ABSTRACT

Joshua Dunn
The Youth of Roswell Voices: A Linguistic and Social Study of Community Definition
(Under the direction of Dr. William Kretzschmar)

This research is a continuation of the Roswell Voices project, a linguistic and oral history project began in 2002 by Dr. William Kretzschmar and the Roswell, GA Folk and Heritage Bureau, in an attempt to capture the reality of linguistic change in a dynamic environment. While the project originally focused on the past and the interviewing of older residents, I investigated how the speech – phonetics, syntax, and lexicon – of inhabitants of Roswell aged 18 to 30 groups them together as a distinct community. I also endeavored to characterize how their speech fits into the large picture of dialect research in the American South and whether new patterns and categorizations are pertinent. To accomplish this task, I interviewed nine informants for one hour each, discussing life in Roswell, and each interview is fully transcribed. For comparison, I also looked at interviews of older informants from previous stages of Roswell Voices. I looked for common speech phrases and lines of discussion to point to a sense of community. In order to establish where my younger speakers fall in the spectrum of Southern dialectology, I consulted the relevant literature to compile a discrete list of features, and then perform a statistical analysis to determine the significant recurrence of these features in the speech of my informants. I also ran a computer-based acoustical phonetic analysis to aid in determining the extent to which my informants follow the proposed Southern Vowel Chain Shift, as well as to independently value their acoustic properties as a group.

INDEX WORDS: dialectology; community study; linguistics; sociolinguistics; acoustic phonetics; roswell; southern; language change
THE YOUTH OF ROSWELL VOICES
A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY DEFINITION

by

JOSHUA A. DUNN

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THE YOUTH OF ROSWELL VOICES

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by

JOSHUA A. DUNN

Approved:

Dr. William Kretzschmar
Dr. William Kretzschmar
Faculty Research Mentor

April 26, 2010

Approved:

Dr. Gary Baker
Dr. Gary Baker
Reader

April 26, 2010

Approved:

Dr. David S. Williams
Dr. David S. Williams
Director, Honors Program, Foundation Fellows and
Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities

May 7, 2010

Approved:

Dr. Pamela B. Kleiber
Dr. Pamela B. Kleiber
Associate Director, Honors Program and
Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities

May 7, 2010
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Favorite restaurants. Favorite teachers. The nice gentleman working at the corner grocery who knows everyone’s name. Many factors bring people together to form a community, a group of people sharing a common life experience that distinguishes them from another. Language is another shared factor less commonly examined, and yet I would say most people can at least begin to identify the similarities in speech that each member of a community shares that then differentiates them from members of other surrounding communities. The Roswell Voices project, which began as a joint oral history and linguistics survey of the citizens of Roswell, Georgia, aims to delve deeper into that initial acknowledgement of a difference with a goal of determining how a common way of speaking brought these people together as a community. My particular investigation serves to characterize the future of the speech community by showcasing the younger speakers of Roswell.

Understanding the history of the place of interest is key to any academic investigation. The town’s settlement reaches back to 1839 as a small textile mill taking advantage of the location near to the Chattahoochee River. The social make up of the original settlement reflected the mill’s importance, and until the time of Reconstruction the population consisted of prominent families who invested in the mill, their slaves and domestics, the mill workers, and area subsistence farmers who employed the mill’s services. While the functionality of the mill aspect of town life was not constant after the 1860s, the essential social structure remained until the middle of the twentieth century (Kretzschmar, et al. 2007).
This account is not unlike many communities in the American South. However, what makes Roswell such an interesting focus of study is the rapid change that occurred after 1950. Records show that at that point in time, only 2000 people lived in Roswell. Twenty-five years later, even after the textile mill had permanently ceased to run, the population had grown to 15,000. During the 1980’s while the economy of nearby Atlanta began to rise, the population skyrocketed to 48,000, and over the last twenty years has almost doubled to an estimated 90,000 citizens. The physical side of Roswell has changed as well of course, extending well beyond what remains of the old downtown and mill area today. Economically speaking, Roswell has also made considerable strides with the median household income coming in at $100,000 (around double that of the national average), and a good percentage of the residents hold post-secondary degrees (Kretzschmar, et al. 2007, US Census).

Such rapid change is partly what warranted the impetus and continuation of the Roswell Voices Project. The initial phases focused on interviewing the older, lifetime residents that had experienced this change first hand. They would be able to shine a light on the past, both historically and linguistically, as their speech patterns would also reach back to a different era in Roswell’s earlier times. However, while such interviews are the only way to determine from where Roswell has come linguistically, there also is but one way to find where the language of the citizens of Roswell is headed, and that is by talking to those who ride the proverbial wave of change. My portion of the project, then, focuses on the younger members of this community, as during the initial research it became clear that they themselves formed a subset within the community, quite possibly with a very unique speech pattern.
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND

Of course, all of the research that has been conducted through the Roswell Voices project follows from a long tradition of language and cultural study both throughout the entire United States and specifically in the South; however, linguistic study often introduces as many questions as answers. Since the publication of Ferdinand Saussure’s lectures at the beginning of the last century and the terms “langue,” the abstract psychological system, and “parole,” the actual production of words, came into linguistic parlance, linguists have been divided as to which to focus upon, and within each of those immensely broad camps one finds a plethora of thoughts concerning the appropriate direction and methodology of study. One constant does remain in the minds of all linguists: language changes. The language of Roswell, Georgia is no exception. Yet the research of Roswell Voices and the previous research of many other linguists prove that documenting the extent of this change is a complicated issue.

The starting point for addressing the linguistic situation in Roswell is quite literally at the beginnings of American English. Most Americans – linguists or not – would likely agree, if given a map, that Roswell, Georgia is in “the South.” The question of Roswell and its current linguistic situation, then, is inherently tied to the history and development of the “Southern” accent. While his were certainly not the first observations, linguist Hans Kurath produced the most well-known map of American dialects that most dialectologists have since used as a base. In his *Word Geography of the Eastern States*, three large dialect regions – the North, the Midland, and the South – are described (Kurath 1949). The famous map outlining these regions
indicates that the North region ends in a line cutting across northern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while the region labeled South begins around the Eastern Shore of Maryland and essentially lies south and east of the Appalachian Mountains, leaving the term “Midland” to describe what lay in between.

Kurath arrived at his conclusions by examining lexical data gathered in surveys in the 1930’s and 40’s for the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS). The occurrences of certain lexical items – for instance, the return of “darning needle” versus “snake doctor” in a question about dragonflies – were plotted on a map of the United States. Kurath then drew what are known as “isoglosses,” theoretical limits of occurrence marking the boundary of where one will find the particular item at hand. When a certain number of isoglosses occurred along the same boundaries, the result was known as a “bundle,” and it was these bundles that were used in demarcating the major dialect regions. For example, Kurath draws one map showing a bundle of isoglosses for the terms “whippletree,” “pail,” and “darning needle,” and concludes that the area above this bundle is the North dialect region (Kurath 1949).

Once these boundaries were delineated, Kurath and his associate Raven McDavid examined the sound systems within each of these regions. In the preface to The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States, the authors make reference to “diaphones,” a term perhaps no longer in use but nevertheless a good symbol of their intentions. They associated the variants of vowels, a phenomenon explained by the system of phonemes wherein many different utterances of a vowel (allophones) represent the psychological reality of a single sound (phoneme), with dialect areas, hence “diaphone.” In a section of the book dealing with vowels before the sound [r], for example, the authors lay out the distinct pronunciation of words like “four” in the
previously identified regional zones, thus both corroborating their previous conclusions by marking the differences, and further characterizing those zones by degrees of similarity (Kurath and McDavid 1961).

Kurath himself admitted that the areas he identified “coincide with settlement areas” in the history of the expansion of the United States (Kurath 1949). Looking at the two areas most pertinent to our discussion, the South and the southern half of the Midland, a clear point of origination and two fairly homogenous paths of expansion exist, which lead to their distinction at least from the other migrating settlers. Kretzschmar, among others, warns us to keep this fact in mind: Kurath’s data fit previous assumptions, yet the holes in his methodology do not preclude his results from being correct (Kretzschmar 2004).

To see this, let us return briefly to the matter at hand. The city of Roswell, being in the path of the Southern and South Midland patterns of migration, is situated in an area that can be historically described as linguistically Southern. However, one of the main questions that spurred my research, a question posed by many of the older residents, is whether or not the newer and younger inhabitants still speak with a Southern accent. In order to answer that question, we must also address its complications. First; does the region that Kurath identified continue to hold true; and second, and perhaps more importantly, how do we define what is Southern here and now?

The research of William Labov provides one way to approach these questions. In his article, “The Three Dialects of English,” Labov takes a view more aligned with the notion of “langue” mentioned above, addressing the constant state of change in language as a systematic one. By identifying what are known as “chain shifts” – described in Labov and Wald 1969 as a systematic redistribution of vowel qualities, such as traditional “back” vowels moving “forward”
in their pronunciation – Labov characterized, in his terms more “scientifically,” the current state of the Northern and Southern dialects. His results reaffirm more or less the original boundaries of Kurath and McDavid, if one groups the North Midland and South Midland regions with the North and South respectively, thus addressing the first concern. In response to the second concern, Labov posits the Southern Chain shift, which consists of three general features, summarized here:

1. the centralization of the nuclei in the original tense vowels /iy, ey, ow, uw/
2. the further fronting of the short vowels /i, e, æ/
3. the filling of a vacated high back vowel with remaining nuclei.

(Labov 1991)

Such phenomena attempt to capture phonologically what distinguishes the Southern accent. Yet what these processes literally mean is less important to our discussion than are their implications: clearly regions themselves remain the same, but the features which characterize them may change. Additionally, while Labov does state in this same article that individual implementation of these rules on the part of speakers may vary (Labov 1991), the underlying rules themselves stand and thus do represent a model for speech in the South, and by extension Roswell.

However, some scholars might find Labov’s focus on pure phonological evidence a departure from the notion of “parole.” Dennis Preston is a linguist known largely for his work in the field of “perceptual dialectology,” or defining dialect regions based on speakers’ notions of where they ought to exist. In an address to the American Dialect Society, Preston suggests how perception and production might interact to help us answer our concern of definition. In terms of production he notes that, “There is a ‘South’ which begins around Indianapolis and whose
southern boundaries reach to the ‘Inland South’” which he earlier identifies as Kentucky. But more interesting is his opinion of perception: “There is a South which begins as soon as people hear dialectemically [another proposed unit akin to how phonemes relate to actual allophones] salient Southern features” (Preston 2003). Yet as Kretzschmar 2003 discusses more fully, Preston’s conclusions may be too neat, as the many maps produced by speakers in Preston’s surveys asked to identify where one can find “Southern” speech rarely agree on where it can be found, or how to describe it.

While we should not necessarily discount what Preston reports, we may be able to explore why people’s perceptions do not always reflect “reality,” including those perceptions of the older Roswell speakers. Guy Bailey’s article, “When did Southern American English Begin?” (1997) appeals to the historical record to both acknowledge the dynamic nature of language and to use that knowledge to prove that what we know as “Southern” now may not have always been such. For example, he reports the study of Brown 1990 which used data from the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States, the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States, and the Tennessee Civil War Veterans Questionnaires to prove that the phenomenon behind the famous merger of the vowels in “pin” and “pen” did not become prevalent in the South until after 1930. He also compiles his own data along with that of other researchers concerning white vernacular English in Texas to provide a table outlining phonological and grammatical features of Southern speech and determining whether they were present before 1875, between 1875 and 1945, or between 1945 and 1980. While this table also shows many features going out of use, “the fronting of /au/, the “Southern Shift”…, along with the pen/pin merger all seem to be features either that emerged during the last quarter of the 19th century or
became widespread during that time” (Bailey 1997). What’s important to take away from conclusions like these is that depending on your particular frame of reference, how a dialect is characterized can vary from person to person. Within the context of Roswell, researchers have to keep this in mind when attempting to categorize the recorded linguistic features as Southern or not. They may differ from older speakers, and Bailey gives us the proof of how, if not why; additionally, however, one expects to identify features that would appear in the hypothetical fourth category, “After 1980.”

Returning to our two questions – whether Kurath’s categorization holds, and if so how we are to define its current state – we can see that the first is much easier to answer than the second. There is certainly an area of “Southern” speech, and Labov and Preston both present different ways of defining what is found within that region. Bailey helps to explain the complexities of Kurath’s Southern and South Midland – which from here on will be referred to as they are in that article as Plantation Southern and Upland Southern, respectively – and other linguists share his opinions. Craig Carver, in his work *American Regional Dialects*, makes the point that, “As a single variety of speech…‘Southern English’ is a convenient fiction, for it is in fact a quilt-work of dialects” (Carver 1987). John Algeo echoes this sentiment, saying that he and linguist Lee Pederson have identified at least 18 different sub-categories of “Southern American English” (Algeo 2003).

The work of Carver, Algeo and Lee Pederson allow us to take a slightly different research path from what has already been mentioned. In addition to the lexical work and impressionistic description that has been described thus far, all current studies must and do rely at least in part on acoustic analysis, the scientific description of sound quality. Many linguists make this the
highest priority in identifying dialect regions (Thomas 2001). The difference from researcher to researcher is in how all of that data is presented. Returning to Kretzschmar 2003, he suggests that the work of Labov, Preston, and Kurath ought to be recognized as “subjective interpretations of their evidence,” in order for readers to correctly analyze their results. In contrast, Pederson and his work with the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States has attempted to simply present the data as it has been uncovered, without conforming it to previously-held conceptions; in his own words, “the method carries analysis through an enumeration of features and reports them in maps” (Pederson 1995). The key difference to this manner of analysis as opposed to Labov’s or Preston’s is that while the latter both recognize complexities in speech, their end conclusions often “level-out” (Kretzschmar 2003) those very complexities and thus provide a less accurate description. Pederson writes elsewhere that because within major dialect regions, social and localized factors lead to language divergence, “any summary of major varieties of American English can become quite complicated with little effort” (Pederson 2001). Referring specifically to Southern speech, it is telling that Pederson titled the relevant section within this same work as “Southern Dialects,” rather than, “The Southern Dialect.”

Yet understanding what “Southern” means is only part of the problem of definition: in order to better characterize and identify dialects, we ought to understand exactly how they are formed. In addition to following similar methodologies as Pederson and applying them to the first phase of the Roswell Voices project, Kretzschmar provides the base assumption taken in this study for how language communities and thus their associated dialects come about. He appeals to the idea of the complex system, wherein a large number of components interact randomly to produce an organized yet dynamic state, such as the organization of water molecules
in a whirlpool, that is unaffected by small changes. In this case, a language community has available a general pool of linguistic features from which to choose. Based on those community members’ tendencies to choose the same feature as those around them, a distribution arises wherein in one or two features emerge as dominant, while the rest of the features reduce exponentially in their frequency of usage or occurrence in a hyperbolic pattern Kretzschmar calls the A-curve. Thus, the common perception of what people generally call a dialect or community language comes from generalizing the tops of A-curve distributions that have been produced by complex interaction (Kretzschmar 2007).

This pattern can occur at any scale. Concerning Roswell, the speech of its inhabitants can fall into the A-curve distribution of general Southern, Upland Southern, Roswell, and so on down to single neighborhoods. Of course, such conclusions complicate the issue of associating language with a region, a topic addressed in Kretzschmar’s forthcoming “Language and Region.” He addresses the different types of regions identified by the cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky, including: traditional, correlating to common misconceptions of a monolithic “North” vs. “South”; voluntary regions created by their inhabitants; and vernacular regions, exemplified by the combination of geography and behavioral perception in the American concept of the Bible Belt (Zelinsky 1992). Kretzschmar applies these regions to the study of sociolinguistics, saying, “Zelinsky’s account of regions addresses a problem in traditional notions of the speech community, which may take just a geographic location as a definition for a speech community instead of indexing location to culture and perception” (Kretzschmar forthcoming). In other words, in order to accurately discuss the language of a region, one must take into account a speaker’s sense of community as well as any geographic correlations.
Of course others have touched on the idea of region as an amalgamation of location and social factors as well. Walt Wolfram has identified the importance social networks can have on speech production in his discussion of group preferential words and pronunciations, explaining the tendency of social groupings to result in scale of terms more or less likely to be associated with that group – not unlike Kretzschmar’s A-curve. Also interesting for our study is Wolfram’s definition of prestige, the idea that certain dialects hold a higher social value than others (Wolfram 2001). Since our study focuses on Southern English, a dialect often stigmatized in America, it will be important to keep in mind during analysis whether the informants relate more to the overt prestige of non-Southern dialects and suppress their speech, or to the covert prestige associated with “Southern Pride.”

The Roswell Voices project resulted from these many ideas of how to define and work with community language and dialect regions, in the South or not. Kretzschmar, et al. (2007) have already published their initial impressions which my stage of the project has used as its immediate starting point. They established that the majority of speakers in Roswell used the Upland Southern variety, as predicted by Kurath and McDavid and corroborated by Bailey. They responded to Labov’s proposition of the “Southern Shift,” saying that from initial impressions the shift may not be taking full effect in Roswell (Kretzschmar et al. 2007).

Yet most significantly for the direction my research takes, investigating the current situation among the youth, was their evaluation of the social dynamic. As remarked by John Algeo, the latter half of the twentieth century produced so many innovations in communication and transportation technology that national culture began to overlay local (Algeo 2001). Kretzschmar also notes the dissolution of small Southern towns, and by extension some of the
traditional speech patterns that had developed in relative isolation (Kretzschmar 2008).

Concerning Roswell, by talking with a few younger speakers, Roswell Voices researchers were able to identify a “New Roswell,” reflecting the recent demographic development of the city. Because of these changes, new participants are entering the linguistic complex system that is Roswell, bringing with them their own features. The newest generation of speakers is currently making decisions about the future of Roswell speech. The team concludes, “Right now, we are asking ourselves how much longer there might still be an Old Roswell speech type that residents used to share, and whether the new social dynamic of an edge city can support the maintenance of a New Roswell speech type.” (Kretzschmar et al. 2007)

Therein lays the motivation for this next phase of the Roswell Voices project: what is the “New Roswell,” speech type actually, what are its attributes and derivations, and how does it fit into the larger phenomenon that is Southern English. As can be found in Figure 1 at the end of the following chapter, my research does acknowledge a certain set of Southern English features identified by other dialectologists and sociolinguists in the field to which I compare my results. However, I hope my research can also serve as a continuation in presenting language as it is actually spoken, and to highlight the directional change within the highly dynamic speech community that is Roswell.
CHAPTER III
ROSWELL VOICES

I have already mentioned in brief that the Roswell Voices project began in 2002 as a joint linguistic survey and oral history project, but the exact process has not been detailed. Data collection was approached in much the same way as in the LAGS project mentioned in the previous chapter. Statistical data – age, family history, social connections – were all gathered previous to or as part of the conversational interview. The conversation, rather than being a direct question and answer format, was instead guided through various topics aimed at: material culture, through questions about food, the home, etc.; social activities like holidays and weddings; and a discussion of historic sites and social development. Many of the interviews (all, in secondary stages of the research) also included two more elements. The first consisted of the informant reading words off of note cards in order to elicit clearly pronounced tokens of certain vowel features. The second aimed at getting the informant to produce lexical items known to vary regionally which may not have come up during the conversation. All the interviews were recorded directly to CD and then stored for later transcription and analysis.

The number of informants interviewed before my stage of the project totaled twenty seven. With the exception of mill workers, the interviewers tried to represent the main social groups that have existed since the founding of Roswell, including blacks and some of the prominent families. In so doing, as stated above they found that their speech did reflect the expectation of a correlation with the Upland Southern variety, and that they can be said to share a certain pool of Roswell speech habits.
Only four of the twenty seven informants belong to the age category that my research focuses on. As reported in Chapter II, the ultimate findings of the speech of these four individuals showed to be divergent both from other data from older informants within Roswell Voices, but also from the Southern Chain shift proposed by Labov and his colleagues. During the actual data collection process, however, the interviewers hit a few snags. Many household and food items, which provided significant return in both LAGS and among older Roswell informants, did not prove as productive among the younger speakers, who were also unable to provide significant commentary on the history of the town. However, talking with these individuals did allow for new topics to be discovered, such as the importance of youth sports and different hangout spots for local youths, which proved a useful jumping off point in my individual research.

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General Southern:
1. stress shift to initial syllable
2. \([\varepsilon] = [\text{i}]/ _{____} [+nas]\)
3. \([aI] \rightarrow [a]\)
4. \([u] \rightarrow [iu] / C_{____} \) (fronting of [u])
5. \([\varepsilon I] \rightarrow [\varepsilon]\)

Upland Southern
6. triphthongization of \([\text{oU}]\) to \([\text{oU}]\)
7. reversal of \([i]\) and \([\text{I}]\)
8. intrusion of \([\text{ae}]\) before the diphthongs \([aU]\) and \([eI]\)
9. loss of post-vocalic \(/\text{r}/\) in unstressed syllables
10. diphthongization of \([\text{a}]\) to \([\text{oU}]\)

Plantation Southern
11. no pronunciation of post-vocalic \(/\text{r}/\)
12. \([\text{a}]\) insertion after vowels (‘drawl’)

FIGURE 1 – Southern Feature List

*This list of features was adapted from a presentation given to the Roswell Folk and Heritage Bureau in 2007.*
CHAPTER IV
METHODS

In my work on the Roswell Voices project I have attempted to look at the make-up of the “New Roswell” speech type and determine how the phonetics, lexicon, and syntax of a speaker aged 18 to 35 contribute to his or her cultural identity of considering Roswell his or her home. As a secondary question, I attempted to respond to the claim that the younger speakers no longer spoke with the traditional Southern accent of the region. To accomplish this goal, I followed the same plan as was carried out previously by Roswell Voices researchers, with some modification. Over two stages I was able to interview a total of nine people, five females and four males. In my selection of informants I continued with the “snowball” method, but decided not to concern myself with seeking out representatives from the classic social groups simply because the previous Roswell Voices research seemed to indicate that such distinction was moot among the youth of Roswell. In my interviews I tried to minimize the amount of time talking about the topics mentioned above that gave the respondents trouble, such as the town’s history, and rather to focus on those lines of conversation that had proved fruitful previously.

While the content of these interviews has a primary role in my research, I also engaged in a type/token analysis of Southern features to determine to what degree the speech could be considered “Southern.” To accomplish this task, I first compiled a list of typically Southern features and divided them into the Plantation, Upland, and General varieties (see Figure 1). Given that these features occur within certain phonological and phonetic environments, I was able to go through the transcripts of my interviews and get a count of all the possible
environments where these variations could occur. I then listened to each interview and determined impressionistically which tokens were marked with Southern pronunciation, utilizing the previously established Southern feature set. Some impressionistic analysis is common in sociolinguistic studies, especially when distinguishing speaker tendencies on such large scales like national regions, and is valid due to the common ability for speakers to identify marked pronunciation in distinguishing perceptually discrete dialects. I have also done some acoustic analysis regarding /ai/ monophthongization, discussed below. With both the counts of possible marked pronunciation and actual marked pronunciations, I was able not only to compile a raw list of feature frequencies of each informant, but also to determine whether these proportions represented statistically significant commonalities within the group as well as differences between my data and that previously collected. Examining whether or not the utterances of my informants reflect Southern tendencies at a rate higher than random chance is important because of the extreme variability in human speech production. In each examination I opted to use the z-test for proportions with a significance value set at .05.

The note-card elicitation and lexical question and answer sections were also used in my study, to further characterize and supplement the data from the conversation portion of the interview. In addition, I have used two speakers from the previous phases of Roswell Voices, each representing the parent and grandparent generations of my informants, as comparison for conclusions about time analysis of local speech, though for my acoustic comparisons I appeal to separate research on the topic. Through all of these methods over the two phases of my research, I have found that younger Roswell speakers share features that unite them as citizens of Roswell, both as an age group, and as a definite, though newly created, group of Southern speakers.
CHAPTER V
FINDINGS

Phase I – May through July, 2007

I completed the first stage of my research in the summer of 2007, following the three-part interview method used in previous incarnations of Roswell Voices. I interviewed four subjects between the ages of 18 and 23, all of whom identified as Caucasian. After transcribing the interviews, I first looked for commonalities among the topics of discussion in order to draw conclusions about the sense of community in Roswell among the youth. Afterwards I also listened to four interviews each from the two older generation brackets to be able to compare lines of conversation.

One of the most discussed topics was the commercial expansion of the area, and how continuous infrastructural development has changed the nature of Roswell over the last 25 years. All four younger informants discussed the overdevelopment around the area of Roswell High School in the form of strip malls. One of the oldest informants shared a story about the transformation of the land around what is now Mansell Road in Roswell from a local farm into a BMW and Lexus car dealership. While such commentary was almost expected of the older informants, the younger informants in Phase I of my study also expressed concern that the area was losing a lot of its natural beauty, and that they did not view most of the construction projects as positive or even necessary.

My informants also aligned in their discussion of topics such as religious, home and social life. All four identified with a certain religion and could name the important religious
centers of the city, and also felt that religion in general continues to play a role in the daily lives of citizens of Roswell, even if only to a nominal degree. All had very positive opinions about the state of education in Roswell, especially provided by Roswell High School. Most of the same sorts of clubs were mentioned, primarily those with either an athletic or community service basis. Additionally they provided names and types of social groups within the high school such as “jocks” and “band kids,” showing that at the high school level a distinct community, and perhaps more importantly a series of easily identifiable sub-communities, existed of which they were all a part. Concerning recreational activities all four informants professed a lack of “fun” things to do in Roswell for people their age, but at the same time lauded the services of the Roswell Parks and Recreation Service and the Chattahoochee Nature Center; Atlanta was also given as a clear and liked alternative to finding fun things to do, such as attending concerts or professional sporting events, on the weekend.

But despite the close proximity to Atlanta, all of the younger informants from this phase of my study held a principally “Roswellian” identity – even if that identity was different than what had brought the people of Roswell together 50 years ago – relying only on the culture of Atlanta to identify themselves to people from outside of Georgia, reflecting findings from earlier Roswell Voices interviews. Both the older and younger informants were self-proclaimed citizens of Roswell, and as was mentioned earlier provided similar thoughts on the importance of religion and the downside of development.

All of these commonalities belie the crux of this project and any other type of community-based research. Returning briefly to Zelinsky’s theories of cultural definition as laid out in Chapter II, the fact that that the citizens of Roswell can find “Roswell” to be a uniting
factor despite the different lives of each informant speaks to the idea of scale, that one person can belong to multiple communities simultaneously. The citizens of Roswell also can both participate in the identity of Atlanta and distance themselves from that identity, showcasing the fluidity between vernacular and traditional identities of “metro areas” and the idea of the self-determined community. Their shared opinions, and shared lines of thought even when the opinions differed, reflect the sense of community that all members of Roswell share.

However, the linguistic aspect of this study tied these four Roswell youths together to a degree that pulled them farther apart from the older generations than did the content of our conversations, thus further dividing them into another community. As I have discussed the significance of social factors such as age as existing separate from regional factors, I identified a number of interesting terms used during the conversation portion of the interview that connected the informants as a younger generation of American English speakers in general, now that we have seen how each citizen relates to the community of Roswell cross-generationally. In describing the social behavior and stratification of various groups of students at Roswell High School, one informant remarked that it was not “all Mean Girls style,” referencing a movie released a few years ago that those of older generations would have had little reason to see, or at least to have applied to their own lives if they had. Another interesting phenomenon noted was the usage of the word huge beyond its classical definition as an adjective describing something that is physically large. Both male informants used this term to mean something that was important to them or cool in someway, as in the phrase, “front porches are huge,” which one informant said while discussing features he enjoys about houses. While such utterances have little to do with Roswell, and while a specialized lexicon within a demographic is certainly not
surprising, I think it is interesting to note that these two items could be classified as descriptors, meaning that what the youths are describing has not been given as specialized a vocabulary as has the way of describing them. Perhaps in constructing future interviews, more focus should be placed on these rather than strictly an objective lexicon, though I must also acknowledge the elusive nature of “slang.”

At this stage in Phase I the informants showed themselves as identifying both with a younger demographic community through lexical items such as huge and with ones associated with a place called Roswell; however, the second part of my original research question had not been answered. In order to quantify the “Southern” in their speech, I performed a feature count on each of my four interviews, as stated above, enumerating the instances at which speakers used token features from the set of General Southern and Upland Southern characteristics previously defined by the original authors of Roswell Voices. I also qualitatively selected the “most” Southern speaker from each of the two older demographic groups and performed a feature count on their interviews as a basis for comparison. I found that three out of my four informants had identifiable Southern characteristics, with the “most” Southern speaker showing 80 instances of marked Southern pronunciation, while the other two had 45 and 28 instances of marked Southern pronunciation. The fourth informant exhibited none of the characteristics I used to determine Southern speech patterns, but the content of her interview suggests a particular disdain for the South and an embrace of her family’s Northern heritage that may explain a conscious effort to suppress these features.

Considering this informant as a potential outlier to a larger trend, I found a Southern accent to still be pervasive among the others, though when compared to the “most” Southern
speaker of each of the other two demographic groups, whose counts totaled 121 for those between the ages of 35 and 65 and 180 for those aged 65 or older, the numbers were smaller. I concluded, however, that the disparity can be explained through the lack of some of the Upland or Plantation Southern characteristics in the speech of the younger informants. In this phase, the most salient General Southern characteristics among the informants were pre-nasal vowel raising (pen vs. pin), movement of nucleus of the diphthong /ai/, and initial stress pattern. A full list describing the features counted and a breakdown of features by informant and frequency of usage of each can be found in the appendices at the end of Chapter III.

Comparing the rate of occurrence for the most salient features in my most Southern informant against those of the two older age groups yielded a mathematical basis for claiming a new Roswell speech type. Informant A (my informant) produced a marked pronunciation of /ai/ 45 percent (40/59) of the time, while Informant E (35 plus) and Informant F (65 plus) produced one 25 (15/60) and 81 percent (73/90) respectively. With z-values of 4.128 and .986, only the larger age gap comparison is significant at the .05 level. Internally, we have a fairly high percentage suggesting a normal speech pattern, yet it is also a different “normal” than speakers who came of age at least during his grandparents’ times. Similarly when comparing the rates of prenasal merger – A: 45% (32/70), E: 28% (20/71), F: 17% (13/76) – we see that the difference is also significant, with z-values of 1.984 and 3.559, which we might have expected noting Bailey’s record of how late this feature actually developed. However, when comparing the rates of marked word-initial stress the values are not significantly different, showing that some features have been preserved while others have changed with time.
Phase II – September through December, 2008

The second phase of my study of the youth of Roswell confirmed my results from the previous stage: that a sense of being a part of both the Roswell community and a young community brings them together, and that some sort of Southern accent still prevails among these speakers. I interviewed five new informants, three female and two male, all aged between 20 and 22. Four identify as Caucasian while the fifth does not choose to identify as any single ethnicity due to mixed ancestry.

As in Phase I, I noted a definite continuity from informant to informant on topics such as religion, school, and social values. However, I focused some of my questioning and most of my analysis for this phase to focus more on community definition: how each informant defined Roswell geographically, both immediately and within the context of “the South,” as well as where each informant felt they fit into Roswell socially, a particularly salient issue given the prevalent wealth in the city. When broaching the topic of cars and homes, for example, all five informants maintained that they represented the average citizen. In each instance the informant described a home with a finished basement, bonus rooms, and bedrooms for each member of the family. The normal vehicle was often described as being a BMW or a Mercedes. The interesting phenomenon that I noted from these descriptions was that the informants were always quick and adamant to say that there were people even wealthier and better off than they, rather than to be proud of what they have. When defining a community one must take into account shared experiences, and it seems that all of the informants, including those from Phase I, share a common emotional connection to the situation of affluence and its connotations, chief among which are the sense of standing out or being different. Therefore, part of what brings these young
people together as a distinct community is both their relative wealth and the discomfort it brings them to admit it to others. Obviously this sets them apart from their parents’ generation, who presumably moved into Roswell because they had that wealth available and were not ashamed to purchase cars and homes which reflected their status. Perhaps a shift in the definition of the “American Dream” as well as an increased awareness of the world on the part of the younger generation contributes to the attitude present in the interviews.

People are also commonly brought together by recognizing what everyone else is not; that is, rather than discretely defining their own group they define how opposing groups are not like them (Zelinsky 1992). In both phases of the study I asked the informants to comment on how they thought Roswell related to the other metro Atlanta communities bordering it, such as Alpharetta and Marietta, and in general they all responded that each city had the same two essential characteristics: being upper class and being white. However, one of my informants in Phase II commented upon specific boundaries of Roswell that did not match up exactly with actual municipal boundaries, prompting me to ask each of the other informants how they defined Roswell physically. I found that there is a “Roswell Roswell” and an “East Roswell,” a division created physically by Georgia Highway 400 but reinforced by the distance from the downtown area and the relatively recent creation of Centennial High School and subsequent redistricting. Four informants came to the conclusion that for them the latter was not even “really” part of the Roswell community. One of my informants, though, was from this East Roswell area and she could not define for me any boundaries within Roswell. I think part of the difference can be explained by the recent incorporation of much of north Fulton County which caused a shift in the borders of Roswell and Alpharetta, but the importance of such statements to this study is that
once again we find proof that the people who identify as being “natives” of Roswell form a distinct enough population that they even question whether their own legal borders truly define their community.

One thing all informants from both phases seemed to agree upon was that Roswell was fundamentally not Southern, at least not in a way that brought immediate affirmation and recognition. One informant used the phrase “tamed Southern,” while commenting on the culture; but considering that most research points both to the coexistence of many different Southern dialects, as well as to the many misconceptions of what is technically Southern, the term might indeed be apt. As a large portion of my project concerns the question of community definition, the fact that there is a community within the traditional community boundary of the South that apparently does not self-identify as such is intriguing, and it opens the door to other questions such as whether Roswellians at large share this opinion or just those included in my sample. The linguistic implications are interesting as well, because I must ask myself whether I can objectively identify a speech community as being Southern if the community itself does not agree with that label.

What certainly cannot be done, however, is to use the intertwining of the social and linguistic aspects of this survey to ignore making any conclusions. Lexically within the interviews both of the terms highlighted in Phase I – Mean Girls style and huge – occurred again, reinforcing their importance to defining the group. I encountered another example which contributed to the earlier noted idea of the redefinition of adjectives. On two separate occasions, two informants used the term glorious to refer to something ‘great.’ While the definitions are related, it is unlikely that earlier generations would have used the word so casually, as in the
phrase, “...we uh have like a Thanksgiving Day party more or less. Both moms cook and it’s
glorious.” But as words like these lose their specialized meanings, we should expect them to
appear more often and in more diverse contexts. After all, in the oldest recording meaning of the
word, something “great” would have only been ‘coarse’ (OED Online).

The fixed elicitation portion of the interview continued to show many similarities
between the informants, and the differences that did occur served to reinforce the conclusions
drawn by my feature count, discussed below. My two “least” Southern informants did not
provide Coke as a general word for soft drink, nor did they provide y’all as a term of address for
multiple people. The similarities found in the rest of the questions do serve to identify them as
belonging to the same, broader geographic location as the other informants.

My feature count of these five new informants added some interesting new information to
the previous, in that the new data might at first appear to invalidate my previous conclusions.
The average count of Southern features was much higher than in Phase I, and in addition two
features of Upland Southern were noted multiple times among two of the younger speakers. My
two “least” Southern speakers had total counts of 9 and 17, both extremely low proportions; the
next most Southern had 54; and the two highest totaled 134 and 144, counts which are higher
than the most Southern speaker of those aged 35-65 as described in Phase I. The wide variety
found here is hard to explain, because my explanation regarding the informant with zero features
in Phase I – that she has a negative opinion of the South – could not be applied here, because
even those informants with the highest counts acknowledge a stigma associated with the
Southern accent. In fact, the informant with the greatest number of features suggesting a
Southern accent does not even believe he has one.
Despite the disparity, however, I believe that my conclusions are still justified. Firstly, regarding the higher than expected values, while it is true that Upland Southern features were found in two of my younger informants, the vast majority of the features counted came from the General Southern category, chief among these pre-nasal vowel raising, monophthongization of [aɪ] and a word initial stress pattern. In the interview of the speaker whose count they surpassed, I found characteristics such as loss of post-vocalic /r/ in unstressed syllables, schwa insertion (the much discussed stereotypical “drawl”), and intrusion of [æ] before the diphthongs [aʊ] and [eɪ] that were not at all present in these new interviews, which points to a very different type of accent regardless of the occurrence of the other features.

As in Phase I, at this point it is appropriate to move beyond the raw numbers of features and their type to some statistical tests of significance. Once again, the rate of incidence of /ai/ shortening was significant in my most Southern speaker of the group – Informant H with a percentage of 65 (42/65) – compared to the two older informants (z of 4.264 and 2.114); also similarly to Phase I Informant H’s rate of prenasal merger of 68 percent (44/65) is significantly different from the others (z of 4.440 and 5.929). Once again the numbers show a distinction between internal make up and the make up of the dialect across age groups.

It is unclear to me, however, why triphthongization of [oʊ] to [əʊʊ] (also referred to as /oh/ fronting in Labov) and reversal of [i] and [ɪ] were the Upland characteristics picked up by these new informants. Of course, it is impossible to predict exactly what any speaker is going to say at any given time. One of the most important aspects of studying language is recognizing that individuals have a choice in deciding what to say and how to say it. Can we even say that these features are part of a dialect system? The two informants who showed these features, H and K,
had proportions of 20 percent (12/60) and 19 percent (13/65) respectively for triphthongization, and 10 percent (9/90) and 15 percent (17/92) respectively for the front vowel reversal, whereas the two older informants, E and F, had proportions of 12 percent (6/50) and 3 percent (1/40) respectively for triphthongization and 9 percent (4/47 and 4/48) for both concerning the vowel reversal. Interestingly enough, the only comparative change that is statistically significant in this case is a marked increase of triphthongization between both of the younger informants and the oldest informant (z values of 2.246 and 2.226 respectively at p = .05), indicating perhaps a resurgence of this feature in newer Southern dialects.

As for my informants who did not exhibit any exclusively Upland features, perhaps there is a hierarchy of characteristics – what is called an implicational scale wherein certain features are present if and only if a certain other feature is present as well – that has yet to be clearly defined. My counts could provide evidence for such a hierarchy if one examines the extremes. At the very low count the most salient features are initial stress pattern and prenasal vowel raising. The mid range count begins to see fronting of [u] in words like “food”, monophthongization of [ɔɪ] and monophthongization of [aɪ] emerge. The younger informants with Upland features stop at triphthongization of [ʊʊ] to [əʊʊ] and reversal of [i] and [ɪ], but the middle-aged informant exhibits loss of post-vocalic /r/ in unstressed syllables, schwa insertion, and intrusion of [æ] before the diphthongs [aʊ] and [eɪ]; the oldest informant exhibits those to an even greater degree while also losing all post-vocalic /r/ pronunciation. The speakers with a low feature count do not hurt the previous conclusions, despite that their very existence might superficially say otherwise. The fact remains that certain features do exist in their speech, and though my sample size is small any extrapolation would point to the majority of speakers – six out of nine if both phases
are counted – speaking with this new, less marked Southern accent. More interviews and more
in-depth type/token analysis would have to be performed to see whether the implicational scale
exists in a larger population.

Though regardless of whether there is this sort of “feature hierarchy” – as can be found to
exist in studies of second language acquisition – it is interesting to note that both the overarching
count across all informants, as well as each informant’s internal feature counts, follow the A-
curve distribution described in Chapter II, where one or two features occur at a relatively high
frequency, a few occur in the midrange, and the rest occur at isolated instances. Thus, as
Kretzschmar predicts, my data provide further evidence for the applicability of the complexity
science model toward dialect research. The “new, less marked Southern accent,” as I just called
it, or the “New Roswell Speech type,” as it has been named in previous publications, can then be
said to be a surface normalization of the most salient features along the A-curve. At this level of
analysis, or scale, the community of youth in Roswell does indeed have an identifiable dialect,
regardless of its relation to other Roswell communities or the South at large.

Thus Phase II continues to support the claim that a New Roswell speech pattern does
exist, maybe because of rather than despite the ever rapidly changing nature of the city. All five
informants have a clear idea of what Roswell is to them, and are in their own ways proud to
identify themselves from Roswell.

TABLE I – Feature Breakdown by Occurrence (n)

This table presents the token occurrences of each feature recorded. The numbers refer to the list in
Figure 1, while the informants (A-D) represent Phase I, (E-F) the most Southern speaker aged 35 and
older and aged 65 and older, respectively, and (F-J) represent Phase II. The features are shown in the order of the proposed implicational scale.

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TABLE II – Proportion of Feature Incidence (%)

This table presents the type/token proportions of each feature recorded. The numbers refer to the list in Figure 1, while the informants (A-D) represent Phase I, (E-F) the most Southern speaker aged 35 and older and aged 65 and older, respectively, and (F-J) represent Phase II. The features are shown in the order of the proposed implicational scale.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>44.3</td>
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<td>35.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER VI
ACOUSTIC PHONETIC ANALYSIS

Impressionistic observations provide a point from which to proceed when attempting to analyze and categorize specific features of speech. Because the human machine is imperfect, empirical research requires a step beyond. Yet when talking about actual realizations of speech some linguists tend to oversimplify and maintain the absolute distinction of phonemes. It is more accurate, however, to think of speech sounds in terms of a continuum. In a continuous vocalization with two different target vowels at each end, the point where one sound ends and the other begins is hard to identify. Additionally, the ends of that continuum themselves are in flux not only from speaker to speaker but within the speaker himself. Thus even the most detailed examination of vowels has complications, just as an impressionistic one would. All that said, in order to have a truer understanding of what sounds are actually being produced by the speaker, it is indeed helpful and necessary to implement acoustic phonetic analysis. I have chosen to focus on one feature in particular that has been highlighted both by Kretzschmar (2007, 2008), and that constitutes part of Labov’s Southern Chain shift: the trend toward monophthongization of the diphthong /ai/.

While the doors acoustical phonetic analysis opens can lead to many different research paths utilizing many different components, for my project I have focused on two factors: simple duration of the utterance, and the values of the first and second formants. The term “formant” refers to the resonant harmonic frequencies, normally measured in Hertz (Hz), produced by air moving through the vocal tract. Each vowel sound produced in human speech has a unique range
of formant values, and thus can be traced on a particular graph known as a spectrogram. Vowels also have multiple formants, as a result of harmonics, and so the common notation referring to formant values is $F_n$, where $n$ is the number of the harmonic, such as 1 or 2; this will be the notation used in this paper from this point forward.

The definitive text for acoustic analysis in American dialectology is Erik Thomas’s *Vowel Variation in New World English*, and is therefore what my analysis will use as a reference. Thomas works to “point out the salient features of different dialects and idiolects” (4). In so doing he tries to represent the relative frequencies of different vowels as they compare across large groups of people, as in how Southerners compare to Northerners or to themselves, or how young people may differ from old. However, I will also be comparing my data to that of the findings of Holbrook and Fairbanks (1962), for further analysis of my tokens versus “General American.” Recall from the earlier discussion on the development of dialect research that one cannot really say that such a monolithic or standard dialect physically exists, yet in this case my concern is with the lack of comprehensive norms in Thomas’s work, whatever you may choose to call the set from which they are derived.

Due to the advance in technological imaging over the last half a century, the actual process of obtaining and presenting my data takes its basis from the Thomas text rather than from Holbrook and Fairbanks. In detailing how to begin selecting tokens for analysis, Thomas makes mention of coarticulation, or the production of one sound as affected by those around it, which can skew values considerably. Thus, he avoids tokens within “certain [phonetic] contexts that show an especially strong coarticulatory effect” (10). In order to avoid the same problem, I examine tokens that occur between two voiceless consonants, or between a voiced plosive and a
voiceless consonant. By clearly delineating between the voicing of the vowel and the rest of the word, a more distinct picture of the vowel can be reached. In his research, Thomas also uses around ten tokens per informant, which is satisfactory but can also skew the data as being a relatively small sample; because of that possibility, I have decided to use 30 tokens, obtained by identifying and exporting whole words as .wav files using the free editing software Audacity.

In my measurements I look at F1 and F2 only. Thomas’s recordings of F3 and F0 were used strictly for analyzing more technical aspects of vowel characterization such as lip-rounding, /r/ and /l/ coloring, as well as for measuring some prosodic functions of the utterances, none of which factor into my research. Thomas ultimately presents in his plots only F1 and F2 regardless, so these data points do provide a satisfactory idea of the shape of a vowel.

As far as actually measuring the formants, Thomas presents a couple of methods. In his study, he takes a frequency reading at the middle of the duration of the vowel, as well as 25 ms from either end. This 25 ms buffer is used to avoid coarticulatory confusion. In other analyses, Thomas says a method which can also be used accurately is to take readings at a quarter, halfway, and three quarters through the duration of the vowel. Using an adaptation of the quarter method – but instead taking values at twenty percent and eighty percent of the vowel’s duration – was preferable for my analysis because I used the phonetic analysis software Praat, which is dependent on user-designed computer scripts to manage large amounts of data. The basis for most of my script was taken from scripts provided on public forums, and the quarter method secured better functionality within the scripts. However, a useful marker from Thomas’s work was used, in that any vowel with a total duration of less than 70 ms was not counted as a
diphthong, pertinent as my goal was only to measure rates of monophthongization and not monophthongs themselves (Thomas 12).

Before I move on to further detail my process and results, Thomas also provides an informative background of the production /ai/ in the Southeast and throughout the United States, an important basis for establishing the significance of my own findings. In his own words, this vowel is “one of the most heavily studied vowels because much of its variation is stereotypical,” and thus can provide a good indication of regional dialect. Movement of the vowel nucleus of /ai/ is indicative of many dialects throughout the United States and Canada, but historically the issue in the South has been glide shortening – the reduction of the /i/ or “glide” portion of the diphthong – or complete monophthongization (Thomas 37).

As has been stated earlier, many different dialects occur within the South, mainly falling into at least two larger categories, which can be distinguished in their production of /ai/ in certain cases. In those places with a strong history of plantation culture, glide weakening before voiceless consonants is rare; however, in the area of the South Midland/Upland South, speakers have been found to tend toward monophthongization in virtually all cases. My decision to look at vowels preceding voiceless consonants will also serve to see whether the current residents of Roswell, in the Upland region, will continue to follow that traditional pattern.

As stated above, I opted to use the software called Praat in order to process my acoustic data. Praat is an open-source, downloadable freeware created by Paul Boersma and David Weenink of the University of Amsterdam (http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat). The code provides for a wide range of functionalities in manipulating and analyzing speech, which the user can
write into his own program, or script. The script then uses the predetermined commands within the coding of Praat itself to give the desired results.

Before any Praat script can function, however, it must have properly prepared data to retrieve and process. As mentioned earlier, I took 30 instances from each interview, saving them as .wav files and labeling them according to their original phonetic context, e.g., “tight.wav” Once I had an individual file, I was able to open it as an object within the Praat program and link it to a editable “text grid.” This allowed me to not only see the spectrogram of the sound itself, but also to label individual instances within that sound file; in this case, I chose to mark approximately the onset and the coda, or beginning and end, of the diphthong in question and label the interim “/ai/.” My script, for which I am heavily indebted to the programming knowledge of Daniel Hirst of the Laboratoire Parole & Langue at the Université de Provence, told Praat to search for all sounds labeled /ai/ within my data folder, and to subsequently record the duration of the vowel (in milliseconds), and the frequency values (in Hertz) of F1 and F2 at twenty, fifty, and eighty percent of the marked vowel. All of these numbers were printed onto a separate text document.

The calculation of glide shortening, or the monophthongization trend, involved the extreme values of both formants. I wrote above that each vowel sound has its own unique formant pattern that can be seen on a spectrogram. For example, if we look at data from Peterson and Barney (1952) as presented by Kent and Read (2002), we find that the vowels /a/ and /i/ (chosen here because of their intrinsic relationship with the diphthong in question) for a sample of adult males have a mean F1 frequency of 730 and 270 respectively, and a mean F2 frequency of 1090 and 2290 respectively. However in the case of /ai/, as with all diphthongs, it is more
difficult to rely on a single vocal tract shape or a single formant pattern in describing them versus pure vowels (Kent and Read 2002).

Consequently, as mentioned above we must focus on what we can learn from the “movement” of the vowel, or the relative change in the glide. So rather than measure only means, it follows that we should examine the rate of change of F1 and F2. Holbrook and Fairbanks report that the average initial F1 and F2 values for 20 tokens of /ai/ was 750 and 1280, with the mean final values at 572 and 1942. Given that the length of measurement of each utterance was .25 seconds, the normalized rate of change for F1 and F2 in this study is then -712 Hz/sec and 2648 Hz/sec. Following the same normalization process, I determined the average rates of change against these numbers to measure the extent of glide shortening.

My hypothesis for this part of my research supposed that as the glides in /ai/ became shorter, the rates of change would approach zero, and thus would point to the characterization of that speaker having a Southern speech mode. I do not suggest that even pure vowels would have a truly nonexistent rate of change in their formants, merely that in the target method of graphing and presenting the relationship of formants between distinct vowels we see a relatively tight zone for each vowel but an arrow of “movement” when talking about the diphthongs that can be said to be comprised of two of those zones.

Actual analysis yielded mixed results. For F1, all informants uniformly had a higher rate of change than the data reported in Holbrook and Fairbanks, ranging from -1226 to -1870. While statistically both ends of this range are significant compared to -712, the implication certainly does not follow my original line of thought. Also interestingly the range does not reflect my original conclusions about who among my informants could be considered more or less Southern
than the rest. Internally I do not find this scalar consistency, nor does the informant with the lowest rate support my hypothesis of being the most Southern, for rather he was one of the least. Additionally, F1 change in general deals with fronting of vowels in general, and thus any movement detected could simply reflect the variable onset location of vowels among speakers.

Analysis of F2, however, seemed more promising. In this case I did see the beginnings of scale that reflected my earlier type/token count of /ai/ showing the “least” Southern informants trending towards the data of Holbrook and Fairbanks and the “more” Southern informants trending towards zero, with a couple of exceptions. None of my values contradicted those reported in their research; my range was 2380 at most to 1238 at the least. A change of 2380 is statistically significant in this case compared to the reported norm of 2648.

One factor that could also add to the explanation of my results is the duration of the various vowels in question. As previously stated, Thomas does not consider a token lasting less than 70 ms to be a diphthong; following his lead, I did not factor any tokens of my own with a shorter duration but rather included a value of change at 0. What I found in my data was that those speakers who had been considered less Southern after the type/token phase did not have a single token lasting less than 74 ms, whereas my most Southern speakers had a number of tokens changed to the zero value because they failed to meet the 70 ms cut off. While in and of itself the observation of greater amounts of monophthongs in these speakers is not itself conclusive, I feel that it is of some value to note and to take into consideration with the acoustic values.

Looking at Thomas’s data, I improved my look at glide shortening by understanding how variability within a speech community does not negate the existence of that community. Holbrook and Fairbanks showed that the country wide norms and the values collected from
Roswell at the very least differed significantly, while not always in the expected fashion. An equal comparison to other Southern speakers would be needed to validate any conclusions. Unfortunately Thomas does not provide a data table with specific numbers, but the graphs provided – which in this section are luckily drawn all to the same scale – do allow us to note the relative movement of F1 and F2 for the /ai/ diphthong of speakers from the same geographical area as Roswell. From his data, he concludes that this region is distinct for its intense glide shortening, among other factors. Yet for the values of the formants of /ai/, even given that the beginning and end frequencies themselves of any vowel with always vary from person to person, the rates of change between the informants also varied widely from extreme F2 increases to hardly any at all.

Actual data values finally rounded out my comparison against what is “Southern.” The data I used is from a paper from Auburn University which studied the effects of dialect reduction programs in public schools in Buford, GA, only about a half an hour’s drive from Roswell, making the data a fairly appropriate comparison point. The data was being compared against what is generally considered to be standard, so in order for their study to be valid we must assume that their collected values represent a Southern dialect. The average range for F1 of /ai/ in the Auburn study was 829 to 705, while the average for F2 was 1484 to 1874. In my data the average ranges were 714 to 613 for F1 and 1593 to 1825 for F2. Using a t-test for means, I find that these ranges are not significantly different from one another. Of course, at the very least all such a correlation means is that one group of Southern speakers is similar in /ai/ production to another group of Southern speakers and cannot really speak for every Southern dialect in the nation; however, such a conclusion is not even necessary. I have found that my group is not
anomalous, and that the proposed “New Roswell” speech type may be a part of, if not Labov’s chain shift, then at least a broader characterization of Southern speech in northern Georgia.

### TABLE III – Averages of Acoustic Means (Hz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Average F1 20%</th>
<th>Average F1 80%</th>
<th>Average F1 20%</th>
<th>Average 80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1416</td>
<td>1674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td>1807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>1522</td>
<td>1799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>2088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>1744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>1569</td>
<td>1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>577</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>1824</td>
</tr>
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### TABLE IV – Average Rate of Change of Acoustic Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Average Duration</th>
<th>Average rate of ΔF1</th>
<th>Average rate of ΔF2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>.110 sec</td>
<td>-1387 Hz/sec</td>
<td>2027 Hz/sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>-1870</td>
<td>2380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>-1536</td>
<td>1539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>-1835</td>
<td>2270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>-1578</td>
<td>2280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>-1576</td>
<td>1238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>1540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>-1533</td>
<td>2164</td>
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</table>
TABLE V – Total Average Change of Acoustic Means (Hz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Average Duration</th>
<th>Average ΔF1</th>
<th>Average ΔF2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>-163</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>-232</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>-186</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>-229</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>-202</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>-137</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>-193</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>-129</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>-159</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While transcribing the interviews, I came across an interesting phenomenon that I wish to comment upon that could be used as a point of departure for future studies. None of the topics discussed over the course of the interview forced any informant to disclose possibly damaging information, or to speculate wildly on sensitive topics, but some of their speech patterns seemed to suggest that they were doing just that. I identified three phrases that I believe the informants used to create some sort of distance between themselves and what they were saying even when there was no perceived need for them to do so.

The following three phrases were counted: *I mean*, *I would say*, and *I feel like*. In order to count these accurately as “distance creators” I disqualified those instances where they follow their classic semantic values, which I defined as follows: for *I mean*, the speaker states X mistakenly, and follows with the correction Y; for *I would say*, any time the informant is responding to a question specifically phrased “How/What would you say?”; and for *I feel like*, when there is a self-referential predicate nominative or adjective as in, “I feel like a ton of bricks just hit me”. I found that the values were not constant among all of the interviews, but each speaker always employed at least two of these devices. Upon reexamining where the marked Southern tokens were found relative to the use of these hedging devices, I could find no immediately apparent correlation between degree of “Southern” and the overall frequency of use among these terms, so I believe their significance lies in defining a general “youth” speech. The
phrase *I mean* occurred most often, with *I feel like* occurring the least. The table at the end of this chapter details the results of this count.

Of course, the observer effect could explain the use of these items, in that the microphone’s very presence encouraged the informants to couch their answers in a particular fashion; however as a speaker from this community myself I have noticed an increased use of terms like these in everyday speech. Another explanation which takes into consideration their everyday nature could be that just as “like” and “um” are used to prevent any sort of period of silence, so these could be semantically valuable discourse markers, allowing the speaker more time to appropriately phrase his or her answer without causing a break in continuity. However, as I previously stated these statements within the context of the conversation seem to be employed for distancing the speaker away from what they are actually saying, as exemplified by the following statements:

“I think I think just group Marietta and Roswell well or I probably separate just because I’ve lived in both but overall in general I pretty much put them together. *I feel like* they’re pretty comfortable living areas location wise.”

“Um but we did trips we uh went on of like beach vacations *I would say* um kind of always to the same place growing up.”

“Just friends getting together *I mean* they weren’t like huge parties it was just with my group of friends. Someone would organize it.”

With regard to my project, these hedge markers present a couple of interesting thoughts. While as I stated above it is not conclusive whether these phrases curb the preponderance of marked speech within their proximity, I do think it would be not unfair to say that they may contribute holistically to a reduction in Southern features. In both phases of my research I was able to identify that the Southern accent was not really in any way desirable among this
community, or at the very least my informants seemed aware of a prevailing opinion in that vein. Ignoring the linguistic implications momentarily, I saw that in my discussions of the Roswell community, there were certain aspects, such as affluence, that made the group uniformly uncomfortable. Perhaps the hedges in the speech of this young, Roswell community reflect a broader sense of hesitation in communication with anyone not immediately identifiable as part of their group. Zelinksy says that interactions between communities can yield behavioral anomalies, but even in everyday life most of us would observe that too. In the end why the youth of Roswell would feel the need to create the distance is uncertain, but perhaps when living in a “Politically Correct” culture, as one of my informants put it, the hesitancy to make assertions spreads to all walks of life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“I mean”</th>
<th>“I would say”</th>
<th>“I feel like”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
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<td>I</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

A lot has been said in this paper about Southern Englishes, and about how Roswell may fit into that larger category. Whether or not we can include the speech of Roswell in larger schemes such as the Southern shift, we have from the beginning had to acknowledge that it is changing. In my discussions I have shown that the findings of the original Roswell Voices team were valid; the younger speakers depart in how they use key speech features that distinguished speakers from Roswell in past generations. Given the variable nature of the responses given by all my informants throughout the interviews, they were also right to question whether any new and sustainable speech type was actually emerging in any significant way.

However, certain conclusions can be drawn indicating that perhaps there is. The lexical items that I highlighted above, the new “descriptors,” may be around for the long haul. Certain similar characteristics may be attributed to age grading, that is speech habits that are not retained nor passed on but occur only in limited life stages, yet if we were to examine the history of the usage of words like “awesome,” we may see things a bit differently. Of course, there is no frame of reference to say that such changes are occurring uniformly throughout American English, and in fact such generalization rarely have much merit, but at least in the window of Roswell and other similar communities, we may have a new direction for study.

In answering the all important question of just how “Southern” the speech of Roswell is, we already have certain evidence to suggest that because of the history of the place this is all we can expect. However, my features counts also showed synchronically that aspects of Southern
speech occur in most of my speakers, and that perhaps what is more important is which of these features occur most often. The fact that features associated with the most “universal” Southern accent appeared most often is crucial, showing perhaps a leveling impact of both an influx of people all over the South, and a greater degree of a more neutral Southern speech affected by the correlation between affluence in this country and a higher tendency to employ as unmarked a speech as possible, though we know complete demarking is impossible.

From a statistical and scientific standpoint, we can delve deeper into the importance of the features that appeared in the informants’ speech. I found that not only were the General Southern features more prevalent, but that three among those – stress shifting, /ai/ monophthongization, and the pen/pin merger – were the few that emerge as statistically significant, both across generations of Roswell speakers and as compared against other speakers of Southern and non-Southern American English. Analysis of the rate at which features appeared in my informants speech showed that an implicational scale may be able to be derived, and that Upland features may in fact be a part of the New Roswell dialect to some extent. The proportions of marked speech across generations indicated beyond the perceptual level that language has changed in Roswell; comparison of changes and rates of change in formant means of /ai/ indicated that despite this change the dialect remains distinct, rather than trending towards the hypothetical standard.

My findings also revalidated the theory behind complexity science in language, since my feature counts could be mapped against the A-curve model. Some people might feel more comfortable if from all this I could say that there was a new Roswell “dialect” within Southern speech. Such a generalization, though, would erase part of the complexity and significance of
this study’s findings. The ranges of formant values, as well as the varied rates at which marked speech occurred in my informants, does not negate the fact that these informants do fit within a single categorization at a certain level of scale, compared to other speech communities in the South. In general, language is rapidly changing, everywhere, always, and putting dialect labels on speech types can at times be artificial at best. What we have now, however, is a sense of the direction speech in Roswell is taking, and a hint of some sustainability.

Yet ultimately, Roswell Voices is a study about community. Oftentimes we fall into traps bemoaning the loss of past traditions and ways of life. In less than a century, Roswell has doubled its population nearly 50 times; no one can argue that things have changed. Though in Roswell, and perhaps throughout all of its sister communities throughout North Atlanta, a new sense of community and identity is being created based on the traditions of the past. Religion is still strong, though how it is celebrated may have changed. New schools have been built, but pride in education still thrives. Farm life disappears, but new industry comes in, and new ways to hang out and have fun with sports leagues and nature centers come about as well. No doubt 60 years from now, when another study about life in Roswell is done, my informants will be just as concerned for the community’s future as those in Roswell Voices are today. Certainly the way they will speak and they way they carry on their lives will differ; though if the sense of community and identity that has been broadcasted in this study remains, I don’t think they’ll have anything to worry about.
APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PLAN

Below is a copy of the interview plan used in the conversation portion of the interviews:

**Churches**

Has church always been an important/integral part of life in Roswell?

Is church still as important in the community today as it was historically?

Do you attend church in the community? If so, which church do you attend?

What types of activities did church members participate in? Did the churches sponsor dinners on Sunday or retreats/revivals?

What about weddings in Roswell? Do people tend to marry folks from the community? Are people still marrying within the community or is that changing? Are there any special customs you remember?

**Daily Life**

As a child, what types of chores were you expected to do around the home? Were there chores assigned to the boys and chores assigned to the girls? What was your home like; can you give us a tour in words?

Were there any special activities that you remember from your family life?

Did you have any favorite meals when you ate at home? Did you have foods that you ate all the time?

**Schools**

What sort of education did you have? What school/schools did you attend in the area? What were they like? Were there both public and private schools?

Where did African Americans go to school? Integration was an important event. What were the effects of integration on the schools and students in Roswell?
Are there any funny or interesting stories about school here in Roswell? Any stories of favorite teachers or school events?
Were there different groups of students at school? (Names for those groups.) What made a person a member of one group or the other? Did the students have favorite places to "hang out" or favorite activities after school? Has this changed for your children (names, places).

**Urbanization and Atlanta**

What are some of the differences between Roswell and Atlanta? Do you feel that Roswell is still a small town or has a small town feeling?

Has the large size of Atlanta impacted Roswell? If it has, how do you feel about the impact it has had on the community?

Do you think that people that currently live in the community see themselves as being from Roswell or being from Atlanta?

How do people get to Atlanta? What kinds of vehicles did you or your parents drive? What do you call a vehicle that uses a lot of gas?

How well are outsiders integrated into the Roswell community?

What do newer residents do to fit in the Roswell community? Are there organizations that they become involved in that help them to become better integrated?

How long do you have to live in Roswell to be considered to be from Roswell?

**Historical Buildings and Events, Institutions**

There are many historic and well-known buildings in Roswell. Do people currently live in these homes or are they only used for meetings etc.?

Have you visited the majority of these buildings? In your opinion which one is the most interesting or has the most interesting history? Do you have any family stories that emphasize local history?

Does Roswell have any special celebrations or yearly events? What are they like?

Nowadays, lots of people go to the mall instead of going to individual stores. Is this a good kind of change for you, or for Roswell?
Below is a copy of the Q&A portion of the interview, aimed at producing dialectal responses:

1. What do you call a body of running water, like a river but smaller?
2. What do you call the place to get water outside of a house, where you might put a hose?
3. Do you call a place to get water by the same or a different name if it is inside of the house?
4. What do you call the thing that you get a drink of water from in a school?
5. What do you call the drink made with milk and ice cream?
6. What do you call the drink that is fizzy and usually sweet, often sold in can or bottles?
7. What do you call the long sandwich that is made with cold cuts, lettuce, and other items?
8. What do you call the breakfast food made by pouring batter on a hot cooking surface?
9. What do you call the store that is also located where you get gas that sells items like milk and beer and small food items and batteries?
10. What do you call the thing with wheels that you push in a grocery store?
11. How about the thing that groceries are put in to carry them to the car?
12. When you are in a restaurant and you drink a lot of tea or coffee or water, what do you call the place that you then have to visit?
13. Do you call that place by the same name at home, or a different name?
14. What do you call the long piece of furniture in a living room that three people can sit on?
15. What do you call the piece of furniture in the bedroom where you keep small items of clothing like socks?
16. What do you call the kind of shoes, often made out of canvas and rubber, that are worn to play sports or sometimes just for casual wear?
17. What do you call what you wear on your feet at the beach?

18. What did you (or do you) call your mother’s mother?

19. What did you (or do you) call your father’s mother?  the same?

20. What did you (or do you) call your mother’s father?

21. What did you (or do you) call your father’s father?  the same?

22. What do you call an especially attractive man?

23. How about an especially attractive woman?

24. If you address one person as "you," how do you address several people at once? (can this word also be used to address just one person?)
WORKS CITED


