrée into the community of Chalmette and surrounding areas was through my roommates, with whom I shared an apartment in Mid-City New Orleans during the first few months of my fieldwork stay. All three of my roommates had grown up in Upper St. Bernard Parish, and their families were split between returners and relocators. I became close with the extended families of these roommates, even living with one of their parents in Chalmette for a couple months in between lodging arrangements. My roommates and their families thus became key informants, and I would discuss my observations with them during dinner, family get-togethers, or other interactions. They were quick to correct or clarify any points of confusion, and were quite comfortable with me taking notes during our conversations—a practice I otherwise avoided with potential interviewees, to encourage more naturalistic and casual interactions.

As time passed, I expanded my network outside of these initial contacts and made ties with other individuals in the community who also became key informants. In particular, the people I met while coaching a local swim team and co-directing a senior citizen talent show—both activities that involved long-term, repeated contact—became close friends and conversation partners as I further established my concepts about the social and linguistic landscape in Post-Katrina St. Bernard and St. Tammany Parishes.
I also developed stronger friendships during the course of my volunteer work following Hurricane Isaac, which struck on the seven-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina: August 29, 2012. As the anniversary neared, I was interested in seeing how the community responded to this event. I arranged to attend a yearly remembrance ceremony at Chalmette High School with some friends I had made over the course of my fieldwork. However, on August 29 I found myself not at Chalmette High School, but rather in Baton Rouge, having evacuated the city of New Orleans, which was battening the hatches anew in preparation for Hurricane Isaac. Fortunately, the 14 billion dollar levee system held up—but unfortunately, this made for extensive flooding in areas that had never flooded before, since as locals explained to me, “the water had to go somewhere!” Figure 17 presents the Hurricane Isaac flood line painted onto the side of Middendorf’s, a seafood restaurant 40 miles east of New Orleans which was undamaged by Hurricane Katrina’s storm surge. Below the flood line reads, “thanks to the ‘new & improved’ levee system,” indicating some negative sentiments towards the engineering designed to protect Southshore locations in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard Parishes while leaving Northshore locations more susceptible to flooding than before.
While a hurricane striking your field site is clearly less than ideal, it did offer an exclusive look at the processes that take place in Chalmette before and after a major hurricane. I took advantage of the opportunity, spending the following week volunteering every day at donation centers, temporary shelters, and in my Chalmette friends’ yards, clearing debris. One friend in particular—whom I had only just interviewed a week before the storm—had family outside of the levee system whose home had flooded up to the second story with Hurricane Isaac. This same home had taken several feet of water for Hurricane Katrina. When I accompanied the family on several visits to document the damage, recover some possessions, and finally clean out and gut the first floor, they treated it as an opportunity to explain to
me the processes and emotions that follow a devastating hurricane. I witnessed the manifestation of several crucial concepts that defined pre- and post-Katrina St. Bernard Parish in this repetition of a familiar task: picking up the wreckage, finding temporary shelter, and trying to figure out where to go from there.

I also noticed a difference in my interactions with my contacts in Chalmette after my post-Isaac volunteer work. News seemed to travel quickly of the work I had done to help the victims of Hurricane Isaac, in part because of Facebook posts coming from the recipients of aid, and in part through word-of-mouth discussions which I did not discover until later. Some people I had met previously who had been polite but distant made renewed contact with me, either through Facebook or at weekly meetings that I continued to attend after Isaac. Thus my volunteering post-Isaac seems to have represented a key moment within my fieldwork, which indicated a shift away from true outsider status towards something closer to “Honorary Chalmatian” status, as I demonstrated my commitment to the community outsider of my own data collection.

5.2 Places and spaces

One of the goals of my ethnographic fieldwork was to determine how residents of post-Katrina Greater New Orleans conceived of the physical space they inhabited. In this section, I describe the results of my investigation into social and cultural geography of Greater New Orleans, followed by a zoomed-in look at the two areas of interest in the current study: St. Bernard Parish and St. Tammany Parish.
5.2.1 Places and spaces in Greater New Orleans

New Orleans is a city of neighborhoods and wards, where one finds localized pride linked to socio-geographic boundaries—from the Lower Ninth Ward to Uptown to the Garden District to Mid-City to the Seventh Ward; these labels invoke social associations with the type of resident that tends to inhabit these areas.

Similarly, outlying suburbs have clearly defined expectations linked to them, with Western suburbs such as Kenner and Metairie in Jefferson Parish often held in contrast with Eastern suburbs like Arabi, Chalmette, and Meraux in St. Bernard Parish. Descriptions of the differences between Jefferson Parish and St. Bernard Parish frequently center on where the original inhabitants moved from: Jefferson Parish to the West was populated more by the middle and upper class residents of Uptown and the Garden District, while St. Bernard Parish in the East was a more likely destination for working class residents of the French Quarter and the Ninth Ward. This class-based “uptown-downtown” distinction has been documented in linguistic terms as well (e.g. Kolker & Alvarez 1984). Of this geographic/linguistic relationship, Martinez & LaCorgne (1986) write:

*The farther one moves downtown, the stronger becomes the downtown accent, generally known as the “Yat” accent (derived from the greeting “Where y’at?”). The “Yat” accent differs from the uptown accent as much as the British accent differs from the American.* (9)

Thus the speakers of downtown, or “Yat,” varieties of English were those who moved en masse to St. Bernard Parish, settling in this previously sparsely populated swampland downriver of the city.

Race—in particular, the perceived dichotomy between White and Black New Orleanians—plays an important role in the mental carving up of territory in GNO.
Inner-city New Orleans is predominantly Black, aside from “the sliver by the river” comprising the properties on higher land Uptown, in the Garden District, in the French Quarter, and in the Marigny (Campanella 2006). In particular, Central City, the Seventh Ward, the Tremé, and the Ninth Ward are associated with majority Black populations. Outside of city limits, suburban areas to the east and west, as well as communities on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain, have a higher proportion of White residents. In St. Bernard Parish, the population consists primarily of White, working class transplants from the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, who had moved to the St. Bernard towns of Arabi and Chalmette in order to escape integration of Orleans Parish Schools. Many of these transplants were also attracted by job opportunities at the Kaiser Aluminum Factory, the Domino Sugar Factory, the Port of New Orleans, and the multiple oil refineries in the parish.

Visually speaking, there are also striking architectural and structural differences between the different sections of the city. The French Quarter is known for densely populated city blocks, characterized by multi-floor balconies and Spanish-style architecture (Campanella 2006). Uptown New Orleans and the Garden District are the territory of large plantation homes and mansions, scattered amidst centuries-old live oaks that create a canopy over many of the roads in this section of town. Figure 18 shows a typical creole cottage and shotgun house, which are found throughout the city, and are characteristic in particular of Mid-City, the Marigny, the Bywater, and Lower Ninth Ward neighborhoods, located North and East of downtown.
Another issue crucial to the cultural geography of New Orleans derives from the many waterways throughout the city. Just as rivers, mountains, highways, and rail lines create divisions throughout the world, so do the canals, bayous, and marshes—to speak nothing of the river, lake, and gulf—within and around New Orleans. In no area of the city is the divisive power of water clearer than in the Eastern portion of the city, in New Orleans East and the Lower Ninth Ward out to St. Bernard Parish, which are accessible from the rest of New Orleans only by bridge, due to the construction of the Industrial Canal in the 1920s, connecting the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain and effectively cutting off the land to the East of the canal (Campanella 2010). The division created by the Industrial Canal is outlined in blue in Figure 19.
While the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish are both East of the Industrial Canal, they remain distinct from each other, and very little interaction occurs across the parish line. A large part of this fact has to do with St. Bernardians’ historical discrimination against Black residents of the Ninth Ward, a reputation that holds in St. Bernard to this day, as the following quotes from participants demonstrate.

Katherine (57, relocator): “St. Bernard has a reputation for being really anti-black people.”

Parrain (42, returner): “A lot of people from the city, them African Americans say, ‘they prejudiced’.”

Pauly (67, returner): “You know, you hate to be prejudiced, but this is how it was: the black people had their neighborhoods and the white people had their neighborhoods.”

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Figure 19. The Industrial Canal and Jackson Barracks

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28 From this point forward, age and returner/relocator status will be provided for each speaker who is quoted, to help situate their perspective.
Big G (50, relocator): “When the Blacks started moving into New Orleans, as long as they had the [Jackson] barracks there it was fine. Then it got to where, ‘we don’t want you going over the barracks line’.”

In addition, as Big G. points out, St. Bernard is physically separated from Ninth Ward by the Jackson Barracks, a fenced-in, high-security National Guard base, which can be seen in Figure 19 as the area in the red box just upriver from St. Bernard Parish.

There are only two roads that lead into St. Bernard Parish from the Ninth Ward: North Claiborne Street, which turns into Judge Perez Boulevard in St. Bernard Parish, and St. Claude Avenue, which turns into St. Bernard Highway. These two four-lane roads run parallel to each other, following the Mississippi River through the St. Bernard towns of Arabi, Chalmette, Meraux, and Violet. The only other egress from the parish is north across the Paris Road bridge to New Orleans East, and South on the Paris Road ferry to the West Bank. This isolation has resulted in an incredibly insular community, in which dense, multiplex networks are common.

5.2.2 Places and spaces in St. Bernard

It was my very first day in the field when I realized that within St. Bernard, popular conception of Chalmette as a place expanded beyond its geographic definition. I was in a po-boy shop eating lunch, and I asked my waitress where the closest coffee shop was. She directed me to a place “just down the road on the left.” I asked if the coffee shop was in Meraux, since I knew I was near the border of Chalmette and Meraux according to my map. She seemed a little perplexed by this question, saying she wasn’t sure. This interaction gave me my first indication that the boundaries between Chalmette, Meraux, and Arabi are fluid in the minds of locals.
In the following weeks, I noticed more inconsistencies between the divisions of these towns, in the names of local businesses. There is the Brothers Chalmette Market in Arabi, the Meraux Food Mart in Chalmette, Chalmette Collision Center in Meraux, and the Arabi Diner in Chalmette. Moreover, I frequently met individuals who said they were from Chalmette, or identified as a Chalmatian, only to later discover that they were from Arabi, or Meraux. When I asked about this, people would usually explain, “it’s all the same thing” or “well, people know Chalmette better so we all just say we’re from Chalmette.” The major dividing line, I discovered, was not borders between towns, which were for the most part fluid, but a broader urban-rural division between the Eastern and Western portions of the parish. This division mapped onto what locals refer to as “up the road” towns like Arabi, Chalmette, and Meraux (listed in order of distance to the New Orleans border) and “down the road” fishing communities such as Shell Beach, Yscloskey, and Delacroix Island. Figure 20 demonstrates how this divide is taken as a given within the community, and used as advertisement fodder, to appeal to both groups.

Learning that St. Bernardians speak geographically in terms of “up/down the road” was the result of stopping into a parish newspaper office and meeting with their overzealous editor. It was about a week into my fieldwork, and I realized that sitting in restaurants and coffee shops was fine and good, but it didn’t give me much opportunity for interaction, or to build relationships with individuals in the community. I had noticed that the coffee shop I frequented carried several local newspapers, which featured announcements of meetings and current goings-on in
the parish. I decided to stop in at one of their offices to introduce myself, explain my project, and find out how to get involved in some of the events.

The newspaper office was empty, except for a secretary and the editor himself. I asked the editor if I could volunteer or help in any way, as a means of getting to know the area. He suggested I ride the paper route with him, that way he could show me around the whole parish—he would even take me all the way “down the road” to “the end of the world.” I paused, trying to parse what he had said, before asking him to clarify what that meant. He jumped up from his desk and started walking towards the front door, and I followed. Opening the door, he pointed to the road, Judge Perez Boulevard, explaining that this was “the road” and if you followed it all the way “down” (in terms of downriver, towards the Gulf of Mexico), you got to
the fishing villages where the road eventually ends, which folks call "the end of the world." He explained that there was even a sign there, on Delacroix Island, proclaiming it as such (see Figure 21).

![Figure 21. The end of the world, Delacroix Island, St. Bernard Parish (Photo by Anthony Libasci)](image.png)

Although this terminology was new to me, the concept was not entirely unfamiliar, since I had experienced this sort of orientation to waterways in Louisiana before. Because southeast Louisiana is on the Mississippi River delta, the land is transected by smaller bodies of water—meandering bayous, and rivers, flowing out to the Gulf—along which most towns and cities in the region are situated, due to the historical use of these waterways for transportation, food, and livelihood. Very few of these waterways follow a strict North-South or East-West orientation for long,
thus rather than using cardinal directions, many South Louisianans speak in terms of up/downriver, or up/down the bayou. And indeed, for much of its course, “the road” in St. Bernard Parish follows the path of the Mississippi River.

The up/down the road distinction became important in defining my target population: up the road St. Bernardians. Because I already knew that I wanted to focus on the town of Chalmette, but that the borders of the town were not particularly salient locally, discovering that up the road towns were frequently considered a single entity within the parish helped me to home in on a population that fit with local definitions of places in St. Bernard. While the boundary between up the road and down the road changes depending on who you talk to, many situate it somewhere around the town of Violet, which is located just downriver of Meraux. And indeed, the visual difference between Violet and Meraux is striking, with a large cow pasture marking the boundary between the two towns. Continuing beyond this pasture, one moves from more densely packed suburban neighborhoods to the rural, sparsely populated fishing and shrimping towns down the road. Indeed, the association of a fisherman/shrimper with down the road is an important part of the cultural symbolism in the parish, as seen in Figure 22, a tee shirt sold by local company Fleurty Girl featuring white shrimp boots with the phrase “down the road.”
Figure 22. Down the road tee shirt from Fleurty Girl

Figure 23 shows further imagery of white shrimp boots in a Chalmette parade: the “White Boot Warriors” float is decorated with camouflage and palm fronds, which are associated with the rurality and marshes that characterize down the road towns due to the common fishing and hunting that occurs in these areas.
Verbal imagery and discursive associations between rurality and down the road towns also abound in St. Bernard Parish. Figure 24 shows the cover of a St. Bernard-themed issue of Desire magazine, which featured essays and poems from St. Bernard authors. On the cover, the entire parish is acknowledged with the phrases, “Down the road looking up; From Arabi to the end of the world.” Arabi is the farthest up the road town, bordering with Jackson Barracks and the Ninth Ward, while the end of the world is where the road stops.
In a piece from the magazine by Barry LeMoine, known locally as the Bard of St. Bernard, the parish is described as a whole, however clear reference is made to the qualities specific to the up the road and down the road parts of the parish.

**Home**

*This is the place that I call home. New Orleans’ historic neighbor, St. Bernard. Home of one of the most important military victories in our nation’s history—fought bravely by a ragtag group of militia, pirates, Indians, and blacks. Fighting to the death—12 days after the war of 1812 had ended.*

*This is my home. Where a levee, a cruise ship, an oil refinery, a plantation and a smoke stack are all odd neighbors of mine.*

*This is my place—a place of family and festivals and some of the best food in the world, and some unhealthy people eating lots of it.*
This is Da Parish. St. Bernard, Louisiana. Settled by the Canary Islanders in 1687. Located only 20 minutes from downtown New Orleans. And, until 2005, home to 70,000 people.

This is a community where over 120 people drowned from waters that breached our levee system. Where human error cost human lives.

This is the place that used to be surrounded by cypress trees, until MRGO29 made them go.

This is the site of the largest residential oil spill in the history of our nation. The only parish ever declared 100 percent devastated.

Tommy Dorsey played music here. Al Capone ran booze here. And yet, few people have heard much about us. This is a place of fisherman [sic] and blue collar workers. A place that ordinary folks call home.

People will ask, “How can you live there? You don’t even have a hospital!”

But it’s home. It’s our home.

It’s hard for me to feel warm and fuzzy driving down Veteran’s Blvd, but when I’m going down the road towards Delacroix, and I pass the plantations and the oaks, and head to the end of the world….I know, I’m home [bold reproduced from the original]. I know, I’m back, and I know, I’m just where I’m supposed to be.

Throughout the piece LeMoine presents elements specific to up the road towns (the oil refinery, smoke stack, “located only 20 minutes from downtown New Orleans”) as well as reference to the historical and biological artifacts of the parish (Canary Islanders, plantations, oaks, cypress trees), generally associated with down the road towns, which are viewed as the site of culture and history within the parish.

Additionally, in his characterization of St. Bernardian careers, LeMoine addresses both up the road (“blue collar workers”) and down the road (“fisherman”) jobs.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the terms up the road and down the road also encode certain socio-economic expectations. As St. Bernardians throughout the

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29 Pronounced “Mister Go” by locals, the overflowing and erosion caused by the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) is often blamed for the deleterious effects of Hurricane Katrina.
parish reported, down the road residents are generally viewed as less educated, lower income, and more rural/isolated than up the road St. Bernardians. When discussing the pre-Katrina\(^30\) distinction between Chalmette High School and St. Bernard High School (servicing down the road students), many up-the-roaders characterized St. Bernard High students as “rougher” or more “tough.” These stereotypes are often qualified by the assertion that this patterning is due to the fact that down the road residents are generally fishermen who live off the land and who thus do not need high school degrees or access to urban resources to make a living.

Jennifer (41, relocator): “The up the road people thought they were better than the down the road people.”

McKenzie (20, relocator): “If you were up the road you think of just this high class type of person. Down the roaders stayed down the road.”

Interestingly, many of the stereotypes that up-the-roaders project onto down-the-roaders are incredibly similar to the stereotypes people elsewhere in Greater New Orleans have about Chalmette: uneducated, rural, lower-class wearers of white shrimp boots who hunt and fish. This fractal recursivity (Gal & Irvine 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000)—in which negative judgments about St. Bernard according to New Orleanians are reflected within the parish, applied to down-the-roaders—demonstrates how place-based divisions match up with social value judgments about the individuals from those places. These divisions create tension between the groups, which tends to isolate the groups from each other, thereby increasing their

\(^{30}\) Since Hurricane Katrina, there is only one high school in St. Bernard Parish: Chalmette High. Thus down the road students now go to high school with up the road students. Some of my younger interviewees, who had attended Chalmette High post-Katrina, expressed positive reactions to this more unified approach to the Parish.
differences and reinforcing the divide between them. At a party I attended down the road, in Yscloskey, I met some high school-aged down the roaders who explained, “we don’t see eye to eye with Chalmette.” I asked for clarification, and one boy said, “they’re preppy and we wear shrimp boots to the club!” His friend chimed in, “we’re coonasses to the fullest!” Coonass is a label in Louisiana that is used mostly in rural Cajun communities to indicate a less-educated, unworldly, working class individual that is satisfied to remain that way. Clearly, in this interaction, there is commentary on the rurality and lower class status of down-the-roaders, in comparison with residents of up-the-road towns like Chalmette. Even the terms “up” and “down” carry some connotations of higher and lower, better and worse (Lakoff & Johnson 1993), which are imbued in the designations for these regions of the parish. On a similar dimension, discussion of the Northshore and the Southshore (of Lake Pontchartrain) tended to follow the patterns of fractal recursivity and value judgments linked to geographic spaces, with Northshore residents often described by St. Bernardians as “uppity” or “high and mighty” in contrast with the “down home” and “down to earth” qualities associated with Chalmatians.

5.2.3 Places and spaces on the Northshore
The year before Hurricane Katrina, a different category five hurricane was bearing down on New Orleans. It was similarly labeled “the storm of the century” and touted as the hurricane that would lead to the city’s ultimate destruction. Hurricane Ivan is now largely forgotten in the popular imagination outside of the Gulf Coast, since it ended up turning and hitting the panhandle of Florida—just as Katrina was
predicted to do. It was September 2004, and I was 19 years-old at the time, a sophomore at Tulane University. The university enforced mandatory evacuation for the storm, so I took my first journey across the causeway bridge to a classmate’s home in Covington, on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain. I remember thinking the area was very rural and sparsely populated, but that I could also tell by the sheer size of my friend’s home and property that this was the realm of the wealthy.

Returning to the same area eight years later for fieldwork, I barely recognized the now-heavily developed suburban area, which had experienced a population increase of 20% from 2000 to 2010, according to the census. The towns of Mandeville, Covington, Madisonville, and Slidell had been recipients of large-scale migration from the Southshore from the 1990s onward (Lasley 2012). Thus there were some St. Bernardians who had moved to the Northshore preceding Katrina.

Most participants I talked to had strong ideas about what type of person moved away from Chalmette to a place like the upscale suburban towns on the Northshore.

Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “Pre-Katrina, the goal of most St. Bernardians, the indicator of moving up in the world, is to move from St. Bernard Parish to the Northshore.”

Big G (50, relocator): “You had a few of them [St. Bernardians] that wanted to think they were gonna do better, and move out before Katrina, move to the Northshore—move to you know Covington, Mandeville, and places out this way.”

Allie (41, returner): “He [nephew who moved to the Northshore] forgets where he come from!”

Part of the reason St. Bernardians who moved to the Northshore were viewed as social climbers is because that is how all residents of the Northshore tend to be
perceived by St. Bernardians, as evinced by some of the social commentary elicited in interviews.

Justin (29, returner): “Northshore always thought they were better, you know, looked down on St. Bernard people.”

Herman (50, relocator): “Some of these people here [on the Northshore] are very stuck up people, think they’re better than everybody.”

Bella (46, returner): “Mandeville people need to be just so. You need to know what I’m worth.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “Mandeville people kind of have their nose up in the air. And it’s like ‘really?’ you know—you’re not better than anybody else.”

Note that, similar to the spatial up/down metaphors used to describe up/down the road in St. Bernard, in these excerpts Northshore residents are described here as “stuck up” with “their nose up in the air.”

In a seemingly contradictory manner, Northshore residents were also commonly pronounced “country” by residents of Chalmette. Part of the reason for this characterization is St. Tammany’s history as being relatively sparsely populated up until the past thirty years. Although the causeway bridge was constructed in the mid-twentieth century, it was not common for those who work on the Southshore to commute from St. Tammany until recently. Even now, with a heavily developed handful of towns near the causeway (Madisonville, Mandeville, Covington, and Abita Springs) and twinspan (Slidell, Lacombe, and Pearl River, MS) bridges to the Southshore, connections between these towns are limited to the constantly congested Interstate-12 and a few older, shoulder-less two-lane roads through swaths of pine forests. It is clear from the design of the roads and subdivisions within St. Tammany that there was no master plan for developing suburban towns
as densely populated as they have become. Because of this recent expansion coinciding with the post-Katrina arrival of St. Bernardians on the Northshore, Chalmatians have taken the brunt of the blame for nuisances resulting from overpopulation that range from heavy traffic to long lines at stores to overcrowding of public schools. The pre-existing tension between St. Bernard and St. Tammany residents—who straddle opposite sides of the class spectrum—has only intensified since the hurricane, as they have been forced to interact more than ever before.

5.3 Chalmette according to Chalmatians

Throughout the course of interviews, I questioned participants about what growing up in Chalmette was like for them, and asked specifically about the word “Chalmatian.” Many individuals explained to me that being a Chalmatian meant being neighborly, independent, and hardworking, despite the reputation they may be attributed elsewhere of being lower class, uneducated, and unworldly. Indeed, most participants framed their positive portrayals of Chalmatians in contrast with the more common perception that Chalmatians were not valued within GNO more broadly, demonstrating their awareness of their hometown’s stigma in the region. This stigma was often discursively linked with the local accent, described as ignorant and uneducated even by those who admitted they spoke “like a Chalmatian.”
5.3.1 Chalmatians: What’s in a name?

The term “Chalmatian” is known throughout Greater New Orleans, and is generally used to describe an individual from the town of Chalmette, or Upper St. Bernard Parish more broadly. Even in my brief time living in New Orleans as an undergraduate—far across the city from St. Bernard Parish—I had encountered this term, and knew that it was generally used in a derogatory sense. There may be an inherent quality to the word Chalmatian that lends the negative interpretation, such as the fact that it rhymes with a breed of dog (Dalmatian). Even aside from the word structure is the fact that to be from Chalmette is not valued within Greater New Orleans, as several participants explained.

Benjamin (31, relocator): “You get the feeling other people look down on the people in St. Bernard.”

Dave (19, returner): “In a lot of places Chalmette has a bad reputation.”

Christian (49, returner): “[Chalmette] was always the butt of the joke...just like West Virginia is to Virginia, Mississippi is to Louisiana, Chalmette is to New Orleans metro, you know.”

Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “My goal in high school was to move out of Chalmette. That was—it didn’t matter what I was doing, I just didn’t want to live in Chalmette. Because that was not cool. I was never going to live in Chalmette. Because there’s this stigma. You don’t want that. You don’t want to live in Chalmette.”

Thus Chalmette is framed as being looked down upon, having a bad reputation, being the target of jokes, and being an undesirable place to live within Greater New Orleans. Such views are not limited to my participants. In the image presented in Figure 25, two children are sharing a secret, gossiping about others not pictured. This ecard, which was made by a user rather than distributed by the site itself, implies that simply being from Chalmette can explain undesirable behavior and that
furthermore, those residents of Chalmette behaving poorly are unaware of the inappropriateness of their actions, and thus warrant (faux) concern about protecting them from potential judgment.

Figure 25. “Shhhh...they're from Chalmette!” ecard

It is acknowledged in the parish that it is generally outsiders who use the term “Chalmatian” derogatively, verbally linking it with negative qualities such as ignorance, lack of education, and classlessness, as Sugar Magnolia and Paul voice when asked about stereotypes about the parish.

Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “People in St. Bernard Parish are less educated. They're those uh, blue collar worker people. They work on shrimp boats. They're um, they um—most people down there they don’t go to college, you know’ [...] um there's definitely a stigma attached of lower class down here.”
Paul (22, returner): “People from Chalmette [...] are the unsophisticated working class fishermen.”

Note here that interestingly, the “down the road” fisherman stereotype is applied to up the road “Chalmatians” by outsiders. Indeed, Katherine and JuAllison explain that it is specifically those who are not from St. Bernard, in many cases who have never even been to Chalmette, who use the term negatively.

Katherine (57, relocator): “People who are not from St. Bernard use it in a derogatory way.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “People do use it in a sense to be ignorant and mean and ugly—and it’s the people who have never stepped foot in Chalmette!”

As is common with many slurs (e.g. “queer,” cf McConnell-Ginet 2011), the term “Chalmatian” has been reappropriated by residents of St. Bernard as a label of pride. Acilie, below, in fact discusses this word only in terms of its reappropriation, suggesting that “of course” the term was embraced, and explaining its subsequent commodification on tee shirts.

Acilie (62, relocator): “So there was this term of Chalmatians, that of course, we embraced. I have some tee shirts I printed when I had a tee shirt company, if I could find one. One said ‘From the Parish and proud of it’ uh, the other said ‘Chalmatian’ and then I had the phonetic spelling of it, uh ‘one who lives in St. Bernard by birth or by choice.’”

Indeed, the reappropriation and revalorization of this term has resulted in St. Bernard Parish residents referring to themselves as the “Chalmatian Nation,” which presents them as a group of people united in solidarity, and perhaps acknowledges their cultural “otherness” within GNO. Figure 26 shows the phrase “Welcome to the Chalmation [sic] Nation” printed on tee shirts sold at the popular New Orleans-based shop Storyville.
Despite this localized use of the word “Chalmatian” to express pride, many participants acknowledged the original or primary meaning of the term by discursively situating themselves in contrast with those who use the word “Chalmatian” negatively.

Dave (19, returner): “To us, we love being Chalmatians.”

Molly (23, returner): “Some people say ‘you’re such a Chalmatian’—yeah I am but I love it!”

Returners Dave and Molly both qualify their ownership of the term Chalmatian, Dave by specifying that “to us” (fellow Chalmatians) being from Chalmette is a good thing; similarly, Molly refers to “some people” calling her a Chalmatian, then uses the contrastive particle ‘but’ with a positive interpretation to illustrate the negative intent of those “people.” Many relocators contrasted themselves with hypothetical “bad” or “ashamed” Chalmatians who don’t claim their connection to Chalmette once
they move away. In the following excerpts, Katherine positions herself in opposition with that “group of people” who don’t identify as being from St. Bernard and Benjamin explains that he never denied his connection to Chalmette, thereby suggesting that there are those who do.

Katherine (57, relocator): “There’s a whole group of people who um don’t mention they’re from St. Bernard, would deny they’re from St. Bernard, don’t claim it, make fun of it. Um, I feel exactly the opposite.”

Benjamin (31, relocator): “I never shied away from telling people I was from Chalmette, I was proud to be from St. Bernard.”

The multivalency of the label “Chalmatian” is something most residents of St. Bernard are aware of, explaining that its interpretation—as a slur or a term of endearment/solidarity—depends on who utters it. One participant even described it as “our n-word,” equating discrimination against residents of Chalmette with historical racial inequalities in the U.S.

Benjamin (31, relocator): “If another person from Chalmette’s calling you that then it’s a compliment and if someone from outside the area’s calling you that it might not be considered that way. It, it could be considered, yeah, it’s like our n-word. It could be considered derogatory or it could be considered...you know, a a compliment, it’s—a Chalmatian, you know it could go both ways depending on who’s saying it and how they’re saying it.”

During interviews, I asked participants to characterize Chalmatians: what makes someone a Chalmatian, in their minds? Most participants used positive terms, usually pointing out the more flattering aspects of common stereotypes—for example “independent” or “hard-working” instead of “blue collar” or “lower class.”

Katherine (57, relocator): “[Chalmatians are] salt of the earth people, honest, hard-working.”

Sam (62, relocator): “A Chalmatian to me is a very independent person, doesn’t need a whole lot of help.”
Buckaroo (25, relocator): “[Chalmatians have a] hard-working mentality, [they’re] honest people that’ll do anything for you. When I hear that accent those are the things that come into my mind, you know. I’m sure some people think it’s ignorant and trashy.”

As Buckaroo demonstrates in her discursive connection between Chalmatians and accents, a large part of being a Chalmatian is talking like a Chalmatian. In the following section, metalinguistic commentary from participants is examined in order to describe the perception of Chalmatian English, and its role in identity construction in St. Bernard Parish.

5.3.2 Language in Chalmette

At the end of each interview, if it had not come up organically, I asked about the local dialect in Chalmette, which most participants described as an identifying feature of their hometown.

Benjamin (31, relocator): “People from Chalmette, they have a pretty distinct accent, that’s pretty recognizable around these parts [the Northshore].”

Acilie (62, relocator): “We have somewhat of a distinctive accent, some of us and so you go in other areas of the surrounding parishes, and sometimes people know that you’re from the Parish because of our accent.”

Molly (23, returner): “They say we have a different accent down here [Chalmette].”

Sandra (31, relocator): “I get people all the time, they ask my husband, they’re like, ‘oh she’s from Chalmette, huh?’ They clearly know.”

As these participants suggest, Chalmatian English speakers regularly encounter outsiders who comment on their accents or identify them as being from Chalmette based on the way they speak. The accent is sometimes parodied by these outsiders, as seen in the tumblr image in Figure 27, which features Full House character
Michelle Tanner making a face of teasing perplexity, implicitly directed at an incomprehensible Chalmatian.

Figure 27. “When you can't understand what a Chalmatian says”

In framing Chalmatians as incomprehensible, it places blame squarely on them for any misunderstandings that arise from dialectal differences. That is, it is the Chalmatian, not the listener, who is framed as abnormal or lacking due to their dialect. Many participants, even those who claimed to speak with a Chalmette accent, described use of the dialect in similarly disparaging terms. For example, Acilie equates the Chalmatian dialect with “silliness” or lack of education—though she clarifies that Chalmatians “don’t have a problem with that.”
Acilie (62, relocator): “We don’t have a problem at all with it sounding silly, or uneducated. We don’t have a problem with that. That uneducated kind of an accent. I think it’s perceived as that, certainly—saying “dat” or dropping your r’s and g’s.”

Acilie also selects particular linguistic features that presumably function as salient indicators of education level and/or being from Chalmette, such as th-stopping, non-rhoticity, and apicalization of (ING). Apicalization of (ING), which is common in most casual registers of American English, is linked with being from Chalmette in Figure 28, which presents a Storyville tee-shirt featuring an image of white shrimp boots labeled as “Chalmette runnin’ shoes.” Both the (ING)-apicalization and the shrimp boots, worn by fishermen who rarely have above a high school degree, index lack of education, and the overall image links these qualities to being from Chalmette.

Figure 28. “Chalmette runnin’ shoes”  
(From http://www.storyvilleapparel.com/chalmette-runnin-shoes.html)
On the site, the description of the tee shirt engages in further linguistic commentary, reading “When you run in Chalmette, you run with ya’ white shrimp boots on!” The spelling of “your” as “ya’” presents another example of dialect-writing, here depicting non-rhoticity.

As is clear, the “Chalmette accent” is stigmatized outside of Chalmette. Many participants reported being teased or otherwise harassed for their accents, and some even reported actively making an effort to “fix” their accent.

Haylie (22, relocator): “I used to get made fun of all the time after the hurricane.”

Ellie (18, returner): “People would make fun of me all the time.”

Acilie (62, relocator): “People will tease you here, ‘here’ meaning outside of St. Bernard, for having that accent.”

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “I got so much attention from [my accent] that I cut it out. Because—I, I fixed it because I felt like people were listening to how I saying it and not what I was saying.”

Further evidence of negative attitudes towards the dialect comes from post-Katrina public message boards and blog postings about the arrival of St. Bernardians on the Northshore. Below the speech of St. Bernardians on the Northshore is described as “unbearable” and “mutilated.” Note that in Jasons’ post, specific reference is made to non-rhoticity in his representation of “Buh-nahd” for “Bernard.”

11/4/09 at 3:33 pm (response to MightyYat’s post “Name that Parish”) DanTiger says:
The accents are unbearable. I have never met a person from St. Bernard that spoke the Queen’s English. 

6/16/10 at 1:29 PM Jasons says:
Chalmations [sic] did not drown during Katrina as Nephilim did in the flood. They are now alive and well on the North Shore of Lake Ponchartrain [sic]
defiling the world with their horribly mutilated form of English, and always
talking about how things were back when they were in Saint Buh-nahd!
http://unsettledchristianity.com/tag/jeremy-thompson/

It is likely that the anonymity of posting opinions online intensified some of the
commentary about St. Bernardians on the Northshore, with very few participants
reporting such overt shows of distaste for their accents. However, because such
postings were public, and oftentimes online forums functioned as a way of
reconnecting and finding old neighbors post-Katrina, there were participants who
encountered these negative comments, as Benjamin reports below.

Benjamin (31, relocator): “Especially reading some of the, the comments on
the blogs and just the forums online where people from St. Tammany Parish
were just bashing the hell out of the people that were moving from St.
Bernard to there. Because there were a lot of people coming over here, and
you would read some of these forums and they were just, just had no
sympathy. They were just like ‘get out’ you know ‘we don’t want you here.’ So
there was a lot of hatred, genuine hatred it seemed like, from these people
trying to keep the people from St. Bernard out.”

Such comments are directly at odds with the local conception of what people from St.
Bernard are meant to be like: neighborly, kind, generous, and welcoming. In the
following section, I describe these qualities of Chalmatians as they were presented
to me in interviews.

5.3.3 Neighbors in Chalmette

Being neighborly in Chalmette is generally taken as a given. Some participants
explained to me that due to the small size of house lots in Chalmette, and the
resulting proximity of households to one another, it was more common than not to
know your neighbors. And invariably, when I asked participants about life in
Chalmette, the response related to this idyllic sense of community in which everyone knew everybody else, and were always willing to lend a helping hand.

Allie (41, returner): “It’s a good neighborhood, they—I mean, they all, we all watch out for each other. You know. People cut grass or my husband cuts grass and he knows the neighbor’s been sick he’ll go ahead and cut her grass and you know they’ll do the same for us. Or you know, something like that. Or if something’s broken my husband’s not home: ‘can you come see what this is?’”

Savannah (32, returner): “In my family, and in our neighborhood it was so important to stay close with the people that you were going to live along side of, because the idea was, like, well these are going to be your neighbors forever, you know, these are going to be the people that that you’re living next-door to, and your kids are going to be playing together.”

Momma B (48, returner): “But that’s the thing is like we knew all the neighbors, you knew all of their siblings, you knew all of their cousins sometimes.”

Being Chalmetian doesn’t just mean knowing the folks who live near you, though—it means being connected to people throughout the community, participating in the dense, multiplex networks that resulted from people attending the same churches and schools, and often working together later in life.

Margaret (59, relocator): “Everybody knew everybody, and you knew the politicians, you knew the wealthy, you knew—you knew the roofers, you knew the electricians, you knew the plumbers, you know. Everybody knew everybody, everybody’s kids went to school together.”

Big G (50, relocator): “The friends, the relatives, everybody knew everybody, everybody loved everybody. Everybody would do anything—to this day they would do anything, we still close.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “Everybody knew everybody, everybody looked out for everybody.”


Molly (23, returner): “That’s one thing about St. Bernard, everyone knows your business, whether you want them to or not.”
Justin (29, returner): “Everybody’s so close down there, it’s like one big family. Everybody knows everybody. I mean you can go to the store and you gonna see somebody you know, or you go out to eat down there you gonna see somebody you know, you know everybody down there. It’s just one big family.”

Just as I encountered the repetition of discourse centered on “everybody knowing everybody,” Justin’s allusion to running into friends and acquaintances throughout the parish was echoed in a commonly repeated story centered on the grocery store.

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “We would go to the grocery store, and we would know everyone in the grocery, usually every grocery trip took over an hour because you had to talk to everybody {laughs} And you knew the cashiers by the time you’re there and, I mean just, everyone knew one another.”

Molly (23, returner): “Down here you can walk to the grocery store, everyone’s gonna ask you how your day was, what’s going on, how’s everybody. When you—like, when we were in Baton Rouge, it’s a different breed, I don’t know. They just don’t, they don’t care what you’re doing, they don't care about your life. Down here, everybody cares.”

Details such as knowing the cashier’s name and caring about the events in each other’s lives indicate the importance of not just knowing individuals in the community, but really connecting with them. Just as Molly contrasted Baton Rouge residents with those of Chalmette, relocators used the grocery store meme as an example of how their interactions on the Northshore differed from St. Bernard.

Chocolate (53, relocator): “It was different up here [on the Northshore], it was—you know, starting over and, and going to the grocery store and not seeing people that you recognized. I’m sorry I’m getting a little emotional here. Um, that was kind of tough, it was weird. You know, you go to Wal-Mart and you don’t see anybody you know. Because you’d go down to, you know, living in St. Bernard Parish, you’d walk out your front door, and you know everybody’s going out and waving, talking to you from across the street. You had to plan on at least two hours to go to the grocery because you’d be talking to all your friends, you know.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “I miss going to the grocery and running into this person and running into that person and, you know. It’s weird when I run into somebody here at the grocery that I know from over there and it’s like,
‘hey, how are you,’ and, and it’s more of a reunion type thing now. But it was something that happened every time you’d go to the grocery—it’s weird to go to the grocery and not know anybody.”

Big G (50, relocator): “When I go across [the lake to St. Bernard], I can stop into every Time Saver [convenience store], every store, every street, and I’ll know somebody. I’ll not only know them but they glad to see me and they hugging me, kissing me, you know, ‘how you been?’ asking me questions, and that’s just the way it is.”

Thus Chocolate describes the difficulty of adjusting to not seeing familiar faces in grocery stores, while JuAllison notes that if that occurs on the Northshore it is a marked occurrence. Big G does not describe grocery store experiences on the Northshore, rather he cites such encounters in trips to the parish to illustrate how warm and welcoming his experiences back in the parish are—presumably in contrast with his experiences on the Northshore. Some participants explicitly described Northshore residents in terms of not being friendly, or not knowing their neighbors, thereby positioning them as not possessing the positive qualities that are discursively connected with being from Chalmette.

Allie (41, returner): “I will say this. As long as [my sister’s] been living [on the Northshore], she doesn’t know her neighbors.”

Bella (46, returner): “Mandeville and Covington [on the Northshore]—the rudest people I’ve ever met in my life!”

Benjamin (31, relocator): “I stereotyped them [Northshore residents] as basically being snobs and not welcoming at all which is totally different from what I’m used to which is everybody saying ‘hi’ to each other and being nice and there’s nothing, you know, there’s not a stuck-up bone in anybody’s body in St. Bernard and that’s what I loved about it.”

Herman (50, relocator): “Everybody kind of [sticks] to theirself, they’re not real overly friendly [on the Northshore].”

A number of these descriptions from relocators identify feelings of confusion or loss of bearings resulting from being thrust into a less tight knit community than St.
Bernard. Such reactions relate not only to St. Bernard as a friendly, welcoming place, but also to the fact that many individuals had minimal exposure to life outside St. Bernard before the hurricane. As many participants explained, part of being a Chalmatian is being somewhat insulated from the world outside of the parish—and specifically not wanting exposure to that world, rather preferring to remain within the comfort zone of St. Bernard Parish.

Bella (46, returner): “The unknown kinda scares a lot of people here, you know.”

Molly (23, returner): “Mostly homegrown stay homegrown. St. Bernard stays in St. Bernard. They don’t really venture out.”

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “[Chalmatians] stay in Chalmette, they don’t leave.”

Acilie (62, relocator): “People from St. Bernard are very much, um, homebodies, and stayed within their Parish, and had this accent, and kind of stuck together.”


One relocator, Roger, stood out in his particularly disapproving description of this aspect of St. Bernard. Roger had left the parish for New Orleans shortly after college, and unlike most participants I interviewed, had very few kind words about his hometown of Chalmette. Notably, he labeled individuals like him—which he acknowledged were few and far between—as “escapees,” implying a sense of being “trapped” in St. Bernard.

Roger (29, relocator): “Once you see that there are other things in the world, you just want to latch onto whatever you can find, you know. And I find that is common, um at least with me and some of my fellow Chalmette escapees, who value the variety of the world in a way that a lot of my other friends don’t, um—that I’ve noticed. Again, limited experience, but I’m just telling you about my experience. Uh. You know, um once you get out of the, the
bubble that is Chalmette life, and you get a taste of what the rest of the world is like, you want to embrace it, you know.”

Thus the community of Chalmette is described as a bubble—protected from movement in or out of it. This sentiment was repeated by several participants, some of whom even adopted the same terminology of “living within a bubble.”

Benjamin (31, relocator): “You don’t find a lot of people who just come from outside of St. Bernard to move inside St. Bernard. It’s a lot of second, third, fourth generation families that are born and raised there, they have their kids there, they live you know a few houses down from each other, or within a few minutes drive, and that’s just kind of how, how you grow up in St. Bernard. You don’t find a lot of people moving in from outside the area.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “I kind of had to get out of my little bubble, my little southshore bubble.”

Big G (50, relocator): “I realized, hey wait a minute, the whole world isn’t centered around St. Bernard.”

This narrative about being exposed to the world outside of St. Bernard was often explicitly linked to Hurricane Katrina, which was for many individuals their first experience living outside of the parish. In the following section I will describe how participants framed their recovery from the storm, and the crucial division within the community that arose between returners and relocators.

5.4 Post-Katrina: “The new normal” after the storm

Two phrases seemed to circulate around every conversation linked to Hurricane Katrina: “the new normal,” and “before/after the storm.” A friend of mine in St. Bernard even required individuals who uttered any variation of the latter to take a sip of their beverage (alcoholic or otherwise) any time they spoke of an event in
terms of the storm (e.g. “I went to Rocky’s every Sunday before the storm”)—which is, indeed, the most common way to conceive of time in modern-day Greater New Orleans. “The new normal” referred to life in post-Katrina St. Bernard: the mental adjustments and trauma recovery that became a part of every St. Bernardian’s daily routine. As Peaches explains, referring to “the new normal” became a constant refrain.

Peaches (56, returner): “[Returning after the storm is] like you’ve been reborn. ‘The new normal.’ I hate that term. It’s the new—it was ‘the new normal’ that everybody would tell you about.”

The idea behind a “new normal” is that conditions which would be marked or abnormal in the past become the everyday or unremarkable. Thus, for people to move forward, it was necessary for the jarring changes in post-Katrina St. Bernard to be treated as “the way things are now.” One of the greatest changes was on the demographic level, in terms of the population loss. Many St. Bernardians could not or would not return to the parish. Because of the availability of housing on the relatively unaffected Northshore, the majority of individuals who ended up relocating after the storm settled in towns like Covington, Mandeville, and Slidell, creating a clear division within the community between returners, who moved back to St. Bernard Parish to rebuild, and relocators, who often still had strong ties to the parish, through their families, jobs, or leisure activities, but who were physically and emotionally distanced from the “new normal” in the parish.
5.4.1 Returners vs. relocators

At first glance, the division between returners and relocators appeared to be the clearest and most straightforward local distinction I uncovered. Though this division within the community was seen and felt by most locals, the reasons behind returning and relocating, and the feelings towards the opposing group, differed extensively across participants.

In my discussions with both lifelong Northshore residents and newly-arrived St. Bernardians on the Northshore, it was clear that the latter was less than welcome in St. Tammany Parish. Because it was so common for St. Bernardians to move to the Northshore, there developed clever terminology to identify them. St. Tammanard (St. Tammany + St. Bernard) was the most common blend, however I also heard “Slimette” (Slidell [a town on the Northshore] + Chalmette). While “St. Tammanard” is innocent enough in terms of word structure, it is of course hard to deny that the word “slime” contained within “Slimette” conveys a sense of unpleasantness associated with this particular combination. Figure 29, a forum post, identifies an example of the connections made between Chalmette residents on the Northshore and the subsequent de-valuing of that space.
In this exchange, several connections are made: first, describing Slidell as “brutal with white trash” in a thread entitled “Is Slidell the new Chalmette?” implies that Chalmette is historically associated with white trash, and Slidell is not. Secondly, the response identifying 2005 as the “turning point” identifies post-Katrina arrivals as the source of the purported trashiness. When combined with an emoticon of a person banging their head against a brick wall, it is clear that the statement here is that the post-Katrina state of Slidell is being viewed negatively. Finally, use of the words “Chalmation” [sic] and “St. Tammanard” along with the repetition of the head-banging emoticon expresses further disdain for the new arrivals, placing responsibility for the negative transformation on these particular post-Katrina residents (as opposed to the many residents of Jefferson and Orleans parishes who moved to St. Tammany following the storm, who are rarely acknowledged in discourse about overcrowding on the Northshore).

This animosity on the part of lifelong Northshore residents was clearly felt by relocators, who recounted their tales of cruelty at the hands of their new neighbors.
Chastity (42, relocator): “But um, a couple of our friends moved to Covington and um, they were in a restaurant, and the people behind them were talking about Chalmette people. ‘Oh they coming over here in Covington,’ and ‘it’s not the same,’ and ‘they trashy,’ and you know. Oh, the guy got up and he lost it, he was like, ‘they not all trashy’ and you know they not, you know. But they weren’t very welcoming people, I found.”

Paul (22, returner): “I have friends who went to school [...] across the lake in Mandeville, or Covington, which is just a 30, 45 minute drive from here [Chalmette], and because so many people went there they were ostracized and, and looked down upon by everybody who was there. They looked at them and they were like, ‘these new, these people are coming, they’re taking over, they’re ruining our lives,’ not having any idea or any respect for what they had been through.”

JuAllison (33, relocator): “I made the mistake of asking the guy at Blockbuster if I could use my card from Chalmette because I only went to the Blockbuster in Chalmette and the Blockbuster in Meraux and um, this lady got really, really, really ugly. ‘Oh.’ And it was like, ‘I’m sorry, excuse me?’ ‘You’re one of those people. You’re the reason our traffic is screwed up.’ And I rolled my eyes and I turned around and looked at her and said, ‘your traffic was messed up long before Katrina so don’t blame any of us.’”

Even returners recounted stories they had heard about the aggression from the Northshore.

Allie (41, returner): “The people over there—I would listen to people talk and they were so unwelcoming, like, they thought we wanted this to happen, they thought we wanted to invade them.”

Bella (26, returner): “People actually said stuff like, ‘you need to go back home where you came from’.”

Dave (19, returner): “Mandeville [on the Northshore] doesn’t like us [St. Bernardians], because so many of us evacuated from here to Mandeville.”

Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “As a whole St. Tammany was very very bitter, because they had this influx of the St. Bernard people. Be like a ghetto taking over, you know it really was very—no matter how much money you had, you were still from St. Bernard.”
Many relocators described feeling the distance and disdain radiating not only from their new neighbors on the Northshore, but also from their old neighbors who had returned to St. Bernard to rebuild.

Margaret (59, relocator): “[My best friend from Chalmette and I] hardly talk now, because she went back to Chalmette and there’s this, like, invisible curtain, with a lot of people, I sense that. ‘Oh we’re back and you’re not.’”

Mark (34, relocator): “It was like, ‘well, you don’t come back, you don’t matter’ [...] ‘Oh, if you wanted to help you would’ve come back and you didn’t.’ There was a lot of animosity, um, and frankly it just keeps opening, it reopens a wound on my end.”

While relocators lamented their severed ties with old friends in Chalmette, returners did not hesitate to identify relocators as the source of this distance.

Relocators were framed as “high and mighty,” “high falutin’,” “traitors,” and were denied the (in this instance, positive) label of “Chalmatian.”

Bella (46, returner): “Then you move to Mandeville and you think you’re high and mighty. People like that, I don’t know. Those are not Chalmatians”

Justin (29, returner): “Well, you know, after the storm, people that moved to Madisonville, then they kind of thought, oh well, they got that high falutin’ attitude, you know. ‘I’m living across the lake now.’ ‘Well, you ain’t no better than where you came from.”

Savannah (32, returner): “I think it’s, um, like resentment [...] you know calling people who didn’t come back ‘traitors’. And I don’t like that. Because I believe everyone has to do what’s best for their family. Now if you leave and you want to talk bad about St. Bernard and say ‘I would never go back there, I’m so glad I got out of there,’ well then you deserve to be called a traitor {laughs}”

What Savannah voices here initially—before settling on the conclusion that some relocators are indeed traitors—is the common sentiment that many people who moved to the Northshore were “stuck” and thus not to blame for their abandonment of St. Bernard. Indeed, relocators reported mixed reactions when questioned about
their affiliations with Chalmette versus the Northshore, with many relocators identifying Chalmette as their true “home.”

Gaston (85, relocator): “Old people say, ‘how do you like Slidell, Doc?’ I said, ‘I like Slidell, but it's not home’...and there's no four generations of friends and family around.”

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “[The Northshore is] still not home by any means.”

Acilie (62, relocator): “Of course St. Bernard is home. That’s home.”

It is for this reason that I developed the Extra-Chalmatian orientation index (described in Chapter 4), to capture the differing relationships with St. Bernard, regardless of participants’ current physical location. For many, Hurricane Katrina had relocated them physically, but not mentally, or as Acilie puts it: “we carry home in our heart, and no hurricane can change that. So I had to grow up, and learn that home is a concept sometimes rather than a physical place.”

5.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have described the process of discovering crucial categories within St. Bernard Parish, such as the value of neighbors, the division between returners and relocators, and local perceptions about the term Chalmatian and associated linguistic features. These social and geographic divisions have shaped not only my overall research questions, but also the analyses I pursue in following chapters, which focuses on the returner/relocator division, but also on how participants orient to Chalmette and Upper St. Bernard Parish as a whole.
The variable (aw) provides a point of interest in terms of documentation simply due to its lack of mention in the literature on varieties of English in Greater New Orleans. Ideologically, it is of interest as well, since this feature is the only one of the four examined in this study that is not historically associated with Chalmette or Chalmatian English specifically. Finally, the striking and unexpected variability of (aw) noted during my fieldwork ensured its inclusion in the current study.

In this chapter, I analyze the environmentally triggered variation in realizations of (aw). First I examine pre-nasal tokens, the nuclei of which is variably raised and fronted. Then I move forward to analyze the remaining data, focusing on the overall raising and fronting of the entire trajectory of (aw) preceding voiceless consonants.

6.1 Previous research on (aw) in New Orleans

I have found no linguistic research on overall raised and fronted /aw/ in pre-voiceless contexts in the New Orleans region. In fact, Rubrecht (1971) specifically notes that within New Orleans, he found no systematic (aw) variation preceding voiceless versus voiced consonants, suggesting that he expected to find such
patterning based on Kurath & McDavid’s (1961) findings on centralization on the Atlantic coast.

In contrast with overall raising and fronting of (aw), Rubrecht does mention (aw) variation in pre-nasal tokens. He notes encountering (aw) with a raised and fronted nucleus in pre-nasal context in the word “ground,” for a speaker from Hammond, which is located 60 miles Northeast of New Orleans. However, he makes a point of noting that such variation is not found in the speech of New Orleanians, and he thus concludes that this pattern is idiolectal.

The only other mention of (aw) in the literature on Louisiana dialects of English comes from Thomas (2001), who wrote that “southern Louisiana had the lowest incidence of fronted /au/ of any region covered by [LAGS].” Thomas reports that his 2001 claim about fronted /au/ was based on tokens of “cows” from LAGS—which, notably, is a pre-voiced context, so it is unclear whether the variation of interest would have been captured in the LAGS data (personal communication, 2013).

One possible interpretation of these facts is that (aw) variation is an innovation within Greater New Orleans, explaining why it was not documented in past studies of English varieties in the region. Data for DARE were collected in the 1970s, and data for LAGS were collected in the 1960s-1980s, so if (aw) variation developed in the 1990s or later—or even if the data collected simply did not manifest this incipient variation—then the lack of documentation makes sense. Furthermore, Baranowski (2007) documented the development of pre-nasal (aw) raising in Charleston, another port city in the South that has historically differed
linguistically from the American South. In the following section, I describe the (aw) variation I observed in Chalmatian English, identifying the different environmentally-triggered variants of (aw).

6.2 Description of (aw) variation observed in Chalmatian English

For some speakers of Chalmatian English, /aw/ is variably realized with a tensed (raised and fronted) nucleus pre-nasally, or with a slightly raised and fronted trajectory (that is, with both nucleus and offglide raised and fronted) preceding voiceless consonants. These patterns may be observed in the plots presented in Figure 30, in which unnormalized means for /aw/ by environment are plotted for participants Frank (left) and Max (right). The blue trajectory represents pre-nasal /aw/, while green is pre-voiceless and red is pre-voiced.31 Filled triangles represent nuclei, while unfilled triangles represent off-glides. Both Max and Frank feature raised and fronted nuclei for pre-nasal /aw/, however they differ in their realization of pre-voiceless /aw/. While Frank has similar mean formant values for his pre-voiced and pre-voiceless /aw/, Max's pre-voiceless mean trajectory is noticeably higher and fronter than his pre-voiced mean trajectory for /aw/.

31 Pre-pausal tokens, such as “now” or “how” preceding a pause, were also included in the pre-voiced classification, since like pre-voiced tokens, pre-pausal (aw) did not trigger any raising or fronting.
Figure 30. /aw/ means by environment for Frank (left) and Max (right)

To compare these two speakers in terms of (aw) variation, Table 7 presents (a) the sum of Euclidean distances between each speaker’s mean normalized F1 and F2 at the 25% and 75% points of /aw/ preceding voiced versus voiceless consonants and (b) the Euclidean distance between each speaker’s mean normalized F1 and F2 at the 25% point of /aw/ preceding voiced versus nasal consonants, across all three speech types. The calculations described were used as the measure of whether speakers presented raised and fronted trajectories of /aw/ preceding voiceless consonants, and raised and fronted nuclei of /aw/ preceding nasal consonants, respectively.
Table 7. Frank & Max’s (aw) Euclidean distances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Euclidean distances</th>
<th>Euclidean distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pre-voiced &amp; pre-voiceless</td>
<td>pre-voiced &amp; pre-nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 7, we see that Max’s sum of Euclidean distances between pre-voiced and pre-voiceless (aw) is significantly higher than Frank’s, indicating Max’s greater overall distance between the trajectory of pre-voiced and pre-voiceless (aw). Frank features a somewhat higher Euclidean distance between pre-voiced and pre-nasal tokens of (aw), compared to Max, due to his more dramatic raising and fronting of pre-nasal (aw), which is evident in Figure 30. That said, both Frank and Max appear to raise and front the nucleus of (aw) before nasal consonants.

6.3 Pre-nasal (aw)

To derive a measure of nucleus fronting, I extracted and normalized F1 and F2 measurements at the 25% point for all tokens of pre-nasal and pre-voiced (aw) from the word list, reading passage, and interview speech portions of recordings. I then calculated the mean F1 and F2 preceding nasal consonants for each speaker in each condition, and the mean F1 and F2 preceding voiced consonants for each speaker in each condition. Using these measurements, I calculated the Euclidean distance
between pre-nasal and pre-voiced (aw) to get a measure of raising and fronting preceding nasal consonants. Pre-voiced (aw) was treated as the “baseline” for (aw) because even if speakers featured overall raising and fronting of the (aw) trajectory preceding voiceless consonants, they should all feature similarly unraised/unfronted pre-voiced (aw), since this environment does not trigger variation for any speakers.

To determine the patterning of pre-nasal raising and fronting of (aw) across speakers, I generated a linear mixed effects regression model with Euclidean distance between pre-nasal and pre-voiced (aw) as the dependent variable. Included as fixed effects in the model were non-linguistic variables of participant age, social class, gender, extra-Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech type (reading passage, word list, or interview speech). Speaker was also included as a random intercept. I completed a “step-up” analysis of the data, in which I generated a model with no predictors, “stepping up” by adding predictors, then comparing the effectiveness of the models in terms of predicting the Euclidean distance values observed. I then generated an inference tree for all the fixed effects, to determine if there were any interactions that should be examined further; there were not. Finally, I generated a random forest to examine the predictive power of each social variable, to ensure that the model generated properly captured the patterning according to social variables and that the ordering of additions to the model was not obscuring any effects. Table 8 presents the regression table for the best model, in which t values of above 2 or below -2 are interpreted as significant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech type</strong>&lt;br&gt;(reference point: word list)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading passage</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-6.77*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-7.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong>&lt;br&gt;(reference point: female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-3.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech type:Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading passage:Male</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview:Male</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.13*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.** Regression table for Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v

Age did not significantly improve the model, indicating that unlike in Baranowski’s (2007) findings on this variable in Charleston, pre-nasal (aw) raising in Chalmatian English does not represent a change in progress. In contrast, speech type, gender, and an interaction between speech type and gender all improved the model. The t values indicate that reading passage and interview speech types favored a lower Euclidean distance, or less pre-nasal raising and fronting, in contrast with the word list reference point. Male participants also favored lower Euclidean distance over women, although the interaction between speech type and gender reveals that men featured higher Euclidean distances in the reading passage and interview speech types than they did while reading the word list.

Figure 31 presents a box plot of the Euclidean distance between normalized pre-voiced and pre-voiceless (aw) nuclei according to speech type. In this box plot,
and the others presented in this section, a higher Euclidean distance represents a more raised and fronted pre-nasal nucleus, in contrast with pre-voiced (aw) nuclei.

Figure 31. Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by speech type

In Figure 31, there is a noticeable rise in Euclidean distance in the word list condition, in comparison with the reading passage and interview speech, indicating that more speakers featured raised and fronted pre-nasal (aw) while reading the word list than in other speech types.
In addition, women featured higher overall Euclidean distances than men, as seen in Figure 32, which presents the Euclidean distance between normalized pre-voiced and pre-nasal tokens of (aw) at the 25% point according to gender.

Figure 32. Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by gender

In Figure 32, we see that female participants demonstrate overall higher Euclidean distance values than male participants. In other words, women feature greater distance between pre-voiced and pre-nasal tokens of (aw), suggesting that they
were more likely than men to feature raised and fronted (aw) nuclei preceding nasal consonants. However, there was also a significant interaction between gender and speech type. Figure 33 demonstrates that this interaction results from women featuring higher Euclidean distances than men in the word list condition.

**Figure 33.** Euclidean distance between (aw)n & (aw)v by gender and speech type – women (left), men (right)

Figure 33 indicates that while both men and women featured raising and fronting of the nucleus of pre-nasal (aw), it was women who did this more drastically. This difference in the word list likely also fueled the significance of gender as an overall predictor in the model. In general, word lists elicit more careful speech, and thus more prestige features (Labov 1972). Additionally, women have been shown across a number of speech communities to gravitate more towards more prestigious variants (Labov 2001). Based on these patterns in past research, one might be tempted to interpret pre-nasal (aw) nucleus raising and fronting as the prestige variant in Chalmatian English. However, it differs from the standard pronunciation
within the region more broadly, and has not been identified as a prestige variant in other communities where this variation occurs (Labov 2001; Chambers & Hardwick 1985). What is more likely, I would argue, is that this feature carries neither prestige nor stigma within the community, in which it was never openly discussed amongst participants during the metalinguistic commentary portion of interviews, nor did I ever encounter it performed or commodified within GNO. Rather, it is simply the pronunciation of pre-nasal (aw) for some participants, who when speaking emphatically in the word list condition exaggerate their articulation more.

The raising and fronting of pre-nasal (aw) nuclei did not pattern according to the social factors of age, social class, extra-Chalmatian orientation, or post-Katrina location status. Thus this feature does not appear to represent a change in progress, or we would expect an age effect whereby younger speakers featured higher Euclidean distances then older speakers. In addition, based on the lack of patterning according to the two measures of place—extra-Chalmatian orientation and post-Katrina location status—this feature does not appear to be affected by either place orientation or physical location. This result is perhaps unsurprising, given its absence from mention or performance in the parish or in GNO more broadly.

6.4 Pre-voiceless (aw)

To determine which speakers featured a raised and fronted trajectory of (aw) preceding voiceless consonants, I calculated the Euclidean distance between the mean pre-voiced and mean pre-voiceless normalized F1 and F2 at the 25% and the
75% points for each speaker, within each speech type condition; I then added both the nucleus (25%) and off-glide (75%) Euclidean distances to produce Euclidean distance sums (see 4.4.4 for further details on this calculation). This method of calculating raising and fronting thus provided three data points per speaker, one for each speech type (word list, reading passage, and interview speech). Euclidean distance sums were taken as the dependent variable in a linear mixed effects regression model of the data. Fixed effects included participant age, social class, gender, extra-Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech type, with speaker as a random intercept (because mean values were taken across tokens for an entire condition, “word” could not be included as a random intercept). Similar to the analysis presented in 6.2, a “step-up/step-down” analysis was completed on these data as well, the results of which are presented in Table 9.

|          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept) | 1.17     | 0.10       | 11.97   | 1.17     |
| Age      | -0.004   | <0.01      | -2.41   | <0.001*** |

* < 0.05   ** < 0.01   *** < 0.001

Table 9. Regression table for pre-voiced & pre-voiceless (aw) Euclidean distance sums

The only social predictor of pre-voiceless (aw) raising and fronting was age. Social class, gender, extra-Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech
type were not significant predictors of pre-voiced and pre-voiceless (aw) Euclidean
distance sums.

Figure 34 presents the patterning across age groups in terms of Euclidean
distance sums, with a regression line fit to the data to demonstrate the patterning of
data points across age groups.

Figure 34. Euclidean distance sums by age

Figure 34 demonstrates that younger speakers feature higher Euclidean distance
sums, indicating that they are raising and fronting the trajectory of pre-voiceless
(aw) more than older participants. This finding appears to confirm the suspicion
that this variation is a change in progress, explaining why it was not documented in previous linguistic research focused on New Orleans.

### 6.5 Discussion

It is worth noting that I have heard raising and fronting of (aw) before voiceless consonants throughout the Greater New Orleans region, within the western and Northshore suburbs of New Orleans. In this situation of displacement, examining use of this vocalic feature within the region as a whole may function as a measure of this population’s participation in wider sound changes in the area. That said, as established already, (aw) variation within Greater New Orleans has not been previously examined in linguistic research, so it is not clear beyond my general observations to what extent speech communities outside of this sample are participating in this sound change. Further examination of this variation in Greater New Orleans as a whole is needed before concrete conclusions may be drawn about whether the shift across age groups in this study represents a shift towards broader local patterns, or simply a shift away from historical pronunciations of (aw) in Chalmatian English.

Also at issue in this analysis is the fact that (aw) variation—new or not, specific to Chalmatian English or not—is not a part of the popular imagination about linguistic patterns in Chalmette, or in Greater New Orleans as a whole. That is to say, there is little to no commentary on this variation within either the linguistics literature or in local discussions of speech patterns. Only two speakers alluded to
the raising and fronting of (aw) before voiceless consonants during the metalinguistic commentary portion of the interview. Buckaroo said, “I've heard that we say ‘about’ too,” with a slightly raised and fronted trajectory in this token. She mentioned that she thought the source of this pronunciation was “Canadian or Cajun” influence. The other speaker who noted (aw) variation was Savannah, who characterized her family who had move to the towns of Madisonville and Hammond on the Northshore as pronouncing the word “house” in a peculiar manner.

Savannah (32, returner): “I noticed that twang in all of them—my sister who lives in Madisonville, and my family that lives in Hammond. And it was—I remember the word, it was the way my sister said 'house.' She said 'hooouuse.' It wasn't like 'house.' She went, 'hooouuuse.' It was like, what? I didn’t say anything, I didn’t want to embarrass her!”

In Savannah’s dialect, the word “house” is pronounced with a raised and fronted trajectory, since (aw) in this context precedes the voiceless consonant /s/. And indeed, when speaking as herself, Savannah features raised and fronted trajectories. In her performance of her sister, however, Savannah pronounced the tokens longer, and with a lower trajectory, than her natural pronunciation, as seen in Figure 35, where the trajectory of the performed tokens are represented with a dotted line.

Savannah’s performance and commentary suggests that she noticed instances of non-raised and -fronted (aw) preceding voiceless consonants, and that

32 While raising and fronting of (aw) before voiceless consonants can be heard in Canada (and is, indeed, called Canadian raising in most linguistics literature), there is no evidence of this feature existing in Cajun English. Since Cajuns descended from the Acadians of Canada, it is possible that this speaker was extrapolating that Canadian influence may have come to Louisiana by way of the Cajuns. However, since Louisiana Cajuns were historically Francophone, and have resided in Louisiana for hundreds of years now, this is an unlikely source for the seemingly more recent developments of pre-voiceless (aw) raising and fronting.
furthermore she interpreted such pronunciations as marked and linked to leaving Chalmette (living in Hammond/Madisonville, speaking with a twang, et cetera).

![Graph showing F1 and F2 frequencies for natural and performance versions of Savannah's speech]

**Figure 35.** Savannah’s performance of (aw)

It is worth noting that while performances do not provide perfect renderings of the target speech variety, they do provide insight into the performer’s perceptions of the salient linguistic distinctions. So it is possible that awareness is building around
this feature, and furthermore that connections between pre-voiceless raising and fronting are developing specifically Chalmette-linked associations. That said, at the time of the study, awareness of this feature—either in terms of linking it to Chalmette ways of speaking, or noticing its usage at all—was very low.

6.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I sought to describe the variation in (aw) observed in Chalmatian English, which has not before been documented in the linguistics literature. Furthermore, I aimed to determine the patterning of pre-nasal (aw) nucleus raising and fronting, and overall raising and fronting of the trajectory of pre-voiceless (aw), across the social factors of interest in the current study.

The analyses presented in this chapter established that pre-nasal raising and fronting of (aw) nuclei was more common in the speech of women, in particular when reading the word list, in contrast with the reading passage or interview speech. My interpretation of this patterning was that speakers were simply being more emphatic with their nucleus-raising and –fronting in the word list condition. Pre-voiceless raising and fronting of the entire (aw) trajectory was best predicted by speaker age, with those speakers under 50 years of age featuring higher Euclidean distance sums. This variation appears to be a change in progress, explaining its lack of documentation in the linguistics literature preceding this study.
**CHAPTER 7. **(oh) **ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, I examine the raising of the BOUGHT vowel in Chalmatian English, and its patterning across the participants in the current study. Because there is very little research on this variable, it is also necessary to document this variation to add to our knowledge of the linguistic features present in Greater New Orleans. As a secondary examination, I investigate Labov’s (2007) claim that BOUGHT and BOT remain unmerged in this dialect, to determine the relationship between a potential merger and the height of BOUGHT. Throughout this chapter, the data presented represent the data across all 57 participants in all three speech types: interview speech, reading passage, and word list.

**7.1 Previous research on (oh) in New Orleans**

In their work on *The Atlas of North American English* (ANAE), Labov, Ash, & Boberg (2006) defined raised BOUGHT as realizations of /ɔ/ with an F1 under 700 Hz. Labov (2007) remarked that the Hz values for normalized BOUGHT vowels of New Orleans ANAE informants resembled the BOUGHT-raising found in the Mid-Atlantic states, however neither he nor other linguistic researchers have completed any
detailed analysis of this feature within GNO. Thus the current study represents the first attempt at a variationist analysis of BOUGHT in the New Orleans region.

7.2 BOT/BOUGHT merger

As a measure of distance between /ɔ/ (henceforth BOUGHT) and /ɑ/ (henceforth BOT), I calculated the Euclidean distance between the mean normalized BOT and BOUGHT for each speaker across all three speech types. Because Euclidean distance measures the distance between the mean normalized F1 and F2, this determines how far apart, on average, speakers’ realizations of these two sounds were. These values were submitted to a linear mixed effects regression analysis, in which all the social factors identified above were included as fixed effects, with word and speaker as random intercepts. To determine the best predictors of the data, I completed a “step-up” analysis, starting with a null model and working up to a full model, then carrying out a model comparison to determine which model best predicted the data observed. After the best model based on main effects was determined, I generated inference trees for the data to aid in deciding whether any interactions should be included in the model. Finally, I generated a random forest to confirm that the ordering of fixed effects was not obscuring patterning of results—that is, to ensure that the order of addition to the model matched the robustness of the predictive power for each significant fixed effect. Table 10 presents the regression table for the best model of Euclidean distance between mean normalized F1 and F2 for BOUGHT and BOT.
|                | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(>|t|)   |
|----------------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|
| (Intercept)    | 0.79     | 0.09       | 8.50    | 9.96e-14*** |
| Age            | 0.01     | <0.01      | 5.39    | 4.04e-07*** |
| Social class   | -0.02    | 0.01       | -2.12   | 0.04*     |

* < 0.05  ** < 0.01  *** < 0.001

**Table 10.** Regression table for Euclidean distance between BOUGHT & BOT

Table 10 demonstrates that while higher ages favor a greater Euclidean distance, higher social class rankings disfavor greater Euclidean distance measures. In other words, older speakers and those of a lower class ranking are more likely to have a greater distance between BOT and BOUGHT. This age effect may be seen in Figure 36, which presents Euclidean distance across age groups.
Across age groups we observe a clear pattern of decline for Euclidean distance, which represents realizations of BOT and BOUGHT that are closer in normalized F1-F2 space for younger speakers than for older speakers. Similarly, in Figure 37 Euclidean distance is lower overall for speakers with higher social class rankings.
While Euclidean distance offers a measure of distance between the means for /ɔ/ and /ɑ/, it does not provide an indication of overlap in terms of merged versus unmerged BOT and BOUGHT. To determine which speakers featured a merger, unnormalized tokens from the reading passage were plotted for each speaker. On average, 32 tokens of BOUGHT and 11 tokens of BOT were plotted. The resulting plots showed for each speaker the distance between their realizations of BOUGHT and BOT. These plots were then examined impressionistically by myself and an intern. We independently coded the speakers into three categories according to our perception of distance between realizations of BOUGHT and BOT: (1) significant distance (2) some distance (3) no distance. Cases of (1) "significant distance"
between BOUGHT and BOT usually consisted of speakers with little to no overlap in F1-F2 space between their tokens of BOUGHT and BOT, as in Figure 38, in which dots represent individual tokens of BOUGHT (in blue) and BOT (in red) and the ellipses represent a 75% data spread assuming a t-distribution for that vowel class.

![Figure 38](image)

**Figure 38.** Dave, “significant distance” between BOUGHT and BOT
An example of a speaker with (3) “no distance” between BOUGHT and BOT is provided in Figure 39, in which it is visually apparent that tokens of BOT and tokens of BOUGHT take up overlapping sections of the vowel space.

**Figure 39.** Daisy, “no distance” between BOUGHT and BOT

Generally speakers categorized as featuring (2) “some distance” between BOUGHT and BOT featured ellipses that either touched or overlapped slightly.
I checked my intern’s coding into these three categories against my own coding, and we discussed any cases of disagreement until we reached a consensus about the categorization for all 57 speakers. The resulting distribution of speakers into the three categories is presented in Table 11, in which I have labeled speakers with a significant distance between BOT and BOUGHT as “unmerged” and those with no distance as “merged,” based on this impressionistic examination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Significant distance (unmerged)</td>
<td>31 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Some distance</td>
<td>15 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) No distance (merged)</td>
<td>11 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11.** BOT/BOUGHT merger categorization totals

Table 11 demonstrates that more than half of the speakers in this sample featured unmerged BOT and BOUGHT, however quite a few speakers appeared to have a merger or near-merger. To determine the patterning of BOT/BOUGHT distance within the sample of speakers, the coding into these three categories was taken as the dependent variable in a multinomial regression analysis, with all the social variables in this study taken as fixed effects. As I did in my analysis of Euclidean distance, I completed a “step-up” analysis, working up to a full model from a null model and performing model comparisons to determine the best predictors of the
variation observed. I also generated inference trees and random forests to confirm that no interactions needed to be added to the model, and that the ordering of fixed effects added to the model was not skewing results towards earlier-added predictors. The results of this regression analysis are given in Table 12, in which coefficients are presented for each application against the reference point of “significant distance”, with standard error in parentheses and significance indicated by asterisks. In this table, predictors are presented in columns according to distance between BOUGHT and BOT (rows).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Social class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some distance</strong></td>
<td>3.51(1.75)</td>
<td>-0.05(0.02)*</td>
<td>-0.32(0.16)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No distance</strong></td>
<td>0.73(1.87)</td>
<td>-0.05(0.03)*</td>
<td>0.05(0.17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* < 0.05  ** < 0.01  *** < 0.001

**Table 12.** Regression table for BOT/BOUGHT distance

Table 12 indicates that significant predictors of BOT/BOUGHT distance were age and social class, mirroring results for Euclidean distance. And, as was the case for Euclidean distance, younger speakers were more likely than older speakers to have smaller distances between BOT and BOUGHT, and speakers of a higher class ranking were more likely to have smaller distances between their realizations of BOT and
BOUGHT. Interestingly, class was selected as a significant predictor only for speakers with “some distance” between BOT and BOUGHT, in contrast with the reference point of “significant distance.” One reason for this patterning may be that the subset of speakers with “no distance” between BOT and BOUGHT represented a smaller group of participants than the other two groups. In addition, over half of the participants categorized as featuring “no distance” between BOT and BOUGHT were 30 or younger. Although there was no significant interaction between age and class, it is possible that because so many young speakers featured “no distance” between BOT and BOUGHT that social class simply did not distinguish this group from speakers with “significant distance” as strongly as age did.

Based on these analyses, it appears that Chalmatian English speakers are shifting towards merged realization of BOUGHT and BOT, and that speakers of higher class rankings are leading this change. In the following section, BOUGHT height will be examined, which will add to the story of /ɔ/ variation within Chalmatian English.

### 7.3 Raised BOUGHT

To determine the patterning of BOUGHT raising within my sample, I generated a linear mixed effects model with normalized F1 at the 50% point as the dependent variable, and random intercepts of speaker and word. Linguistic constraints included in the model as fixed effects were preceding segment, following segment, and number of syllables. Social factors of participant age, social class, gender, extra-
Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech type (reading passage, word list, or interview speech) were also included in the model as fixed effects. I completed a “step-up” analysis of models generated for these data, in order to determine the best predictors of normalized F1. In this method, the barest and fullest models of the data are generated, and fixed effects are added until the best model for the data—determined via model comparison—is achieved. In these models, I always added all of the linguistic constraints before social constraints, to ensure that I was capturing all the language-internal effects before concluding that there was social patterning. After completing the “step-up” process, I generated an inference tree and random forest for all the fixed effects, to identify whether there were any interactions between the main effects and to ensure that my model was not obscuring certain fixed effects due to the order of adding social and linguistic factors. The best model for (oh) is presented in Table 13, in which t values of over 2 or under -2 can be interpreted as significant predictors.

Preceding segment and number of syllables were found to significantly improved the model, while following segment was not. The only social factor that significantly improved the model was age. Gender, social class, extra-Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech type did not significantly predict normalized (oh) F1. In the following sections, the patterning of predictors will be discussed further.
Table 13. Regression table for (oh) normalized F1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>14.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preceding segment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reference level: pause)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-3.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of syllables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reference level: 1 syllable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 syllables</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 syllables</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-2.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 syllables</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 syllables</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-3.02*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.1 Linguistic factors

In the following box plots, normalized F1 is presented along the y-axis, ranging from lower F1 (realized with the tongue higher in the vowel space) to higher F1 (realized with the tongue lower in the vowel space). In other words, data points located lower along this axis indicate raising of BOUGHT.

Linguistic factors included in the model as predictors included preceding segment, following segment, and number of syllables. Of these, preceding segment and number of syllables significantly predicted (oh) normalized F1.
Figure 40 presents the patterning of normalized F1 for BOUGHT according to preceding segment, collapsed into the segment types of preceding pause, vowel, fricative, plosive, liquid, and nasal.

![Normalized F1 by preceding segment](image)

**Figure 40.** (oh) normalized F1 by preceding segment

In the regression model, preceding liquids were significant predictors, with plosives approaching significance, in contrast with the reference point of preceding pause. Figure 40 demonstrates that these environments favored lower F1 (raised BOUGHT), while pauses favor higher F1 (unraised BOUGHT).

The sample included tokens of words ranging from 1 (e.g. “lost”) to 5 (e.g. “auditorium”) syllables long, with the vast majority of the sample (96.5%)
representing 1- and 2-syllable words. Figure 41 presents the patterning of normalized F1 across syllable number.

**Figure 41.** (oh) normalized F1 by number of syllables

In her examination of BOUGHT-raising in New York City English, Becker (2010) found that shorter words favored raising of BOUGHT. In contrast, for the data in the current study, the regression model determined that 3-syllable words featured lower normalized F1 compared to the 1-syllable word reference point, suggesting that multisyllable words are more likely to trigger BOUGHT-raising. Figure 41, however, indicates that this patterning may in fact have more to do with low token counts for 3-syllable words, which thus allowed for less variation along the F1
continuum, since 1-syllable words feature a number of outliers with quite high F1 values, while 3-syllable words feature only a handful of outliers.

7.3.2 Social factors

Of the social factors examined for BOUGHT height, only age significantly improved the predictive power of the model. Social class, extra-Chalcatlan orientation, gender, speech type, and post-Katrina location status did not significantly improve the model.

Figure 42 presents mean normalized F1 according to age across participants, with a regression line fit to the data demonstrating the patterning of data points.

**Figure 42.** (oh) normalized F1 means by age
Figure 42 shows that younger speakers feature higher normalized F1 for (oh) in comparison with older speakers, indicating that they are raising BOUGHT less than older speakers. In other words, BOUGHT raising is declining over time, as younger speakers feature higher BOUGHT F1.

7.4 Discussion

The fact that there are age effects for both raising of BOUGHT and the BOT/BOUGHT merger suggests that not only is raised BOUGHT becoming a less likely variant in the speech of Chalmette residents, but they are becoming less likely to retain the distinction between BOT and BOUGHT entirely. In this way, Chalmatian English speakers are leaving behind locally marked speech patterns of the past and shifting towards a merged BOT/BOUGHT system that is becoming increasingly common throughout the United States (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). This trend mirrors the shift occurring for white speakers of New York City English on the Lower East Side, who are similarly shifting away from raised BOUGHT, which is a “traditional” and “local” feature in that variety as well (Becker 2010).

While it is impossible to determine whether the merging of BOUGHT and BOT in Chalmatian English is causing speakers to raise BOUGHT less, or if the inverse is true, it is possible to examine the relationship between these two factors. Figure 43 demonstrates a clear relationship between BOUGHT normalized F1 and impressionistically coded distance between unnormalized BOUGHT and BOT. Speakers who feature significant distance between BOUGHT and BOT are also those
who have the lowest normalized F1, which indicates raising of BOUGHT. In other words, the speakers who are unmerged are in part making the distinction between BOT and BOUGHT through vowel height, raising BOUGHT significantly more than unmerged speakers. Moreover, because of the age effects uncovered in the analyses presented earlier in this chapter, we can conclude that overall it is the older speakers in my sample who are raising BOUGHT the most, while maintaining this distinction between BOUGHT and BOT.

![Graph: (oh) normalized F1 according to distance between BOT & BOUGHT]  
**Figure 43.** (oh) normalized F1 according to distance between BOUGHT & BOT

While the age effect provided significant predictive power in terms of both BOUGHT-raising and the BOT/BOUGHT merger, there were also significant effects of
class rankings for the latter. Speakers with higher social class rankings were less likely to retain a distinction between BOT and BOUGHT. Such patterning may indicate that it is the speakers of higher class ranking who are leading the change towards merged BOT and BOUGHT. Supporting this hypothesis is the fact that the multinomial regression analysis of BOT/BOUGHT distance revealed that social class only significantly predicted the difference between speakers with “significant distance” between BOT and BOUGHT and those with “some distance.” It may be that this middle group featuring “some distance” between BOT and BOUGHT, or a near-merger, is the transitional group of speakers shifting towards the merger, indicating the importance of social class in the transition.

Despite the strong effect of age, other social factors—including both measures of place, post-Katrina location status and extra-Chalmetian orientation scores—were not significant predictors of normalized BOUGHT height. Notable too in the analyses presented in this chapter is the lack of effect based on speech type—whether a participant was reading a word list, reading passage, or speaking casually during the interview did not affect BOUGHT height. These facts are perhaps related, if we interpret lack of speech type effect as being a measure of attention paid to speech, with variables featuring greater awareness and stigma surrounding them more likely to be corrected when more attention is drawn to speech—which is how Labov (1972) originally described these speech types. That is to say, if speakers are not aware of raised BOUGHT as a feature in their speech, it is possible that this feature is not strongly linked to being from Chalmette in the minds of speakers, and thus is not predicted by participants orientation to Chalmette (extra-Chalmetian
orientation), nor is it a feature that speakers seek to change in their speech when they move away from Chalmette (post-Katrina location status). And indeed, raised BOUGHT was never mentioned explicitly during metalinguistic commentary about Chalmatian English. That said, this feature did have some presence in the performance or exaggeration of Chalmatian English that sometimes took place during the course of interviews. For example, relocator Buckaroo, who features merged BOT and BOUGHT, did feature raised BOUGHT prominently in her performance of people with a “Chalmette accent,” reciting the following sentence with the underlined vowels produced as raised tokens of BOUGHT.

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “Oh my god, I got the dog. He’s bringing his daughters over”

In Labovian (1972) terms, it may be that raised BOUGHT has achieved marker status such that it can be used in performances, but it is not yet a stereotype of Chalmatian English that may be pointed to or explicitly described. Further evidence of this distinction is the fact that r-lessness, a stereotype of Chalmatian English, was frequently mentioned explicitly in metalinguistic commentary, and commodified/performed throughout St. Bernard Parish and beyond. A number of speakers explained that in particular, their pronunciation of “water” [wɔɾə]33 was the source of commentary or ridicule from people outside of St. Bernard Parish. When pressed to explain what exactly about this pronunciation was remarkable to outsiders, most participants explained that it was the lack of /ɹ/ at the end of the word. No participant mentioned the realization of /ɔ/, although it is equally

33 In this transcription, the diacritic underneath /ɔ/ indicates raising.
plausible that others were remarking on their raised realization of BOUGHT as well (it may, in fact, be that because the word “water” presents two features of Chalmatian English, it is the site of increased attention by outsiders, who may not have been able to articulate themselves what exactly about the Chalmatian English pronunciation of this word differs from their own pronunciation).

7.6 Conclusions
The analysis presented in this chapter sought to answer two questions: (1) What is the patterning of BOUGHT realizations within Chalmatian English, in terms of vowel height? and (2) What is the relationship between BOUGHT and BOT for Chalmatian English speakers? My analysis determined that variable raising of /ɔ/ is predicted by preceding segment, syllable number, and age. Furthermore, age and social class were predictive of merged BOUGHT and BOT, measured both by Euclidean distance between mean normalized F1 and F2 values for these vowel classes and by impressionistic examination of distance between unnormalized /ɔ/ and /ɑ/ tokens in individual vowel plots. This patterning demonstrates a shift away from previous speech patterns reported by Labov (2007), who noted unmerged BOT/BOUGHT and raising of BOUGHT. The patterning of the data may also indicate that speakers of higher class rankings are leading the change in progress towards merged BOT and BOUGHT. Finally, I proposed that part of the reason raised BOUGHT was not predicted by measures of place such as extra-Chalmatian orientation scores and
post-Katrina location status was due to lesser awareness of this feature, making it a less salient variable to manipulate in order to express a place-linked identity.
In this chapter, I present the results of analyses performed on short-a data from the word list, reading passage, and interview speech. The goal of these analyses was twofold. First, I wanted to assess the constraints identified in Labov’s (2007) work on the GNO short-a system, which he developed based on a handful of speakers from *The Atlas of North American English* (ANAE). Using my larger sample, which features a particularly conservative group of speakers in the region, I was able to determine that while my data confirm Labov’s description on many counts, there were some short-a system findings in my data that differed from his. The second goal of my analysis, of course, was to determine the patterning of different short-a systems across participants according to social factors of interest. In particular, I wanted to test whether my data manifested evidence of the change in progress towards a nasal system, as was posited by Labov (2007). Furthermore, I sought to determine whether the movement of relocators away from the conservative speech community of St. Bernard had an effect on their realization of (æ)—that is, are relocators more likely than returners to exhibit the nasal system that has become more common throughout Greater New Orleans (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006)?

In the sections that follow, I first discuss previous work on short-a systems in GNO. I then describe the types of short-a systems present in my data, focusing on the
environmental, word-type, and syllable-type constraints identified by Labov. Finally, I present the results from regression analyses performed on data from the word list, reading passage, and interview speech modules of the interview, discussing the overall patterns in short-a results.

8.1 Previous research on (æ) in New Orleans

While many dialects of American English feature a nasal short-a system, defined by Becker (2010:153) as “where any /æ/ before a nasal coda is tense and in all other environments is lax,” Labov (2007) has documented the split short-a system within Greater New Orleans, using data from ANAE. Labov (2007: 365) described New Orleans’ split system as featuring tensing “before nasals, voiced stops /b/ and /d/ (bad, sad, crab, Crabtree), and voiceless fricatives (asked, basketball, last).” Based on this description—in combination with the plots presented in his article, which identify /v/ and /z/ as additional tensing environments—I developed Figure 44 to represent the tensing environments I expected for Chalmatian English.

Figure 44. Tensing environments for New Orleans English (Labov 2007)
Contrast this figure with Figure 45 for New York City (Becker 2010) and Cincinnati (Boberg & Strassel 2000), which feature slightly different tensing environments from each other, and from Labov’s description of New Orleans English.

What unites all three examples of split systems demonstrated here is that the following phonetic environment (in combination with other linguistic constraints, to be described shortly) determines the tense/lax distribution of /æ/. Furthermore, the groups of sounds that trigger tensing do not belong to a natural class, and thus share no uniting phonetic feature.

Aside from following phonetic environment, linguists have uncovered some other triggers for tensing in split short-a systems described in the United States. For
example, in NYCE there is a constraint excluding function words and open syllables from this phonologically conditioned tensing pattern. While Labov found no evidence of the function word constraint in ANAE data for New Orleans, he found the open syllable constraint to be present in his data for speakers with split short-a systems. Notably, this constraint was robust in the data from older speakers, but in examining the data of two younger speakers Labov noted weakening or loss of this constraint. These younger speakers also featured a nasal short-a system, described as “Short-a before nasal consonants is tense (man, manage, span, Spanish), and lax elsewhere,” regardless of syllable type—open or closed (Labov 2007: 354). Labov took this patterning as evidence of a shift away from the split short-a system, towards a nasal system, in GNO.

8.2 Description of split short-a system in Chalmatian English

In this section I describe the split short-a system in Chalmatian English based on the data acquired for this study, noting the instances where my findings contrast with Labov’s (2007) description. I start with environmental constraints, and then address the function word and open syllable constraints.

8.2.1 Environmental constraints

The environmental constraints are perhaps the defining feature of split short-a systems, labeled thus because of a distinct “split” between the tense and lax vowels in different phonetic environments. Data from the word list, reading passage, and
interview speech were all coded for following segment, then plotted in F1/F2 space, where environmental patterns of tensing could be observed. The full environmental constraints indicated by my data are presented in Figure 46.

For the most part, my data corroborated Labov’s (2007) description of the split short-a system in New Orleans. The main differences between Labov’s findings and my own are that in my data, (1) /dʒ/ and /ɡ/ are tensing environments, while Labov described these sounds as lax environments, and (2) /θ/ was found to be a lax environment, in contrast with Labov’s inclusion of this sound in his description of tensing environments. Figure 47 provides the vowel plot in F1/F2 space for a speaker with a split short-a system. In this figure, tokens of “bag” __/ɡ/ and “badge” __/dʒ/ are in the cluster of tense tokens (shown here as red squares), and “math” __/θ/ is clearly in the lax territory (blue triangles). In this plot, pink unfilled circles represent nasal tokens, which we expect to be tense in both kinds of systems, and filled green circles represent open syllables, which we would expect to be lax if the speaker observes the open syllable constraint that blocks tensing in open syllables.
To corroborate my visual classification of these three sounds—/ɡ/, /dʒ/, and /θ/—into tense and lax environments, I subdivided my sample in order to analyze only speakers featuring a split short-a system (N=17; see 8.3 for a full description of this categorization process). I then generated a linear mixed effects regression model for these data only. In this model, normalized F1 was taken as the dependent variable, following environment as a predictor, and speaker and word as random intercepts. In order to determine whether /ɡ/, /dʒ/, and /θ/ patterned more with established and confirmed tense or lax environments (by which I mean the environments
established by Labov [2007] and confirmed by my visual analysis), I collapsed following environments into tense, lax, and nasal environments, while separating the ambiguously tense/lax triggering sounds /ɡ/, /dʒ/, and /θ/ into individual categories. In this way, I would be able to see with which group (tense, lax, nasal) these ambiguous sounds most patterned, in terms of predicting normalized F1. The results of the regression are presented in Table 14, in which t values of over 2 or under -2 can be interpreted as significant predictors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(reference point: Tense)</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lax</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>5.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɡ/</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/dʒ/</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.37*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* < 0.05   ** < 0.01   *** < 0.001

Table 14. Regression table for environmental constraints

Because I set the reference point for following environment to “tense,” the results of this regression model revealed how strongly a given environment predicts normalized F1 of (æ) in comparison—that is, whether that environment triggers a

34 The reason I separated nasal consonants into a separate category is that even for speakers with split systems, often tokens of /æ/ preceding nasal consonants are higher and fronter than tokens preceding tensing triggers.
tensed, or raised, realization of /æ/. For example, with a t value of 5.10, lax environments were significant predictors of normalized F1, in contrast with the tense reference point. Similarly, /θ/ featured a t value of over 2, suggesting that it contrasted with tense environments as well, and it otherwise patterned similarly to the lax environments. Conversely, nasal sounds, which generally trigger higher and fronter realizations of /æ/, were not significant predictors of normalized F1 in contrast with tensing environments, suggesting that these sounds triggered similar normalized F1 measurements to tense environments (as we would expect to be the case). Mirroring nasal results, /ɡ/ and /dʒ/ were not significant predictors of normalized F1, suggesting that like nasal consonants, both /ɡ/ and /dʒ/ do not differ from tensing environments already established and confirmed in their prediction of F1. Overall, the results of this regression model support my impressionistic judgment of vowel plots in which /ɡ/ and /dʒ/ patterned more with tensing triggers, while /θ/ patterned more with lax, in contrast with Labov’s (2007) description.

As a final check, to determine whether /ɡ/, /dʒ/, or /θ/ were simply the locus of increased variation (which is plausible, due to the low frequency of /æ/ preceding these three environments in English), I examined individual vowel plots for speakers with split systems, looking specifically at tokens preceding these sounds. I found that while /ɡ/ and /dʒ/ were consistently—indeed almost exclusively—tensing environments, there was some variation in the realization of /æ/ preceding /θ/ (which is not entirely surprising, given that there are a number
of lax tokens of /æ/ preceding tensing triggers throughout the corpus, simply due to the natural variability that occurs in speech production).

In order to determine the effect of environmental and other constraints on tensing within the split short-a system in Chalmatian English, I submitted the data for speakers with split systems to a linear mixed effects regression model, taking normalized F1 as the dependent variable. In this model speaker and word were included as random intercepts, with the fixed effects of syllable type (open or closed), number of syllables, syllable position, word type, and following phonetic environment (coded into “tense” vs. “lax” classifications, based on my description of tensing environments above). I also included in the model an interaction between syllable type and following phonetic environment, since the open syllable constraint blocks tensing in open syllables.

I tested regression models against each other using the “step-up” approach, which involves generating the simplest (null) and most full (all factors) models, as well as everything in between, then running a model comparison to determine which factors were significantly improving the model when added. I then generated an inference tree for the data, which confirmed that there was an interaction between syllable type and following environment. Finally, I generated a random forest for the data, to ensure that the model accurately captured the patterns in the data. As a result of this process, I found that the best model—presented in Table 15—featured the significant predictors of syllable type (open versus closed) and following environment (whether the environment typically triggers tense versus lax realizations of /æ/).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>14.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllable type (reference point: closed)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>10.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following environment (reference point: tense)</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>3.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllable type:Following environment</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>3.49*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Regression for split short-a system constraints

Word type, number of syllables, and syllable position were not significant predictors of normalized F1. The coefficients presented in Table 15 indicate that closed syllables, tensing environments, and the combination of these factors favor higher F1 (or tensing). This patterning means that overall, participants with split short-a systems patterned according to environmental constraints and the open syllable constraint, but not the function word constraint. The effects of the function word constraint and the open syllable constraint will be discussed in the sections that follow.

8.2.2 Function word constraint

In NYCE, there is a constraint against tensing in function words such as “have” and “has,” despite the fact that based on the following phonetic environment, these tokens of /æ/ should be tensed (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). According to Labov’s (2007) description, the split short-a system in New Orleans does not have such a constraint. And indeed, my data similarly suggest that function words within
Chalmatian English are tensed when followed by tensing triggers such as /z/, /v/, and /d/. Figure 48 provides an example of a split system, in which the function words from the word list are labeled to demonstrate that the words are well within the tensed region of the vowel plot.

![Figure 48](image)

**Figure 48.** Function words in Savannah's split short-a system

In the regression model presented in Table 15, word type (lexical versus function words) was not selected as a significant predictor of normalized F1, providing
further support for my interpretation of vowel plots. Thus my data on the whole
confirm Labov’s description of the absent function word constraint in New Orleans.

8.2.3 Open syllable constraint

In contrast with the function word constraint, Labov found the open syllable
constraint to be relatively robust in New Orleans. The open syllable constraint
dictates that tensing is blocked in open syllables, even when /æ/ precedes a tensing
environment, as in the words “mammal” (syllabified as /mæ.m̩l/) and “traffic”
syllabified as /tɹæ.fɪk/). In my data, this constraint was also present to varying
extents. For example, looking back at Figure 48 one sees that Savannah clearly
adheres to the open syllable constraint, with both tokens of open syllables (the
words “cannon” and “carry”—both preceding tensing environments—represented
as filled green circles) from the word list in the lax region of the vowel plot. As
mentioned, in the regression model presented in Table 15, syllable type (open
versus closed syllable) was selected as a significant predictor of normalized F1,
suggesting that despite the presence of some variation, overall the open syllable
constraint remains robust for speakers of Chalmatian English with split short-a
systems.

Interestingly, even one speaker who clearly exhibited a nasal short-a system
observed the open syllable constraint. Figure 49 shows that despite the fact that
Ellie clearly features a nasal short-a system, her tokens of open syllable words,
represented by green circles, are located in the lax region of her plot. To the right,
Cecilia’s vowel plot presents an example of a split short-a system featuring the open
syllable constraint (her tokens of open syllables, indicated by green circles, are also in the lax region of her plot).

**Figure 49.** Open syllable constraint in Ellie’s nasal short-a system (left) & Cecilia’s split short-a system (right)

The fact that this constraint remains active even for a speaker with a nasal system speaks to the robustness of this constraint within Chalmatian English. And indeed, visual examination of vowel plots indicated that 63% (N=36) of the speakers in my sample featured this constraint, across all short-a system types (N=57). When examining only the speakers in my sample who feature split short-a systems (N=17), 77% (N=13) of participants adhered to this constraint.
8.3 Classification of short-a systems types in Chalmatian English

In my data, there were clear examples of the two short-a system types mentioned already—nasal and split systems—as well as examples of what is generally referred to in the literature on short-a as a “continuous” system (e.g. Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006; Durian 2012). When a speech community shifts from a split system to a nasal system, as so many have or are in the process of doing, often there is a generation or two of individuals featuring continuous systems. That is, a system with “the highest and frontest tokens of /æ/ occurring before nasals, but [with] no robust difference between prenasal and non-prenasal tokens of /æ/. In the continuous system, tokens occur in a more or less uninterrupted smear, from mid-front to high-mid-front position on down to low central position” (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006: 180-181). Figure 50 presents examples of continuous systems from my data.

![Figure 50. Continuous short-a systems](image-url)
Contrast the examples from Figure 50 with those in Figure 51, which present a clear split system (left) and a clear nasal system (right), in which a distinct line may be drawn in between tense and lax tokens of (æ).

**Figure 51.** Split (left) and nasal (right) short-a systems

Worth noting in the example plots provided in Figure 50 is that the two continuous system examples are actually quite different from each other in terms of the spread of tense, lax, and nasal (æ) tokens. Victor, to the right, features most (æ) tokens occurring together in a blob, regardless of their classification into tense or lax triggering groups based on following environment. Within this blob as well are a few nasal tokens, while the other half of Victor’s nasal tokens are located higher and fronter in the vowel space—as they might be within a nasal system. In contrast,
Benjamin’s tokens of (æ) more or less match up with the location of tense, lax, and nasal (æ) one might expect for a split short-a system in New Orleans, however the tokens appear in a continuous smear rather than as distinctly separate portions of the vowel space. Because of similar patterning appearing throughout the speakers with continuous short-a systems, I divided continuous speakers up into two groups: split-continuous and nasal-continuous, according to which system they more closely approached. Thus speakers in this study were separated into four short-a system groups. Table 16 presents the final totals of speakers classified into each short-a system type group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>17 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split-continuous</td>
<td>27 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal-continuous</td>
<td>5  (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>8  (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16. Short-a system totals**

It is apparent in these numbers that the majority (77%) of the speakers in this study featured split and split-continuous short-a systems, demonstrating the relative robustness of this short-a system type in Chalmatian English, despite its purported decline in the region overall (Labov 2007).
Division of speakers into the four groups—split, split-continuous, nasal-continuous, and nasal—was first accomplished impressionistically, through visual examination of speakers’ vowel plots. To confirm my impressionistic classification, I also calculated for each speaker the Euclidean distance between their mean normalized F1 and F2 for tokens preceding sounds that trigger tensing (e.g. /z/, /d/, /n/), and those preceding sounds that do not trigger tensing (e.g. /l/, /t/, /p/) in the split system. Euclidean distance was calculated by use of the following equation, in which “tense” and “lax” represent the categorizations of each that one might expect for the Chalmatian English split short-a system, based on my description in 8.2.1.

\[
\sqrt{(F1_{\text{tense}} - F1_{\text{lax}})^2 + (F2_{\text{tense}} - F2_{\text{lax}})^2}
\]

This calculation thus yielded a continuous measure of distance between “tense” and “lax” tokens such that the higher the speaker’s final Euclidean distance calculation (and thus the greater the distance between their “tense” and “lax” tokens), the more likely the speaker was to feature a split short-a system. For example, Rosie and Momma B both featured the highest Euclidean distance measure of 2.04 and 2.00, respectively, and both were impressionistically classified as having split short-a systems. In contrast, Max and Sara, with the lowest Euclidean distance measures of 0.36 and 0.31 respectively, were both classified as having nasal short-a systems.

After calculating Euclidean distance, I revisited my classification of speakers according to their short-a system types, comparing my classifications to the range of Euclidean distances observed. Based on this visual examination, I ended up altering
the classification of three speakers,\textsuperscript{35} while all other speaker classifications remained the same as my original impressionistic categorization. The results of this comparison therefore provided support for my impressionistic classifications, while aiding in increasing the granularity of my distinction between split-continuous and nasal-continuous speakers. Table 17 presents the final distribution of speakers across the range of Euclidean distances observed between normalized F1 and F2 for tense versus lax tokens of /æ/. This table is organized by short-a system type, demonstrating the correlation between Euclidean distance and system type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euclidean distance</th>
<th>1.50-2.04</th>
<th>1.00-1.49</th>
<th>0.75-0.99</th>
<th>0.31-0.74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split-continuous</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal-continuous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17. Range of Euclidean distances between normalized F1 & F2 for tense and lax tokens of /æ/, according to short-a system type

Note that while the Euclidean distance ranges observed correspond strongly to the divisions between nasal and nasal-continuous systems, there is some overlap in

\textsuperscript{35} Two of these speakers were originally classified as featuring split-continuous systems, and one as having a nasal system. All three were re-classified as having a nasal-continuous system, based on where their Euclidean distance measures placed them within the sample of speakers and re-examination of their vowel plots in comparison with other nasal-continuous speakers. Table 16 reflects this reclassification.
Euclidean distance ranges across split and split-continuous systems. This patterning likely results from the fact that there is some variation even within split systems according to tensing environments. For this reason, I completed my analyses on the coded short-a system types and not Euclidean distance.

**8.4 Social factors**

To examine the patterning of short-a system types according to social factors, I developed a multinomial logistic regression model with the fixed effects of age, class, gender, extra-Chalmatian orientation, and post-Katrina location status, with the dependent variable of system type (split, split-continuous, nasal-continuous, and nasal). I tested regression models against each other using the “step-up” approach, adding factors to a bare model until all fixed effects have been added, then comparing the predictive powers of each model against the next. I also generated inference trees to confirm that there were no interactions between predictors, and a random forest to ensure that the order in which I was adding the fixed effects to the model was not obscuring patterns of variation. Table 18 presents the results of the best model for the data, which featured age and extra-Chalmatian orientation as significant predictors. In this table, predictors are presented in columns according to the applications of short-a system types (rows). Coefficients are presented for each application against the reference point of nasal systems, with standard error in parentheses and significance indicated by asterisks.
(reference point: Nasal system)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(Intercept)</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>extra-Chalmatian orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasal-continuous</td>
<td>-7.43(2.82)</td>
<td>0.20(0.09)**</td>
<td>0.12(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split-continuous</td>
<td>1.94(2.20)</td>
<td>0.21(0.08)**</td>
<td>-0.10(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>-6.96(2.36)</td>
<td>0.23(0.09)**</td>
<td>-0.22(0.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* < 0.05  ** < 0.01  *** < 0.001

Table 18. Regression table for split short-a system type

The significant predictive power of age is not surprising, since according to past literature we should expect a trend away from split systems toward nasal short-a systems (Labov 2007). Figure 52 demonstrates that the age effect did indeed reflect a shift over time from a split (and/or split-continuous) system to a nasal system. For the sake of visualizing the discrepancy between speakers of different ages, in this figure participant age is represented by three age groups: under 30, 30-50, and over 50, although age was treated as a continuous variable within the regression model.
For speakers over 50 in the sample, almost 90% featured either a split or split-continuous system. No speakers over 50 featured a nasal short-a system. For speakers in the 30-50 year old range, the numbers of speakers with split and split-continuous systems held, but speakers with split-continuous systems increased by 15% for this age range, compared to the over 50 age group. In addition, we witness the appearance of the nasal system, although users of this system comprised a meager 8% of the speakers aged from 30-50 in my study. Finally, for speakers under 30, half featured a nasal short-a system, while speakers with a split short-a system dropped to 17% of this age group. This patterning suggests that the change-in-progress towards a nasal system in Chalmatian English is nearly complete. Notably the age effect holds across all speakers, and does not differ across returner and

Figure 52. Short-a systems according to age
relocator groups. That is to say, young relocators in my sample were no more likely to feature nasal short-a systems than young returners.

Although the effects of extra-Chalmatian orientation do not demonstrate significant predictive power in Table 18, when the reference point is changed from “nasal” to “split,” extra-Chalmatian orientation becomes a significant predictor of nasal-continuous systems (p=0.006, intercept=0.831). That is to say, nasal-continuous systems are significantly predicted by extra-Chalmatian orientation scores in contrast with split systems. The directionality of the effect reveals that speakers with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation scores—that is, those speakers who orient most to extralocal areas, outside of Chalmette—are more likely to feature nasal-continuous systems than split systems. While this significant predictive power holds only across these two short-a system types, a model comparison revealed that adding extra-Chalmatian orientation as a predictor resulted in a significant improvement over a model containing only age.

Figure 53 presents the distribution of short-a system types according to extra-Chalmatian orientation. As was the case with age, although extra-Chalmatian orientation was treated as a continuous variable within the regression model, for the sake of demonstrating the differences across the continuum, I have grouped speakers into three ranges of extra-Chalmatian orientation: less than -1 (N=26), -1 to 1 (N=15), and over 1 (N=16).
Figure 53 shows that speakers with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of less than -1—those who are the most oriented towards Chalmette, and the least oriented towards extra-local influence—are also those most likely to feature a split short-a system. While only 60% of speakers with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of more than 1 (those most oriented to extra-local areas) feature a split or split-continuous short-a system, over 90% of speakers with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of less than -1 feature a split or split-continuous short-a system. The remaining 10% of speakers with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of less than -1 featured nasal short-a systems. These two speakers were aged 18 and 22, suggesting there may be a relationship between extra-Chalmatian orientation scores and age for this variable. While adding an interaction between age and extra-Chalmatian orientation does not significantly improve the model presented in Table 0%.
18, an inference tree generated for these data, shown in Figure 54, demonstrates that there is a distinct relationship between the factors of age and extra-Chalmatian orientation, in that the latter factor best predicts short-a system for speakers over 27 years of age.

**Figure 54.** Inference tree for short-a system types

In Figure 54, we see that extra-Chalmatian orientation scores did not predict system type for participants under 27, likely because so many speakers in this age range featured a nasal system regardless of extra-Chalmatian orientation, due to the shift
over time towards the nasal system. For participants over 27, in contrast, very few
speakers featured nasal systems. Within this age range, the main distinction lies
between speakers with nasal-continuous systems and those with split systems,
since split-continuous systems were approximately evenly split between the two
nodes identified. There were no speakers over 27 with extra-Chalmatian orientation
scores over 6 (N=7) who featured a split short-a system. That is, for speakers over
27, those participants who orient the most to places outside of Chalmette were least
likely to feature the traditional split short-a system. These speakers were rather
divided between split-continuous and nasal-continuous systems. Speakers over 27
with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of less than 6 featured primarily split
and split-continuous systems. Thus we see in this analysis that, for participants over
27, speakers who orient more to Chalmette and less to extra-local areas were more
likely to feature the traditional split short-a system, whereas those oriented less to
Chalmette were more likely to feature transitional split-continuous and nasal-
continuous systems. This patterning may suggest that the Chalmatian English
speakers over 27 who are more oriented to extra-local areas led the shift away from
split systems towards the nasal systems prevalent amongst the youngest speakers
in my sample.
8.5 Discussion

The results of the regression analyses presented in this chapter reveal that the split short-a system in Chalmatian English is giving way over time to the nasal system. However, relocators were no more likely than returners to feature a nasal short-a system. Thus it appears that relocation to the Northshore has not caused a subsequent shift from the traditional Chamatian English split system to a nasal system; rather, this shift appears to have been underway already before Katrina. That said, for participants over 27, speakers with the highest extra-Chalmatian orientation scores—who orient the most to places outside of Chalmette—were also those least likely to feature a split short-a system. This patterning may suggest that use of a split short-a system provides a way to express affiliation with Chalmette.

Some comments from participants seem to reflect this association. For example, when reading the word list, returner Savannah—one of the more linguistically aware participants—read the words “have” (tense), “has” (tense), “had” (tense), and “hack” (lax), commenting under her breath just afterwards: “can’t hide my Chalmette on that one.” This example implies that Savannah’s tense realizations of *have*/*has*/*had* were not only noticeable to her, but these pronunciations were linked, in her mind, to being from Chalmette. It is furthermore interesting that her commentary arrived after these particular words, which featured the only function words in the word list, and followed a number of tokens of short-a that also revealed Savannah’s split system that she did not remark upon.

Only one other participant commented on pronunciation of /æ/: relocator Chastity. Chastity—who features a split short-a system—mentioned that her son, a
pre-teen at the time of the interview, talked differently than her. In the following
excerpt, Chastity cites as an example her son’s tense pronunciation of /æ/ in the
word, “parent,”—which she pronounces with lax /æ/, due to the open syllable
constraint.

Chastity (42, relocator): He’s got a little Chalmette slang sometimes, but he is
picking up the Slidell slang. Like the other day he said something about
‘parents’ [pæ.nts]36 ...I said, ‘parents’ [pæ.nts]? But like every now and then
he’ll say little words—but he still talks like, kind of like he picked up our little
accent, you know.

Interviewer: Wait, what’s the—what would be the Chalmette way of
saying...?

Chastity: What—it—we don’t say ‘parents’ [pæ.nts], we like, ‘parents’
[pæ.nts]. {laughs} I don’t know it just sounds like, kind of like, not country
but...little things he says, I’m like, ‘what?’ You know because it sounds
different to me. But I mean he’s raised here, really. I mean, he doesn’t really
remember anything from Chalmette, you know.

Because “parents” is syllabified as [pæ.nts], the open syllable constraint in
Chalmetian English blocks tensing. In this excerpt, Chastity discursively links her
son’s tense realization of /æ/ with a Slidell way of speaking, that “sounds different.”

She explains that the reason he pronounces this word differently from her is
because he was essentially raised on the Northshore, having moved there as a child
post-Katrina. Thus she constructs her son as someone without access to Chalmette
speech patterns, and his lack of open syllable constraint as evidence of his closer
linguistic ties to the Northshore than to Chalmette.

Despite these examples of the split short-a system coming up in interviews, I
never witnessed this feature being parodied or commodified within the Parish, nor
was it cited by any speaker as a defining feature of Chalmetian English when

36 In IPA, [æ] indicates tense /æ/.
participants were explicitly asked about the speech variety. In Savannah’s example, she comments on this feature while reading the word list. In Chastity’s example, she is discussing her son during the conversational portion of the interview. Neither discussed this feature during the metalinguistic commentary portion of the interview. Thus it is unclear to what extent this feature exists within the popular local imagination of what a Chalmatian sounds like.

8.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of the short-a systems present in Chalmatian English. I found split, continuous, and nasal systems across the 57 participants in the current study.

One of the goals of this analysis was to determine if Labov’s description of the split short-a system in New Orleans was confirmed by my larger data set of speakers. While my data on the split short-a system in Chalmatian English matched Labov’s (2007) description of constraints in many ways, there were some differences between his description and what I found in my data. The main distinction was that /ɡ/ and /dʒ/ belonged to the tensing environments, and /θ/ belonged to the lax environments, in contrast with Labov’s classification of these sounds. However, like Labov, I found a relatively robust open syllable constraint and no function word constraint. Thus my data mostly corroborate Labov’s findings in terms of environmental constraints, with a few tense-lax categorization differences that may have resulted from Labov’s more limited subject pool.
In terms of the effect of social factors such as age, gender, social class, post-Katrina location status, and extra-Chalmatian orientation, I found that age was a significant predictor of short-a system type. My regression analyses determined that this dialect is undergoing a shift away from a split system towards the more common system in the United States, a nasal short-a system. While post-Katrina location status was not a significant predictor of short-a system type, suggesting that relocation to the Northshore following Katrina has not had an effect on speakers’ short-a system types, extra-Chalmatian orientation did significantly predict short-a system types. Speakers with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation scores—those who oriented the most to extralocal areas—were less likely to feature the traditional split short-a system than those who oriented more to Chalmette. This patterning may indicate that short-a system type is one way of expressing orientation towards or away from Chalmette.
In this chapter, I analyze of the patterning of (r) in word list, reading passage, and interview speech data for the 57 speakers in my sample. Variable r-lessness is perhaps the most well studied feature of the speech in Greater New Orleans. Thus it was crucial to analyze (r) in order to situate my population within the linguistic literature about the region. Additionally, Chalmatian English is an important dialect to examine to hypothesize about the future of r-lessness in Greater New Orleans.

Since r-lessness within GNO is becoming increasingly rare (Schoux Casey 2013), and Chalmette represents a bastion of conservative linguistic features within GNO (Mucciaccio 2009), we would expect that if even speakers of Chalmatian English are eschewing r-lessness, this feature likely has a limited future in GNO. If, in contrast, r-lessness is stable across younger and older speakers in my sample, it may remain a feature of Chalmatian English in the future, even as r-less pronunciations decline elsewhere in GNO.

R-lessness is also the most locally salient of the features I examined. This feature was often mentioned by participants in metalinguistic commentary, and is frequently parodied or otherwise utilized in dialect performance and commodification of speech styles throughout Greater New Orleans. In following with the patterning of other linguistic stereotypes, thus, it is possible that because of
this heightened level of awareness (1) this feature is being lost because of increased stigmatization towards it (Labov 1972), or that (2) it is functioning as a marker of “placedness” or locality, due to its perceived uniqueness and local specificity (Johnstone 2009), and is thus linked to being “from” New Orleans. The latter is obviously of interest in the current study, in which localness is challenged for some participants following the physical change of location.

Figure 55. R-lessness in the United States (From Irwin & Nagy 2010)

9.1 Previous research on (r) in New Orleans

R-lessness, or variable absence of post-vocalic /ɹ/, is common in various coastal US English varieties, as seen in Figure 55, which demonstrates the provenance of r-less
settlers in the United States. Note that in this figure, New Orleans is marked as a non-rhotic, or r-less, area.

(r) is perhaps the most systematically examined linguistic variable in Greater New Orleans, mentioned by a number of researchers (Rubrecht 1971; Coles 1997, 2001, 2004; Eble 2003, 2006; Labov 2007; Mucciaccio 2009), and examined in detail by Reinecke (1951), Brennan (1983), and Schoux Casey (2013).

In 1951 George Reinecke found very low rates of r-fulness in the speech of schoolchildren (4%, N=42) and educated adults (13%, N=20). The majority of words tested featured unstressed /ɚ/, which may explain the exceptionally low rates of r-fulness, since /ɚ/ has been shown to favor r-less realizations (Nagy & Irwin 2010).

Thirty years later, Reinecke’s student Pamela Brennan found rates of r-fulness at 30-50% (N=36). Brennan interpreted these results as a change in progress towards more r-ful pronunciations, further asserting the emergence of r-fulness as a prestige marker in New Orleans. In her study, Brennan examined the variables of ethnicity, gender, and social class, finding no significant difference between Black and White speakers, but lower rates of r-fulness for men and working class speakers.

Schoux Casey (2013) completed a restudy of Linguistic Atlas of Gulf States (LAGS, Pederson et al 1986-1992) data as well as an analysis of her own post-Katrina data, finding in both cases that based on an apparent time analysis of speakers according to their age, r-fulness was increasing over time. Within her own data, which consisted of interviews with 71 speakers from post-Katrina New Orleans, Schoux Casey found 61% r-fulness, concluding that in comparison with
Reinecke and Brennan’s results, this finding represented evidence of a continued trend towards increased r-fulness within GNO. Although women in Schoux Casey’s sample were more r-ful than men, and White speakers were more r-ful than Black/Creole speakers, neither ethnicity nor gender was predictive of r-fulness. Similarly, upper middle and middle class speakers were more r-ful than working class speakers in her sample, however social class was not selected as a significant predictor of (r).

As in the current study, Schoux Casey (2013) had an interest in speakers’ relationships to place. She categorized speakers into groups of more locally-oriented and more externally-oriented individuals, based on discourse analysis of their narratives: locally-oriented individuals were those interviewees who “primarily brought up local topics through the lens of personal experience, and took a strong New Orleans-centric perspective across topics” (Schoux Casey 2013: 92), and externally-oriented individuals were those who discussed non-local topics in a less personal way. Schoux Casey found that speakers who were more locally oriented tended to be less r-ful (36% r-ful) on the whole than those speakers more externally oriented (80% r-ful). This finding suggests that local orientation is relevant within GNO, and thus it may also be a predictor of r-fulness in my own data.

These studies show the patterning of (r) across time and different speaker groups. One trend that is immediately apparent is the rise of r-fulness over time. In the 1950s rates of r-fulness ranged from 4-13% (Reinecke), in the 1980s from 30-50% (Brennan), and in current times is approximately 61% within city limits (Schoux Casey). Based on these findings, in the current study I expected younger
speakers to be more r-ful than older speakers, reflecting the change in progress. Based on results demonstrating that men and speakers from working class backgrounds tend to be less r-ful, I also expected gender and social class-based patterning in my data. Furthermore, since there is evidence that since r-fulness, or (r-1), is the prestige form, and the more widely used variant in the region more broadly, I hypothesized that higher rates of r-fulness might be found in the speech of relocators, who would likely have motivation to adapt to the speech patterns on the Northshore and elsewhere. Because Schoux Casey found an effect of local versus external orientation in her study, I further expected individuals with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation scores (those less oriented to Chalmette and more oriented towards external places). Finally, due to the conservative nature of this speech community, I expected slightly higher levels of r-lessness, or (r-0), than in Schoux Casey’s study, which was completed in New Orleans proper.

9.2 Results

The overall rate of r-fulness in my data was 65% (N=8417 total tokens of (r-1)), representing a slightly higher rate than Schoux Casey’s overall 61% r-fulness (N=5392) for post-Katrina residents of New Orleans. Interestingly, this patterning suggests that Chalmette residents are not more r-less than residents of New Orleans proper, despite the commonly held perception in the public imagination. One possible reason for this finding is that Schoux Casey’s sample was not controlled for ethnicity as mine necessarily was, due to the primarily White racial composition of
pre-Katrina St. Bernard Parish. While speaker race (White, Black, or Creole) in Schoux Casey’s study was not selected as a significant predictor of r-lessness, at 66% (r-1) the White speakers in her study featured higher rates of r-fulness than her Black (60%) or Creole speakers (49%), as well as being slightly more r-ful than the speakers in the current study.

I generated a logistic mixed effects regression model for the data from interview speech, the reading passage, and the word list in order to examine overall patterning based on linguistic and social predictors. To determine the best predictors of the variation in the data, I performed a “step-up” analysis, which involves adding predictors one by one to a bare model, and removing predictors from a full model, in order to complete a model comparison of which predictors significantly improved the predictive power of the model. Included in the full model were the following linguistic predictors: preceding vowel (ə, ə, a, e, i, ɔ, au, or aɪ), word type (lexical or function word), morphological environment (a combination of morpheme position and syllable-type: word final; morpheme-internal, closed syllable; morpheme-internal, open syllable; morpheme-final, closed syllable; or morpheme-final, open syllable), and following segment (consonant, vowel, or pause). The social factors included in the model were age, social class, gender, extra-Chalmatian orientation, post-Katrina location status, and speech type (reading passage, word list, or interview speech). Also included in the model were the random intercepts of speaker and word. In building up the model, linguistic factors were always added to the model before social factors, to ensure that the predictive power of internal factors were accounted for before social factors. Furthermore, I
generated an inference tree and random forest to indicate if any interactions needed to be included in the model, and to ensure that the model best captured the variation in the data. Table 19 presents the results of the best model for (r) in Chalmatian English.

|                                | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)                    | 7.22     | 0.81       | 8.95    | < 2e-16*** |
| **Vowel**<br>*(reference point: ɚ)*|          |            |         |          |
| ɚ                              | 2.41     | 0.25       | 9.59    | < 2e-16*** |
| ɑ                              | -0.04    | 0.28       | -0.14   | 0.89     |
| e                              | -0.05    | 0.34       | -0.14   | 0.89     |
| i                              | 0.78     | 0.38       | 2.05    | 0.04*    |
| ɔ                              | 0.72     | 0.24       | 3.02    | < 0.01** |
| aʊ                             | -1.30    | 0.75       | -1.73   | 0.08     |
| aɪ                             | 1.49     | 0.96       | 1.54    | 0.12     |
| **Morphological environment**<br>*(reference point: word-final preceding a pause)*|          |            |         |          |
| Word-final preceding a consonant | -1.36    | 0.16       | -8.41   | < 2e-16*** |
| Word-final preceding a vowel   | 0.21     | 0.18       | 1.19    | 0.23     |
| Morpheme-internal, closed syllable | 0.14    | 0.28       | 0.50    | < 0.001*** |
| Morpheme-internal, open syllable | -0.39   | 0.29       | -1.35   | < 0.001*** |
| Morpheme-final, closed syllable | -0.59    | 0.29       | -2.01   | < 0.01** |
| Morpheme-final, open syllable  | -2.34    | 0.45       | -5.15   | 0.03*    |
| **Speech type**<br>*(reference point: word list)*|          |            |         |          |
| Reading passage                | -1.68    | 0.26       | -6.53   | < 0.001*** |
| Interview                      | -2.83    | 0.26       | -11.04  | < 2e-16*** |
| **Age**                        | -0.08    | 0.02       | -5.36   | < 0.001*** |
| **Extra-Chalmatian orientation**| 0.19     | 0.05       | 3.74    | < 0.001*** |

* < 0.05  ** < 0.01  *** < 0.001

**Table 19. Regression table for (r)**
The linguistic effects of preceding vowel and morphological environment were selected as significant predictors of (r), while word type was not. The social factors selected as significant predictors were speech type, age, and extra-Chalmatian orientation. Gender, social class, and post-Katrina location status were not selected as significant predictors of (r). In the following sections, I describe the patterning of the significant linguistic and social predictors within the data.

9.2.1 Linguistic Factors

While some past studies have found an effect of word type (Nagy & Irwin 2010; Schoux Casey 2013), with lexical words favoring r-fulness over function words, this factor was not a significant predictor in my data. While lexical words did favor r-fulness slightly, there was only a marginal difference in rates of r-fulness compared to function words (67% compared to 61%).

In contrast with word type, preceding vowel did emerge as a significant predictor of (r), perhaps unsurprising since this factor has been found to predict r-fulness in studies across North America (Nagy & Irwin 2010). For Detroit AAE speakers, r-fulness was favored by /ɔ/, but it was disfavored when (r) was preceded by /ɑ/, /i/, /ɔ/, or in the unstressed, centralized vowel /ə/ (Wolfram 1969). Examining a sample of speakers from Boston, Irwin & Nagy (2007) found that /ɔ/, /u/37, and /ɑ/ strongly favored r-fulness, while /e/ and /ə/ disfavored r-fulness. When they expanded their sample to include New Hampshire speakers, Nagy & Irwin (2010) found that preceding vowel was still a strong predictor of r-fulness.

37 Pre-rhotic /u/ and /ɔ/ are merged in Chalmatian English, so the preceding environment of /u/ was not included in the model.
fulness, with the vowels progressing from favoring r-fulness most to least: /ɜ/ > /ʌ/ > /e/ > /u/ > /i/ > /ɑ/ > /ɚ/. Thus we see a general pattern wherein /ɜ/ is frequently the most r-ful vowel, while /ɚ/ is the least r-ful, which Nagy & Irwin report holds in communities in Quebec, Iowa, Tennessee, Alabama, New York City, and Philadelphia as well. In the current study, this pattern also held, with /ɜ/ favoring r-fulness the most and /ɚ/ the least seen in Figure 56 (notably, although /au/ features lower rates of (r-1) than /ɚ/, this patterning is likely due to low token counts for this environment—N=63, versus N=2216 for /ɚ/. Thus the ranking for vocalic environments that most favor r-fulness to those that least favor it is bookended by /ɜ/ and /ɚ/, mirroring past studies).

Figure 56. (r) by preceding vowel
The ranking of preceding vowel environments in Figure 56 differs somewhat from Schoux Casey’s (2013) findings for New Orleans, in which high vowels were more likely to be r-ful than low vowels, whereas in the current study /i/, /e/, /a/, and /ɔ/ were about equally likely to be r-ful, with only 4 percentage points separating rates of r-lessness following these vowels. While Schoux Casey reported that tokens of (r) following /əɪ/ and /e/ were slightly more likely to be (r-0) than in the case of /ɔr/, in her data /ɔr/ was still most likely to be r-ful, matching my findings. One possible reason that the r-ful tendency of /ɔr/ is so consistent across these two studies in GNO is because this vowel is the locus of the highly stigmatized and stereotyped pronunciation of /ɔɪ/ or /ɜɪ/ for /ɔr/ (e.g. “thoity-thoid street”). This vowel may thus be a site of hyper-vigilance in terms of r-fulness. In the statistical model presented in Table 19, aside from /ɔr/ only /i/ and /ɔ/ were selected as differing significantly from the reference point of /ɔr/. This may be due to other factors—such as morphological environment—affecting tokens of /a/ and /e/ disproportionately.

Morphological environment was also a significant predictor in the current study. This factor has been shown to have predictive power in past studies as well. For Detroit AAE speakers, r-fulness was favored when word-final (r) was followed by a vowel (e.g. ‘care about’) (Wolfram 1969). In the Lower East Side of New York City, r-fulness was favored by pre-vocalic position, whereas following consonants and pauses slightly disfavored r-fulness (Becker 2009). Speakers in Boston and New Hampshire were most likely to be r-ful in word-final position, preceding vowels and pauses, while pre-consonantal (r) was more likely to be (r-0) (Nagy & Irwin 2010). For post-Katrina New Orleanians, r-fulness was most favored in morpheme-internal
contexts (e.g. ‘girl’), word-finally, preceding a vowel (e.g. ‘care about’), and morpheme-finally, in closed syllables (e.g. ‘cares’) (Schoux Casey 2013). The morphological environments that least favored r-fulness in New Orleans were morpheme-final, in open syllables (e.g. ‘careful’), and word-finally preceding a consonant (e.g. ‘care to’) or pause (e.g. ‘care’). Thus there is a general trend whereby word-final (r) preceding a consonant disfavors r-fulness, and word-final (r) preceding a vowel favors r-fulness, although there is little consensus for other morphological environments.

The results for (r) in the current study according to morphological environment are presented in Figure 57. In this figure, MIC is morpheme-internal, closed syllable (e.g. ‘girl’), MIO is morpheme-internal, open syllable (e.g. ‘early’), WF0 is word-final, preceding a pause (e.g. ‘care’), WFc is word-final, preceding a consonant (e.g. ‘care to’), WFv is word-final, preceding a vowel (e.g. ‘care about’), MFC is morpheme-final, closed syllable (e.g. ‘cares’), and MFO is morpheme-final, open syllable (e.g. ‘careful’). All morpheme-internal and morpheme-final tokens necessarily preceded a consonant, so I do not specify type of following segment for these tokens.

Figure 57 demonstrates that morpheme-internal environments and word-finally preceding a pause or vowel most favor r-fulness, while (r) in morpheme-final position or word-finally preceding a consonant are less likely to be r-ful. These results closely mirror Schoux Casey’s results for morphological environment in her sample of New Orleanians, and follow the more consistent patterns for other studies of r-fulness. In the statistical model, all environments differed from the reference
point of word-final preceding a pause except for word-final preceding a vowel, both of which resulted in 72% r-ful realizations for this sample.

Figure 57. (r) by morphological environment

9.2.2 Social Factors

Perhaps most surprising of results was that post-Katrina location status was not a significant predictor of r-fulness. Relocators were only marginally more r-ful than returners (68% versus 63%). This patterning means that Chalmette residents who relocated to the Northshore post-Katrina were no more likely to produce (r-1) than those who returned to Chalmette after the storm. This finding is surprising in light
of the fact that variable r-lessness is commonly remarked upon or mocked as being
a feature of the stigmatized “Chalmatian accent” throughout Greater New Orleans. In
spite of stigma attached to r-lessness throughout GNO, the physical movement of
Chalmatian English speakers away from Chalmette does not seem to have had an
effect on their use of this linguistic feature.

Although previous researchers found women to be more r-ful than men in
New Orleans (Brennan 1983; Schoux Casey 2013), gender was not a significant
predictor of (r) for my data. Men featured 62% r-fulness while women featured 68%
r-fulness. Thus women were slightly more r-ful than men, but not to a significant
extent.

Like gender and post-Katrina location status, social class was not a significant
predictor of (r). While social class was not a significant predictor of (r), there was a
tendency amidst speakers with lower class ranking to be more r-less than speakers
with the highest class rankings. Speakers with a class ranking of 3 or 4 (N=19) are r-
less 50% of the time, while speakers with a class ranking of 10 or 11 (N=10) are r-
less 75% of the time. This patterning mirrors Brennan’s (1983) and Schoux Casey’s
(2013) findings with respect to social class. However, speakers in the middle of the
class range for the current study seem to show greater variability, which may
account for the fact that social class was not selected as a significant predictor in the
regression model.

Also included in the regression model as a predictor was speech type:
whether the token of (r) came from the word list, reading passage, or interview
speech portion of the recording. Speech type was selected as a significant predictor
of (r). As Figure 58 shows, speakers were most r-ful during the word list, followed by the reading passage, and finally speakers were least r-ful in interview speech.

![Figure 58](image)

**Figure 58.** (r) by speech type

The patterning in Figure 58 reflects exactly what one might expect for a stigmatized feature that has a high level of awareness associated with it, which is precisely what r-lessness functions as within Greater New Orleans. The three speech types elicited in the current study were originally designed by Labov (1972) to capture differing levels of attention to speech—with interview speech meant to capture the most casual speech, while reading a written passage directs more attention towards pronunciation, and finally a word list featuring minimal pairs elicits the highest level
of attention towards one’s speech. Often results based on speech type are interpreted as representing the amount of effort a speaker puts into eschewing certain stigmatized linguistic features. Thus the more prestigious variant is likely to appear more in word list speech than in the reading passage, and the least in interview speech. For this reason, we may interpret the results from Figure 58 as supporting Brennan’s (1983) claim that (r-1) is the prestige form in Greater New Orleans.

![Figure 59. (r) by age](image)

Age was also a significant predictor of (r), with youngest speakers the most r-ful. This patterning follows with the findings of previous studies, which have
demonstrated the decline in r-lessness both through studies over time, and through apparent time analysis examining the variation according to speaker age (Reinecke 1951; Brennan 1983; Schoux Casey 2013). Figure 59 presents this change over time, in which the rise in r-fulness across age groups is apparent, with the youngest speakers the most r-ful.

Also selected as a significant predictor of (r) was extra-Chalmatian orientation, shown in Figure 60, which demonstrates a clear trend across extra-Chalmatian orientation scores, which range from lowest (most oriented to Chalmette) to highest (most oriented to places outside Chalmette).

![Figure 60](image)

**Figure 60.** (r) by extra-Chalmatian orientation
We see in Figure 60 that it is primarily those speakers the least oriented to Chalmette—those with extra-Chalmetian orientation scores of 4 or over (N=12)—who are driving this effect. These speakers are the most r-ful in the sample, nearly 20% more r-ful than speakers with an extra-Chalmetian orientation score of 1 or less. Thus it appears that speakers who are the most oriented to places outside of Chalmette are those who eschew (r-0) the most.

9.3 Discussion

One of the most striking results from my (r) analysis was the difference in rates of r-fulness across age groups. The higher rates of r-fulness for younger speakers confirms that, even within this linguistically conservative community, variable r-lessness is receding. It appears moreover that the shift towards r-fulness has taken the largest leap with the youngest speaker group, since speakers under 30 in my sample featured (r-0) nearly 30% less often than the rest of the speakers in this study combined. Furthermore, two of the nine participants under thirty were exclusively r-ful throughout all three conditions, and another two featured fewer than 10 r-less tokens—which may indicate that the future of Chalmetian English is as a fully r-ful dialect. This patterning for (r) in Chalmetian English mirrors developments reported for New Orleans proper over the past 65 years (Reinecke 1951; Brennan 1983; Schoux Casey 2013).
The fact that speech type was selected as a significant predictor of r-fullness, with the most r-ful realizations in the speech task that directed the most attention to speech (word list), suggests that (r-1) is the prestige pronunciation, and that speakers of Chalmatian English make some effort to use the prestige form when paying attention to their speech. And indeed, there does seem to be a high level of awareness of this feature, with some even describing their efforts to pronounce post-vocalic /ɹ/ more.

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “For a long time I couldn’t stop saying ‘water’ [wɚɪ] because like the r’s are a-w’s, like ‘door’ [dɔ] any of your r’s do that [...] it took me a while to kick it.”

Another participant explained that he saw a speech therapist when he was younger, to help him eliminate r-less pronunciations from his speech.

Not only was r-lessness a feature with a high level of awareness, but many participants also characterized r-less pronunciations as being the single most identifying feature of “the Chalmette accent,” as in the following examples from the metalinguistic portion of interviews.

Benjamin (31, relocator): “As far as people from Chalmette and the accent that we have, it’s uh, you know, instead of—like in Boston when they replace the r with the w, just kind of glob it all together. ‘Lifeguard’ [laɪɡʊd] and ‘water’ [wɑrə] and things like that, you know.”

Bella (46, returner): “Most people, they say, ‘turn left at the corner [kɔnə],’ and I think we down here [in Chalmette] say, ‘turn\(^{38}\) left at the corner [kɔnə].’”

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “The Chalmette accent’s like a mixture of just, it’s like lazy Brooklyn. You know, you just walk in like, ‘I’m a open up the door [dɔ], get the computer [kəmpjʊə] out, get me a glass of water [wərə].’”

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38 Note that despite performing r-lessness in this example, Bella does not pronounce ‘turn’ with (r-0). Because both /ɹ/ and the morpheme-internal position disfavor r-lessness, however, this is likely a faithful rendering of how a Chalmatian English speaker would utter this sentence.
Such associations between r-lessness and being from Chalmette may explain why speakers with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation are more r-ful: in order to disassociate with Chalmette, and express affiliation with external places.

R-lessness is also used to indicate locality in marketing and retail in St. Bernard Parish. Figure 61 presents an example of the commodification of r-lessness in Chalmette, in the form of a tee shirt from the site Café Press, which allows users to create and customize their own tee shirt designs. This shirt reads “Da Parish Charma” with the image of a woman sporting dated fashions.

![Figure 61. Image from Café Press tee shirt](image)

“Da Parish” is how many GNO residents refer to St. Bernard Parish, and a “Charmer” is a cheerleader from Chalmette High School. The use of r-lessness in this word links this feature to not only a Chalmette-specific identity, but to a proud Chalmette resident—a cheerleader at the local public high school. As previously discussed, high schools are a significant social indicator within GNO, and within St. Bernard
Parish it is much more prestigious to attend a Catholic school within New Orleans than to attend the local high school in Chalmette. In the following excerpt, returner Allie discusses schooling choices post-Katrina, specifically framing public schools in St. Bernard Parish as the less valued option, and framing her discourse in opposition to imagined judgment of her public school children.

Allie (41, returner): “Mine had to go to the public school [...] Going to a private school, you think you’re more upscale because your parents pay for schooling and this and that, and yet you’re getting the same education as in—you know it’s just, I guess it’s just everybody’s own opinion. You know, because like, I don’t think anybody’s better than me just because, you know, they go to a private school.”

Thus it is likely that the use of r-lessness in the image with a Chalmette charmer is making use of this public school referent—someone who is tied to Chalmette, unable or unwilling to leave the parish to attend a private school, and also likely someone with the local accent.

Figure 62 presents a bumper sticker, similarly created on the site Café Press, on which r-lessness is used to promote rebuilding the parish. The bumper sticker reads, “I (hawt) da Parish: Rebuild St. Bernard, Louisiana,” featuring an r-less pronunciation of the word ‘heart.’
The use of r-lessness in combination with reference to Chalmette and St. Bernard as places indicates the associations between this feature and these locales. It is surprising, however, that a feature so clearly linked to the physical town of Chalmette, and in the case of Figure 62, to the recovery effort there, would not display differences according to post-Katrina location status. In fact, this lack of patterning according to post-Katrina location status, in contrast with extra-Chalmatian orientation, may provide the strongest evidence that linguistic expression of a place-linked identity is more strongly affected by one’s orientation to a given place than by their physical location in that place.

9.5 Conclusions

In my analysis of (r), I sought to determine the patterning of this variable within the speech of residents of pre-Katrina Chalmette, a community thought to be more conservative than others in the region. I also examined the effect of relocation on speech patterns, especially in this situation in which much attention was drawn to relocators’ accents, and r-lessness remains one of the key definers of “the Chalmette accent” for both speakers of Chalmatian English and residents of Greater New Orleans outside of St. Bernard Parish.

My analysis revealed that (r) in Chalmatian English is conditioned by phonological, morphological, and social factors. Significant predictors of (r) included preceding vowel, morphological environment, and speech type, as well as participant age and extra-Chalmatian orientation. The linguistic predictors lined up
with previous studies of (r), in which /ə/ most favors (r-0) and /ə/ most favors (r-1), and morpheme-final position or word-finally preceding a consonant favors (r-0), while morpheme-internal position or word-finally preceding a vowel or pause favors (r-1). Speech type also patterned as expected, with (r-1) most favored in the word list, then the reading passage, and finally least favored in interview speech. This patterning suggests that speakers are putting some level of effort into avoiding r-less in more careful speech, perhaps due to widespread awareness of the stigma surrounding r-less. In terms of social factors, age was a strong predictor of (r), with youngest speakers eschewing r-less pronunciations in favor of r-fulness (again, possibly in response to the stigma associated with r-less). While post-Katrina location status was not a significant predictor of (r) variation, extra-Chalmetian orientation significantly predicted r-lessness, with speakers most oriented to Chalmette also those featuring the highest rates of r-lessness, suggesting that this feature may represent a linguistic manner of signaling affiliation with Chalmette as a place.
This study takes an ethnographic and sociophonetic approach to understanding the sociolinguistic variation in Chalmatian English in post-Katrina Greater New Orleans. Through the mixture of ethnographic fieldwork and data collection to determine the salient social categories at the fieldsite, and rigorous acoustic and statistical analysis, I was able to determine the patterning of sociolinguistic variation within this community in locally relevant and reflexive terms.

In this chapter, I will first summarize overall findings, and then discuss some of the issues and insights brought to light by this study, ending with concluding remarks about the broader impacts of this study and the future directions.

10.1 Summary of findings

The analysis of ethnographic fieldwork and variationist analysis revealed that whether participants moved to the Northshore after Hurricane Katrina or returned to Chalmette to rebuild was not predictive of their language patterns, in terms of (aw), (oh), (æ), or (r). However, age was predictive of all four variables, such that the historically attested variables of raised BOUGHT, a split short-a system, and rlessness were less frequent in the speech of younger participants than in that of
older participants. In contrast, raising and fronting of the trajectory of pre-voiceless (aw) was *more* frequent in the speech of younger participants. Furthermore, extra-Chalmatian orientation, or participants’ orientation towards Chalmette versus external locations, was predictive of split short-a systems and r-lessness such that speakers with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation scores—those more oriented to places outside of Chalmette—were more likely to eschew the historically attested variant, and pattern more with extra-local standards. In the following section, I describe in detail the results from each analysis.

10.1.1 *Ethnographic results*

Ethnographic fieldwork informed the shape of this study from the start, when it became clear that the “story” I needed to uncover was about the largescale migration to the Northshore post-Katrina, and how that interacted with historical language patterns linked to Chalmette. I also uncovered the “up the road”/“down the road” distinction, which helped me to carve up the space in St. Bernard Parish as the locals do, and expand my sample from just the town of Chalmette, to the surrounding towns of Arabi and Meraux as well. In addition, I was able to design questions for interviews that would help me to zero in on local social and linguistic associations, such as asking about the term “Chalmatian,” the Chalmette accent, and the relationship between Chalmette and other areas in GNO such as the Northshore. Finally, my ethnographic fieldwork informed the categories of returner and relocator, and provided the first indication that I would need to develop a locally-
informed measure of place orientation, which became extra-Chalmatian orientation scores.

10.1.2 (aw) results

Because (aw) variation in New Orleans had not been examined at length before this study, one goal was simply to describe the system. I also sought to determine the social patterning of pre-nasal (aw) nucleus-raising and –fronting, and of pre-voiceless overall raising and fronting of the trajectory of (aw).

   Pre-nasal (aw) nuclei were raised and fronted more by women than by men, and particularly so in the word list. I interpreted this patterning as reflecting emphatic pronunciation of the pre-nasal (aw) variant, which likely indicates that it is not an overtly stigmatized pronunciation in the area. However, lack of patterning across age groups suggests that pre-nasal (aw) variation is not a change in progress, as it is in Charleston (Baranowski 2007). In contrast with pre-nasal (aw), pre-voiceless (aw) trajectories were raised and fronted overall more by younger speakers than by older speakers, indicating a change in progress towards pre-voiceless raising and fronting.

   I did not find any effects of post-Katrina location status or extra-Chalmatian orientation on (aw) variation, which suggests that this variation has not been affected by post-Katrina movements or by speakers’ orientation to Chalmette or to places outside of Chalmette. One possible explanation for this patterning is that the pre-voiceless variant is so new that it has yet to take on social meaning, whether linking this feature to Chalmette, or to any other social factor. Also possible is that
since my observations in the field indicate a potential presence of pre-voiceless raising and fronting in GNO outside of Chalmette, it has not built associations with Chalmette or any other specific locale in the region, thus place-linked social factors do not predict use of the raised and fronted variant.

10.1.3 (oh) results

In my analysis of (oh), I examined both BOUGHT height and the relationship between BOUGHT and BOT, which have been described in the literature as unmerged (Labov 2007). My goal in this analysis was to determine whether raised BOUGHT and unmerged BOT and BOUGHT were still attested features in Chalmatian English.

I found age effects for both BOUGHT height and the BOT/BOUGHT merger indicating that younger speakers are shifting towards merging BOT and BOUGHT, and that raised BOUGHT is primarily a feature of older participants’ speech. There were also indications in my analysis of the merger that the change in progress towards merged BOT and BOUGHT is being led by Chalmatian English speakers of a higher class ranking.

I did not find any effects of post-Katrina location status or extra-Chalmatian orientation on either BOUGHT height or the BOT/BOUGHT merger, which suggests that neither feature has been affected by movement post-Katrina, or by orientation towards Chalmette.
10.1.4 (æ) results

One of the primary goals of analyzing short-a data was to determine whether Labov’s (2007) description matched the data I found for Chalmatian English speakers. I found that, on the whole, it did, with a few exceptions. To begin with, although Labov identified /θ/ as a tensing trigger and /dʒ/ and /ɡ/ as lax environments, I found that these sounds patterned just the opposite in my own data: /dʒ/ and /ɡ/ were tensing environments and /θ/ was lax. My analysis did corroborate, however, Labov’s assertion of the absence of a function word constraint and the presence of an open syllable constraint in Chalmatian English.

I also analyzed short-a system type according to social factors. Age and extra-Chalmatian orientation were significant predictors of short-a system type, with younger speakers and participants with higher extra-Chalmatian orientation scores—those oriented the most to places outside of Chalmette—more likely to feature nasal short-a systems. The fact that post-Katrina location status did not predict short-a system type indicates that speakers who moved to the Northshore after Hurricane Katrina were not more likely to present a nasal short-a system, which is more common throughout the US. However, because extra-Chalmatian orientation was predictive of short-a system type, it is possible that the split short-a system represents one way of expressing affiliation with Chalmette.

10.1.5 (r) results

The examination of variable r-lessness in Chalmatian English revealed a shift towards r-fulness amongst younger speakers, mirroring the results of past studies
examining (r) in New Orleans over the past 60 years (Reinecke 1951; Brennan 1983; Schoux Casey 2013). Also predictive of r-fulness was speakers’ extra-Chalmetian orientation, with speakers the most oriented to places outside of Chalmette also the most r-ful. These social results suggest that the change towards r-fulness in Chalmetian English is being led by younger speakers and those oriented to places outside of Chalmette. Post-Katrina location status’ lack of predictive power for (r) variation indicates that movement away from more r-less Chalmette to the Northshore since Hurricane Katrina has not had an effect on r-fulness.

I also found linguistic effects of morphological environment and preceding vowel; in terms of the former, morpheme-internal environments and word-finally preceding a pause or vowel most favored r-fulness, and in terms of the latter, stressed schwa /ə/ most favored r-fulness. These results were in line with past studies of r-lessness such as Nagy & Irwin (2010) and Schoux Casey (2013). Extra-Chalmetian orientation was also a significant predictor of r-fulness. In addition, speech type was a significant predictor of (r), with highest rates of r-fulness in the word list, then the reading passage, and finally in interview speech. Based on the combination of this result, the significance of extra-Chalmetian orientation, and metalinguistic commentary about this feature and examination of r-lessness commodification in the area, I concluded that part of the reason for this patterning was that there is a high level of awareness of r-lessness in Chalmette and the broader region, and that the linkage between this feature and Chalmette as a place is quite strong. I thus proposed that part of the reason that r-lessness carried place-
linked social meaning was because of this level of awareness, allowing for strong associations between a locale (Chalmette) and a linguistic feature (r-lessness).

10.2 Linguistic changes in Chalmatian English

Evident from these data is that there is an overall linguistic shift occurring in Chalmatian English, which was in effect before the storm and which has continued to progress since Katrina. All four linguistic features examined, (aw), (oh), (æ), and (r) demonstrated age effects in statistical analysis of the variation. The directionality of the shift appears to be overall towards the standard—more r-ful, a nasal short-a system, merged BOT/BOUGHT. The feature that does not fit this trend is raised and fronted pre-voiceless /aw/, which is not a feature of Standard U.S. English.

Impressionistic observations suggest that the development of this (aw) variation may represent a broader change in progress in the Greater New Orleans region, however further study would be needed to determine the presence of (aw) variation outside of Chalmatian English. Regardless of the status of (aw), the participants in this study overall appeared to be shifting away from historical speech patterns that identify them as Chalmatians.

One of the goals of this study was to better situate this speech variety within the South and the United States more broadly, and to determine the future of the distinctive linguistic features of Chalmatian English. These findings suggest that while Chalmatian English is shifting away from its historically distinctive “Brooklynette” pronunciations, it does not appear to be shifting towards Southern
American English. For example, speakers in my sample did not feature merged PIN and PEN or other features of the Southern shift, aside from /aɪ/-monophthongization, which is historically attested in the region (Reinecke 1951; Rubrecht 1971; Coles 1997). Many speakers in my sample were also heard to front /ou/ and /u/. However, /ou/- and /u/-fronting are not specific to the South, as they have been documented throughout the US, especially in the West and Midwest (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006; Durian 2012). If anything, the dialect seems to be veering mostly towards the standard General American English spoken throughout the United States, mirroring developments in Charleston, another linguistically distinct port city in the American South (Baranowski 2007).

10.3 Place and displacement

The context of post-Katrina displacement provides a natural laboratory for the examination of language and place. In this situation of displacement, the issues of place identity and regional dialect were highlighted. For this reason, I expected linguistic effects of the migration of speakers from Chalmette to other regions of GNO such at the Northshore. Part of the reason for this expected linguistic shift is due to social pressures to conform to their new linguistic surroundings, but part of the reason is also because of commentary from participants indicating that even pre-Katrina, emulating the Northshore was a sign of “moving up in the world.” One way to think about this situation is through Le Page & Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) “acts of identity” model. These researchers laid out straightforward principles in
their hypothesis that language offers opportunities for “acts of identity,” or linguistic attempts at affiliating with groups we wish to be seen as more like (or, in contrast, distinguishing ourselves from groups with which we do not wish to be associated).

However, there are several requirements for such acts of identity, laid out below:

i. we can identify the groups
ii. we have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyze their behavioral patterns
iii. the motivation to join the groups is sufficiently powerful, and is either forced or reversed by feedback from the groups
iv. we have the ability to modify our behavior

(Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985: 182)

Within the context of relocators on the Northshore, (i) is certainly satisfied, in terms of identifying Chalmatians and pre-Katrina Northshore residents as two distinct groups—in the minds of both Chalmatians and Northshore residents (see Chapter 4). The questions of (ii) access and (iii) motivation likely vary across participants, which I attempted to capture in the measure of place orientation, extra-Chalmetian orientation. Finally, the issue of ability to modify behavior remains an open question in sociolinguistic inquiry (see, e.g., Babel forthcoming).

One of the ideas behind the “acts of identity” model is that speakers will attempt to speak like the group they most desire to be like. So if a relocator wants to fit in on the Northshore, they might attempt to change their speech variety, leaving behind their linguistic markers of affiliation with Chalmette. But these places do not simply signify a location in time and space. They represent a social type—in that Chalmette is a working class town, and the Northshore is a wealthy suburb. These associations between place and class did not escape participants either, as Sugar Magnolia explains.
Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “As a whole St. Tammany was very, very bitter, because they had this influx of the St. Bernard people. Be like a ghetto taking over, you know it really was very—no matter how much money you had, you were still from St. Bernard.”

Not only is Chalmette a working class place, but Chalmatian English is also a working class vernacular. It is crucial here to mention the implicit association between social class and expressing place identity linguistically. It is not the case that information about where one is from exists in a vacuum, rather it interacts with other social factors, in particular social class. Trudgill (2000) has illustrated the relationship between social and regional dialect variation in the diagram presented in Figure 63, which demonstrates how much more regional variation takes place at the most localized, non-standard, and often stigmatized dialect level.

![Social and regional dialect variation](image)

*Figure 63. Social & regional dialect variation (from Trudgill 2000)*
That is, often to be “from somewhere” is to be of a lower class ranking (at least in the United States). As Van Herk (2012) explains, “Corporate lawyers from New York and Los Angeles may have slightly different accents, but their grammatical systems will be virtually identical. But security guards working in the same corporations in these two cities will sound much more different from each other.” Hence linguistic statements about place—in Greater New Orleans and elsewhere—are often statements about social status. In this vein, by expressing their placedness, Chalmatians are also making a statement about their social class, whether they mean to or not.

Another issue relating to place and displacement in this study is the fact that this research was completed after a large—and for many, life-changing—event in the region. It is clear that pre-Katrina Chalmette was the site of relatively strong language ideologies, and links to the terrain. There are indications, however, that both linguistic and social ideologies have become magnified following the storm (Mucciaccio 2009; Schoux Casey 2013). One of the limitations of this study was that I did not have access to the speakers before the hurricane, so I had no pre-Katrina baseline to which I might compare their current speech patterns. The storm may have changed local perspectives on what it means to be a Chalmatian, creating a sense of local pride even for relocators—which could explain why their speech patterns mirrored those of returners. It is possible that they in fact made no linguistic changes to their speech patterns following the storm, or that the individuals that moved to the Northshore were less vernacular preceding the hurricane and in fact ramped up their use of Chalmatian English features to match
those of returners following the storm, to express affiliation with their pre-Katrina homes. Without pre-Katrina recordings, however, it is impossible to say.

In the following section, I describe extra-Chalmatian orientation as a measure of place identity, taking a closer look at some participants in the current study that stood out on the scale in terms of their orientation.

10.3.1 Orientation to place

Speaking a regional dialect, or a language variety linked to a specific place, is one way of invoking one’s membership as a resident of that location. In other words, regional dialects can be a linguistic expression of place-based personal identity. This study made use of a multifaceted measure of place identity, which I call each participants’ extra-Chalmatian orientation score. Extra-Chalmatian orientation scores are a quantification of how much participants in the current study oriented to places outside of Chalmette, as opposed to orienting specifically to Chalmette (and, presumably, to Chalmette social and linguistic norms).

The extra-Chalmatian orientation score consisted of a combination of two measures of stance towards Chalmette versus outside places, and three measures of exposure to places outside of Chalmette. The first measure of stance was whether the participant self-identified as a Chalmatian. The term ‘Chalmatian’ is rife in St. Bernard Parish, since for some the term evokes the stigma of being from Chalmette—of speaking and acting in ways that are not valued outside of St. Bernard Parish. This stigma is reinforced through negative stereotypes that circulate throughout GNO about the low intelligence, lack of morality, and
classlessness of Chalmette residents. However, ‘Chalmatian’ can also be a term of pride—and a large part of how the term is interpreted depends on the participant’s relationship with Chalmette as a place, and with local pride trumping the negative stereotypes that come from outside St. Bernard Parish. The second measure of stance captured whether participants indicated a desire to leave Chalmette before Hurricane Katrina. Again, such commentary is indicative of their relationship with Chalmette—were they die-hard residents of Chalmette before the storm, or had they considered cutting ties with their hometown? Finally, the three measures of exposure are perhaps the most replicable, since these were objective measures of time spent interacting outside of St. Bernard Parish. However, these exposure measures are interpretable as being part of individuals’ orientation specifically because of Chalmette residents’ insularity preceding Hurricane Katrina.

Due to the ethnographic nature of data collection and the subsequent development of the extra-Chalmatian orientation score, this measure of placèdness cannot be replicated exactly in another study examining a different place. For example, even if a researcher were to ask a Pittsburgh resident if they are a ‘Yinzer,’ a term which is arguably multivalent like ‘Chalmatian,’ they would not be able to just enter the response into a spreadsheet along with information about their exposure to other places and determine their extra-Yinzer-orientation. However, similar measures of stance and exposure which are tailored to the fieldsite of Pittsburgh, decided upon following detailed ethnographic fieldwork, would certainly prove useful in terms of explaining why some Pittsburghers feature more “local” features than others. That is to say, while I do not advocate the wholesale adoption of the
extra-Chalmatian orientation score within other communities, I do encourage other researchers of language and place to develop similar quantitative measures of place orientation so that our models of sociolinguistic variation can include more complex and more precise predictors of place-linked linguistic variation.

Several speakers in the current sample were notable because of their extra-Chalmatian orientation scores, in combination with other details about them. In particular, I will discuss seven individuals in this study with an extra-Chalmatian orientation score of 8 or more: Katherine, Roger, Lance, Victor, Buckaroo, Peaches, and Sugar Magnolia. Relocators Katherine, Roger, Lance, and Victor stood out in the sample since they moved away from Chalmette before Katrina, out of their own volition. Similarly, Buckaroo was away at college during Hurricane Katrina, and returned for a time after the storm, eventually opting to relocate out of her own volition, and not because of post-Katrina displacement. Finally, returners Sugar Magnolia and Peaches stood out due to their extended time spent outside of St. Bernard Parish—Sugar Magnolia because she and her non-Chalmatian husband, “made a concerted effort to move away from all things we knew,” and Peaches because her husband was in the military.

These participants patterned linguistically according to expectations given the reported results – while (aw) and (oh) variation depended from speaker to speaker, all seven of these individuals featured exceptionally high rates of r-fullness (over 90%), and none of them featured split short-a systems. Many of these participants overtly commented on the fact that they did not linguistically conform to the Chalmette norm, with Lance for example explaining, “I don’t sound as
Chalmette.” Four of these seven participants even offered to “perform” the accent for me once they realized I had an interest in the local way of speaking, demonstrating that they did not believe their natural speech in interaction reflected the local Chalmette linguistic features.

One of the reasons cited by these speakers for not speaking “like a Chalmatian” was discovering negative stereotypes about their hometown, and their dialect. Several of these participants attended Catholic high schools within Orleans Parish, describing a significant moment of discovery upon arrival at the school, when they realized being from Chalmette and speaking the local dialect linked to that place was not valued outside of St. Bernard Parish.

Buckaroo (25, relocator): “[High school] was, that’s the first time I figured out I had a Chalmette accent. I had no idea I had one, when I was a kid. No clue. But I used to talk [tɔk] like this [dis]. [...] Like I talked like that and I had no idea! No idea! [...] There wasn’t a lot of Chalmette people that went there—some, but most people stayed in the Parish. Like, I remember I got so much attention from [the accent] that I cut it out. Because, I—I fixed it because I felt like people were listening to how I saying it, and not what I was saying. And there was kind of some—I started realizing the stereotypes that our community has. I never knew we had stereotypes of our community at all. I didn’t know what Chalmette was considered. I was like, ‘it’s a fun place, I didn’t know it had all this, you know, shrimp boots incest jokes.’ I didn’t know about any of that, until I was out of [Chalmette]. So—I mean, I was never ashamed of it. I became very aware.”

Sugar Magnolia (42, returner): “I went to school, to high school at [Catholic HS] in New Orleans. And one of the reasons my mother wanted me there is to know that there was something outside of St. Bernard Parish. Um, but then when I got there I realized there was a lot outside of St. Bernard Parish. But people did not treat me—when they found out I was from St. Bernard—the same as they treated people from New Orleans, people from Metairie, people from Kenner, people from wherever. Um, there’s definitely a stigma attached of lower class down here.”
Roger (29, relocator): “[Upon arrival at high school] I immediately—while I was still waiting in line [in the cafeteria] to get my food, on a day before school even started—I was already hearing Chalmette jokes for the first time in my life. I had never realized that the place that I came from was this object of ridicule for people in surrounding areas, you know cities, parishes, whatever, until that day. And I started hearing the jokes about the shrimp boots and stuff, and I started thinking, I probably only know like five people who actually own shrimp boots. I, uh, you know, I don’t know what this stereotype is based in, really, you know, and I started trying piecing things together. Just quietly observing these jokes that were being told about, you know the, just general stupidity, and they sleep with their sisters, and all these things […] it was kind of a devastating day for me.”

Similarly, relocator Victor, a university professor with an acute awareness of his own diction, recalled the exact moment that he realized he had an accent. It was as a graduate student when a senior colleague told him that he “really needed to speak better.” As a result of this chastisement, Victor told me he used to study newscasters, and try to emulate Peter Jennings’ speech style. Thus we see that many of these speakers with the highest extra-Chalmetian orientation scores made an effort to erase the place markers from their speech.

In comparison with the previous set of speakers discussed, Bella and Molly featured much lower extra-Chalmetian orientation scores. With an extra-Chalmetian orientation score of -5 (the lowest possible), Bella featured all of the most conservative Chalmetian English features—she had a split short-a system, raised BOUGHT (in fact the most raised on average within the sample), and was only 34% r-ful across all three speech types (an exceptionally low rate within this sample). Bella even discursively connected her way of speaking to being from Chalmette, contrasting herself with me, as the interviewer, with what she perceived as a lack of accent.
Bella (46, returner): “I think [the Chalmette accent is] a special thing. Because I don’t know—I’ve heard you speak, I’ve heard you laugh, I’ve watched your mannerism, and I don’t know where you’re from.”

Thus Bella frames her perception of my own lack of accent as a lack of connection to a place, in contrast with her strong Chalmette accent, which ties herself to her home. Molly, with an extra-Chalmetian orientation score of -2, featured many transitional patterns (a split-continuous short-a system, some overlap between BOT and BOUGHT, and 71% r-fulness)—however, at 23 years old, for her age group, she was incredibly conservative. Interestingly, both Bella and Molly professed a lack of awareness of the accent, even while mentioning that outsiders remark upon it.

Bella (46, returner): “It’s not until someone really points out to you that you say things funny.”

Molly (23, returner): “They say we have a different accent down here. I don’t see it.”

Such commentary suggests that part of extra-Chalmetian orientation may be related to positioning oneself in contrast with those who claim an awareness of Chalmatians’ linguistic “otherness.” The role of awareness in the linguistic expression of place identity will be discussed in the following section.

10.4 Awareness and linguistic expression of place identity

One of the reasons that post-Katrina Greater New Orleans represents such an important site for the examination of place identity and sociolinguistic variation is because of how foregrounded place is in the post-disaster landscape. Several results
of the storm—some specific to participants’ experiences, and some representing broader developments in the region overall—have affected the way that language use is viewed within GNO. For example, the increased movement of speakers throughout the region and beyond introduces a greater level of exposure to different language varieties, compared to their pre-Katrina interactions. Or as relocator Haylie puts it, “I never thought I had an accent until the hurricane.” As mentioned, for some participants, this awareness preceded Hurricane Katrina, but generally accompanied increased interaction outside of St. Bernard Parish (such as attending high school within city limits).

The issue of speaker awareness has been broached in various ways in sociolinguistic research. Perhaps the most well-known approach is Labov's (1972) categories of indicator, marker, and stereotype. Indicators are linguistic variables that vary according to social factors, but are below the level of consciousness and are thus not employed for stylistic or performative purposes and generally have little to no social meaning. Markers also vary according to social factors, but impart social meaning and thus may be employed for stylistic purposes. Stereotypes, finally, are strongly socially marked and available for conscious commentary. According to this system, and the results from the metalinguistic commentary portion of interviews in this study, (aw) is likely an indicator, (oh) and (æ) markers, and (r) a stereotype.

Labov’s use of different interview modules (such as reading passages, word lists, etc) was intended to manipulate the level of attention paid to speech. Labov theorized that in the case of stigmatized linguistic features associated with higher
levels of awareness, speakers would put greater effort into reducing their rates of such variants when paying more attention to their speech—although it is worth mentioning that this claim is not uncontroversial (see Babel forthcoming). Again, based on results from this study, (r) varied the most according to speech type (word list, reading passage, interview), following expectations for this type of linguistic variable. There were also many instances of speakers correcting r-less pronunciations during the reading passage and word list. For example, while reciting the reading passage aloud for this study, Victor was almost categorically r-ful, despite being occasionally r-less in flowing speech. However, in the following example Victor catches himself saying the word “car” r-lessly, which he laughs at and self-corrects. Then, several lines later, when reading the word “water” Victor explicitly points out that he will not “make the mistake” of pronouncing this word r-lessly. In this passage, r-fulness is indicated by (r-1) and (r-0) markings, and the reading passage (in contrast with commentary about the reading passage) is in italics.

Victor (47, relocator): “Plus Mark feared (r-1) Shawn’s wrath if he refused to tag along, so he gathered (r-1) up his gear (r-1) and jogged out to the car (r-0) Ooh, c—c—out to the car (r-1) {laughs} [...] Just past Pamela’s Snowball Stand, there (r-1) is a path through the bushes that leads down to the water (r-1). As th—water (r-1), not going to make that mistake there. Uh, water (r-1).”

Notably, in his second self-correction, Victor says the word water r-fully three times in a row, to confirm what he frames as the “correct” pronunciation of this word. Similarly, Lance made a comment about the inclusion in the reading passage of a lexical item containing (r).
“He called his brother (r-1) Mark (r-1)—I see what you did there—to see if he wanted to join. You put the word (r-1) ’Mark’ (r-1) in there. Sneaky.”

Thus it appears that, at least in the case of (r), there was some level of conscious awareness within the less casual speech types of reading passage and word list.

Another measure of awareness is through the commodification of language as a representative of localness (Johnstone 2009). Again, as discussed throughout the results chapters, (r) was the only variable in the current study that had been commodified. And indeed, the widespread commodification of r-lessness throughout Greater New Orleans as a marker of localness and authenticity has been documented in detail by Schoux Casey (2013). Commodification of this feature can only occur due to its enregisterment in the public imagination as a part of the “local” repertoire (Agha 2003; Mucciaccio 2009), thus providing further evidence of public awareness of this feature, and its linkage to certain linguistic groups.

A final indicator of awareness that I considered in this study was participants’ commentary on their own language use. Participants took varied stances towards their speech patterns, with Cecilia for example claiming she put active effort into eliminating her accent, while Benjamin laments the gradual loss over time. Chastity declares that she does not intend to change her accent despite moving to the Northshore, then qualifies her statement by explaining it depends on the audience.

Cecilia (70, returner): “I chose not to [talk like] that, ok, I didn’t want to be associated with that. And there are a lot of people that don’t speak that way. But, for the ones who do, they get—the other ones get the bad call for it too.”
Benjamin (31, relocator): “My accent’s kind of faded [...] I never tried to lose it, I never shied away from telling people I was from Chalmette, I was proud to be from St. Bernard [...] I’ve never tried to lose the accent, it just happened.”

Chastity (42, relocator): “[Chalmette] is where I came from, I’m not gonna change now, I’m 42 years old, you know. But I do kind of think about it sometimes, it depends on who I’m talking to, I do. I don’t want to sound like I’m illiterate {laughs}"

Implicit in these comments is a level of agency on the part of the speaker. Indeed, in some ways, expressing a link to a place provides the same sort of sociolinguistic “choice” as any other socially meaningful linguistic variant. That is not to say that every use of regional dialect is purposeful, but there are almost certainly levels of linguistic awareness that come into play in this process, as Johnstone (2000:392) suggests:

As fewer and fewer people can be said to talk the way they do simply because they grew up in a certain location, how people make strategic choices among identities and ways of sounding is receiving increased attention. To a certain extent, the leveling forces of increased dialect contact, which encourage people to sound more like people elsewhere, may be counteracted by attempts to cling to local identity by preserving at least one or two features that sound local. Representations of local speech are a key part of this process, because parodies, performances, and other representations are the mechanisms by which people tell each other what sounds local.

Here Johnstone implies that for something to “sound local,” there must be some general public knowledge of its association with a given place (although, crucially, speakers who employ “local” variants are not necessarily always aware of the social meaning of these variants [Johnstone & Kiesling 2008]). In other words, without the awareness that a linguistic variant is specific to a given place, there cannot be manipulation of that feature to express localness. Along these lines, Le Page &
Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) “Acts of Identity” model suggested that as certain linguistic features developed a level of awareness to the point that they became associated with specific social groups, speakers who affiliated more with those groups would employ those features more. For example, the perceived “toughness” of working class men may cause middle class men to adopt working class linguistic features, in order to affiliate with this group and the desirable social meaning attached to their language use (Trudgill 1972). I propose that, similarly, for a linguistic variable to acquire place-linked social meaning, there must be some level of general awareness surrounding that variable, in the public eye—even if a particular speaker does not profess knowledge of the social meaning related to it. This argument explains the patterning of the data observed in the current study, wherein the linguistic features with the most awareness in the region (e.g. r-lessness) were those that featured place-linked variation, while those features that escape notice (e.g. (aw) variation) did not vary according to indicators intended to measure place orientation.

10.5 Final words

This study has examined the evolving social and linguistic landscape since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Greater New Orleans region in 2005. The broader goal of this study was to better understand how largescale displacement affects place-linked sociolinguistic variables. In other words, what does it mean to speak a locally distinct, place-linked dialect if you move away from that place? Answering this question advances our understanding of the ways individuals use language to
express their affiliation with certain locales, and enhances our understanding of place as a predictor of linguistic behavior.

In the case of post-Katrina linguistic variation, it was essential to examine place not just in terms of current physical location, but also in terms of speakers’ orientation to their new and old homes. I found that while current location was not sufficient to predict sociolinguistic variation, orientation to extra-local norms was a strong predictor of variation for linguistic variables with greater local awareness. These results demonstrate that physical movement across spaces affects speech patterns less than one’s relationship with a given place. Furthermore, these findings suggest that treating a speaker’s location as a static indicator may even obscure patterns of variation in the case of place-linked features.

10.5.1 Broader impacts & future directions

One of the most important contributions I sought to provide with this research was the development of a method for quantifying place-based personal identity that specifically targets individuals’ orientation to the place(s) with which they might express a linguistic tie. In an increasingly globalized and mobile world, it is necessary to develop tools for examining regional dialectal variation, in particular accounting for movement between places and differing relationships with multiple “hometowns.” It is my hope that studies in sociolinguistics will continue to consider aspects of place-based personal identity, and to include quantitative measures of place-based personal identity in models of variation to further develop ideas about the varying ways orientation to different locations may affect linguistic practices.
There remains much to do to document New Orleans English, and to build upon our theoretical tools to study the relationship between language and place. In terms of varieties of English in Greater New Orleans, this study has added to the description of the linguistic landscape, but there remain large gaps in the literature about language varieties in this region. For example, there is next to nothing on the African American and/or Creole varieties of English in GNO (with the notable exceptions of Charity 2007 and Schoux Casey 2013). Also unexamined are the longstanding Vietnamese populations that primarily reside in New Orleans East and on the Westbank of the Mississippi. Another population of interest is the large influx of Brazilians that has made their way to New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina. Finally, the Northshore population which has seen a boom since the 1990s, but has gone undescribed in any linguistic sense. Within St. Bernard Parish, too, are the “down the road” populations. While Coles (2004, 2012) has completed linguistic research on the Isleño population of lower St. Bernard, of interest would be a comparative study examining “up the road” and “down the road” populations, to determine if there are linguistic correlates to this social distinction.

The sociolinguistic study of place identity has several directions it could go. One way of developing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between sociolinguistic variation and place identity is by focusing on situations where one’s ties to a place are in flux or otherwise contested. In such contexts, it is important to gather ethnographic insights into the local social categories. The other avenue of interest for zeroing in on the role of place identity in linguistic variation is through experimental examination of how specific regional linguistic features are perceived
and interpreted by speakers. Regardless of the methods used to attain these goals, it is crucial to the field of sociolinguistic inquiry to further develop our understanding of how speakers linguistically express place-based personal identity, and to create systematic ways of examining such issues across speech communities. Only then can we develop sophisticated models of the role of place identity in sociolinguistic variation, and the variable ways one’s relationship(s) with places can interact with language practices.


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Appendix A. Participant Info

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Post-Katrina location status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Extra-Chalmatian orientation</th>
<th>Class</th>
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Appendix B. Interview Schedule

The interviews I performed were semi-structured, thus I did not follow any kind of script. The questions below give an idea of the kinds of questions that were broached, however I was always open to discussing whatever topics the interviewees wished to discuss.

**SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC**

- Where were you born?
  - When was that?
- Where did you grow up?
- Where else have you lived?
  - When was that?
  - Have you travelled much outside of the area?
- How long has your family lived in this area?
  - (what generation are you?)
- What did your parents do for a living?
  - Would you say your family growing up was working-class, middle class, or...?
  - Would you say you were poor or well-off growing up?
- How many years of school did you get a chance to finish?
  - Did you go to college or get some other additional training after high school? Where was that?
  - What was your first job you got when you left school?
- What do you do for a living?
- Would you say you are a member of any particular ethnic group?
  - What are some of the things you do that you’d say were especially [group]?
- Are you married or do you have a long-term partner that you live with?
  - Is he/she from Chalmette?
  - How did you meet him/her?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
  - How old are they?
  - Where do they live?
  - What do they do for a living?
• Do you have kids?
  ▪ How many?
  ▪ How old are they?
  ▪ Where do they live?
  ▪ What do they do for a living?
  ▪ Any grandchildren?

ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
• Do people in your neighborhood ever sit out on their porches or stoops?
  ▪ Do your neighbors visit each other’s houses?
    ▪ Why?
    ▪ How often?
  ▪ Do kids in your neighborhood play with each other outside?
  ▪ Do people in your neighborhood have block parties?
    ▪ Do they invite each other over for meals?
  ▪ When you go away, who do you ask to look out for your house, pick up the papers and mail, etc.?
  ▪ Do you have any cats? Who takes care of them when you go away?
  ▪ Who do you ask to babysit your kids?
• Do you like your neighborhood?
  ▪ What about it do you like/dislike?
• What’s changed about this community in your memory?
  ▪ How would you change it now, if you could?
  ▪ Do you think you’ll stay here to raise kids/to retire/for the rest of your life?
• Do you like Chalmette?
  ▪ Do you think Chalmette is different from other places?
• Do you like New Orleans?
  ▪ Do you think New Orleans is different from other places?
• Do you like Louisiana?
  ▪ Do you think Louisiana is different from other places?

YOUR LIFESTYLE
• What do you do on weekends?
  ▪ [If respondent mentions hobbies:] How did you learn to do that?
  ▪ [If respondent mentions organizations:] What's your role in ______ (organization)?
  ▪ Where do you go for vacation?
• Do you read a local newspaper (either in print or online) regularly? Which one(s)?
• What radio stations do you listen to?
• What is your favorite restaurant?
  ▪ Why?
What do you like to eat there?
• Where do you go shopping for clothes?
• Where do you get your hair cut/done?
• Do you like watching sports?
  o What games?
  o What teams?

LOCAL EVENTS AND PHENOMENA
• What are some events and gatherings specific to Chalmette?
  o Are there any events you attend regularly?
    ▪ Which?
  o Do you ever host or attend parties with your neighbors?
    ▪ What was the reason or theme behind the last party or gathering you attended?
  o What do people do at local gatherings?
  o What do people eat at local gatherings?
• Do you do anything special for Mardi Gras?
  o Are there any Mardi Gras traditions specific to Chalmette?
  o Do you ever go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras?
  o Do you know anything about the history of Mardi Gras within the area?
    ▪ What is the significance of the Mardi Gras colors? (green, gold, purple)
  o Are you a part of any Mardi Gras Krewe?
  o Are there any specific foods you eat around Mardi Gras?
    ▪ Can you explain the tradition of King Cake to me?
• What are some local dishes people eat?
  o How important is seafood to local cuisine?
    ▪ How do you usually prepare/what is your favorite way to cook:
      • Fish?
      • Crabs?
      • Crawfish?
      • Shrimp?
• When visitors come into town, where do you take them?
  o Where are your favorite tourism sites within Chalmette?
    ▪ Within New Orleans?
    ▪ Within Louisiana?
  o What is your favorite part of town?
  o What, if any, parts of town do you avoid when visitors are in town?
• How has Hurricane Katrina affected Chalmette?
  o What was Chalmette like before Hurricane Katrina?
  o What are some changes that have occurred in Chalmette since Hurricane Katrina?
  o Has the population changed at all since Hurricane Katrina?
Have your neighbors changed at all since Hurricane Katrina?

- How has The Murphy Oil spill affected Chalmette?
  - What was Chalmette like before The Murphy Oil spill?
  - What are some changes that have occurred in Chalmette since The Murphy Oil spill?

**ABOUT YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL**

- Who would you say have been the most important people in your life?
  - Who’s taught you the most?
- What’s unique about you, in your opinion?
- Would you say you tend to be a leader in groups you’re in, or would you rather be more of an observer, more on the edges of things?

**LANGUAGE**

- What can you tell me about the different kinds of English that people speak here? Do they have names?
- Is there a local "accent"?

**Yats**

- Have you ever heard the term “Yat”?
  - What does it mean, to you?
  - Would you call yourself a Yat?
  - Why or why not?
  - Is it a compliment or an insult to call someone a Yat?
  - What do Yats do?
  - How do they talk?
  - How do you know about this? (newspapers, tv, personal experience)

- Are Y’ats different from “non-Y’ats”?
- What’s the opposite of a Y’at?
- Are there subtypes of Y’ats?
- When did you first hear the word “Y’at” being used?
- Where does the expression “Where y’at?” come from?
- Was “Y’at” used to refer to a kind of speech or a type of person when you were a child? In your parents’ time? In your grandparents’ time?
  - What type of person speaks Y’at?
  - Who speaks Y’at now? Where do speakers live? Where did they use to live? Do African Americans/ Uptowners/ Cajuns speak Y’at?
  - Was Y’at spoken in areas/ neighborhoods where it is no longer spoken?
- Would you say that you speak “Yat”?
  - All the time? Just sometimes?
    - When?
- Do you think of Y’at in the same way as you did before Hurricane Katrina?
**Chalmatians**

- What would you say constitutes a “true New Orleanian” or “true Chalmatian”?
- Have you ever heard the term “Chalmatian”?
  - What does it mean, to you?
  - Would you call yourself a Chalmatian?
    - Why or why not?
- Is it a compliment or an insult to call someone a Chalmatian?
- What do Chalmatians do?
- How do they talk?
- How do you know about this? (newspapers, tv, personal experience)
Appendix C. Reading Passage

On a cloudy Thursday afternoon that just happened to be his birthday, Shawn thought to himself that he couldn’t spend another moment at work. He didn't bother to ask his boss if it was okay to leave, he just ran out to his car and hit the road. He stopped at his house, grabbed a fishing pole, and called his brother Mark to see if he wanted to join.

“Awesome idea! Except it’s supposed to storm. Can’t you hear the thunder?” Shawn replied, “I’m sure it’ll pass, it always does. So are you coming or not?” Right then Shawn pulled up outside the mechanic shop where Mark worked. Shawn flashed a smile through the window. His enthusiasm was alluring. Plus Mark feared Shawn’s wrath if he refused to tag along, so he gathered up his gear and jogged out to the car.

The brothers drove south down Walker Street towards the canal. Just past Pamela’s Snowball Stand, there is a path through the bushes that leads down to the water. As they started down the path, Mark and Shawn came across a pair of small cows blocking their way.

“How about that!” said Mark, “they must have wandered off from Mr. Cannon’s farm.” The brothers managed to walk around the lost calves, continuing on towards the water. Once they made it to the canal, they chose a spot in the grass to set up camp.
“Watch out for fire ants!” cautioned Shawn, “and cow manure!”

They had only been sitting there for half an hour when they saw their friend Larry’s boat, Thousand Pound Bass. Larry hollered at them to climb aboard, so Mark and Shawn jumped from the shore, fishing poles and all.

“Don’t fall!” yelled Larry as he laughed. “Have you caught anything yet?”

Shawn frowned and said no, but Larry just smiled and told them to prepare themselves for a serious bounty. They were headed straight to Larry’s special fishing spot. At first Shawn rolled his eyes, but he shouldn’t have doubted his friend. By sundown they had caught nearly forty pounds of fish!

“No bad for amateurs,” said Shawn. “I certainly am glad you found us!” At that point, they had no choice but to head home and start eating.

The whole crew went back to Larry’s house for dinner. There they fried some of the fish, along with a pound of oysters Larry had bought from Rouse’s earlier that day.

“The only way this birthday feast could be better is if we had some crawfish or crabs to boil too!” said Shawn.

“It’s your birthday?” asked Larry. “Well then we need a candle!” He put the fish and oysters on a large platter, sticking a candle in the middle and lighting it. They all sang to Shawn, who blew out the candle before everybody dug in. All three of them sat happily together on the couch, lost in thought after finishing dinner. Then Mark broke the silence to say, “So what time should we start the fishing tomorrow?”
Appendix D. Word List

Cot ... Caught
Lot ... Law ... Log

House ... How
Doubt ... Down
Lout ... Loud
Thousand ... Vows
Crown ... Crowd

Cannon ... Candle
Carry ... Careful ... Care
Marry ... Mary ... Merry

Mash ... Mass
Math ... Mat
Badge ... Bag
Laugh ... Lap
Pal ... Pack
Jazz ... Jam

Can ... Calves
Crab ... Cracks
Have ... Had ... Has ... Hack
Mad ... Glad ... Sad ... Pad
Raspberry ... Strawberry

Cone ... Cope
Code ... Coal
Loon ... Loop
Food ... Fool

Perfect ... Point
Coil ... Curl
Oil ... Earl

Ask ... Ax

Sink ... Zinc
Appendix E. Vowel plots of pre-nasal, pre-voiced, and pre-voiceless (aw) means by speaker (all data, unnormalized)
Allie

Bella

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)
Benjamin

F2 (Hz) vs. F1 (Hz)

- pre-nasal
- pre-voiceless
- pre-voiced

Big G

F2 (Hz) vs. F1 (Hz)

- pre-nasal
- pre-voiceless
- pre-voiced

Legend:
- ▲ nucleus
- △ off-glide
Chastity

Chris

pre-nasal
pre-voiceless
pre-voiced

pre-voiceless
pre-nasal
pre-voiced

nucleus
off-glide

nucleus
off-glide
KillaB

Lance
Margaret

Maria

nucleus
off–glide

pre–nasal

pre–voiced

pre–voiceless

nucleus
off–glide
Molly

MommaB

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)
Nunu

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)

Parrain

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)

pre−nasal

pre−voiceless

pre−voiced

nucleus

off−glide
Rosalee

Rosie

![Diagram showing F1 and F2 values for Rosalee and Rosie's speech sounds.

- F2 (Hz): 2400, 2200, 2000, 1800, 1600, 1400, 1200
- F1 (Hz): 1100, 1000, 900, 800, 700, 600, 500

- pre-nasal
- pre-voiceless
- pre-voiced

nucleus
off-gliding

- Rosie's speech sounds are plotted in different colors and symbols.
- Rosalee's speech sounds are plotted in blue and black symbols.

338
SugarMagnolia

Super
Victor

Yoda

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)

pre-nasal

pre-voiceless

pre-voiced

nucleus

off-glide

nucleus

off-glide

1800 1600 1400 1200 1000

1800 1600 1400 1200 1000

800 700 600 500

800 700 600 500
Appendix F. Vowel plots of BOT-BOUGHT by speaker (all data, unnormalized)
Jennifer

JuAllison

Vowel

-1500
-1000
-500
-250
-2000
-1500
-1000
-500
-250
-1500
-1000
-500
-250
Appendix G. Vowel plots of short-a systems by speaker
(Word list data, unnormalized)

Acilie /æ/ Word List
Allie /æ/ Word List

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)

Bella /æ/ Word List

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)
Chris /æ/ Word List

Christian /æ/ Word List
Dayle /ae/ Word List

Ed /ae/ Word List
Gaston /æ/ Word List

Greg /æ/ Word List
Haylie /æ/ Word List

Herman /æ/ Word List
Killa B /ae/ Word List

Lance /ae/ Word List
Luke /æ/ Word List

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)

Mandy /æ/ Word List

F1 (Hz)

F2 (Hz)
Sara /æ/ Word List

Savannah /æ/ Word List
Sugar Magnolia /ae/ Word List

Super /ae/ Word List
### Appendix H. Table of r-fulness means by speaker (all data)

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402