

Who is Anchorage?:

An Investigation into the Local and Extra-Local Construction of Anchorage Identity

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Research Question

How do the narratives of Anchorage citizens lend insight into their symbolic construction of identity in relationship to both the local and the extra-local?

Deictic Markers

Deixis are discourse markers that orient speech towards a specific place, time, or person. "social deixis" (Manning) have been used to step beyond the grammatical analysis of speech. These social deixis markers indicate self, place, space, and time as they are encoded into speech (e.g., *I* v. *you*; *here* v. *there*; *near* v. *far*; *today* v. *yesterday*). How speakers utilize deictic markers within their discourse symbolically represents how they orient themselves within the context of their worlds.

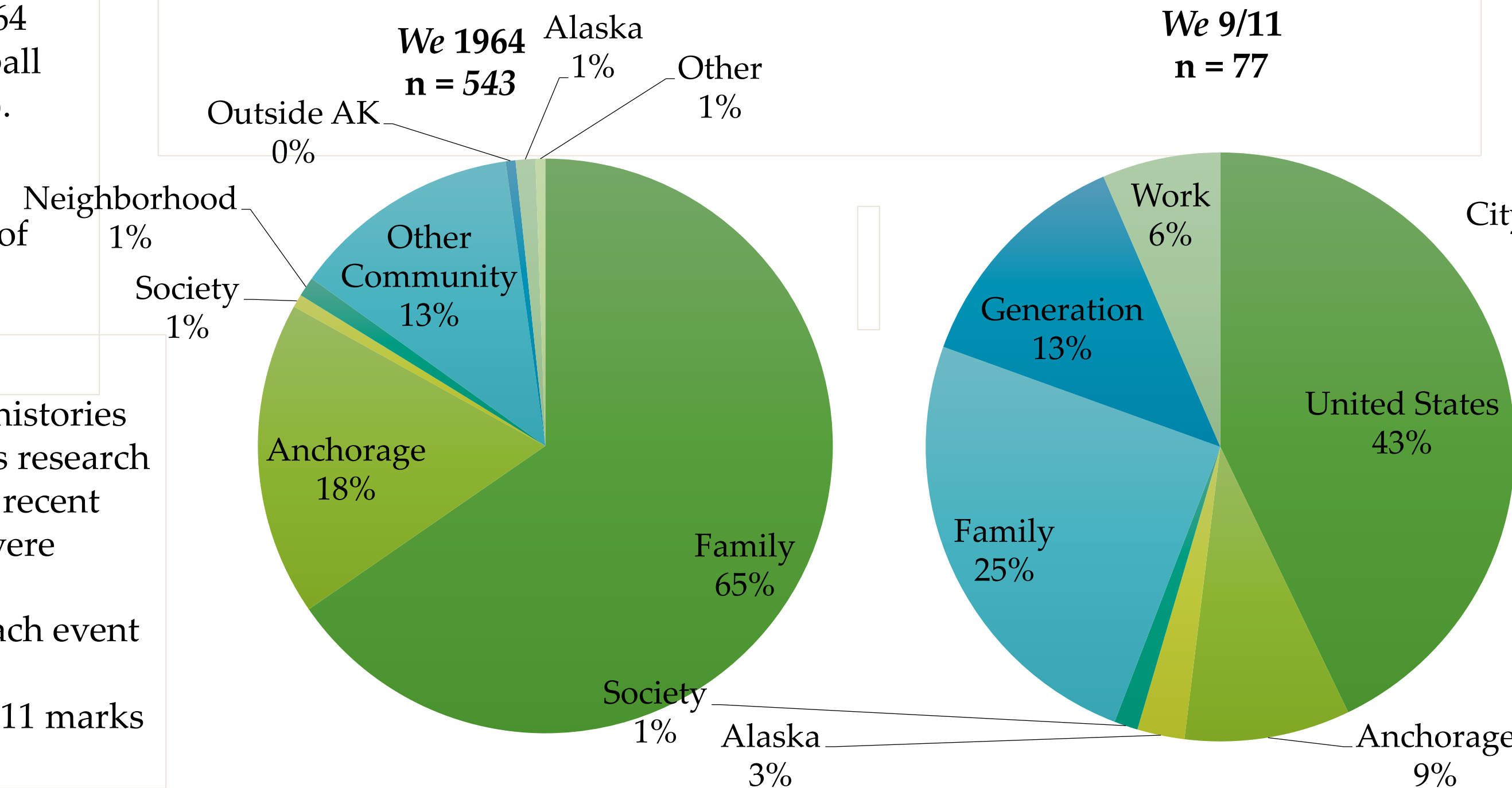
Tentative Findings:

The following charts are instances of deictic markers around each of the two topics. The markers were analyzed through the surrounding context of the narrative in order to pinpoint to what the speakers were indexing.

The Earthquake narratives contained significantly more instances of deictic markers than did the narratives of 9/11. This indicates that participants may be aligning their sense of community along the lines of the Earthquake story.

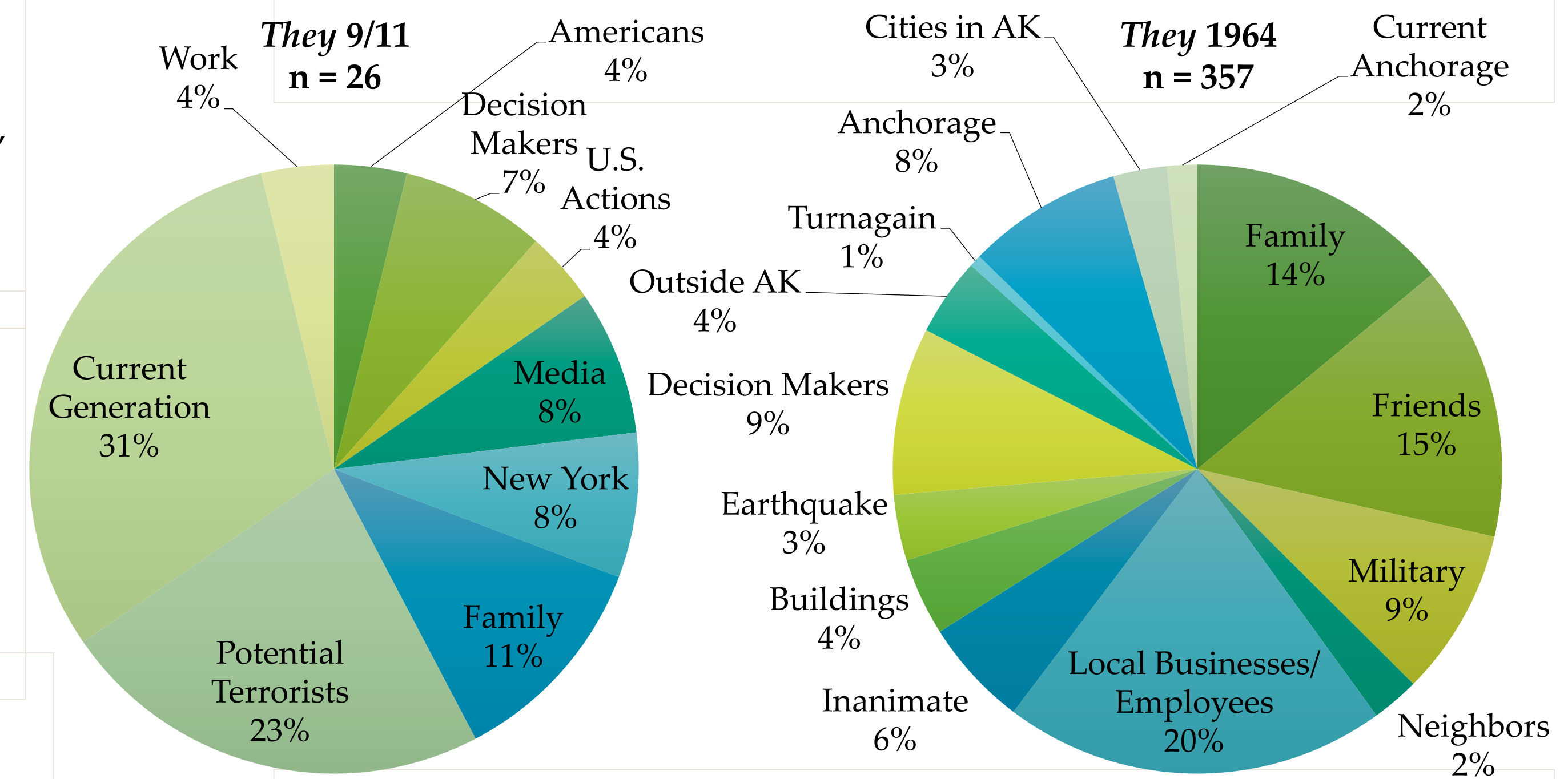
We Markers

We is an inclusive marker indicating that the speaker is part of the community being discussed. The 9/11 markers suggest an orientation that is indexed to the United States. In the 1964 narratives the speakers most often indexed themselves as part of their family unit. That suggests that the speakers were orienting themselves into a tighter community than with the 9/11 narratives.



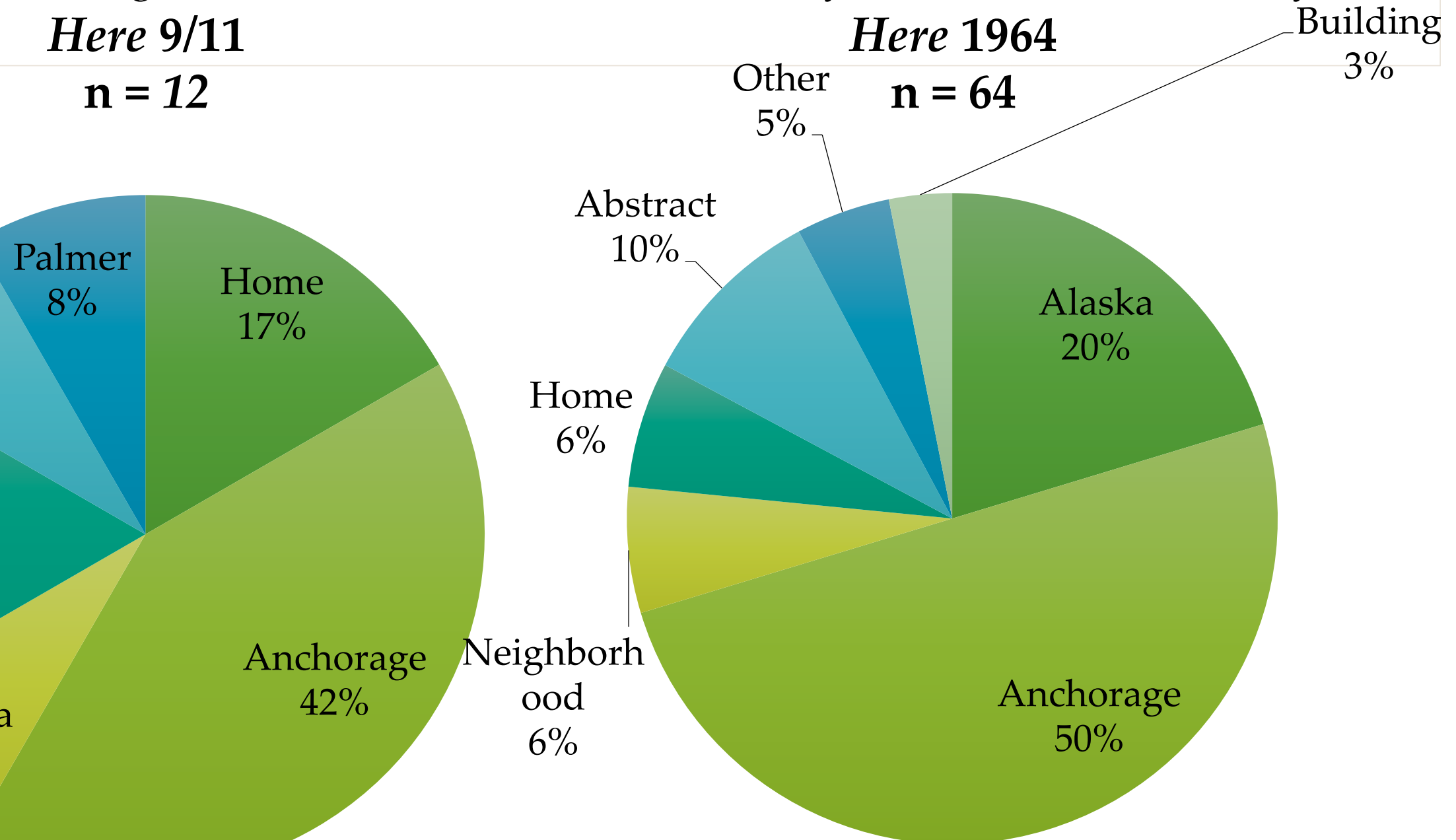
They Markers

They is a differentiating deictic marker that is in contrast to *we*. In the 9/11 narratives, participants showed a marked difference between themselves and the current generation as well as groups seen as potential threats. The most salient markers in the 1964 narratives mark a differentiation between the speakers and those making the decisions for the city as well as local businesses.



Here Markers

Here is an inclusive marker indicating that the speaker had a more local orientation. Within both narratives, the majority of markers indexed to Anchorage. This indicates a micro-local identity oriented towards the city.



Selected Bibliography

- Manning, Paul H. 2001. On social deixis. *Anthropological Linguistics* 43. 54-100.
 Galbraith, M., Bruder, G., & Hewitt, L. (2012). Deictic Shift Theory and the Poetics of Involvement in Narrative.
 Garde, M. (2013). Culture, Interaction and Person Reference in an Australian Language an ethnography of Bininj Gunwok communication. (1st ed., Vol. 11, p. 9). Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Anchorage, Alaska

Anchorage, AK is a young urban environment on the edge of a wilderness whose identity remains elusive. The city of Anchorage is primarily defined not by its own characteristics but by its relationship to other spaces and places. Anchorage's size and urban attributes causes it to be seen by Alaskans as not *authentically* Alaskan. In a corresponding linguistic anthropology project on neighborhood, several Alaskans interviewed dubbed Anchorage *little Seattle*.

The Talking Anchorage Project

This study is working as part of a larger ongoing project—*Talking Anchorage*—which is investigating the negotiation of identity in urban Alaska. The project has, so far, collected more than 70 interviews from over 100 long-term Anchorage residents. This study utilizes the methodology that is consistent with that of the larger *Talking Anchorage* project.

The Research

The illusive identity of Anchorage calls into question how Anchorage-ites situate themselves and their identity in this negotiated space. This research seeks to examine the symbolic expressions of individuals within Anchorage in order to explore the negotiated construct of identity.

Methodology

This project relies on well-established, qualitative methodology utilized within the field of linguistic anthropology. This research involved the collection of interviews from 12 participants who were long-term residents of Anchorage who were in town for the 1964 Earthquake. Participants were found through snowball sampling (i.e., classic "friend-of-a-friend" technique).

The interviews were tape recorded and lasted approximately an hour each. The interviews consist of open-ended questions designed to elicit natural and spontaneous conversation.

The Study

This research looks at the relationship between oral histories and how the storytellers construct their identity. This research collected and analyzed stories base on two events in recent history: the 1964 Earthquake and 9/11. Both events were catastrophic and embedded deeply into the social consciousness of those who experienced them; yet each event positions the speaker in different contexts. The 1964 Earthquake was a uniquely local experience while 9/11 marks a shared national experience.