



**A Case Study of Northeastern Pennsylvania English
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This summer, with the help of the Jumpstart for Juniors Research Grant, I was able to collect all the necessary data for my senior thesis in linguistics. The focus of my research was on phonological change and dialect boundaries in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Using recording equipment borrowed from Penn's Language Variation and Cognition Lab, I conducted 30 sociolinguistic interviews in and around Scranton, WilkesBarre, and Hazleton, PA. While being recorded, the participants, who were selected based on age, gender, and location, were asked to read word lists, judge minimal pairs, and assess the grammaticality of phrases provided to them. Naturalistic conversation between me and the participants was also recorded.

Following the interviews, I transcribed the data in ELAN for later acoustic analysis. This analysis will be examining the presence and hypothesized expansion of the lowback vowel merger (the difference between *caught* and *cot*) in the region, and the extent to which the region is participating in the Northern Cities Vowel Shift. Data gathered from older speakers will be compared with data gathered from younger speakers to conduct an apparenttime analysis (i.e., to see change in progress and get a sense for the direction of this change). This analysis will hopefully provide a clearer dialectological picture of this portion of the state, which lies at the intersection of several dialect regions.

From this experience, I learned so much not only about dialectology, variation, and sociolinguistics, but also about initiating and conducting research. For example, I have become more familiar with applying for a research grant, preparing for Institutional Review Board approval, recruiting participants, and managing my time and resources. As I approach my senior year, I feel equipped for writing my senior thesis and for undertaking more research in the future. Above all, I feel more comfortable working independently, and working to ask and answer my own questions.