

SOURDOUGHS IN THE CITY:

Towards an Understanding of Regional Variation in Anchorage, Alaska



UAA Academic Innovations & Learning
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1. Overview

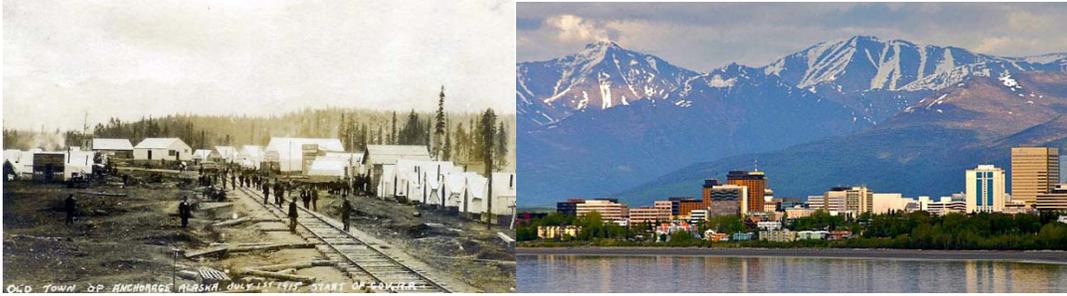
- Sociohistorical Context of Anchorage
 - Tent City to Annexed Municipality
 - Language Varieties
 - Fairview and Government Hill Neighborhoods
- Brief qualitative look at language and concepts of community/region
- t/d deletion
- Vowel distribution
- Where will we go from here?

2. Anchorage, Alaska in the Context of the Lower 48



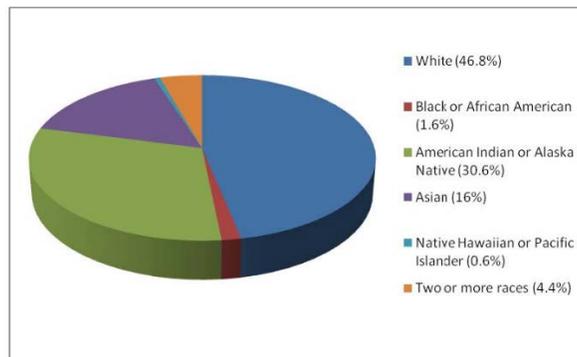
- Many spaces in Alaska are not accessible by car, but rather by boat or plane.
- The state's population is very small—to give you an idea, Chicago's population is over 3 times as large as Alaska's. But, the vast majority of Alaska's population (around 300,000) live in the municipality of Anchorage, which is located in the south of the state on the Cook Inlet. The second largest populations in Alaska are Fairbanks in the interior and Juneau, in the Southeast, at around 30,000 each.
- Anchorage is a thriving seaport and a railway hub, but the oil industry, military, and tourism comprise the bulk of the economy.
- Anchorage has the dubious honor of being named one of the top 5 most dangerous metro areas in the United States by *Forbes Magazine*.

3. Anchorage then and now



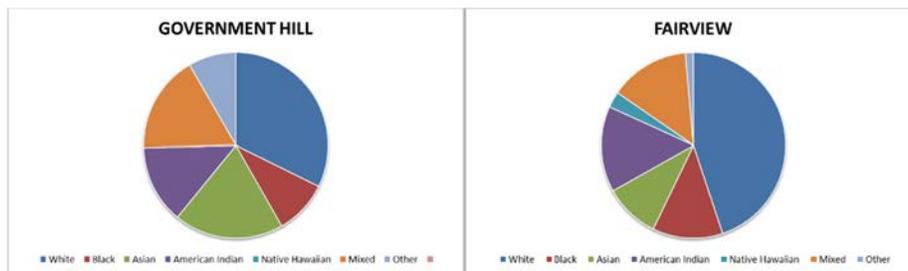
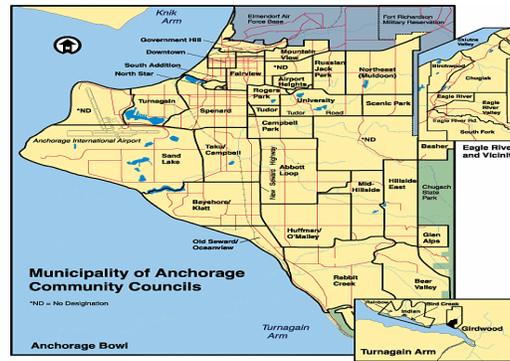
- Anchorage was founded as a tent city in 1914, so this year we are celebrating our Centennial.
- Early on, the tent city began to grow into small, independent townships that had discrete governing structures.
- These townships remained independent until the 1960's when the City of Anchorage began a petition to annex them into the larger municipality
- Several of the towns became official neighborhoods of the Anchorage municipality, including the neighborhoods of Fairview and Government Hill that we are looking at today.

4. Population Distribution in Anchorage



- Anchorage is located on Alaska Native Dena'ina land, but there were (and still are) indigenous populations of Alaska Natives that populate Anchorage, including but not limited to the Athabaskan, Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Inupiaq, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian.
- Anchorage is also home to a variety of Asian, Hispanic and Pacific-Islanders groups as well as a long-standing African-American population. Those who identify themselves as white constitute the largest group.
- Anchorage's population is transient, with about a turnover of 50,000 people per year. However, the number of migration in and out of the municipality are predictably near equal each year because of the strong military presence and also due to the constant shifting of oil company employees.
- "True" Alaskans are those who have been here for twenty or more years. These folks are called Sourdoughs.

5. Location of Government Hill and Fairview Neighborhoods and Population Distribution



- Neighborhoods are quite close together, only separated by the downtown area.
- Both neighborhoods have reputations in Anchorage: Fairview is known for its high crime. Particularly notorious is a corner street of 13th and Gambell where there is quite a bit of disorderly conduct. And, while Government Hill has less crime, primarily due to its location close to the Air Force base and around the industrial area of Ship Creek, it is well known for its ethnic diversity.
- As you can see in the population charts designating race, both communities are actually ethnically diverse showing a similar pattern of distribution with those who identify as white constituting the greatest number of the population.

6. Participants and interview methods for our study

- For our project we have so far interviewed 40 Sourdoughs from various neighborhoods in Anchorage, 24 of whom are residents of Government Hill and Fairview.
- We selected the folks we interviewed by the friend-of-a-friend, with the designation that each participant was considered a “real” Alaskan—that is, they had lived in the area for at least twenty years.
- Most of our participants in the Government Hill and Fairview neighborhoods were at least 30 year residents, with a majority having grown up in Anchorage since children.
- For our interviews, we adopted story corps style which downplays the interviewer and highlights participant conversation with each other.
- At least two participants were interviewed for around an hour and a half. Conversation was actually quite relaxed and natural.

7. Qualitative Quick Glance

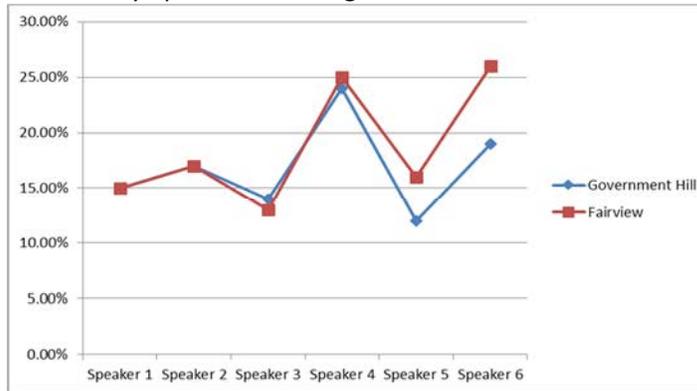
- In both neighborhoods, we found evidence of zero marking for articles, past tense, and prepositional phrases as well as irregular verb usage, multiple negation and object for subject pronouns.
- Evidence for plural –s absence with nouns of weights and measures. Metathesis, intrusive –t, and [δ] for [d] were also quite common, as well as a feature we call intrusive –g, an –ing variant as in *somethink/g else*.

- Both communities have very strong associations with the idea of neighborhood community, but they each have a strong tie with their individual neighborhood.
- Both groups make frequent reference to the history of annexation—remember these neighborhoods were once independent towns—and both neighborhoods have community councils that inform and also give pushback to the municipal government on issues of redistricting policies and plans for municipal expansion and transportation.
- Neighborhood/ region is a salient aspect of identity for both communities. Residents recognize themselves as individuals who must contribute their part to maintain cohesion in the neighborhood.
- Participants identify as from Fairview or Government Hill, rather than from Anchorage.

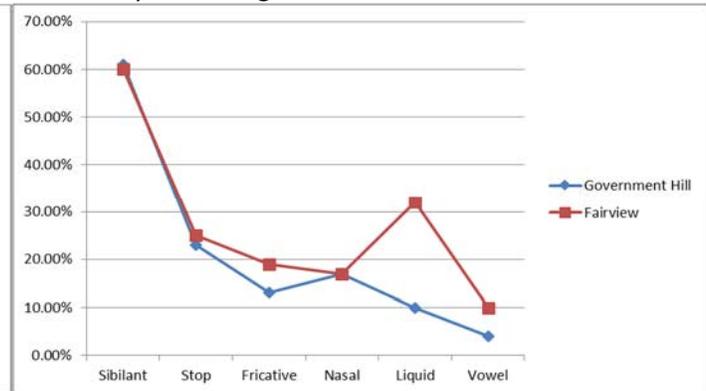
8. t/d Deletion

- 12 speakers were investigated for t/d (6 from each neighborhood)
- 2915 tokens of t/d total
- 1310 (Government Hill)
- 885 (Fairview)

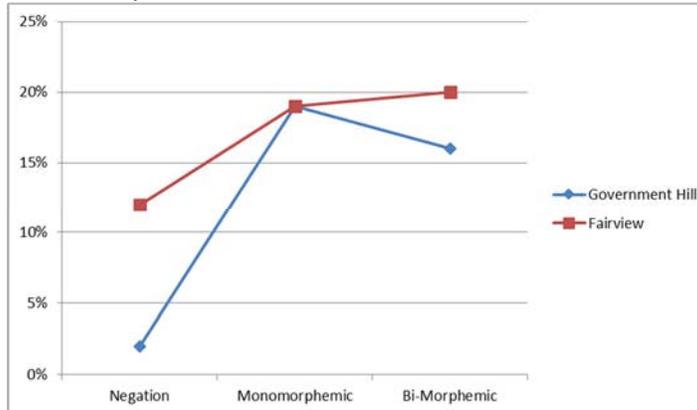
Deletion by Speaker and Neighborhood



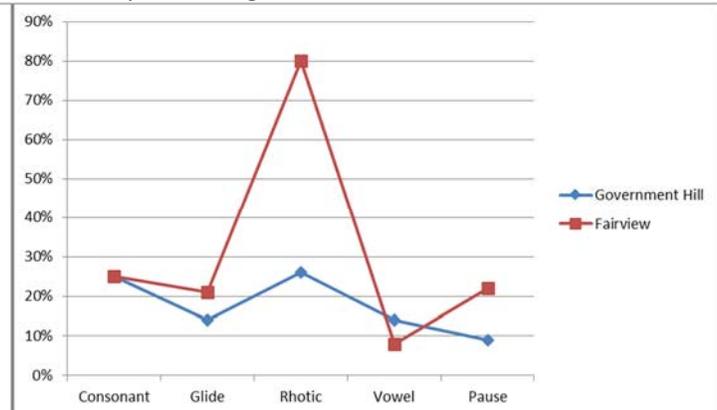
Deletion by Preceding Environ.



Deletion by Grammatical Environ.



Deletion by Following Environ.

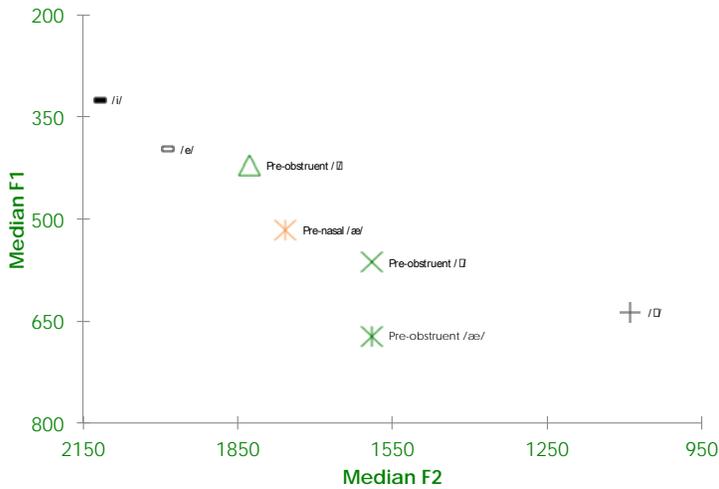


- Low rates of t/d deletion overall but unified rates across speakers in each neighborhood.
- Fairview showed slightly different patterns of environments, favoring liquids for preceding environments vis-à-vis Government Hill.
- Fairview showed much higher rates of deletion before rhotics than Government Hill.
- Fairview and Government Hill had slightly different patterns of deletion in grammatical environments, with Fairview having higher rates of deletion in negated and bi-morphemic environments.

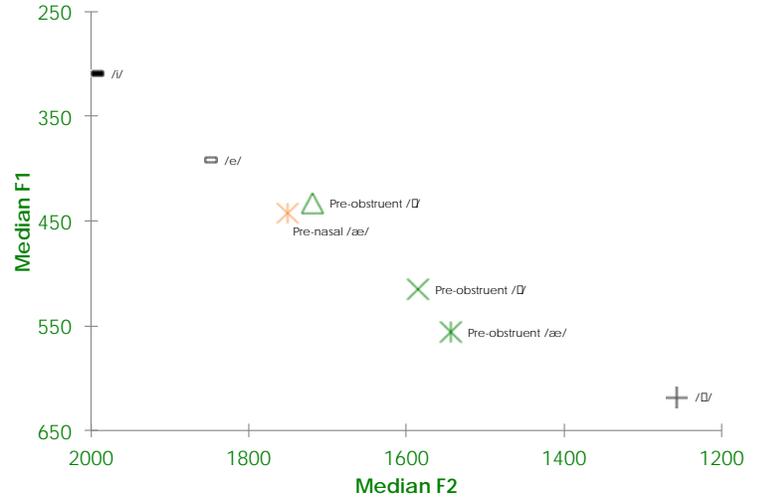
9. Vowel Analysis

- 10 Speakers designated (5 speakers from each neighborhood)
- Examined with respect to Third Dialect Shift

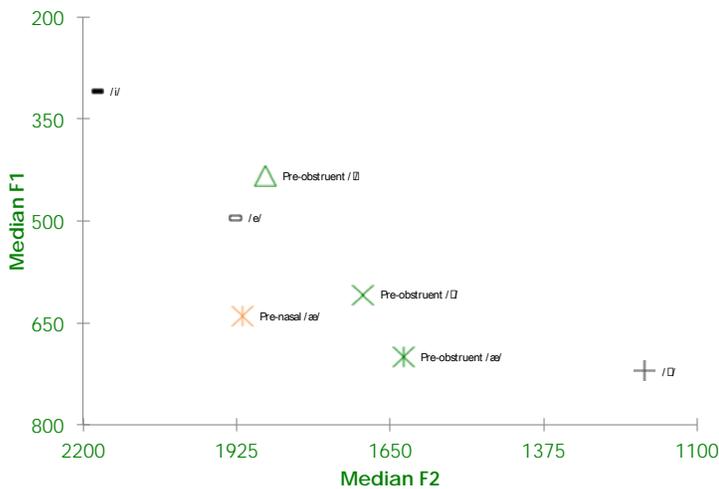
Example Government Hill Speaker



Example Fairview Speaker



Oddities: Pre-nasal /æ/



- We took F1-F2 measurements of vowels involved in the third dialect shift from 10 speakers, 5 from Fairview and 5 from Government Hill.
- We also measured long-e and long-a as reference points for the lowering of their lax counterparts.
- Midpoint measurements are displayed in these charts, but measurements were also taken at 20% and 80% of the vowel duration.
- The Government Hill Speaker shows the prototypical third dialect pattern in the front and low vowels. Short-e and short-i are also lowered, and it's a pretty extreme lowering, with short-i lower than long-a.
- The same is also true of Fairview. Short-a before obstruents isn't quite as low relative to the *ah* vowel, but it's still low and retracted, and short -i is again lowered quite a bit. We should note that short-e and pre-obstruent short-a are quite

close to each other in some of these charts; the vowels remain, however, separate as evidence by their 20% and 80% measurements, which are not shown here.

- There were a couple oddities, though. One of them is that 2 speakers, one in Government Hill and the other in Fairview, showed what looked, at first glance, like an extraordinarily fronted pre-nasal short-a, with surprisingly high midpoint F2 values.
- From impressionistic listening to the recordings we suspect that this isn't some sort of fronting, but rather some other articulatory process—but whatever's going on, there's something unexpected audible in the pre-nasal short-a of a number of speakers in the corpus. Also, though it only shows up in such a visible way among 2 speakers of the 10 whose vowels were analyzed, something similar can be heard among several of our speakers. One possible cause of maximal F2 is some sort of extra tongue constriction in the palatal region; we don't know whether this is the cause or not, but from listening to the tapes it seems a possibility.

10. Conclusions

- Some differences between Fairview and Government Hill do appear to be emerging based on our data so far:
- Fairview is acting a bit differently with respect to the patterning of t/d deletion
- Government Hill reflects a few intriguing vowel patterns with respect to long /a/ and long /e/.
- Next steps involve incorporating more participants into our data set as well as conducting more complete acoustic analysis in order to test whether we may draw a distinction based on neighborhood in Anchorage.