Y'all, This Paper Is Crazy Interesting:
A Study of Variation in US English

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Abstract

Ralph Molina. Y'all, This Paper is Crazy Interesting: A Study of Variation in US English.

Overview: The United States, with its large area and cultural diversity, experiences a great deal of variation with respect to its language. I will investigate two specific phenomena from US English and their variation across the United States. I will first investigate the second person plural pronoun in US English, and then I will look into intensifying adverbs. Each phenomenon will first be explained to make clear the object of interest. Next, using survey results obtained from this project, I will investigate the acceptability of each phenomenon, breaking them down in terms of geographical location, education, gender, age, and ethnicity of speakers. In addition to this I will look at the contexts in which these phenomena are used, looking at variables such as formality, number of addressees, familiarity, etc.

History: With respect to the second person plural pronoun in US English, the historical background will address the terms *þu* and *ge*, the Old English forms of the second person singular and plural pronouns respectively. I will then track these pronouns as they make their way through Middle English and Early Modern English until they either disappear or make their way into Modern English. I will also explain the histories of each 2PL marker found used today. With respect to intensifying adverbs, there has been very little study done, so most of the section will focus on describing IAs and their acceptability today.

Methodology: The survey created and used for this project first collects background information on the respondent including age, gender, ethnicity, education, and geographical location of the place they lived longest. Next, it asks the respondent to mark the acceptability of each of seven 2PL markers according to how often respondents would use (or could imagine themselves using) them in different contextual situations. Finally, it uses the same approach to test the intensifying adverbs as well, giving different conversational contexts and asking the respondent to mark the acceptability of each item. The contextual variables being tested for the 2PL markers are addressee gender, formality, and addressee number. For intensifying adverbs, the variables are formality, familiarity, and age.

Analysis: After describing the survey data, I will create statistical models to help to find tendencies in the social distribution and contextual acceptability of the different markers of these phenomena. Given the results of the survey, I will attempt to account for the distribution and acceptability found. For the 2PL, this will likely include discussion of the 2PL being used with a singular addressee as proposed in Tillery and Bailey (1998) and the marking of gender and formality on the pronoun as is common in many languages such as Spanish. With respect to IAs, analysis will mostly be confined to making observations about the data collected and setting the groundwork for later study.

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A. INTRODUCTION TO VARIATION

Language is always changing. We can see this, for example, on a large scale by looking at languages that are quite different but have the same origins, and we can see this on a small scale in the difference in people's accents depending on where they live. The study of language as a whole has long been of interest to linguists across the world, but "until the latter half of the nineteenth century, characterizations of dialect areas were intuitive and casual…The Neogrammarians, whose study of classical languages led them to revelatory discoveries about the interrelationship of many modern and classical languages, had begun the search for general principles of language change." (Chambers and Trudgill 1998) These Neogrammarians went on to propose that sound change is exceptionless. In order to test this idea, dialect geography was developed. Chambers and Trudgill (1998) define dialect geography as, "a methodology or a set of methods for gathering evidence of dialect differences systematically. While this methodology refers directly to geography as a major factor in dialect differences, it is important to note that there are many other variables that can affect language variation.

There are many different kinds of variation in language. In setting out to find evidence of some of these dialect differences, I will particularly be looking at two items that experience lexical variation. In other words, I will be looking at aspects of language that are commonly acceptable throughout the United States, but have different lexical markers being used to represent them. Specifically, I will conduct a dialectal study of two specific aspects of US English that seem to experience at least some degree of lexical variation: Second person plural pronouns (2PLs) and intensifying adverbs (IAs).

B. SECOND PERSON PLURAL PRONOUNS

1. Description of 2PL

In English class as a child, I was taught that English had a number of pronouns that I could use when I wanted to refer to a person. Among them were *I, you, he, she, we,* and *they*. At the time, this seemed totally normal to me, but when I began to learn Spanish, I noticed something interesting. Spanish had a number of pronouns you could use to refer to a person as well. Among them were *yo* ('I'), *tú* ('you' sg familiar), *usted* ('you' sg formal), *él* ('he'), *ella* ('she'), *nosotros* ('we'), *ustedes* ('you' pl), *ellos* ('they' masc), and *ellas* ('they' fem). While there were a number of differences between the Spanish pronouns and the English pronouns, one difference between the second person pronouns stuck out to me more than any other. Why did Spanish have two different words for *you*? As I thought about it, I realized that it was actually quite helpful to be able to distinguish between the second person singular pronoun and the second person plural pronoun, so I began to then wonder, "Why does English only have one marker for the second person pronoun?" Up until this point, having grown up in West Texas, people had told me that *y'all* (a word that I used commonly) was incorrect, but in that moment I realized that *y'all,* for me, corresponded to *ustedes* in Spanish. I realized that there was nothing inherintely ungrammatical about it, otherwise Spanish wouldn't have something just like it. You can see the differences I'm talking about in sentences 1a-1e.

1a. **You** are a good friend.

1b. (2PL) **You** are good friends.

1c. (2PL) **Y'all** are good friends.

1d. **Tú** eres un buen amigo. '**You (sg)** are a good friend.'

1e. (2PL) **Ustedes** son buenos amigos. '**You (pl)** are good friends.'

So if there are markers in the United States that are used specifically to mark the 2PL, what are they? Where are they used? Who uses them? These are the kinds of questions that I am trying to answer in this paper. To answer the first question of what the markers are, I looked to the literature. Besides *you*, I found evidence of six other markers found to have been used in US English to mark the 2PL. Obviously, the first marker I wanted to test was the one that I used commonly: *Y'all*. I found reference to *y'all* in a paper by Tillery and Bailey (1998). The paper stated that "*yall* is used by most residents both of Oklahoma and of the South as a whole." The next markers I found were *yinz* and *you'uns*. Murray and Simon (2006) propose that "*yinz*, the second person plural pronoun, is one of the defining items of Pittsburghese…. [and] *you'uns* occurs in Pennsylvania and the South Midland." Cheshire and Stein (2014) reference the marker *youse* stating that it is a feature of Northern US English (as well as Irish and Australian English). Next, I decided to add *you-all* to the test as Maynor (1996) states that in the South "most *you-alls* among that group of respondents are from the high end of the age group. It may be that *you-all* is dying." It is worth noting here that *you-all* and *you all* are different. *You all* generally occurs for all speakers when using *you* as the 2PL marker and *all* to convey totality, but *you-all* is a variant form of the 2PL in that it only conveys plurality, not totality. Finally, George Jochnowitz (1983) proposes that *you guys* is the unmarked plural of *you* and originated in the California area, eventually becoming widespread except in areas where *y'all* is used. Maynor (2000), in discussing *you guys*, says that it is one of the most commonly used markers of the 2PL.

After referencing the literature to determine which markers I was going to test, I began to look into the history of the 2PL in English as a whole and tested the markers mentioned above so that we could investigate them a bit more closely.

2. History of 2PL

2.1 Old English - Early Modern English

When looking at where something in Modern English came from, it seems natural to go all the way back to Old English and see if there is anything recognizably similar to whatever is being traced. To study the history of the second person plural pronoun this seems to be the most reasonable first step. Old English actually had a marker for the second person plural as distinct from the second person singular. Following these forms as they progressed through history is important in understanding what the 2PL is and why we have all of the different variants of the form today.

Starting in Old English, we recognize a distinction between second person singular and plural forms.

2nd Person	Singular	Plural
N	þú	gé
G	þín	éower
D	þé	éow
A	þéc, þé	éowic, éow

Recreated from Baker (2012)

Old English distinguished its pronouns by person, number and case. The figure above shows the second person singular pronoun markers (precursor to *thou*) on the left depending on case, and it shows the second person plural pronoun markers (precursor to *you*) on the right. While case distinctions are not of interest as far as this study is concerned, the distinction between singular and plural markers and the different meanings that distinction allows the speaker to make will be important when discussing the meaning of our more modern second person plural markers.

As we make our way into Middle English, we begin to see markers that look a bit more similar to those of Modern English.

Singular	First Person	Second Person	Third Person
Nominative	I, ich	thou	he, she hit
Possessive	my, mine	thy, thine	his, hire, his
Objective	me	thee	him, hire, hit

Plural	First Person	Second Person	Third Person
Nominative	we	ye	they
Possessive	oure	your	hire, hir(e)
Objective	us	you	hem

Recreated from Benson (2008)

We can see that the markers undergo a few small phonological changes, but are still recognizable and retain their distinction in number (Benson 2008). An interesting note about second person pronouns in Middle English is that it seems that some people, Chaucer in particular, used the two different forms (as distinguished by number) to convey respect (Benson 2008). Typically, he would use singular pronouns (*thee, thou,* etc.) when referring to children, servants, or intimates, but he would use the plural (*ye, you,* etc.) as the pronoun of respect when referring to his superiors (Benson 2008). Although Chaucer wasn't always consistent in this usage, it is worth noting as it could provide an explanation for what would happen to the second person plural in Early Modern English.

A major change occurs as the second person pronouns make their way into Early Modern English. The two distinct markers themselves remain a part of the lexicon, but the distinction between them becomes much less clear. The case distinctions (with the exception of the genitive form) were lost, so the only available second person pronouns were the easily recognizable *you* and *thou*. While each marker

can still be used to mark their previous meaning, it seems that they can mark both the second person plural and the second person singular. Nevalainen (2006) claims that,

> "A notable asymmetry arose in the personal pronoun system when the singular *thou* retreated from the General dialect and, with the generalization of the originally plural *you*, the number distinction between the second person singular and plural was lost"
> (p. 78)

This brings us back to Chaucer's use of his second person pronouns to mark respect in Middle English. Given that his usage of pronouns to mark respect in Middle English was inconsistent, and his writing was often poetic in nature, it is hard to gauge how common this practice was in Middle English. In Early Modern English though, there is more data available in general, but past that (particularly in court records) there's data that was not written with the intention of prosaic or poetic style. The following is an excerpt from the record of a Durham Ecclesiastical Court case in a small village in England, called Hunstanworth, regarding theft around the year 1560:

> Mr. Antony: Dyd not *thou* promess me that *thou* wold tell me and the parson of Hunstanworth who sold George Whitfeld sheep?
>
> *'Didn't you promise me that you would tell me and the minister of Hunstanworth who sold George Whitfeld's sheep?'*
>
> Roger Donn: I need not unless I woll.
>
> *'I don't need to if it wasn't me.'*
>
> Mr. Ratcliff: *Thou* breaks promess.
>
> *'You break a promise.'*
>
> Roger Donn: *You* will know yet soon enowgh, for *your* man, Nicoll Dixson, stole them, that ther stands, upon Thursday bifore Christenmas then last past.
>
> *'You will know soon, for your man, Nicoll Dixson, stole them, for sure, on Thursday before last Christmas.'*
>
> …
>
> Roger Donn: For although *ye* be a gent., and I a poore man, my honestye shalbe as good as *yours*.

'Although you are a gentleman, and I am a poor man, my honesty is as good as your honesty.'

Mr. Ratcliff: What saith *thou*? Liknes *thou thy* honestye to myn?

'What did you say? Did you liken your honesty to mine?'

(Fitzmaurice 2003)

The dialogue reveals that a lower class man (Roger Donn) has been accused of stealing sheep. In the conversation, he is trying to convince two other men that he did not steal the sheep. The exchange shows a very clear distinction in the usage of *thou* and *you*. Mr. Donn explains that he is a poor man speaking to two gentlemen, so it is revealing to note that he always uses the second person plural (*ye/you/your*). While it is certainly possible that he was using plural marker because he was talking to two men, the nature of the conversation and the emphasis on the pronouns in the last line seem to imply otherwise. In response to the comparison of honesty, Mr. Ratcliff could have simply said 'Your honesty is not equal to mine', 'You are inferior and cannot be trusted', or any number of other things, but instead he says 'What did *thou* say? Did *thou* liken *thy* honesty to mine?' The crafting of this statement to use the *thou* form three times indicates that it was important to Mr. Ratcliff that he use that word. "[These] questions cast doubt on the possibility that a poor man of lowly status may be as rich in integrity as the gentleman. The doubt is conveyed in the taunting repetition of *thou*, which is designed to keep Donn in his place" (Fitzmaurice 2003).

You	Thou
Address to social superiors	address to social inferiors
address to social equals (upper class)	address of social equals (lower class)
Address in public	address in private
formal or neutral address	familiar or intimate address
respect, admiration	contempt, scorn

Recreated from Fitzmaurice (2003)

As the Early Modern English period progressed, the *thou* forms of the second person pronoun were lost, and the language progressed into a Modern English very much like

the language that we speak today which only has one form of the second person pronoun, the underspecified *you*. Assuming the proposed usage above, it seems reasonable that the form used positively and in neutral circumstances (*you*) would be chosen in preference to the form that can be interpreted as insulting or negative (*thou*). That said, the *thou* forms don't always convey negativity (as shown above by the 'familiar or intimate address'), and that presents a challenge to the idea that the more positive of the two markers would survive. While this may have still provided some degree of motivation, the fact that the more widely distributed form of the second person pronoun (*you* forms) subsumed the marked *thou* forms in itself makes sense given that the *you* forms would already be thought of as more widely applicable.

2.2 History of Modern 2PL Markers

The history outlined above leaves speakers of Modern English in a bit of a predicament. In a situation where a speaker of Modern English is speaking to a group of people and uses the second person marker, how do they convey whether they're speaking to one member of the group, a certain subset of the group, or the group in its entirety when it's seen as desirable to do so? Once the *thou* marker was lost in Early Modern English, speakers had to figure out how to deal with the aforementioned problem. They had a second person form, but they needed some way to distinguish the plural from the singular. It is worth noting here that Standard Formal English has survived quite a long time without an overt distinction in number on second person pronouns, so to say that speakers *needed* to fill the 2PL gap may be a bit misleading. Rather, I mean to say that while you could use nonlinguistic cues to convey a distinction in number, it is not unsurprising that speakers felt motivated to make this distinction overtly in order to avoid misinterpretation or confusion, so how did they make this distinction?

Montgomery (2002) references a letter from 1737 to show how this was dealt with. The letter was written by an Irish-American immigrant to his friends back home saying, "Now I beg of **ye aw** to come over here." Given that this was written during the Early Modern English time period, we know that this *ye* was underspecified, making the use of *aw* 'all' an interesting linguistic choice. Essentially, the writer of the letter used his

marker for the second person pronoun, *ye,* and added a distinctly plural marker after it, *aw* 'all'*,* to show that he was referring to all of his friends, not just the person reading the letter.

The modern second person plural markers that I will be addressing in this paper are *you, y'all, you-all, you guys, yous/youse, you'uns,* and *yinz.* If we assume the same linguistic solution in these markers as we observed in the 1737 letter to the problem of the underspecified second person pronoun, these markers seem to naturally group themselves into 5 different categories. All of them seem to use the same second person pronoun *you,* but they each utilize a different form of pluralization.

For *you*, there is no distinct plural marker, so the addressee will have to use other cues (likely non-linguistic) to determine whether the speaker is using the second person plural or singular form.

The origins of *y'all* and *you-all* are illustrated by that 1737 letter, using *all* as the marker of plurality. This one can be tricky because *all* not only implies plurality, but usually totality as well. We will address whether or not these two forms always imply totality later on in this paper.

You guys seems to use a distinctly plural noun to achieve plurality. There are certainly other markers like this (such as *you lot* in British English), but this is the one that seems to be most commonly used in the United States.

You ones is not a form typically heard in the United States, but the markers *you'uns* and *yinz* seem to be only a few phonological changes away from such a form. Given that there is evidence in the other second person plural markers of this type of analysis, it seems reasonable to conclude that these are regionalized forms of *you ones*.

Lastly, the *yous/youse* form seems to apply the English grammatical process of pluralization of nouns (adding an *–s* at the end) to the second person plural marker itself to address plurality. It is interesting syntactically to note here that *yous/youse* could be a plural determiner (such as in *youse guys*), or *you* could be the determiner attaching to a null pluralized noun.

While these are all slightly different approaches to solving the problem of the underspecified second person pronoun, each seems to convey it's meaning in a clear and concise manner, which could likely be the reason they have become such common markers of the second person plural pronoun in US English.

3 Survey Regarding 2PL

3.1 Survey Setup

In order to test test the distribution of the markers of the second person plural pronouns that we discussed in the previous section, I designed a survey to distribute amongst as many speakers of US English as I could. I named the survey 'What would you say?'. While anonymous, the respondents of the survey did provide background information on themselves as a starting point. This information included age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, current place of residence (city, state, zip), and longest place of residence (city, state, zip).

I distributed the survey electronically. Using social media, email, and text message I tried to distribute the link to my survey as widely as I could. I also asked respondents to share (by social media or email) the link with their own peers, which many of them did. While this did secure a very large response group, I recognize there may be limitations associated with my distribution methods. For example, elderly/low income/etc. speakers may have been less likely to come across my survey due to limited computer or internet access.

Once the respondents had given their background information, they were asked to give their judgements on multiple fill-in-the-blank questions. The questions were all presented in the format illustrated in the picture below:

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a group of close friends: "What are _____ doing this weekend?"

	Acceptability (Can you use these terms to fill the blank, and if so, how frequently?)				
	(could) always use	(could) often use	(could) sometimes use	(could) rarely use	(could) never use
You	○	○	○	○	○
Y'all	○	○	○	○	○
You-all	○	○	○	○	○
You guys	○	○	○	○	○
Yous/youse	○	○	○	○	○
You'uns	○	○	○	○	○
Yinz	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

Each question contained the same instructions (the top line, starting with ‘mark the acceptability), gave a context, and showed a statement with a blank left in the position where the second person plural pronoun would surface. Essentially, the respondent was tasked with grading the acceptability of the second person plural prounouns provided from ‘1 (could) always use’ to ‘5 (could) never use’. If the respondent felt that the word they would use did not correspond with one of the answers provided, they could mark ‘other’ and would be allowed to provide another option for the second person plural pronoun. All of the information and setup illustrated in the picture above remained the same throughout the survey with the exception of the context of the conversation and the statement being made.

In the survey there were 4 major areas of interest. The first was mapping the results of acceptability in the scenario with the highest degree of variation. I suspected that this would be the scenario below, and the results later confirmed this.

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a group of close friends: "What are _____ doing this weekend?"

In addition to mapping these results, I also wanted to look at 3 more specific things. First, I wanted to determine the degree to which the formality of the context of a conversation affected the second person plural pronoun used. To do this, I used three different questions in the survey. The first is the question shown above used to create the maps. The others are shown below:

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a group of fellow employees/students: "When will _____ be done with personal evaluations?"

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to someone interviewing you for a job: "Do _____ have a good benefits program?"

These contexts were meant to elicit data concerning the acceptability of these forms in an informal context (speaking with a group of close friends), a semi-formal context (speaking to a group of fellow employees/students), and a formal context (speaking to someone interviewing you for a job). Next, I wanted to look specifically at the second person plural pronoun *you guys* to determine whether the gender of the speaker or addressees had any effect on the frequency with which *you guys* would be used. In order to test this, I used the two following questions:

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking (informally) to a group of boys/men: "What restaurant do _____ want to go to?"

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking (informally) to a group of girls/women: "Can _____ tell me when the bathroom has been cleaned."

Finally, the last thing I wanted to test was whether the second person plural pronoun *y'all* was ever used when speaking with a single person. There have been proposals in the past such as Tillery and Bailey (1998) and Butters (2001) that suggested that this was a common occurrence, but because (as a native speaker of Southern/West Texas English) this sounded strange to me, I decided to test this phenomenon myself. In order to test this, I used the following two questions:

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a friend about his family: "Did _____ usually eat at home or go to restaurants?"

Mark the acceptability of each of the following options according to how often you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a single customer who is eating alone at a restaraunt: "How were the clams _____ ordered?"

Having explained the setup of the survey, we can now begin to look at the results of the survey to determine whether there is enough information to answer any of the aforementioned questions.

3.2 Survey Results

Overall, the survey was quite successful. 2,476 people did at least some of the survey, and 1,137 completed it in its entirety. At least one person from each state in the US took the survey giving me a large amount of data to help analyze what is happening with the second person plural pronoun in US English. It is worth noting that there were very few respondents from the Northern Central United States (ND, SD, NE, WY, ID), and even though we do have a few responses from the area, there was not enough data from these areas to draw any relevant conclusions. That is to say, should I talk about acceptability across the United States, I recognize there could be relevant information missing from this area of the US.

The first thing I wanted to do once I closed the survey and downloaded the results was to create a map for each of the markers that I tested showing the distribution of their acceptability. To do this, I combined the city, state, and zip code results from respondent's longest place of residence (as I suspected this would have a larger influence on the speaker's linguistic tendancies than their current place of residence), and I used *Google Fusion Tables* to convert this to latitude and longitude. With this information I was able to graph the acceptability responses from the survey according to the location that the respondent provided. In addition to this I created a bar graph to illustrate how many respondents chose each acceptability ranking (1-5) for each respective second person plural pronoun.

In order to answer the questions I had regarding context, gender and number, I created multiple cross-tabulations using Qualtrics database to help to compare results against each other. To help to answer the question regarding context, I used *y'all* and *you guys* given that they were the markers (as will be seen in 3.3.1 and 3.3.3) that enjoyed the highest degree of acceptability among survey respondents. For each of these markers I created a cross tabulation that compared acceptability in the informal setting to acceptability in each the semi-formal and formal settings. I did the same thing with the results for *you* in order to compare it with *y'all* and *you guys*.

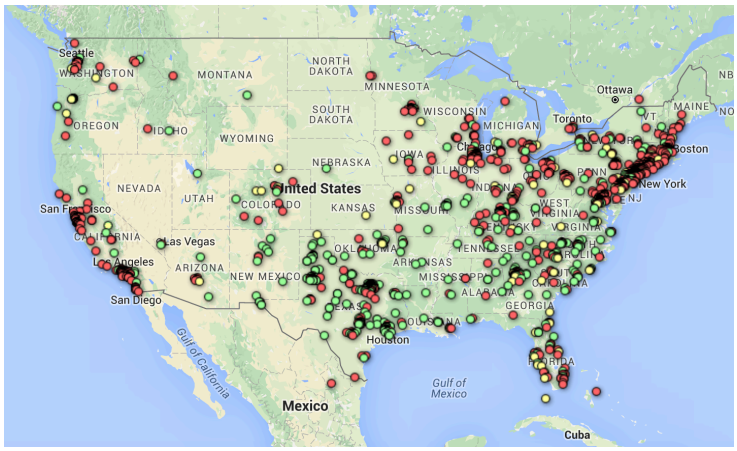
With respect to gender, I created a cross-tabulation of the gender of the respondent (taken from the background questions of the survey) and compared it against the two questions that specified the gender of the group of addressees. This would not only allow me to see whether there was any difference in acceptability with respect to the gender of the addressee, but it also allowed me to determine whether the gender of the speaker had any bearing on the marker used.

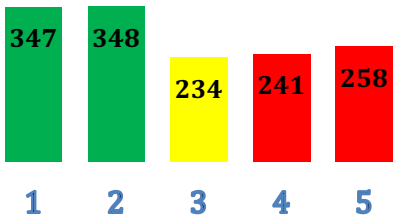
Finally, to test the hypothesis put forth by Tillery and Bailey (1998) that *y'all* could be used to address a singular addressee, I created a cross tabulation that compared the number of respondents who could use *y'all* in a clearly informal plural context to the number of respondents who could use *y'all* in the implied plural case and the true singular case.

3.3 Survey Analysis

For each of the variant markers I tested, I created a map to represent the distribution of respondent's acceptability judgements and a bar graph showing how many of the total number of respondents chose each acceptability choice. On these maps/graphs, green dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choices '1 (could) always use' or '2 (could) often use'. Yellow dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choice '3 (could) sometimes use'. Red dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choices '4 (could) rarely use' and '5 (could) never use'.

3.3.1 *Y'all*



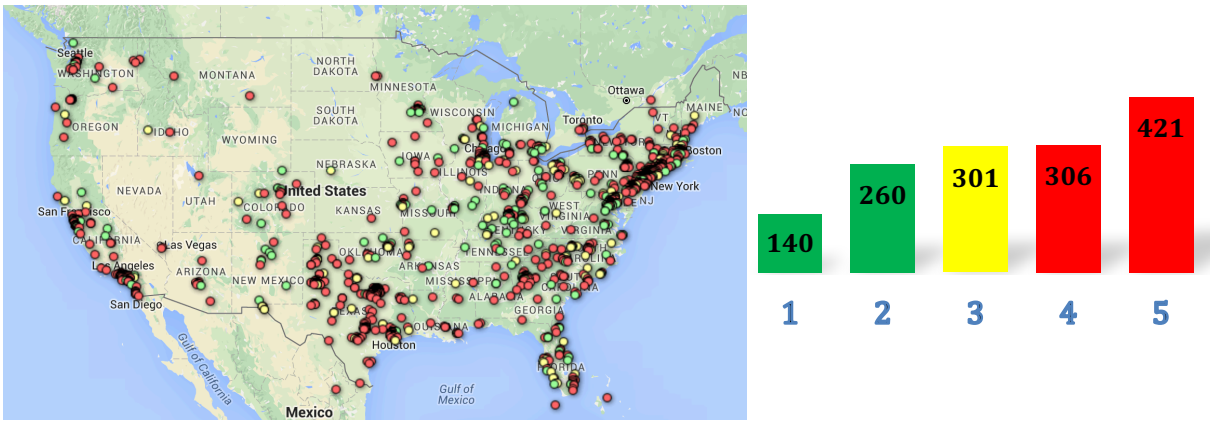


n=1,428

As the bar graph shows, *y'all* seems to be used quite frequently in the United States to mark the second person plural. In fact, 49% of respondents indicated that they always/often would use *y'all* in the clearly informal plural

context. Looking at the map, there are a couple of points of interest that we should investigate. The first is the clustering of *y'all* from New Mexico to Virginia. This seems to confirm the intuitions of many linguists such as Tillery and Bailey themselves(1998) as well as Natalie Maynor (1996) that *y'all* is most commonly used in the Southern United States. The second is the acceptability across the United States. It seems as though, while used with much more frequency in the South, *y'all* has basically made its way across the country. From Seattle in the Northwest to Florida in the Southeast, it seems that anywhere there is a red dot, there is a green one close by. This result could certainly justify more investigation as it could be evidence that *y'all* is working its way toward being a more universal 2PL marker in US English.

3.3.2 *You-all*



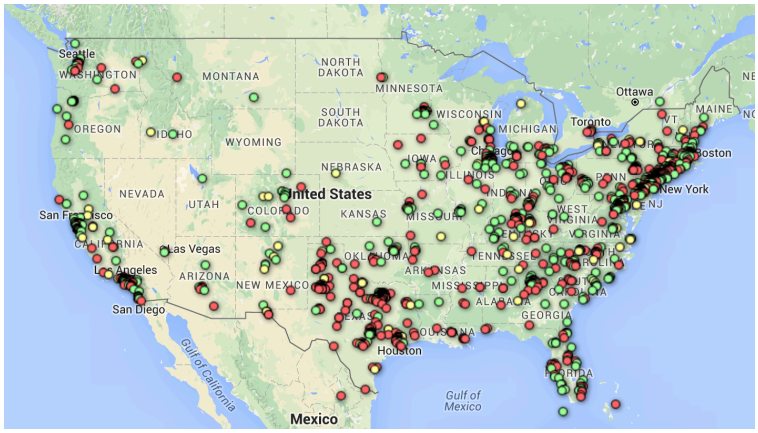
n=1,428

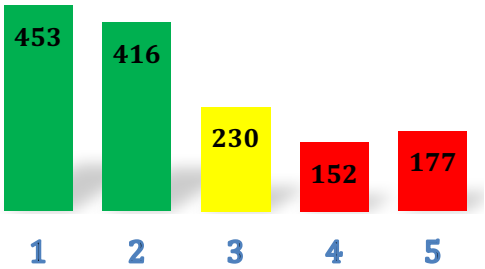
As the bar graph shows, *you-all* seems to be used a bit less frequently in the United States than *y'all* to mark the second person plural. That said, 28% of respondents indicated that they always/often would use *you-all* in the clearly informal plural context. Interestingly, here we see some clustering in the Midwest, which wasn't attested to in the literature. Like *y'all*, *you-all* seems to enjoy nationwide acceptability with one exception. It seems to be distinctly

absent from the deep South (TX, LA, MS, AL, GA). This very well could stem from some of the observations we made in 3.3.1. *Y'all* was used heavily in these areas, which leads me to believe that these are used exlusively to one another.

In other words, *y'all* and *you-all* are in competition with each other. I suspect that even in situations where the speaker wants to convey totality, they will stick with their respective markers creating grammatical phrases like *all y'all*, *y'all all, all you-all*, and *you-all all*. (Note that this is the difference between *you all* and *you-all. All you all* and *you all all* would presumably be ungrammatical/redundant because without the hyphen, the *all* is already conveying totality.) The clustering of negative responses in the South certainly lends support to the idea that *you-all* is dying out (Maynor 1996), but the high degree of acceptability in other parts of the US suggests that it may only be dying out in the Southern US.

3.3.3 *You Guys*





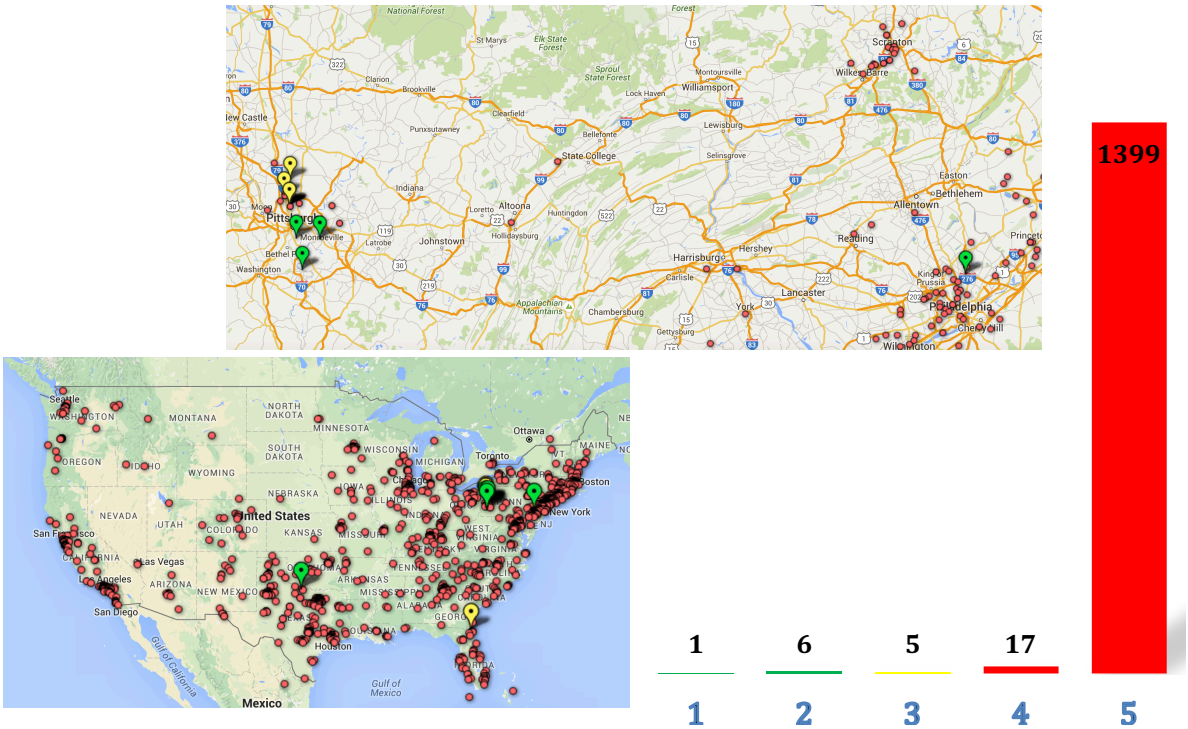
n=1,428

As you can see from the bar graph, this marker enjoyed a very high degree of acceptability. In fact, 61% of respondents indicated that they would often/always use this marker giving *you guys* the highest degree of acceptability for the 2PL among all of the markers I tested. Even more than *y'all* this marker seems to enjoy nationwide

acceptability in the US. Even in the deep South, where *y'all* seems to rule, *you guys* appears to have a significant presence as well. Given the degree of prestige that is commonly associated with California speech (this will be addressed in more depth during discussion of *hella* as an IA), it is not surprising that *you guys*, a form said to have originated in California, has become a common marker across the US (Long and Preston 2002) (Jochnowitz 1983).

3.3.4 *Yinz*

Notice that the acceptability of the marker is not accepted across most of the US, but is (disregarding the TX and FL outliers) concentrated in one state, and even more specifically, one city. The zoomed map is shown to illustrate the concentrated acceptability of *yinz* in PA, and Pittsburgh in particular.

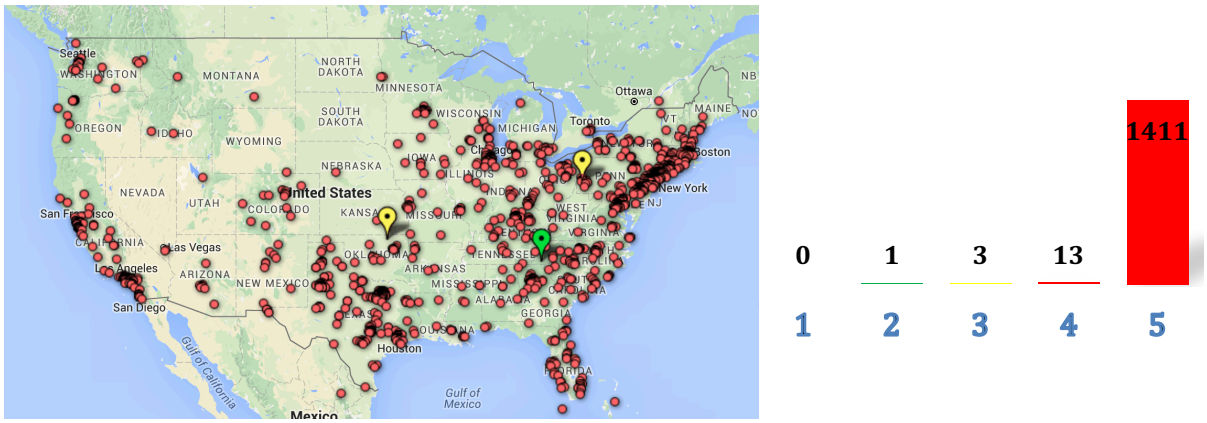


n=1,428

Here we see a stark contrast to the other markers we have looked at so far. Instead of being relatively widespread across the US, *yinz* seems to be heavily

concentrated in Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh in particular. Of the 12 people who said they used *yinz* always/often/sometimes, 10 of them (83%) lived longest in PA, and 9 of them (75%) lived in Pittsburgh. Admittedly, we're talking about 12 people among 1,428, but the concentration of those people in Pittsburgh implies that this marker is used very infrequently anywhere but this very specific area. This data strongly supports Simon and Murray's (2006) statement that "*yinz*, the second person plural pronoun, is one of the defining items of Pittsburghese."

3.3.5 *You'uns*

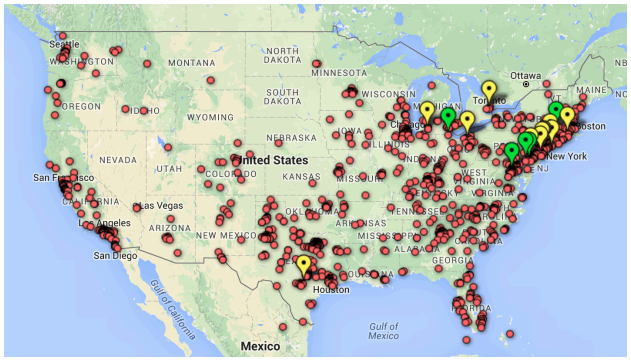


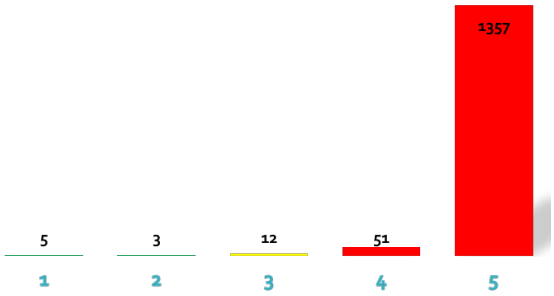
n=1,428

Peculiarly enough, I found very little evidence that *you'uns* is used as a 2PL marker in the US. Simon and Murray (2006) assert that this marker is "found in Pennsylvania and the South Midland." While it is notable that the 4 people who indicated that this was a valid 2PL marker are all located in those two areas, the low number of people who marked it as acceptable even in areas where I had a significant number of responses (such as PA, and much of the South Midlands) is worth accounting for. It is possible that *you'uns* is rarely seen in written form, and speakers who would have used it didn't recognize it on the survey or deemed it unacceptable simply because it was written down. That said, there is also another possible analysis of the dearth of acceptability for *you'uns*. Cheshire and Stein (2014) explain that they "heard the plural form *you'uns*, but this form was considered vulgar. If [they]

remember rightly, it was used by some illiterate mountaineers in North Carolina, and [they] have heard that it is used by the same class in Kentucky and Tennessee." These two characteristics, illiterate speakers and vulgarity, may very well explain why I saw such a low degree of acceptability for this marker. First, if the people who find *you'uns* acceptable can't read, then there is no way they could have possibly filled out my survey. Even for those who can read and have access to a computer/internet, the proposed vulgarity of the marker could have made people less willing to admit that they found the marker acceptable. Given these limitations, it is hard to tell whether *you'uns* is falling out of favor in general, or whether I simply didn't reach the people who actually find it acceptable. That said, Montgomery (2008) actually does propose that, "*You'uns* is the traditional periphrastic form that has been losing ground to *you-all* (less often to *y'all*) for at least three generations." If this is the case, this could be another reason my survey showed such low acceptability rates. If *you'uns* has been losing ground for three generations, it is likely that *you'uns* speakers would be older, making them less likely to have access to computers, internet and surveys.

3.3.6 *Youse/yous*





n=1,428

As you can see from the bar graph, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated that they could not use *youse/yous* as a 2PL marker. That said, there were 8 respondents (including the people who marked that they sometimes could/would use *youse/yous*). Interestingly, they all seem to be

concentrated in the Northeast United States with a smaller group in the Michigan area. While this 2PL marker doesn't seem to enjoy as much national acceptability as *y'all* and *you guys,* there does seem to be more evidence of a regional acceptability of the marker than for *you'uns*. This goes to support Cheshire and Stein's (2014) statement that *youse/yous* is a feature of Northern US English.

3.3.7 2PL by Context

The first specific question I wanted to test regarding second person plural pronouns was whether their acceptability was affected by the formality of the conversation. To do this, as mentioned in 3.1, we tested acceptability in three situations that were meant to represent an informal context (speaking to a group of close friends), a semi-formal context (speaking to a group of fellow employees/students), and a formal context (speaking to someone interviewing you for a job). Using the data from these questions, I cross-tabulated the results of the acceptability of *y'all*, *you guys*, and *you* for each context against the results for the same marker in each of the different contexts. Looking through the resulting data, I recognized a hierarchy that 2PL markers are deemed acceptable much more frequently in more informal contexts, and their acceptability decreases as the situation gains formality.

Basically, the way I'm testing this is by taking the context that yielded the most positive acceptability data for a certain marker and looking at what percentage of people who deemed the marker acceptable in that context could also use that marker in the other contexts. This will reveal specific situations in which a speaker who has *y'all* or *you guys* in their dialect decides not to use that marker in a context that is clearly more/less formal than the context in which they did decide to use the marker.

The results indicated that *y'all* and *you guys* are affected by the formality of the situation. According to my data, the situation in which the most respondents indicated that both *y'all* and *you guys* were acceptable was the informal context.

Starting there, I was able to break down how many of those people could also use that marker in the semi-formal context. The results indicated that only 67% of people who could use *y'all* in the informal context and 87% of people who could use *you guys* in the informal context could also use it in the semi-formal context. Furthermore, only 19% (for *y'all*) and 18% (for *you guys*) of people who could use these markers in the informal context could use them in the formal context. These results indicate that neither marker is used nearly as often in the formal context and also that *you guys* seems to be relatively more acceptable in formal situations than *y'all*. While I did not test all of the markers against formality, I suspect, given the behavior of *y'all* and *you guys*, that the acceptability of all of the marked 2PL forms would be affected in similar ways.

It is important to note here that we can see that different markers can be affected differently by context. The markers that are not commonly associated with Standard American English (SAE) seem to be more acceptable in informal contexts, but if they aren't being used in the formal context, what is? The obvious answer seems to be whatever SAE dictates they 'should' use (in this case the SAE 2PL pronoun *you*), but let's test that to make sure. We should be able to do this by testing *you* against its own data in a similar way that we tested *y'all* and *you guys* above, but instead we will compare how many people who wouldn't use *you* in the informal context would use *you* in the more formal contexts. We would expect the acceptability of *you* to increase as the formality of the situation increases, and that is exactly what we find. In fact, according to my data, 29% of people who wouldn't use *you* in the informal plural context would use *you* in the semi-formal context, and 84% of them would use *you* in the formal context.

This seems to indicate an inverse relationship between variant 2PL markers (*y'all, yinz, you guys,* etc.) and the standard 2PL marker (*you*) with respect to the formality of a situation. While the variant markers often seem to be deemed

acceptable informally, the standard marker seems to be deemed acceptable more often in formal situations.

3.3.8 *You Guys* by Gender

The next question I wanted to answer was whether the gender of the addressee OR the gender of the speaker is relevant to the acceptability of *you guys*. To isolate this data in my results I cross tabulated the results for a respondents gender identity against their responses for *you guys* in the cases of talking to a group of female addressees and talking to a group of male addressees. The results of this breakdown were quite interesting.

First, we'll talk about the situation in which the speaker is addressing a group of male addressees. In this case, 73% of male respondents said that they would use *you guys*, and 71% of females indicated the same. Given the small degree of seperation between these two percentages, I suspect that males and females are similarly comfortable using *you guys* to refer to a group of male addressees. Next, lets look at these same percentages when speaking to a group of female addressees. 44% of male respondents indicated that they would use *you guys* always/often to a group of female addressees, and 48% of female respondents felt the same way. Again here, these percentages are quite close to each other. While we could say that the slightly higher percentage for respondents of the same gender as the addressee shows that people are more comfortable using *you guys* among their own gender, I don't know that there is enough of a distinction in the percentages to fully justify such a conclusion. In other words, it seems as though the gender of the speaker has very little effect on the acceptability of *you guys* with one exception. 24 respondents marked that they don't identify as male or female, and these respondent's results were insightful. These respondents indicated that when speaking to a group of male addressees, they could use *you guys* 79% (19/24) of the time, and when speaking to a group of female addressees they could use *you guys* 58% (14/24) of the time. Both of these are distinctly higher percentages than those for male and female respondents.

While these results could be misleading in that they represent data from a sample size of only 24 as compared to the 519 male and 885 female sample sizes. That said, if we assume that the data from 24 people is enough to draw any sort of conclusion, this could possibly be accounted for by the respondent's concept of gender in general. While people who identify as male or female could reasonably be assumed to put more weight on the relevance of gender, it would make sense for people who have rejected the male/female binary to feel less obligated to account for gender differences in their language. Presumably, these are not respondents who identify as a different gender than their biological sex organ dictates (as I asked them to mark their gender identity, not their sex, allowing people to identify themselves as either male, female, or neither), but rather people who don't identify as either male or female. This rejection of both male and female could very well be the motivation behind their seemingly less prominent obligation to account for gender with *you guys*.

Beyond this, these results do shed light on the relevance of the gender of the addressees. Taking the gender of the speaker out of the equation, we see that about 72% of respondents would use *you guys* to refer to a group of male addressees, but only 47% would do so wheen referring to a group of female addressees. This may be confusing, so I have recreated the cross tabulation below:

		With which gender (if any) do you identify?			
		Male	Female	Other	Total
Speaking to a group of females using *you guys*	(could) always use	90 17.34%	202 22.82%	4 16.67%	296 20.73%
	(could) often use	139 26.78%	224 25.31%	10 41.67%	373 26.12%
	(could) sometimes use	116 22.35%	158 17.85%	5 20.83%	279 19.54%
	(could) rarely use	68 13.10%	100 11.30%	5 20.83%	173 12.11%
	(could) never use	106 20.42%	201 22.71%	0 0.00%	307 21.50%
	Total	519 100.00%	885 100.00%	24 100.00%	1428 100.00%
Speaking to a group of males using *you guys*	(could) always use	219 42.20%	363 41.02%	10 41.67%	592 41.46%
	(could) often use	158 30.44%	266 30.06%	9 37.50%	433 30.32%
	(could) sometimes use	63 12.14%	104 11.75%	4 16.67%	171 11.97%
	(could) rarely use	27 5.20%	41 4.63%	0 0.00%	68 4.76%
	(could) never use	52 10.02%	111 12.54%	1 4.17%	164 11.48%
	Total	519 100.00%	885 100.00%	24 100.00%	1428 100.00%

I have highlighted the different parts I used for different determinations as follows: Green-male to male acceptability, Red-male to female acceptability, Light Blue-female to male acceptability, Purple, female to female acceptability, Orange-other gender identity to male acceptability, Pink-other gender identity to female, Yellow-all respondents to male acceptability, Dark Blue-all respondents to female acceptability.

In the end, it seems as though the gender of the speaker has very little relevance, unless that person does not identify as male or female, to the acceptability of *you guys*, while the gender of the addressees seems to matter much more.

3.3.9 Singular *Y'all*

There has been much debate over whether *y'all* can be used as a second person singular pronoun. Tillery and Bailey (1998) proposed that *y'all* "has also expanded to include singular uses for at least some Southerners, the testimony of many Southern linguists notwithstanding." That said, Axley (1927), no doubt one of the Southern linguists being referred to above, states that, "*You all* is used in the South in addressing more than one person. If by any chance it should be used in an address to one person, the person using it would have in mind more than the person addressed, and the person addressed would understand that unless he just wanted to put his own interpretation on what he heard." While Axley is talking about *you all* rather than *y'all*, his paper is referenced in multiple articles addressing the question of singular *y'all*. In one of these articles Maynor (1996) states that, "As a native speaker of Southern, I agree with those who consider singular *y'all* ungrammatical, the mark of a nonnative speaker. And I will join the chorus of the many Southerners who have said that they have never in all their lives heard a single instance of it." I, as a native speaker of West Texas (a region notably close to the areas of Tillery and Bailey's studies) English, have the same intuition as Axley and Maynor, so I decided to test for singular *y'all* in my survey.

As I explained in section 3.1, I did this by setting up two scenarios: one testing the acceptability of *y'all* as a true singular as Tillery and Bailey (1998) defines the phenomena (ie. no chance of reference to an implied group) and one testing the acceptability of *y'all* as an implied plural (ie. speaking to one person, but referencing a group of people in which the addressee is included). I believe the results of my test go to support the statements of Axley and Maynor, that the true singular *y'all* is very rarely, if ever, used. My results indicated that 83% of respondents who have *y'all* as a

part of their dialect will also use y'all as an implied plural. Unsurprisingly, this seems like a very common occurrence for the marker. On the other hand, only 6% of people who use *y'all* in the general context can also use *y'all* to refer to a truly singular addressee. This is a far smaller percentage than the 1/3 of speakers Tillery and Bailey (1998) propose use *y'all* as a true singular.

To account for such a large discrepancy, I looked to the methods used by Tillery and Bailey (1998). I believe the methodology used in their paper to have been somewhat suspect. They used one question to test whether singular *y'all* was employed:

> "Can you use *y'all* for just one person, or does it always have to be for more than one?" (Tillery and Bailey 1998)

While I understand what Tillery and Bailey meant by this question, it does not do a good job of making an implied plural reading impossible. I believe that they understand singular *y'all* in the same way I do, but the methodology they used to determine it's existence may have been flawed. In fact, if I were asked this question, I would probably answer 'yes' as I (and 83% of my respondents) can use *y'all* when talking to one person with an implied plural reading. This is how they say that they tried to rule out implied readings:

> "Although the question was worded in such a way that respondents should not easily interpret 'just one person' as referring to one person plus associates not present (the so-called associative use of *y'all*), if any additional comments following the answer suggested that the respondent was actually acknowledging associative uses of *y'all* rather than *y'all* as a true singular, the coding was changed to indicate that the respondent was a user of *y'all*-plural only." (Tillery and Bailey 1998)

I strongly disagree that there is little room for misinterpretation. This methodology leaves room for a misunderstanding that, given my survey results and the intuitions of people like Axley and Maynor, I suspect served to mislead Tillery and Bailey (1998) in the analysis of their data. Essentially, if someone answered their question with a

'yes' because they know they can say *y'all* for implied plurals, they were coded as speakers of singular *y'all*.

In addition to this, given the statement in Maynor (1996) that singular *y'all* is an indicator of a non-native speaker, I would be curious how Tillery and Bailey (1998) determined who were 'natives of Oklahoma' as they put it. They did not include an explanation in their methodology, but it is possible that more strict requirements for this designation could have led to more reliable results. Incidentally, their finding that respondents with a higher level of education use singular *y'all* at a higher rate was to me unintuitive, and I think it could be better explained using Maynor's (1996) analysis that singular *y'all* is "the mark of a nonnative speaker". If we assume people of higher education have a more realistic opportunity to leave communities responsible for shaping their linguistic habits (due to education/job opportunities, more disposible income, etc.), we see a trend in the Tillery and Bailey (1998) data that indicates that respondents with a higher chance of being non-native speakers are more likely to use singular *y'all*, which feeds directly into Maynor's (1996) intuition. Essentially, what I'm saying is that while Tillery and Bailey (1998) may be correct that their singular *y'all* users (if they aren't in fact talking about an implied plural reading) have more education, I think the educational background is less important than native-speaker status. This account is further supported by Tillery and Bailey's claim that singular *y'all* is more often used in urban rather than rural areas. It seems to me that urban areas are going to be home to far more nonnative speakers than a rural area.

Though I do believe the data I collected directly contradicts Tillery and Bailey's (1998) conclusions regarding singular *y'all*, it is still important to account for the 42 people (6%) in my survey and some of the examples in Tillery and Bailey (1998) that do seem to be examples of the true singular *y'all*. While, as far as I can tell, these 42 people didn't have any distinct similarities in their backgrounds, I think there are two ways we can try to account for this phenomenon. One could be a

reliance on phrases that are extremely common. Many of the instances of singular *y'all* that have been seen in the literature are high frequency phrases such as "How y'all doin?" (Tillery and Bailey 1998) and "Y'all come back now." (respondent from my survey). In these scenarios, it may very well be that speakers aren't using *y'all* to purposefully refer to one person, but rather to use a phrase that is familiar to them. I've certainly never heard anyone say, "**You** come back now, ya hear?" Not because it doesn't make sense, simply because the phrase is, "**Y'all** come back now, ya hear?" In the same way, "How *y'all* doing?" is simply a welcome greeting. It could be that the implied meanings of these phrases ('welcome' or 'goodbye') require no number distinction, and therefore don't require the second person singular marker.

The other possible analysis is to say that some speakers will occasionally refer to a singular addressee with *y'all* in order to mark politeness. In many languages marking politeness through number distinctions is common. In fact, as I mentioned in the history section, earlier forms of English itself marked politeness on its second person pronouns. Even other languages though, such as Spanish, mark politeness on their pronouns. In Spanish, *Usted* is the second person pronoun used to be polite, while *tu* is the pronoun used when politeness is less important. Actually, using a second person plural pronoun in reference to one person in order to convey politeness is accounted for by Mazzon's (2003) explanation that "In the case of polite pronouns of address, the mechanism works as follows: normally one would expect a pronoun with the feature specification 'second person singular'. But, when a speaker wants to convey a sense of politeness to her or his interactant, s/he can choose to employ a pronoun with the specification 'second person plural instead." (Mazzon 2003) Given the importance of respect and politeness in Southern culture that can be seen in the almost universally known (at least in the US) concept of Southern hospitality, it is not surprising that speakers have adapted their speech to convey this respect and politeness.

C. INTENSIFYING ADVERBS

1. Description of Intensifying Adverbs

Intensifying adverbs (IAs) are adverbs that intensify whatever it is that they are modifying. They correspond to *really, very,* etc. in Standard American English (SAE). Louw (2005) explains that there are multiple categories of adverb intensifier types: Maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers. Because the variant forms I will be testing correspond to *really/very*, I suspect that the variant forms of IAs that I will be testing are boosters. This means that they are "very intense, but there is the possibility of it getting even more intense." (Louw 2005) Examples can be seen in sentences 2a-2c.

2a. Wow, that car is **really** fast! (SAE)

2b. Wow, that car is **hella** fast! (variant)

2c. Wow, that car is **wicked** fast! (variant)

Because there has been very little study done on the variant forms of IAs, I mostly found markers of IAs any way I could. While *hella* has been attested to in the literature as a marker for IAs in Northern California, the other markers that I tested as a part of the survey were found mostly on the internet and from asking native English speakers if they had ever heard other words used to fill the blank in the sentences shown above (Bucholtz et al. 2007). The other markers I tested were *wicked, mad, crazy, stupid, dumb, O.D.* and *scary*.

2. Survey Regarding Intensifying Adverbs

2.1 Survey Setup

The survey I explained earlier had a section with exactly the same setup as 2PLs but for IAs. I used the same setup and methodology, but I asked different questions. Section A.3.1 explains what background information was collected, the format of the questions, how the survey was distributed, etc.

In the IA section of the survey there were 4 major goals. The first was mapping the results of acceptability in the scenario with the highest degree of variation. I suspected that this would be the scenario below because it is a comfortable scenario in which the speaker is probably less likely to be worried about the way they are speaking, and the results later confirmed this.

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a close friend: "Wow, that car was _____ fast!"

In addition to mapping these results, I also wanted to look at 3 more specific things. First, I wanted to determine the degree to which the formality of the context of a conversation affected the IAs used. To do this, I used two different questions in the survey. The two questions I used to help to make this determination are shown below:

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to your professor/employer during a lecture/meeting: "This reading was interesting, but it was _____ long."

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to your professor/employer at a holiday party: "Wow, this food is _____ good!"

These contexts were meant to elicit data from an informal context (a holiday party) and a formal context (a lecture or meeting). I used a professor/employer as the addressee because I was worried that if they were talking to a friend, the informality of speaking to a friend would override the formality of the context itself. This is a bit of a limitation given that some speakers may well never use IAs to a professor/employer, but my intuition was that this would prove less of a hinderance to the formality test than would using a friend as the addressee.

Next, I wanted to look specifically at whether familiarity to the addressee had any effect on the acceptability of IAs. In order to test this, I used the two following questions:

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a close friend: "Wow, that car was _____ fast!"

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a stranger on the street: "Whoa, that car was _____ fast, don't you think?"

These questions were intended to elicit acceptability differences in two different contexts. The first tests what you would say to someone you were very familiar with and the second tests what you would say to someone you are completely unfamiliar with.

Finally, the last thing I wanted to test was whether age affected the acceptability of IAs. I wanted to test both whether the age of the speaker influenced acceptability and whether the age of the addressee influenced acceptability. In order to test with respect to the age of the speaker, I compared a respondent's results to the background questions mentioned earlier (in which ask about the age of the respondent). To test the age of the addressee, I used the following two questions:

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to a friend near your age: "Hey, is it just me, or is this project _____ hard?"

Rank the following options in the order you would use (or could imagine yourself using) them in the context provided.

Speaking to someone 20+ years older than you: "The movement of this train is making me _____ tired."

Here, given the way I asked the question, I recognize that there may be some limitations to my analysis. In the first question, I should have used the word 'someone' instead of 'a friend' to mitigate the effects of familiarity on acceptability. I do not think this limitation invalidates the analysis of the age of the addressee, but I do feel that it is worth noting.

Having explained the setup of the survey, we can now begin to look at the results of the survey to determine whether there is enough information to answer any of the aforementioned questions.

2.2 Survey Results

Here again, I am talking about the same survey I explained when talking about 2PLs. Information about the number of respondents, methodology of creating the maps and graphs, etc. can be found in section A.3.2.

In order to answer the questions I had regarding context, age and familiarity, I created multiple cross-tabulations using Qualtrics database to help to compare results against each other. To help to answer the question regarding contexts, I used *crazy* and *hella* given that they were the markers (as will be seen below) that enjoyed the highest degree of acceptability among survey respondents. For each of these markers I created a cross tabulation that compared acceptability in the informal setting to acceptability in the formal setting.

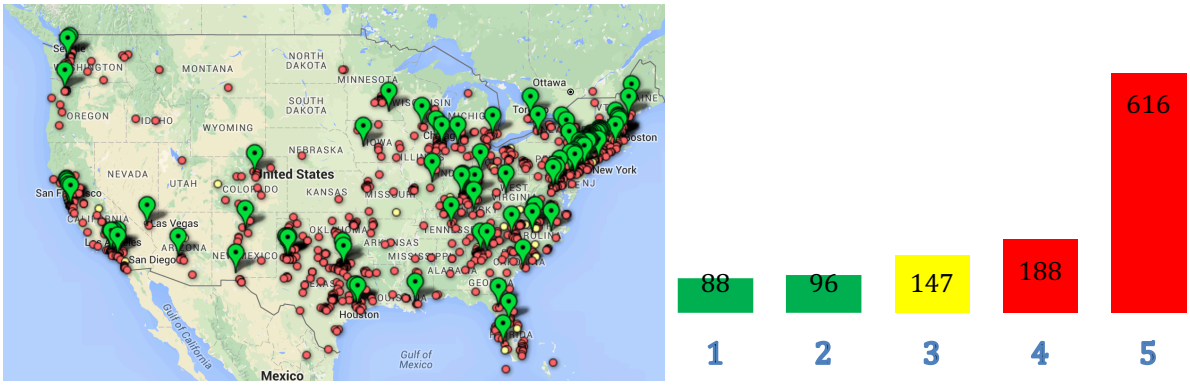
With respect to age, I created a cross-tabulation of the age of the respondent (taken from the background questions of the survey) and compared it against the two questions that specified the age of the group of addressees. This would not only allow me to see whether there was any difference in acceptability with respect to the age of the addressee, but it also allowed me to determine whether the age of the speaker had any bearing on the acceptability of IAs.

Finally, to test familiarity, I created a cross-tabulation of the results for *hella* and *crazy* in the familiar context and compared it against results for the same markers in the unfamiliar context. This allowed me to see whether there was any difference in acceptability with respect to the familiarity of the context of the conversation.

2.3 Survey Analysis

Again here, for each of the variant markers I tested, I created a map to represent the distribution of respondent's acceptability judgements and a bar graph showing how many of the total number of respondents chose each acceptability choice. On these maps/graphs, green dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choices '1 (could) always use' or '2 (could) often use'. Yellow dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choice '3 (could) sometimes use'. Red dots/bars represent respondents who marked answer choices '4 (could) rarely use' and '5 (could) never use'.

2.3.1 *Wicked*

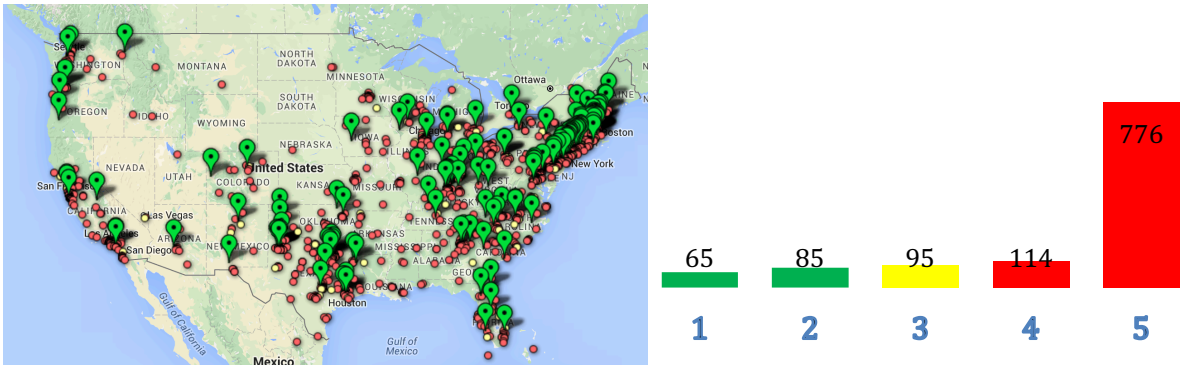


n=1,135

The results of the survey indicated that 16% of respondents could/would always or often use this marker. While there is evidence here of acceptability of *wicked* across the US, it is important to note the clustering of acceptability in the Northeast. While many people believe *wicked* to be from Boston, we can see that acceptability is strong throughout most of the New England area (Gaffin 1997). That

said, there is a degree to which this marker is used across the US. This is unsurprising as *wicked* as an intensifying adverb has made a few famous appearances that could have increased it's acceptability across the nation. One example of this is in the famous movie *Good Will Hunting* when one character says, "My boy's wicked smart." The movie is set in Boston, which is presumably why the actors (representing native Bostonians) use the intensifying adverb *wicked*, but given the popularity of the movie it isn't hard to see how region's specific tendencies such as this one make their way into the mainstream. Very rarely have I come across someone who hasn't heard the 'wicked smaht' quote from *Good Will Hunting*. Obviously, I don't think we can attribute the widespread acceptability of *wicked* to one movie, but I do believe advances in technology have helped lexical dialect markers spread out from their speaker area, and I think this is a great example. This is actually something we'll see quite a bit of in this section. Many of the intensifying adverbs enjoy at least some degree of nationwide acceptability, probably due to the amount of exposure we now have to other linguistically distinct regions as a result of technological advancement.

2.3.2 *Mad*

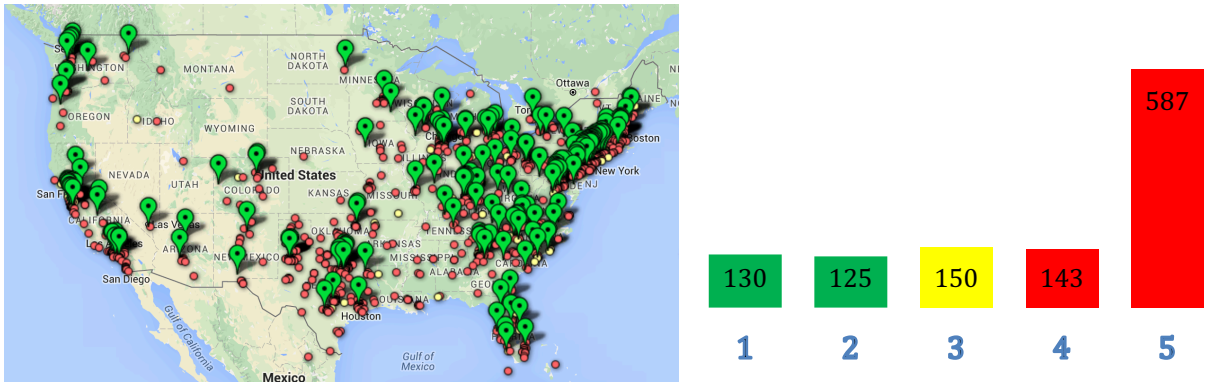


n=1,135

Here we see that *mad* had quite similar results to *wicked*. Around 13% of respondents said they could/would always or often use this marker. Again, while *mad* enjoyed a certain degree of nationwide acceptability, we can also see a much higher degree of clustering in the Northeast. With *mad* though, there seems to be an interesting

statistical distinction between respondents who indicated that they could use this marker. According to my results, it seems that people who identify as African American, Asian American (East Asian), or Arab American (South Asian) are slightly more likely to use this marker than people of other backgrounds. According to my results, 31% of African American respondents, 26% of Asian American respondents, and 47% of Arab American respondents indicated they would always/often use this marker as compared to only 11% of White or Euro-American respondents.

2.3.3 *Hella*



n=1,135

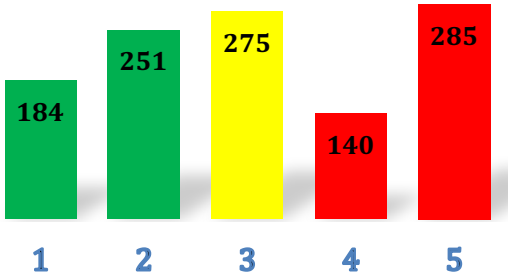
Hella actually ended up getting the second most positive responses among intensifying adverbs in my survey. Racking up a very high 23% of respondents who indicated that they could use this marker in the general informal setting, *hella* is like *wicked* in that it is thought to be extremely regional, but has actually spread much farther across the US than we might have expected. As discussed earlier, *hella* is thought to have originated in Northern California. While the literature suggests that *hella* is a characteristic of speech in the Northern part of California my results suggest a much more nationwide acceptability (Buchholz et al. 2007). That said, other literature suggests that, "While the word does appear in Northern California at a higher-than-average rate, [it has been shown] that it is used throughout the country." (Eisenstein 2014).

This could have to do with the regional linguistic prestige California seems to enjoy. Long and Preston (2002) propose that,

> "California is a high prestige region linguistically, for respondents from across the country…the specific linguistic stereotypes with which California is associated, e.g., *Valley speech* and *surfer lingo*, seem inconsistent with the idea of correctness, [so] there may be an issue of covert versus overt prestige in play here."

Given that California is a high prestige region linguistically and the widespread results of my survey, we can account for the discrepancy between the literature's proposals and my results.

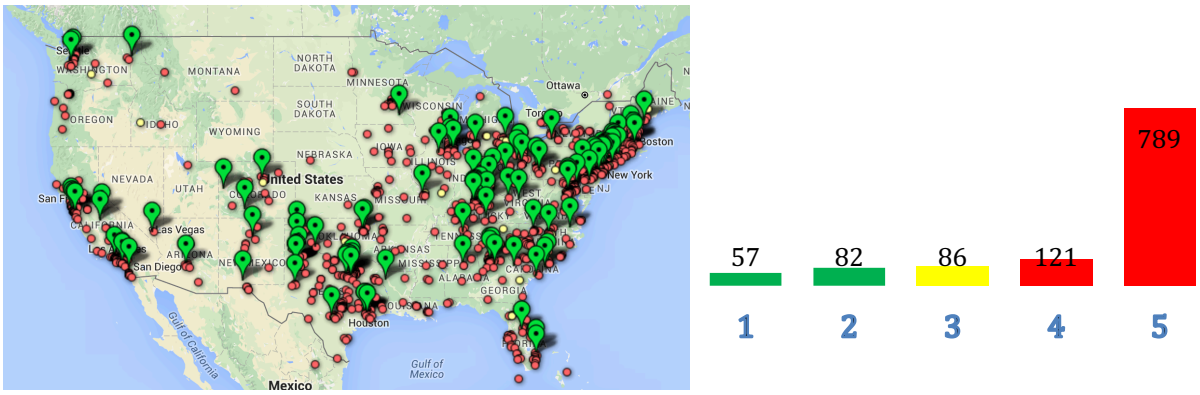
2.3.4 *Crazy*



n=1,135

Crazy enjoyed the highest degree of acceptability among the markers I tested. 38% of respondents indicated that they could or would always/often use this marker. Looking at the map, it is unclear whether there is any regional clustering or whether the marker is simply used nationwide. After comparing the results against the background information I collected regarding a person's regional linguistic background, I realized that acceptability of *crazy* seemed consistent across the US. Furthermore, I broke down the results by gender, ethnicity, age, and any other variable for which I collected data, but I could not find any variable that elicited any meaningful insight.

This marker truly seems to transcend social and geographical boundaries, which is in itself quite remarkable.

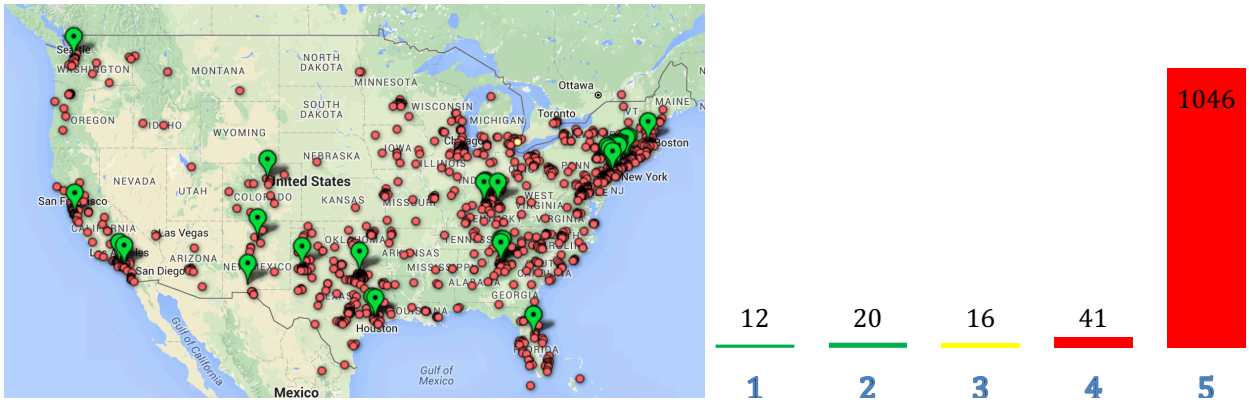


2.3.5 *Stupid*

n=1,135

With *stupid*, much as with *crazy*, it is hard to recognize any specific clustering on the map. Comparing the results to the geographical linguistic data collected from the respondents makes clear that there is very little regional distinction in the acceptability of *stupid*. Only 12% of respondents found the marker acceptable, but there was one interesting statistical irregularity in that for Hispanic Americans and African Americans there was a much higher percentage of acceptability among respondents. 19% of Hispanic Americans deemed *stupid* acceptable as an intensifying adverb along with 18% of African Americans. This may seem like a small percentage, but when compared to the ~10% average frequency of acceptability for respondents with other ethnic backgrounds these numbers seem much more significant. I looked at multiple breakdowns of this data. I compared the results against all of my background info including level of education, but I couldn't find anything to account for the higher level of acceptability for African Americans. I could propose that *stupid* is to African American English as *hella* is to the dialect in Northern California, but I don't know that I have enough evidence to make that conclusion. That said, I do have one possible account for why the Hispanic American

acceptability is so high. It could be the fact that the word for *stupid* in Spanish is a cognate: *Estúpido*. This could impact the acceptability of *stupid* as an intensifying adverb in the Hispanic American community in that among the markers for the intensifying adverb, *stupid* might seem more familiar and natural. While I did find some instances of *estúpido* being used as an adverb in Spanish, none of them were being used as a boosting adverbs in the way that the US English variant forms of IAs are used, so I can't say with any degree of certainty that this is the reason for the higher acceptability rate among Hispanic Americans. Explaining the ethnic distribution of this marker an area where further research could be done.



2.3.6 *Dumb*

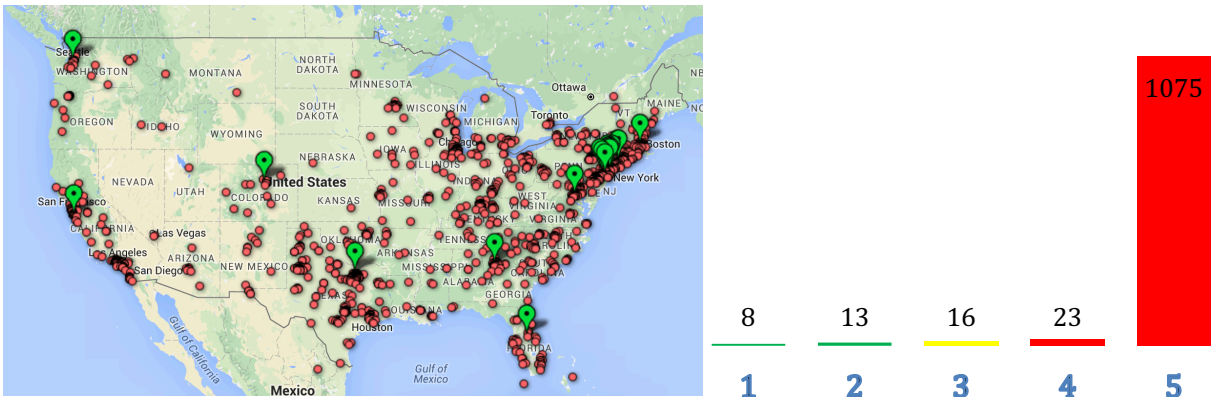
n=1,135

As can be seen in the map above, *dumb* was very rarely found to be acceptable by most respondents. Only about 2% of respondents indicated that they would always/often use this marker as an intensifying adverb. That said, one thing that stands out in the map above is that almost all of the green responses are from large cities. We can see this in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Atlanta, etc. Given this distinction in the data, I compared the acceptability of *dumb* against ethnicity and found that at 9%, African American respondents were

much more (about 4.5 times more) likely to use *dumb* as an intensifying adverb than any ethnicity but Asian Americans (5%).

2.3.7 *O.D.*

For those who may not understand what this marker represents, Eisenstein (2014) explains that the word *O.D.* comes from "the abbreviation *od*, which stands for *overdose*, [but] is now used as an intensifier with considerable syntactic flexibility."



n=1,135

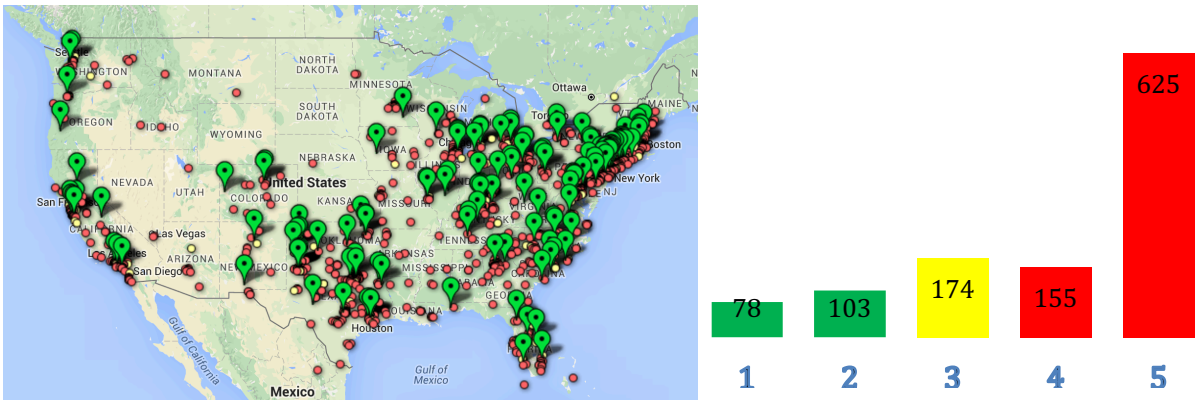
O.D. was the intensifying adverb that respondents found least acceptable. Only 21 respondents indicating that they would always/often use *O.D.*, which rounds out to a little less than 2%. That said, *O.D.* actually has a lot of similarities in it's mapping of results as *dumb*, but they are much more distinct. Here the only green markers we see are in Seattle, San Francisco, Denver, Dallas, Atlanta, Orlando, New York, Boston and Washington DC. As with *dumb* this prompted me to compare the results against respondents ethnic backgrounds to determine whether that had any effect on the acceptability of this marker. When looking at the breakdown, I realized that no ethnicity (other than African Americans) showed more than 1.85% acceptability. African Americans though indicated a near 14% acceptability. This was a major difference and helps to confirm the suggestion (Alysia Harris, Yale Linguistics graduate student, personal communication) that this is a distinct marker of African

American English (AAE). Further evidence can be found in Eisenstein's (2014) article, which gives an example of OD being used as an IA. The example is:

She said she **OD** miss me.

Eisenstein (2014) doesn't connect the marker itself to AAE or give the ethnicity of this speaker, but looking at the underlined verb *miss* gives a bit of insight. Whoever the speaker of this sentence is didn't conjugate *miss* in the way that SAE would dictate (ie. 'She said she OD misses me.') Interestingly enough, this agreement asymmetry is something that is a common characteristic of AAE and is referred to as *–s* absence by Wolfram (2004). Wolfram (2004) actually explains that *–s* absence as a feature of AAE is attested to even as far back as a 1968 study of urban AAE done by Labov. Given the reliable suggestion that *OD* is in fact a feature of AAE, the results of my survey, and the existence of an example using *OD* in a context that exhibits characteristics of AAE, I think there is a signficant amount of evidence pointing towards *OD* being considered a characteristic of AAE.

2.3.8 *Scary*



n=1,135

Scary is another one of those markers for which it is hard to determine a clear speaker area. While there does seem to be some clustering on the East Coast, there generally seems to be acceptability across the country. With 16% of respondents

indicating acceptability, *scary* is tied with *wicked* for third place in terms of the number of respondents who indicated that the marker was acceptable. There was some noteworthy statistical data that is worth pointing out. Ethnically, White/Euro-Americans and African Americans use this marker more commonly than people of different ethnic backgrounds, and females tend to use this marker more commonly than males.

2.3.9 IA by Context

The first question I set out to answer with respect to the Intensifying Adverbs was whether their acceptability is subject to context. To do this, we tested acceptability in two situations that were meant to represent an informal context and a formal context. Using the data from these questions, I cross-tabulated the results of the acceptability of *hella* and *crazy* for each context against the results for the same marker in the other context. Looking through the resulting data, I recognized that IA markers exhibit a higher degree of variation in more informal contexts, and they exhibit less variation the more formal the situation.

Basically, the way I'm testing this is by taking the context that yielded the most positive acceptability data for a certain marker and looking at what percentage of those people could also use that marker in the other contexts. This will reveal *hella/crazy* speakers who don't feel comfortable using *hella/crazy* in certain contexts.

The results indicated that *hella* and *crazy* are affected by the formality of the situation. According to my data, the situation in which the most respondents indicated that both *hella* and *crazy* were acceptable was the informal context. Next, I was able to break down how many of those people could also use that marker in the formal context. The results indicated that only 34% of people who could use *hella* in the informal context and 47% of people who could use *crazy* in the informal context could also use them in the formal context. These results indicate that neither marker is used nearly as often in the formal context, and also that *crazy* seems to be relatively more acceptable in formal situations than *hella*.

2.3.10 IA by Familiarity

The next question I wanted to look into with respect to IAs was whether familiarity had any effect on the acceptability of IAs. I suspected that the more familiar a speaker was with the addressee, the more likely they would be to use a variant marker of IAs. As mentioned in the survey setup, I tested this by cross tabulating the results for *hella* and *crazy* in the familiar context against the results for the same markers in the unfamiliar context.

The results for this test were quite straightforward. I found that acceptability of *hella* and *crazy* was higher in the familiar context (speaking to a close friend), so I tested the difference in acceptability in the other contexts. For *hella*, only about 52% of respondents who indicated that they could use *hella* in the familiar context could also use it in the unfamiliar context (speaking to a stranger on the street). Similarly, 78% of the respondents who could use *crazy* in the familiar context could also use it in the unfamiliar context.

As with formality, we see that familiarity can also affect the acceptability of IAs. Another interesting observation here is that while *hella* exhibited a large dropoff in the unfamiliar context, *crazy* didn't decrease in acceptability by nearly as much. This is the same result we saw in the previous section, which lends further support to the idea that *crazy* is a more universally acceptable form (geographically as well as across different contexts).

2.3.11 IA by Age

The final test I wanted to conduct with IAs was whether the age of the speaker can affect acceptability. To do this, I used the results for *hella* and *crazy* in the context with the most acceptability and compared them against the respondent's ages, which were recorded in the background questions.

The best way to show the breakdown of the results of this test is to show the cross-tabulation itself. The two images below illustrate the age breakdowns of respondents who always/often use *hella* and *crazy* respectively.

Hella

	How old are you?					
	18 or younger	19-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
(could) always use	28 24.56%	80 12.58%	7 9.46%	16 10.32%	11 9.82%	0 0.00%
(could) often use	33 28.95%	191 30.03%	18 24.32%	29 18.71%	16 14.29%	3 6.82%

Crazy

	How old are you?					
	18 or younger	19-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
(could) always use	23 20.18%	44 6.92%	2 2.70%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%
(could) often use	25 21.93%	75 11.79%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	3 2.68%	0 0.00%

The percentages shown in blue represent the percentage of respondents in that age group who report that they can always/often use that marker. Here we see evidence that younger people are using IAs at a much higher rate. Again it is worth noting that this is much stronger with *hella* than *crazy*. It seems, given the results comparing *hella* and *crazy*, that *crazy* is considered to be much more standard and less subject to situational variables dictating acceptability. That said, each of the markers seems to be subject to decreased acceptability as the age of the speaker increases.

D. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper we discussed dialect geographies and noted that aspects of different dialects could be tested against multiple variables. Having created a survey to break down lexical variation with respect to both second person plural pronouns and intensifying adverbs in US English, I was able to collect my own data, with which I could either work to further the debates already occurring within the field, or lay a groundwork for further study. While often times, I did not have enough data to make hard claims about these variant forms, almost every question I asked led to some sort of interesting finding in my data. That said, I was able to answer many of the questions I asked, in some cases yielding data that would prove to be extremely insightful such as with singular *y'all*, *O.D.,* and many of the geographical breakdowns of acceptability. It is my hope that this paper will provide further data and analysis to continue/establish ongoing conversations about lexical variation, its examples in the real world, and its effects.

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