‘Bogans’ and Boundaries: A perceptual dialectology of Australian English

by Madalyn B. Danielson

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Although linguistics is primarily centered on the study of language competence, Dennis Preston has put forth strong arguments for the legitimization of perceptual dialectology, or the study of “folk” perceptions of language, as a proper subfield of sociolinguistics. Traditionally, structuralists have regarded this subfield with criticism, as the study of nonlinguists’ perceptions of speech varieties was thought to have little to do with the objective, ‘scientific’ approach to language research. Yet Preston claims that the study of nonlinguists’ perception of language is a critical component of linguistics, as these views have often inspired and informed empirical research in the first place (1999:xxiv). Furthermore, folk perceptions of language can impact the production of language itself, as well as affect the larger processes of language change (Preston 1989:2).

The present study is an undergraduate thesis inspired by Preston’s original research methods and Bucholtz et al.’s perceptual dialectology of California (2007, 2008). This paper examines the data collected from 85 surveys distributed primarily within Sydney, New South Wales that were designed to elicit Australians impressions and perceptions of variation in Australian English. The paper will explore what types of attitudes Australian English speakers have to their own language and how those attitudes manifest through overt and covert expression.

Crucially, it has been generally recognized among linguists that Australian English (hereafter, AusE) is “remarkably” homogeneous when compared to other dialects of English (namely British and American English), regardless of regional distribution or
speakers’ social characteristics (e.g. Mitchell 1946:11, Mitchell and Delbridge 1965b:11, Moore 2008:166, Collins 1989:4, Horvath 1985:177). Starting with this opinion, this paper investigates if such uniformity is expressed in nonlinguist Australians’ perceptions of the language by following the two basic research questions:

1. Do Australians perceive AusE as homogeneous? Or, if not, then:
2. What might be informing their perceptions of variation in the language, and what type of variation might that be?

In sum, the paper will argue that, although AusE is indeed relatively homogeneous throughout the continent, speakers do consciously perceive social and regional variation of the language. Regional variation is noted most frequently by contrasting urban and rural areas; however, there is neither a specific ‘linguistically superior’ nor ‘inferior’ location identified by the majority of survey participants. Instead, responses vary when distinguishing specific geographic boundaries of regional “difference” in the language. Perceptions of variation based on the perceived social characteristics of speakers (i.e. social variation) are typically conveyed by marking the ‘nonstandard’ speech of lower or working-class Caucasian speakers (usually described as living in rural Australia or in the western suburbs of Sydney) or the speech of immigrants for whom English is a second language (noted to live primarily within cities). Thus, perceived regional variation and perceived social variation are intimately tied within participants’ responses, and it often appears as though impressions of social variation drive many of respondents’ impressions of regional variation. In sum, folk perceptions of these two types of variation interact with one another to construct a larger metalinguistic awareness of the language alongside social evaluations of its speakers.
To provide context to the study, the paper will first present a brief summary of Australian history, followed by a review on the variation and origins of AusE and Australian language ideologies. The research methodology, findings and analysis will then be presented. Finally, the paper will conclude with the larger implications of the study for Australian language ideologies followed by suggestions for future research.

I. Australian English and Society

1. The history of Australia in two-and-a-half pages

Prior to prolonged European contact, Indigenous Australian culture comprised a habitat of expansive multilingualism (Harris 2007:132). Though the Dutch are credited with the first European exploration of Australia in the early seventeenth century (Romaine 1991:2), it was not until the arrival of British colonists in the late eighteenth century that Europeans made a significant mark on the continent’s cultural and linguistic ecology. Of the estimated 250 distinct indigenous languages spoken in Australia at that time, the majority of those varieties died out following colonial contact, and English became the dominant language spoken throughout the continent (Walsh 1991:27, 30).

In 1788, British settlers established a penal colony along Botany Bay that gradually expanded outwards into what became the state of New South Wales. Other British colonies were founded on the continent in the early to mid-nineteenth century, but only Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) was established as a second penal colony in 1803. Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria were all founded independently and populated by free immigrants (Horvath 1985:33). Notably, overseas immigration and
internal migration were both frequent trends during this period of early settlement (Horvath 1985:33).

It was not until 1901 that the established colonies united under one national government. Prior to this time, RP had carried overt prestige within the colonies, and settlers had been determined to maintain their English language and heritage while living far abroad from the metropole (Damousi 2010). Although the AusE dialect had arguably been extant since the 1830s, this new shift in political alliance coincided with a new shift in attention to the dialect as a distinct variety within and of the country (Moore 2008:76,101). Though Australia still regards RP as a standard and prestigious variety, this sociopolitical shift was the first step in recognizing AusE as emblematic of the country, setting up the language for evaluation and dynamic change in that evaluation throughout the subsequent years of nationhood.

From here, political nationalism and linguistic unification also coincided with a growth in egalitarianism, which has since become an integral feature of Australian cultural identity. However, this ideology went hand in hand with a social and political movement known unofficially as the ‘White Australia Policy’. Beginning with the Federal Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, this statute drastically limited the rights of Indigenous Australians by subjecting them to restrictive protectionist and assimilationist policies. Overseas immigration was limited to a specific category of ‘white’ European immigrants who were also pressured to assimilate into British-Australian culture and learn English as the de facto national language. Following this ethos, ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australian’ were considered one and the same, a notion that led to extensive discrimination against Indigenous Australians and non-British immigrant groups up until
1960s (Romaine 1991:3). During this time, egalitarianism was thus a feature reserved for only a distinct proportion of the population.

In the early 1970s, the White Australia policy was revoked and replaced by a major political and social movement towards multiculturalism, and, to this day, Australia continues to grow as a multicultural nation in both population and principle. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, one out of every four Australians was born overseas (ABS 2012a). The U.K. and New Zealand top the list of total countries of birth for the overseas population of Australia (at 20.8% and 9.1%, respectively), followed by China at 6.0% and India at 5.6%, the latter two experiencing the highest rate of increase of all overseas countries of birth since 2006 (ABS 2012a). Though English remains the *de facto* national language, indigenous and immigrant languages are no longer suppressed by political assimilation policies. Today, 18.2% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (ABS 2011).

At the time of writing, the current population of Australia is estimated to be 23.4 million (ABS 2014). The majority of Australians resides in the southeastern part of the continent where the states of New South Wales and Victoria are home to 32% and 25% of the nation’s entire population (ABS 2012b). The overall geographic distribution of the population is overwhelmingly concentrated in cities, with roughly 64% of Australians residing in the capital cities alone (ABS 2012b).

2. Theories on the variation and origins of Australian English

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1 Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Cantonese and Greek are the top LOTEs spoken at home in the country (ABS 2011).
2 Listed in descending order of total population, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Hobart and Darwin comprise the nine capital cities of Australia (ABS 2012b).
The first major investigation of AusE is attributed to A.G. Mitchell’s publication of *The Pronunciation of English in Australia* in 1946. While still maintaining that “Australian speech is remarkable for its comparative uniformity” (1946:11), Mitchell was the first to put forth credible argumentation for a degree of social variation within AusE, defining Broad Australian (furthest from RP) and Educated Australian (closest to RP) as the two extreme ends of the language’s total range of variation (1946:13-15). Namely, Mitchell notes that a speaker’s level of education is the most important factor in their orientation to one of these two varieties, whereas geographic location and socioeconomic background do not play a significant role (1946:15). Lastly, Mitchell estimates that at least 70% of Australians speaks Broad Australian (1946:15).

These two varieties were further explored and redefined in Mitchell and Delbridge’s study on Australian adolescents’ speech in 1965. On the basis of interviews with over seven thousand speakers ages 16 to 18, the researchers concluded that there were not two but rather three varieties of AusE—Cultivated, General and Broad Australian (in increasing distance from RP) (1965a, reviewed in Horvath 1985). They asserted that 55% of speakers used General, 34% used Broad and 11% used Cultivated Australian, distinguished primarily on variation in vowel production (Horvath 1985:11). In tune with Mitchell’s previous study, Mitchell and Delbridge concluded that education seemed to have the greatest effect on the production of a particular variety, and that the variation of AusE was unrelated to geography or the sociocultural traits of its speakers (Horvath 1985:12).

Finally, the origins and development of AusE have been a topic of some debate. Most linguists agree that the language arose from a London variety, some arguing for a
possible mixture between London English and Irish. Whether that mixing occurred pre- or post-arrival to Australia, however, is an unresolved discussion (Cochrane 1989:177). Collins (1989:16) identifies two major arguments regarding the origins of AusE—one advocating a formative history of linguistic homogeneity, the other a history of linguistic variation. Bernard (1969, 1981) and Bernard and Delbridge (1980) argue for the initial development of a “Proto-Broad” variety as established by the first cohort of second generation Australians. This variety developed independently within the separate colonies, but because each was founded with “the same raw materials”, “the melting pot…produced the same end-product” (Bernard and Delbridge 1980:279). On the other hand, Barbara Horvath questions the validity of Bernard and Delbridge’s arguments by highlighting the social stratification of early Australian society, specifically between “the ruling elite”, “the convicts and their progeny” and “free immigrants” (Horvath 1985:33). In this context, she argues, “[O]ne would expect to find highly polarized social dialects”, that is, both a Proto-Broad and Proto-Cultivated variety. Elaborating on this notion, she then claims that “there has always been dialectal variation in Australia: variation between the adult migrants and the Australian-born as well as variation among the different social groups among the native born” (Horvath 1985:37). Blair (1989:172) confirms that this theory has become the wider consensus among AusE linguists.

3. Homogeneous or heterogeneous?
The recognized uniformity of AusE, by linguists and nonlinguists alike, warrants a necessary, more in-depth discussion in order to unravel the nuances of this impression. Principally, the homogeneity of AusE refers to two types of variation (or lack thereof)—regional variation and social variation. As mentioned above, Mitchell (1946) and Mitchell and Delbridge (1965a) were the first to argue the existence of the latter, though neither study made a particularly strong case suggesting the reasons for that variation (Horvath 1985:12). Horvath took these studies a step further by bolstering the argument for social variation based on speakers’ social class, age, ethnicity and gender in her study on the Sydney speech community in 1985. Nevertheless, Horvath clarifies that the two previous studies of AusE and the overall perceived uniformity of the language are rooted in the assumption that AusE “is ‘everywhere’ various in the same way” (1985:19). (It should be noted that these notions of homogeneity exclude Aboriginal English or other varieties spoken by Australian ethnic minorities.) Thus, as identified in these three studies, social variation of AusE is not tied to specific regional location.

Recently, however, there has been some work more suggestive of regional variation in the language. Horvath and Horvath (2001a, 2001b), Horvath and Borowsky (1997), Bradley (1989) and Oasa (1980) have all discussed cases of phonological variation among the capital cities. Furthermore, Trudgill and Hannah (1982) and Bryant (1991) have discussed lexical variation across the country. Nevertheless, Blair and Collins (2001) note that when comparing regional variation of AusE to the massive size of the country it pervades, the differences between regional varieties are in essence quite slim.

While these arguments are relevant to the overall sociolinguistic nature of AusE, central to this focus of this paper is the perception of the homogeneity of AusE by
nonlinguist speakers. Despite the more recent work supporting the heterogeneity of the language, David Blair writes:

What does seem to be true is that Australians perceive their language to be much more uniform that might be expected over such a vast area. Comparisons are often made with Britain and Europe, and even with the United States, where there is much more regional variation than here. This is not to say that the socially-marked varieties of pronunciation are ignored or unrecognised: one end of the Cultivated-broad spectrum is even given its own colloquial label (*Strine*). But their existence does not seem to prevent AusE being seen by its speakers as being 'pretty much the same wherever you go'. (1989:174-175)

According to Blair, it then seems as though nonlinguists’ views are more or less in step with the traditional linguistic assessment of AusE. For both linguists and nonlinguists, social variation is apparent and recognizable; however, regional variation seems to be less potently recognized within folk perceptions of the language. Yet, while linguists’ views are informed by linguistic research, nonlinguists’ views are informed by folk discourse. Thus, it is appropriate to next examine the larger language ideologies of Australia and how those ideologies will relate to the findings of this study.

4. Australian language ideologies: Past and present
Since the earliest years of its formation, AusE was regarded with overt stigmatization from within and beyond the frontiers of colonial settlement. With colonists living physically and socially removed from the metropole, the development of the ‘divergent’ AusE variety was considered symbolic of the social divergence of the colonists themselves (the penal origins of early settlers had much to do with this marginalization). This conviction is exemplified in Englishwoman Louisa Meredith’s observation during her brief residence in New South Wales in the mid-nineteenth century:

Young Australia makes a specialty of swearing. High and low, rich and poor, indulge themselves in bad language luxuriantly; but it is amongst the rising generation that it reaches its acme. The lower-class colonial swears as naturally as he talks. He doesn’t mean anything by it in particular; nor is it really an evil outward and visible sign of the spiritual grace with him. (Twopeny 1973: 84, cited in Damousi 2010)

In short, Meredith blatantly connects language use to the pigeonholed social characteristics of “young Australia”. Her commentary represents the stigmatization of colonists that was coming from England during this time, which took dynamic effect on the way colonists perceived themselves and their language, inferior to the social and linguistic prestige of England. Phillips (1950) refers to this notion as ‘the cultural cringe’—colonists’ feelings of cultural subordination to the esteemed standard of British society.

Indeed it was not until A.G. Mitchell began to publicly promote AusE that the nation took on a new perspective of the language (Horvath 1985:9). Mitchell’s argument is sociolinguistic in nature—that the differences between language varieties should be regarded as differences and not the “corruption” of a particular ‘degenerate’ variety (1946:2). During a time when the language held little overt prestige within the nation,
Mitchell was adamant in arguing for the regard of AusE as a symbol of national identity (Horvath 1985:22).

Recently, Willoughby, Starks and Taylor-Leech (2013) investigated the current language attitudes of over six hundred Queensland adolescents by asking them to list the first three things that came to mind when thinking about AusE. The researchers concluded that some responses to this exercise “suggest[ed] that Australian English is perceived as lacking both status and solidarity and perhaps still suffering from the ‘cultural cringe’” (2013:47). However, the researchers also noted that other responses “appear[ed] to show strong links between culture and language, and even a strong sense of identity” (2013:47). Therefore, it cannot be said that cultural cringe or the stigmatization of AusE (by AusE speakers) has been altogether lost in the years since colonial Australia; however, there nevertheless has been an apparent shift towards regarding the language with covert prestige.

Bradley and Bradley (2001) conducted a similar language attitude study of AusE speakers, focusing their research more specifically on perceptions of the language’s social variation. In 1980, they interviewed 40 Melbourne residents and 27 of those same residents in 1995, concluding that there was a general shift to a more positive evaluation of the language within that 15-year period. In addition to these interviews, the researchers conducted a subjective reaction test and found that participants ranked General Australian (cf. Mitchell and Delbridge 1965a) high in both status and solidarity (Bradley and Bradley 2001:280). The positive evaluation of this variety (as spoken by most Australians and therefore perhaps the most ‘representative’ of AusE as a whole) suggests that the language is now even regarded with overt prestige.
Altogether, these studies indicate that the perceptions of AusE are far from static. Attitudes to the language have shifted overtime, though remnants of even its earliest, negative evaluations arguably still persist in the language ideologies of the nation today. On a separate note, Bradley and Bradley’s study emphasized that although AusE is and is perceived to be largely socially and regionally homogeneous throughout the country, social variation is a salient feature in folk perceptions of the language. To be explored in the following sections are how perceptions of social variation play into perceptions of regional variation and what the interaction between these two elements of folk linguistic awareness implies for Australian language ideologies in a wider context.

II. The Study

1. Methodology

In addition to Dennis Preston’s research, this project was largely inspired by Bucholtz et al.’s (2007, 2008) study on the perceptual dialectology of California. In brief, the researchers gathered 703 responses to a survey where participants labeled a blank map of California with where they thought “people speak differently” throughout the state (2007:329). This exercise was followed by two language attitude questions, phrased as: “Where in California do you think people speak best? Why?” and “Where in California do you think people speak worst? Why?” (2008:64). The map-labeling exercise and two short-answer questions were adapted for this study; however, the Australian survey included several more components judged necessary to account for the inherent

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3 Bucholtz et al. (2007) analyze the data collected from a map-labeling exercise on their dialectology survey, while Bucholtz et al. (2008) analyze the data collected from the two language attitude questions included on that same survey.
differences between the language habitats of Australia and California. Bucholtz et al.’s study will be further discussed and compared to throughout the remainder of this paper.

In total, 85 dialectology surveys were collected from Australian respondents (primarily within Sydney) November to December of 2013. Forty-nine surveys were distributed and re-collected online using a digital questionnaire service, with the remaining 36 surveys distributed on paper to Australians in public places throughout central Sydney. As discussed above, the primary intent of the project was to examine if and/or how Australians perceive social and/or regional variation of AusE and to investigate the reasons behind those perceptions. Nevertheless, due to the general understanding of AusE as both socially and regionally uniform, the language perception questions and map-labeling exercise were presented with intentionally vague instructions, so as to elicit a wide range of interpretation. It was the hope that through vague instruction, participants would have the space to express their honest attitudes and perceptions, unrestricted and unbiased by specific directions.

Lastly, due to the small set of data collected in this study, in addition to its sole distribution from within New South Wales, responses to this survey should be understood

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4 Bucholtz et al. designed their survey to test for language ideologies pertaining to the multilingual nature of the California speech community, particularly with regards to the distribution of Spanish and English throughout the state. The present study, however, is monolingual in focus, as the survey asked only for respondents’ perceptions of AusE. Perceptions of other languages spoken in the country are beyond the scope of this paper.

5 The original plan for survey distribution was to approach a goal of 100 undergraduate students at universities within eastern and western Australia. Due to a variety of reasons, however, this method was overturned in favor of approaching a smaller group of participants, resulting in a collection of fewer responses but perhaps from a wider range of participants (in terms of age, occupation, education level, etc.). Regarding survey distribution, the online survey was created using SurveyMonkey®, an online questionnaire development website. Its URL was circulated via the friend-of-a-friend method, in postings of public flyers, and finally by online advertisement on the popular social media site Reddit. Paper surveys were distributed to Australian residents within Sydney, most (24) within public places of the Sydney central business district (CBD). The final six surveys were distributed to participants at a mall in North Sydney, a location recognized as one of Sydney’s more affluent areas (this recognition was confirmed in many of the surveys as well).
as representative of an independent, particular sample of AusE speakers. Although participants were from various places (some from New South Wales, some from Queensland, others from overseas, etc.), the survey was designed to apply mainly to Sydney residents or those familiar with the city. Thus, the larger connections to be made in this paper regarding the folk perceptions of AusE at large are inherently substantiated in this small and specific set of data.

1.1 The Survey

Both online and paper surveys began with eight personal information questions, included primarily to provide context to the responses collected (i.e. from where and whom they were coming). Participants were asked to provide their age, gender, occupation, native language(s), place of birth, parents’ places of birth, highest completed level of education, and place(s) of residence or extended stay (with approximate time spent in each place).

Following the personal information section were five open-ended questions meant to elicit participants’ attitudes and perceptions of AusE and its variation throughout the country. Modeled after Bucholtz et al. (2007, 2008), this section began with the following question pairs:

1. Where in Australia do people speak the ‘best’ English? Why?
2. Where in Australia do people speak the ‘worst’ English? Why?

These questions were included to examine the general feelings towards the use of these labels and also to determine if the labeling was relevant to the attitudes and perceptions of AusE as a whole.

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6 I am indebted to Barbara Horvath for her gracious assistance and expert advice when designing the format of this survey.
The following two questions asked about particular phonological traits of AusE that have been confirmed to show some regional variation within the country (e.g. Horvath and Horvath 2001a, 2001b). Through the use of orthographic transcription and rhyme pairs, the questions were meant to appeal specifically to perceptions of /l/ vocalization (specifically coda and syllabic /l/) and short-a variation (i.e. [a] vs. [æ]) for the word advance (a specific lexical item pronounced with either of these varieties in Australia, e.g. Wells 1982, Horvath and Horvath 2001b). As examined by Horvath and Horvath (2001a), /l/ vocalization in AusE is most commonly produced in Hobart, Mount Gambier, and Adelaide. Regarding short-a variation, advance is most likely to be pronounced with [æ] in Brisbane and least likely in Mount Gambier (Horvath and Horvath 2001b).

The survey’s questions were phrased as follows:

3 Does anyone in Australia pronounce the word little like “lidduw”, dill like “deuw”, and middle like “midduw”? If so, where?

4 Does anyone in Australia rhyme the word advance with the words pants or ants? If so, where?

In brief, responses were generally inconclusive, as too many participants expressed confusion with the questions. Nevertheless, responses are minimally suggestive of several noteworthy results, which will be briefly discussed at the end of section 2.

The fifth question included on both surveys was asked out of perhaps a sociological curiosity as much as a linguistic one:

5 Can you tell if someone is a “bogan”? If so, how? Can you tell by the way they speak?

“Bogan” (n.), “bogan” (adj.) and “boganny” are variations of a term to describe a social stereotype that has entered Australian popular culture within the last ten to twenty years.
Traditionally referring to lower or working-class Anglo-Australians (Pini and Previte 2013), “bogan” has shifted from an overt insult slur to a marker of in-group identity. (Perhaps the term “white-trash” is the closest equivalent in American English.) In general, responses to this question shared many similarities and are briefly summarized here to provide context for the analysis section to come. According to respondents, bogans are known to live primarily within the western suburbs of Sydney. Participants identified particular “bogan” social traits or habits (e.g. “how they dress”, “employment or lack of”, “mullet, self titled: ‘lions mane’ hairstyle”, etc.), and further provided references to linguistic traits ‘iconic’ of the stereotype. These included phonological traits (e.g. “they cut off the “g” in “ing”, “T’s and d’s are spoken the same”), lexical items (e.g. “youse”, “cigs”), and even intonation (specifically High Rising Tone, e.g. Guy and Vonwiller 1989). Simultaneously, however, some respondents either expressed a general hesitance to respond or overtly rejected the allusions of the stereotype. Thus, although the term has lost some of its taboo connotation, “bogan” can still be employed to express negative exclusionary intent.

Following these five questions, paper surveys concluded with a map-labeling exercise, where participants were asked to define the areas where they thought Australians spoke “differently”. This exercise consisted of three minimally detailed maps of Australia, New South Wales and Sydney, respectively, allowing for wide, medium and

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7 This notion employs Irvine and Gal’s definition of iconization, which indicates, “Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (2000:37).
limited scopes of regional differentiation. Twenty-eight respondents completed maps of Australia, 25 completed maps of NSW, and 24 completed maps of greater Sydney.⁸

Since the online survey format was not conducive to the map-labeling exercise (participants could not draw or mark on digital maps via computer), the map exercise was replaced by three additional language attitude questions at the end of the online survey. The first of these questions (Please describe where you think people in Australia speak English differently.) was followed by two more questions phrased in the same way, but with Australia replaced by “New South Wales” then “Sydney”, respectively.⁹ Again, respondents were asked to describe their perceptions of AusE in a descending order from the largest scope of regional variation (trans-national variation) to the smallest (intra-Sydney variation). Overall, these descriptions are comparable to responses to the map-labeling exercise on the paper surveys.

1.2 Participants

On the whole, there were not many detectable trends between participants’ social traits and the answers they provided. A reason for this might be because there was, at times, a wide range in response to a particular question (i.e. with not many participants answering in the same way). In other cases where responses were more concentrated, participants who fell out of the ‘norm’ comprised groups that were too small to be

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⁸ Unlike Bucholtz et al. (2007), state lines and the names of cities were included on each of these maps. Preston has discussed “the potentially damaging influence” of these details on dialectology surveys, as they can bias respondents to center their isoglosses around political boundaries, rather than production boundaries (1989:125). However, Preston also notes that some of this information might be necessary due to respondents’ potential “geographical uncertainty” (1989:25,125). Given the perceived homogeneity of AusE, it was determined that state boundaries and regional labels would perhaps provide respondents a degree of guidance when marking the maps. Their inclusion was not to meant to bias responses, but rather to determine if such details held at least some relevant connection to AusE and its variation. Nevertheless, for future study, it would be profitable to distribute a survey without these markings to see if or how responses would vary.

⁹ These questions were supplied with the same maps distributed on paper surveys for geographical reference.
analytically salient. Thus, to provide a general and contextual overview of participants’ sociolinguistic background, summations of age, gender and birthplace/generation are presented in brief below.

*Age:* Of the total 85 surveys collected, there were 41 distinct ages. The total mean age between both formats was 42.0. The median age was 40 and the two modes were 22 and 26. In all, there was a general skew to a younger age among respondents, especially among online respondents.

*Gender:* The total male to female ratio was 41 to 43 (one online respondent identified as ‘trans’). Paper responses had a male to female ratio of 17 to 19 and online responses had an even ratio of 24 to 24.

*Birthplace/Generation:* Respondents were asked to provide their place of birth and their parents’ places of birth so as to determine if a respondent was native to Australia, and if so, how long the respondent’s family had lived in the country (i.e. generation). Sixty-one respondents were born in Australia, while the remaining 24 were born overseas (14 from monolingual English-speaking countries and 10 others from countries where English is not the monolingual, predominant language). In sum, it was hoped that distinguishing place of birth and generation would allow for the testing of local preference—the positive evaluation of particular speech varieties within one’s own place of birth or residence (Preston 1989). Unfortunately, this factor could not be quantitatively investigated, as too few native Australian respondents provided their specific place of birth within the country.

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10 At 28.2%, the proportion of participants born overseas is slightly higher than the proportion of the total Australian born-overseas population (24.6%) (ABS 2012b).
As a final contextual note, when specific survey responses are presented below, participants’ gender, age, generation and (when applicable) the format of the survey they completed will be included in brackets following each response. Responses, themselves, are copied verbatim (inclusive of spelling and punctuation).

2. Analysis

With a quantitative and qualitative approach to collected data, this section will first explore the responses to the two language attitude questions (Where in Australia do people speak the “best”/“worst” English? Why?). These responses will then be compared to the three additional regional variation questions included on the online survey format (Please describe where you think people in Australia/NSW/Sydney speak differently.), which will next be followed by a discussion of the responses to the map-labeling exercise on the paper surveys. Lastly, responses to the two phonological perception questions (/l/ vocalization and short-a variation) will be discussed in short.

2.1. Australian perspectives of “best” and “worst” English

These first two questions generated quite a range in responses, as participants were asked not only to identify where the “best” and “worst” English in Australia were spoken, but also to provide a reason for their answer. Thus, these questions were advantageous because they not only elicited perceptions of variation within AusE, they also elicited attitudes towards that variation. In general, each completed response included at least one of three components: 1) a place where the variety was spoken, 2) a folk definition of “best” or “worst” English and 3) a socially based reason for regional distinction (these
latter two components accounting for the “Why?” part of each question). All three components will be discussed separately in the following subsections.

2.1.1. Folk definitions of “best” and “worst” English

Interpretations of these two labels are discussed first in order to illustrate how participants created their own frames of reference in response to these questions. In sum, folk linguistic definitions were included in 22.4% of responses to the “best” English question and 15.3% of responses to the “worst” English question. A selection of these labels is included in the columns below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of “best” English</th>
<th>Definitions of “worst” English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>− grammar and syntax is usually correct</td>
<td>− a lot of broken English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− forcing more standardised language</td>
<td>− accent is more nasal sounding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− sounds the most like BBC English and</td>
<td>− a dialect emerges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has less pronounced ‘Strayan’ accent</td>
<td>− use slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people don’t talk too slowly</td>
<td>− a lot of slang and drawl to sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− speak slower &amp; clearer</td>
<td>− broad nasally voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− sounding ‘proper’</td>
<td>− drawl all their words together and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− neutral accent</td>
<td>making it sound very ‘bogan’ and improper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− easy to understand</td>
<td>− very relaxed and sometimes lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− isn’t much ‘villageization’</td>
<td>− Unclear, hard to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− best pronunciation</td>
<td>− Regional dialects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− much better diction and pronunciation</td>
<td>− Non practise of the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− least jargon/euphemisms/colloquialisms</td>
<td>− Heavier accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− less slang used</td>
<td>− Least understandable in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− reduced ‘nasal’ tone to words</td>
<td>rural/regional areas. Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− vowels are enunciated well</td>
<td>jargon/euphemisms/colloquialisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− more precise</td>
<td>− Very much slower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− Shorten every word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preston writes that “correctness” is of “primary consideration” in nonlinguists’ perceptions of dialect boundaries (1989:71). The responses listed above are of no exception, as definitions of the “best” English included comments on grammar, syntax, pronunciation, precision, ‘neutrality’, speed, and comprehensibility all as markers of a.

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11 Here, the use of ‘completed response’ does not include answers in which participants expressed confusion, skipped the question, and/or challenged the question. These responses, however, warrant a complete discussion in and of themselves and will explored in-depth at the conclusion of this paper.
more ‘preferred’ variety of AusE. Notably, one respondent even referred to “BBC English” as a preferred variety, suggestive of the traditional prestige of RP in Australia (Damousi 2010).

Preston also claims that references to correctness can include both “[o]vertly prescriptive labels (standard, correct, normal, slang) as well as covertly prescriptive ones (twang, drawl, accent)” (1989:71). This phenomenon appeared in this study as well, as marked or ‘nonstandard’ traits were commonly used to describe what ‘best’ or ‘standard’ English simply was not (e.g. “least jargon/euphemisms/colloquialisms”). Therefore, even when identifying ‘standard’ or ‘correct’ features, the salience of ‘nonstandard’ varieties was used to measure the distance from this oppositional extreme. This is exemplified by the identification of “neutrality” as a trait of a preferred or standard variety, whereas the somewhat vague description of “a dialect emerges” was identified as a marked, nonstandard variety.

Significantly, some of these descriptions included an underlying connection to perceived social/speech communities in efforts to define a “worst” English variety. These responses typically included references to bogans (e.g. “making it sound very ‘bogan’ and improper”) and nonnative English-speaking immigrants (e.g. “heavier accents”, “broken English”). At large, these two iconized communities were frequently referenced throughout survey responses, pointing to a significance of these perceived groups within Australian language ideologies (to be further discussed in the concluding remarks of this paper).

Lastly, for “worst” English definitions, respondents referred to “nasality”, “drawl” or “broad” to denote a marked, nonstandard variety of AusE. Mitchell (1946:5) discusses
how “drawling” and “nasality” were terms often used in reference to AusE as a whole during his own time of publication. Clearly, then, these terms have been carried into the perspectives of AusE speakers themselves to denote particular varieties of the language today.

2.1.2 Regional Identifications

Nearly 53% of respondents referred to cities as the place where people speak the “best” English in Australia.\(^\text{12}\) Yet, since roughly two-thirds of the total Australian population lives in the country’s capital cities, this delineation includes many more speakers than the number living in rural Australia (ABS 2012b). Therefore, it is suitable to next consider the specific cities listed in response to this question. The chart below has been divided based on total number of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities (General)</th>
<th>ONLINE</th>
<th>PAPER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sydney</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney+Melbourne</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney+Melbourne+Adelaide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, this chart illustrates that there is no one city that stands out as ‘linguistically superior’ to the rest. All cities had more or less the same number of responses. However, note that all specified cities lie in the southern and eastern coastal areas of Australia. This

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\(^{12}\) At 11.8%, the next highest category of response was responses that did not express an answer at all (i.e. participants expressed confusion, skipped the question, etc.). Hence, references to cities were not only the most frequent response to this question, they also had a significant lead over all other responses.
is the highest populated region of Australia; therefore, the potential significance of this finding may be, again, simply overshadowed by the higher number of speakers in this particular area when compared to the rest of the country. In short, the appearance of specific cities in response to this question may say nothing more than participants’ personal preference or past experiences with those cities. The salience of cities in general, however, might point to a larger, pervasive ideology regarding where the “best” English is spoken in Australia. (Responses to the map-labeling exercise and regional variation questions on the online survey are suggestive of this hypothesis as well.)

If cities are the places where the “best” English is spoken, then it might be expected that rural areas (the converse) would be the place where the “worst” English is spoken. However, although rural areas did stand out in participants’ responses to this second question, cities were also quite frequently referenced. In total, references to general rural areas and to the predominantly rural states of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia (in geographical size), comprised 32.9% of responses, while total references to cities followed not far behind at 23.5%. Thus, there does not seem to exist a simple dichotomy between “the best” English as spoken in cities and “the worst” in the rural country.

In summary, participants generally distinguished regional variation between cities and rural areas in Australia; however, there does not seem to be an overwhelming consensus on a specific location home to a preferred or dispreferred variety. In fact, participants referenced 13 different places (including cities and states) in response to where the “best” English is spoken, and 6 different places in response to the “worst” English question (among other more vague responses). Thus, given this diversity in geographical
identification, it is imperative to consider the socially based explanations that appeared in these responses.

2.1.3 Social Reasons

In total, 38.8% of responses to both the “best” and “worst” English questions included one or more social reasons for those delineations. The social reasons most frequently provided in “best” English responses included overt references to speakers of a higher socioeconomic status (e.g. higher levels of education or higher class brackets) and/or a covert reference to a fewer number of nonnative English-speaking immigrants concentrated within a particular area. “Worst” English varieties were often explained with opposing social reasons, referencing speakers with lower socioeconomic status (e.g. lower levels of education or lower class brackets) and/or regions with higher concentrations of immigrants.

Therefore, comparing social reasons to regional distinctions, respondents would generally mark cities as the region where the “best” English was spoken because of higher education levels, “affluence”, professional necessity, etc. On the other hand, respondents tended to mark rural areas and cities as the regions where the “worst” English was spoken because of the lower socioeconomic status of those areas. (Notably, of the 20 responses indicating cities in this case, references to outer-city regions and the Sydney western suburbs comprised 55% of those responses.) Furthermore, only identifications of cities (specifically or generally identified) included references to greater concentrations of nonnative English-speaking immigrants.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Here, it is worthwhile to mention a covert response in exception to these trends. When answering the “best” English question, one participant wrote, “Smaller country towns – fewer international visitors who are still learning”. Although this respondent was the only one to answer in this way, this exception further
To illustrate these trends qualitatively, a response to where the “worst” English question has been copied below.

_I suppose areas in which there are high concentrations of first-generation, low-skilled immigrants – South Sydney or Western suburbs. In terms of English-speakers, rural areas, especially in states like Western Australia (excluding Perth) & the Northern Territory_

[Female, 18, third generation Australian, Paper]

Note the reference to both “low-skilled immigrants” and rural “English-speakers”.

These identifications suggest an expectation of the geographical distribution of particular social/speech communities (that immigrant groups live in cities whereas the “English-speakers” of a nonstandard variety live in rural regions or in the lower socioeconomic regions of cities). Indeed, even Mitchell (1946:15) noted that Broad Australian (a socially marked variety) might be more common to country or rural areas than urban ones, suggesting a connection to access to education. Lastly, this response suggests two working definitions of “worst” English, the first based on second language acquisition, the second based more implicitly on the relation between rural regions and concentrations of speakers of lower socioeconomic status.

In conclusion, responses to these two questions imply there is an interaction at play between respondents’ perceptions of social and regional variation in AusE. The diversity in specific regional identifications likely had much to do with participants’ personal preferences or knowledge of those regions; however, despite this diversity, the social reasons describing those locations showed more patterning (cf. footnote 13), and were primarily based on perceptions of speakers’ socioeconomic status and the degree of English fluency among immigrant Australians. Altogether, these responses suggest that

___________________________________________________________________________

illustrates how regional identifications were variable and were dependent on the perceived social qualities of speakers of (or not of) those regions.
social variation is more salient than regional variation in speakers’ perceptions of AusE, and that notions of regional variation are often dependent on folk reasoning for social variation.

2.2 Responses to regional variation questions: Online surveys

Despite this section’s title, online “regional variation questions” is a bit of a misnomer. The first of these questions asked participants to respond to “where in Australia do people speak differently”, followed by the same question but limited to New South Wales, then the third limited to Sydney. Hence, “where in ____” was suggestive not just of specific geographical area but also of a possibly perceived ‘social area’ (i.e. an abstractly defined area where an identified, specific concentration of people reside). Indeed, most respondents did provide specific regional locations in their responses; however, several elaborated on the social reasons for that variation. (Others even responded with only these reasons for variation.)

Before discussing specific responses to these questions, the use of differently in the instructions should also be explained. Preston (2003) discusses the implications of this term when designing dialectology questions, noting that its inherent vagueness inhibits biasing a participant if they lack geographical familiarity with a given region. Notably, this word created some confusion among participants, pointing perhaps to a general perceived homogeneity of the language (e.g. “Differently to what?”). Furthermore, of the 49 respondents, only 35 completed this final section. For some, this may have had to do with expediency, but for others this may indicate that they simply had no response to give. Nevertheless, despite some expressed confusion and the overall drop in response,
there were enough completed responses to also suggest that linguistic homogeneity is not absolute in nonlinguists’ perceptions of AusE. In fact, 11 respondents indicated that AusE is spoken differently ‘everywhere’, indicating (an albeit vague) perception of linguistic heterogeneity.

In total, 38 respondents completed the Australia and New South Wales question and 35 completed the final Sydney question. First and foremost, like the responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions, there was quite a range of responses noting specific geographic areas. For the Australia-scope question, there were 16 different places identified, followed by 15 different places for the NSW question, and 33 different places for the Sydney question (this being the most concentrated region of the three, but also the region with which most participants were familiar).

In total, there were 50 references (henceforth, ‘tokens’: total place names, inclusive of repeats) to geographic regions in response to the Australia question, 25 that referenced specific rural areas or predominantly rural states, and the remaining 25 identifying specific cities (of various population sizes), general rural areas or general urban areas. Though the regional identifications were diverse, general response trends have been tabulated below. (To simplify, specific cities have been absorbed into the corresponding state category.)

| Queensland | 13 |
| New South Wales | 10 |
| Northern Territory | 9 |
| South Australia | 6 |
| Other | 6 |
| Victoria | 3 |
| Western Australia | 3 |
| TOTAL | 50 |
Thus, Queensland and NSW were identified most frequently. However, whereas references to (rural) Queensland often included descriptions of nonstandard linguistic traits of its speakers (e.g. “thicker ‘Australian’ accents”, “very broad and nasal”, “different words i.e port for suitcase”), references to New South Wales was often neutrally referenced as a point of comparison between other states (e.g. “I would say the differences are most pronounced between South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.”). Thus, the prevalence of NSW in responses is arguably due to participants’ familiarity with the state (using it to compare with other states/regions), whereas the prevalence of Queensland (followed not far behind by the Northern Territory) is due more to its linguistic markedness in the perceptions of these respondents.\footnote{Notably, references to NSW were generally inclusive of a specific city (8 of the total 10 tokens). Queensland, on the other hand, was referenced as a state 12 of the 13 total tokens (i.e. only once was Brisbane, the capital city, identified). This was true of the Northern Territory as well (the majority of references were to the state itself, and only one token was specific to its capital city, Darwin). Therefore, this may further suggest a difference in familiarity between NSW (with specified locations) and Queensland and the Northern Territory (referenced as entire states).}

A total of 51 tokens were included in the responses to the NSW question. These were largely divided between western rural areas of the state, peri-urban regions along its eastern coast, and specific suburbs within the central Sydney basin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural regions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban regions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal areas (outside Sydney)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney (General)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sydney</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Sydney</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Sydney</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, similar to responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions, rural regions were referenced most frequently, often coupled with linguistic and social explanations for its difference (e.g. “home to thicker accents”, “due to the isolation and rural community”, “traditional Australia country ‘occa’ accent”). Western Sydney (specifically Penrith) was the location next most frequently identified, accompanied with references to its high concentration of immigrant communities and “accents of the ‘bogan’ variety”.

Furthermore, references to general urban regions were almost always linked with an oppositional comparison to rural regions or rural speech communities. In fact, there were a total of 9 responses that clearly made this distinction (e.g. “metro vs rural”, “country v city”, “city and rural would be different”). Nevertheless, the far greater number of responses including references to rural regions suggests that it is the rural regions where people “speak differently” and that the cities do not need to be referenced because they are the implied standard. As Preston has argued, “in general, respondents single out areas regarded as nonstandard more frequently than those thought of as prestigious or neutral” (1989:71). Thus, the use of differently in the instructions was largely interpreted as different to the neutral standard.

Lastly, responses to the Sydney-scope question were difficult to categorize, as there were a total of 60 tokens (33 distinct locations) throughout the greater Sydney metropolitan area. Nevertheless, the three most identified regions were Sydney’s western

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15 According to Delbridge (1977:9), “ocker” refers to an Australian social stereotype not dissimilar to the more contemporary “bogan” image. He defines an “ocker” as a “good-hearted uncultivated Australian working man, usually in early manhood, devoted to football and beer, a low estimation of women (who should be kept in their place), a friendly prejudice against minorities, a cheerful aggressiveness in speech, and a markedly broad Australian accent” (cited in Eisikovits 1989). Although beyond the scope of this study, it is interesting to note the general masculine quality of the “bogan” and “ocker” stereotypes. The correlation of these gender stereotypes to the use of Broad Australian is a noteworthy discussion, especially when considering the connection of Broad Australian to Australian national identity at large (this latter element to be discussed briefly at the end of this paper).
suburbs (16 tokens), southern/southeastern suburbs (13 tokens), and northeastern suburbs (12 tokens). (After these three categories the next highest category was southwestern Sydney at only 6 tokens.) Unfortunately, there were not many explanations included with these regional demarcations (per participant); however, the following three responses were inclusive of description and illustrate the social and linguistic reasons for these areas’ markedness.

1. North Sydney is definitely [sic] more “proper” English, the west is more bogan, down through Sutherland, Como, Janali to Cronulla [southeastern suburbs] they have a slight different way of talking and people from Campbeltown, Minto etc [southern suburbs] sound like Lads.\textsuperscript{16} Also there is different ethnic regions like the Greeks in Marrickville [inner south] and Lebanese in Burwood [inner west] etc

[Male, 22, third generation]

2. In Northern and Eastern suburbs where there is good quality education you will find speakers are more refined, as you move further west you begin to pick up accents of the ‘bogan’ variety as well as mixed culture accents.

[Female, 28, third generation]

3. North Sydney with a more tight and posh English

[Male, 21, first generation]

Note that there are a total of 14 tokens within these three examples alone.

Nevertheless, the social and linguistic reasons explaining these areas show some clear similarities. North Sydney is identified for its “proper”, “posh” and “refined” English. Furthermore, particular social groups (“lads”, “bogan”, “ethnic”) are used to label distinct varieties of the language. In this regard, again, perceptions of regional variation are very much rooted in participants’ notions of social groups living in those regions and the typecast social traits through which they are characterized.

\textsuperscript{16} The particular use of “Lads” in this context is indeterminate. A native Australian known by the researcher defined the term as a way for men “to affectionately describe a group of friends” (comparable to “the boys”) or perhaps “slightly mischievous men” (but only if the word were to be used by Australians with British heritage). It is unclear if these definitions are what this participant had in mind when responding to this question.
Other common social factors defining the variation of AusE included commentary on speakers’ education level or on general references to socioeconomic “groups” and “areas” (e.g. “the middle class” vs. “the poor”). Thus, similar to responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions, there were far fewer social reasons provided than specific regional territories identified, suggesting that the patterned set of reasons for social variation (i.e. speakers’ socioeconomic background) is very much ‘mapped onto’ particular regional areas known by the participant. Thus, speakers ‘characteristic’ of particular regions (as understood or experienced by the respondent) fit the ‘social criteria’ that would define difference in language and speech varieties. In short, perceptions of regional variation and perceptions of social variation interweave to forge participants’ larger understandings of the ‘nature’ of language variation.

2.3 Map-labeling exercise: Paper surveys

Bucholtz et al. (2007) used a transparent grid to superimpose respondents’ California maps and approximate their collection of perceptual isoglosses “into areas of equal and analytically manageable size” (2007:333). However, due to the much smaller set of data collected in this study and the vague directions for respondents to follow, this technique turned out to be less effective when analyzing the isoglosses quantitatively.\(^\text{17}\) Instead, to gain a general idea of isogloss distribution, the opposite technique to Bucholtz et al.’s

\(^{17}\) Instructions on each map were worded as follows: “Please indicate on the map below where you think people in Australia/New South Wales/Sydney speak English differently. Your response does not need to be detailed, but please answer honestly. Include labels on or around the map for each region you define.” In sum, indicate was accomplished through numerous types of illustration (i.e. many participants shaded-in areas or included verbal descriptions without providing regional boundaries).
was trialed, and all isoglosses were superimposed onto a single printed map to compare the total indicated regions of “difference”.\(^{18}\)

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\(^{18}\) Please allow for some error, as maps were traced over by hand.
Superimposed map of New South Wales

Superimposed map of Sydney
As discussed above, there was a wide range in participants’ regional identification within responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions and to the three regional variation questions of the online surveys. Although urban and rural areas were commonly identified, there was no distinct polarity between specific marked and unmarked locations. This trend becomes perhaps all the more apparent through these superimposed maps, where the diversity in response is visually manifested. The maps are ‘messy’ in the sense that no particular region seems to stand out in the summation of responses.

Nevertheless, two noticeable trends appear when looking more closely at these maps. The first is the way in which many responses were situated around particular labels already printed on the map (i.e. participants circled the names of cities or states). Preston (1989:25) claims that state lines or other historical-political boundaries have a significant effect on participants’ defined perceptual isoglosses (cf. footnote 8), a finding that proved true in these responses as well. Secondly, in addition to circling the names of particular rural or urban areas, many respondents would merely draw a line or a large circle around the general middle or western-middle section of Australia, NSW or Sydney to mark rural regions or western suburbs from other unmarked (in both senses of the word) urban locations.

Although there were several ways to conduct a close analysis of these maps (e.g. systematically tabulating geographical trends, comparing the map responses of a single participant, deducing larger divisions between perceptual isoglosses); it was decided to that it would be most appropriate to focus on the relationship between isoglosses and the their corresponding labels and descriptions. To begin, general types of responses to this exercise are assembled in the chart below (listed by respondent).
Although each of these categories merit complete discussions by themselves, only regional labels with corresponding descriptions will be discussed at length, provided their relative frequency and for being simply more informative in nature. Although there was some overlap, the worded labels on maps of this kind can be divided into four basic categories: 1) identification of geographic location, 2) description of regional language variety, 3) social reasons for linguistic variation, and/or 4) identification of perceived social/speech communities.

In 14 of the total 18 responses to the Australia map where isoglosses were described, participants specified the particular linguistic traits of the speakers within the areas they defined. (The remaining four responses provided regional names for the solely rural locations they marked.) Of the linguistic trait responses, there were eight overtly evaluative responses that indicated where standard/nonstandard (or ‘correct’/‘incorrect’) varieties were spoken, while the remaining six responses were comparative; that is, they neutrally defined the difference between speech varieties. The following map illustrates an evaluative linguistic response.

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19 The “other/no response” category includes maps left blank, when participants claimed “none” or when participants expressed they had too little experience with the region to be able to determine linguistic variation.

20 Nevertheless, comparative responses were often implicitly evaluative, for the mere marking of a particular region as different indicated some salience of the perceived speech variety of that region. For example, one respondent who shaded in the states of Queensland and the Northern Territory, wrote, “more laid back and slower; less contact with different cultures and people from other countries; more cut of [sic]”. Thus, although no overt opinion or linguistic assessment is provided, the ‘more’ and ‘less’ quality of these defined areas indicates that the region is nonetheless ‘assessable’.
[Male, 51, first generation]

Specifically, this map indicates the salience and differentiation of “unrefined”, “normal” and “refined” varieties of AusE. “Unrefined” varieties are associated with Queensland and Western Australia (predominantly rural states in a geographical sense), while “normal” varieties are associated with Sydney, Tasmania and Perth (the most populated city of WA) (ABS 2012b). Lastly, a “refined” variety is spoken in Melbourne. This map is indicative of how, on the whole (though there were some exceptions), Australia map responses that marked rural regions (i.e. NT, WA, QLND, western NSW) tended to do so with corresponding evaluations indicative of a marked or dispreferred variety (e.g. “where communication skills/speech/vocabulary may be relatively poor”, “heavier Aussie accents”, “uneducated”, “unrefined”, etc.).
In the 15 responses to the NSW map that included both regional identification and description of that identification, 11 of those responses included linguistic labels, four overtly evaluative and seven comparative. The map below exemplifies two evaluative linguistic labels in addition to a regional identification and an identification of a social/speech community.

[Female, 22, first generation]

Most striking about this map is not only the difference between the types of labels the participant chose, but also the regions to which these labels refer. The boundaries marked with “Regular” and “Posh” are referred to with linguistic labels (denoting the unmarked and prestige variety, respectively)\(^\text{21}\), while “The Shire” and “Westerners” are more

\(^{21}\) “Posh” could potentially refer to the social community of that regionally marked area (i.e. a social label rather than a linguistic one); however, other respondents also used this word as a linguistic label when referring to the northern suburbs of Sydney. Thus, perhaps this term is a circulated description of the perceived speech variety of this area.
implicit—the former indicating a region and the latter an identified social/speech community. Notably, The Shire (formally, the Sutherland Shire) and eastern-rural Australia are places where the language is enough ‘noticeably different’ for this participant to include a mere indication of those places and its residents; rather than an overt reference or description of the language variety spoken in those regions.

Lastly, there were 11 responses to the Sydney map marked with regional identification and description. Six of these responses included linguistic labels, while the remaining five referred to particular regions within Sydney, particular social/speech communities of those regions (e.g. “westy”) and/or the social reasons for speakers’ language varieties in those regions (e.g. “very highly educated”).22 Below a participant completed her map with two identified social/speech communities, referring to “more immigrants” and “bogans” living in the western suburbs of Sydney.

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22 “Westy” is comparable to “bogan”, though more specific to Sydney’s western suburbs. The *Macquarie Book of Slang* defines “westy” as a derogatory term that refers to “a person […] usually characterised as being unsophisticated, uncouth, and typically wearing certain distinguishing items of clothing” (Lambert 1996:260-261).
In general, similar to the responses to the final three regional variation online questions, responses to the map-labeling exercise would frequently list references to nonstandard varieties (e.g. “Better english (not always :P)”\(^{23}\), “Sydney Western Suburbs speak in a lazy manner”) to mark where English is spoken “differently” within Australia. Furthermore, throughout all three map exercises, folk linguistic definitions of dispreferred varieties included terms such as “harsher”, “twangy”, “slower” and “broader” (similar to responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions). Again, for these respondents, “differently” was negatively equated with deviation from an unmarked standard.

\(^{23}\) “:P” appears as an emoticon in this instance.
In summary, perceptual isoglosses varied significantly in responses to this exercise. There did not appear to be a specifically defined regional area where a people speak “differently” in Australia, New South Wales or Sydney. Nevertheless, isoglosses including vast geographic space of rural Australia, New South Wales or the western suburbs of Sydney did appear to trend in responses. Lastly, labels that defined marked isoglosses took the form of regional identifications, descriptions of regional language variety, social reasons for variation and/or identifications of perceived social/speech communities.

2.4 The Microlinguistic Perception of Language: Phonological variation questions

Preston (1989:2) claims that the analytical benefits of perceptual dialectology can be understood with reference to two dimensions of language perception. The first he defines as macrolinguistic perception, that is, how speakers consciously perceive and identify social and regional variation (e.g. their attitudes towards it, their definitions of it). The second dimension is microlinguistic, referring to the extent to which speakers (consciously or unconsciously) perceive various phonological or phonetic traits of a language. By studying these two dimensions, linguists can gain a more complete understanding of the overall metalinguistic comprehension of language, discerning what perceived factors are most important or salient for speakers of a particular speech variety. The survey questions discussed above were largely rooted in examining the macrolinguistic scope of perception. To balance this, discussion of the survey’s two phonological questions will center instead on the microlinguistic dimension of language perception.
The phonological questions were included in hopes of ascertaining Australians’ perceptions of /l/ vocalization and short-a variation, and particularly whether the traits and/or their regional variation were consciously noticed by AusE speakers. Though it has been concluded that each of these traits show some regional variation within Australia, it is not clear to what extent speakers perceive the traits and their regional variation. In all, responses to these questions were generally inconclusive. Many participants expressed confusion or provided vague descriptions, which could suggest that AusE speakers do not consciously notice the traits (or their variation) at above the level of consciousness and/or that there was a problem in the methodological approach to studying perceptions of these particular variants.

2.4.1 /l/ vocalization

Horvath and Horvath (2001a) studied /l/ vocalization in 6 cities in Australia and 3 in New Zealand, concluding that speakers in New Zealand cities (Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) were more advanced in the shift towards /l/ vocalization than speakers in Australian cities (Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart, Mount Gambier, and Adelaide, in increasing rate of overall /l/ vocalization) (2001a:41).24 Despite its variation, Horvath and Horvath suggest that this feature exists below speakers’ level of consciousness (2001a:39); and indeed, the results from this survey support this suggestion. In total, 65.9% of respondents to online and paper surveys claimed that no one in Australia would pronounce these words in the way they were orthographically transcribed. Notably, the

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24 Additionally, the researchers determined that there were some differences in regional variation based on the specific context in which /l/ appeared in a word—principally, postvocalic /l/ in coda position (dill), postvocalic /l/ in a consonant cluster (milk) and syllabic /l/ (middle or little) (2001:40). In conclusion, they claim that vocalization is least likely to occur in clustered /l/ consonant clusters in both Australian and New Zealand cities, but that Australians are more likely to vocalize coda /l/ whereas New Zealanders are more likely to vocalize syllabic /l/ (2001:41). To test the salience of context, an example of postvocalic /l/ and syllabic /l/ were included on this survey (middle and little). Nevertheless respondents, on the whole, did not point out these differences of context.
The majority of the respondents who answered in this way overtly expressed that they were unaware of the trait (45.9%), whereas a minority simply stated ‘no’ (20.0%). Although at first this discrepancy may not seem significant, when respondents stated ‘no’, they could have been implying that they perceived the trait but that they did not consider characteristic of AusE (therefore suggesting the trait would be above the level of consciousness, but its regional variation as unrecognized). Unfortunately, this question must remain unanswered without further research.

Total categorized responses are included in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not aware</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>45.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, region provided</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, no region provided</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague/other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 11 of respondents who gave specific regional areas, South Australia, Victoria and Sydney were referred to just once, while 6 respondents referenced Sydney’s western suburbs. One of these respondents mentioned “kiwi transplants all over the place”; however, this was the only identification of New Zealand in response to this question. The final two respondents suggested the trait was a feature of British English.

Although these regional identifications are interesting to note, the chart nonetheless supports Horvath and Horvath’s conclusion that the trait exists below the level of consciousness for most speakers; or at most, that speakers do not consciously distinguish the trait as a feature of a given region.

Identification of the western suburbs may be due to the carryover effect, as this question immediately followed the “worst” English question. Thus, it is possible that responses were biased, with participants having thought that the question was suggestive of a trait of a dispreferred speech variety. For future research, it would be necessary to alternate the order of questions across surveys so as to more firmly calculate if this effect is at work in certain responses.
2.4.2 Short-a variation

Horvath and Horvath (2001b) continue the work of Wells (1982), who claims that the variation between short-\( a \) ([æ]) and long-\( a \) ([a]) in AusE can sometimes be determined through phonetic conditioning, specifically within words that comprise the ‘BATH lexical set’—a specific collection of lexical items that show variation between [a] and [æ] within and across dialects of English. Specifically, Wells notes that phonetic conditioning in AusE can occur in words of the BATH lexical set where the variant in question precedes a nasal+consonant (e.g. ___ns). He further concludes that in this context, most AusE speakers will produce [æ] while fewer will produce [a] (Horvath and Horvath 2001b, citing Wells 1982:233). Thus, advance (as a word of the BATH-lexical set) would fit into this category, usually produced with short-\( a \) rather than long-\( a \).

Nevertheless, with reference to Wells’s work, Horvath and Horvath write:

What is unusual about the phonological variation of the BATH lexical set is that although one can describe the phonological conditioning to a certain extent in those places where there is variation, one cannot predict that the conditioning will apply in the case of any particular word. (2001b:341).

After conducting a geolinguistic study on the variation of several BATH lexical set items, the authors confirmed that “in order to predict how a word in the BATH lexical set will be pronounced in Australia you need to know what word is being said […], where the word is being said […], and something about who is saying it” (2001b:349). There are therefore more elements to this phenomenon than just phonetic conditioning. The short-\( a \) question on this survey was included to determine if phonological conditioning stands for advance in participants’ perception/production of the word, or if it is something about the word itself and/or its (social or regional) variation that drives an indicated difference in its pronunciation. Crucially, according to the Macquarie Dictionary, ants and pants will
only take the [æ] variant in AusE. Therefore, if *advance* rhymes with these two words for participants, this indicates it would take the [æ] variant.

With regards to regional variation, Horvath and Horvath concluded that pronunciation of *advance* in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart shows at least 86% short-\(a\) usage, compared to only 4% and 18% usage in Mount Gambier and Adelaide. In response to this question, participants confirmed that *advance* would rhyme with *pants* or *ants*, in Sydney’s western suburbs, Adelaide, Queensland, Victoria, Eastern States, Tasmania and parts of South Australia.

Again, (a theme of this study) the responses varied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ONLINE</th>
<th></th>
<th>PAPER</th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhyme</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Rhyme</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware/skipped</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, for the majority of respondents it seems as though *advance* rhymes with *pants* and *ants*, with all three pronounced with [æ]. This is supportive of Horvath and Horvath’s conclusions. In this case, phonetic conditioning stands for *advance*.²⁶

Nevertheless, this trend was closely followed by another where respondents expressed uncertainty or skipped the question altogether, thus suggesting that either the variation is not perceived or that the wording of the question needs to be reconsidered. Thus, in conclusion, it seems as if *advance* would more than likely take the [æ] variant for most

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²⁶ As an aside, in response to this question, one participant wrote, “Most people [would rhyme these words], except during the national anthem.” Thus, perhaps even beyond Horvath and Horvath’s model of ‘place, person and word’, context takes effect on the variation of this word. Notably, this is in specific reference to Australia’s national anthem, and as *advance* always takes the long-\(a\) form in RP (Wells 1982), this connection might point to RP’s traditional prestige in Australia (past and present).
AusE speakers, though it would be necessary to conduct a secondary study with rephrased questions to see if and/or how the responses varied.

III. Concluding Remarks: Reconsidering Australia’s language ideologies

Thus far, the findings of this study have been discussed within their own analytical context. Responses to individual questions have been compared to reveal trends in participants’ perceptions of AusE. Trends themselves have then been compared to illustrate their patterning across survey questions. As discussed above, one of the most salient findings was the way in which participants’ consistently referenced immigrants in “ethnic enclaves” within metropolitan areas and persons of lower socioeconomic status in the western suburbs of Sydney (i.e. bogans). In fact, approximately 20% of responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions included the words “ethnic”, “immigrant(s)”, “bogan”, “yobo behavior”, “tradies” 27, “multicultural”, “immigration”, “different cultures”, “low-skilled immigrants” or “Asian(s)” (appearing twice, this was only ‘overseas’ ethnicity specified in responses to either of these two questions). 28 The majority of allusions to these two perceived communities were included in responses to the “worst” English question, though references to immigrant groups spanned responses to both the “best” English question (covertly referenced) and “worst” English question (overtly referenced).

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27 According to The Macquarie Book of Slang “Yobo” (or “yobbo”) refers to a “middle-aged” Australian man who has “a well-developed beer gut, thongs, a bad tan, and a perpetual stubbie [beer] holder glued to his palm” (Lambert 1996). “Tradies” assumedly refers to tradespersons living in “semi-metro areas” (as indicated by the respondent), arguably of a low socioeconomic and social status. Presuming these definitions, then both terms are comparable to the “bogan” stereotype.

28 To clarify, “Aboriginal areas” were referenced in one response to the “worst” English question.
To illustrate, the following selection of responses exemplifies the way in which these identified groups were discussed.

“Worst” English responses

1. The western suburbs of Sydney perhaps as there are more foreigners therefor [sic] heavier accents.
   [Female, 18, third generation, Paper]

2. To my knowledge, outer suburbs of major metro areas. These attract high numbers of new immigrants and lower-educated bogs.
   [Female, 29, first generation, Online]

“Best” English responses

1. Smaller country towns – fewer international visitors who are sill learning.
   [20, female, third generation, Online]

2. South Australia – fewer concentration of first generation immigrants
   [Male, 21, first generation, Online]

The markedness of these groups is of worthy consideration when looking beyond the scope of this study to the larger context of Australian sociocultural history. To begin, it is valuable to consider Lesley Milroy’s (2001) discussion of the language ideologies of England and the United States. Milroy identifies a class-based gradation in British society, with RP setting the linguistic and class standard for speakers of British English. She then notes the difference between this type of ideology and an American one, where orientation to a “mainstream” standard “sets up a pattern of structural oppositions that foregrounds and stigmatizes those codes that index ‘nonmainstream’ [ethnic] groups in the United States” (2001:83). Thus, while British notions of Standard English revolve around class distinctions, American notions center on delineations between ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ ethnicities.
Considering the framework of Milroy’s argument, then perhaps both class-based and ethnicity-based stratification are at work within contemporary Australian language ideologies. Though notions of egalitarianism are perpetuated and upheld in the country’s collective identity, Horvath clarifies, “This is not to say that the uneven distribution of wealth and power is not recognized, but simply that the differences do not have the same social significance that they have in other societies, particularly British society” (1985:4). Thus, while egalitarianism may be a national value (and even more realized than British society), it is not an absolute circumstance. The “bogan” image supports this notion, for the recurrence of this class-based stereotype throughout responses reveals that class distinctions and class evaluations persist in Australia, despite national ideals of egalitarianism.

With regards to a proposed ethnicity-based stratification, the White Australia Policy (in contradiction to egalitarianism) long imposed limitations on the political rights and social acceptance of ‘nonmainstream’ ethnic groups in the country (cf. pg. 4). Although this policy is no longer followed and the nation welcomes multiculturalism both politically and socially, a tradition of ‘ethnic markedness’ is arguably still extant in national public discourse. The references to (general and specific) ethnic and immigrant communities in responses to this survey support this suggestion. Therefore, in sum, the frequent reference to both bogans and immigrants as speakers of nonstandard, even dispreferred varieties of English in Australia positions these groups into marked categories, suggesting the co-occurrence of Milroy’s defined language ideologies within the nation, at least to some degree.
Yet, this suggestion is rather loaded, and it should not be considered without also noting an equally salient and contradictory trend within survey responses. In many cases, participants expressed a hesitance to respond or challenged questions and their implicit implications. Bucholtz et al. (2008) noticed this pattern in responses to their California survey as well and attribute it to an “acquiescence or social desirability bias”, that is, a “tendency…to produce answers that conform to what [participants] perceive as socially acceptable or normatively ‘correct’ (Bucholtz et al. 2008:77, referencing Fischer 1993).

Thus, the fact that some respondents to this survey were uncomfortable acknowledging or accepting the subtle ideology presented in these questions (e.g. that there exist “best” and “worst” varieties of English) indicates the presence of a ‘social desirability’ in Australian society to promote multiculturalism and egalitarianism as national principles.

Bucholtz et al. concluded that about 10% of respondents to their surveys “openly resisted” the questions regarding where Californians “speak best” or “worst” (2008:76). The researchers identify this trend as “The Political Correctness Effect”, noting how these respondents “sought to challenge the premises of the research questions by highlighting the ideologies that informed them” (2008:82). 29 When compared to the present study, this percentage is modest. The total percentage of questions left blank, expressions of disagreement, and hedged or hesitant responses to the “best” and “worst” English questions are presented below. 30

29 Bucholtz et al. note several techniques participants employed to achieve this (e.g. ‘subversive sarcasm’, ‘intellectual expounding’, ‘challenging the question’ etc.). These techniques also appeared in survey responses to this study.
30 Notably, of all the respondents who challenged the “best” and “worst” questions or rejected the implications of these definitions, 10 of those 11 respondents were born in Australia. Of all the respondents who did not provide a response or opinion to these questions, 20 of the total 24 were born in Australia.
Of course, some of these questions left unanswered or answered with uncertainty could simply imply that the respondent was not familiar with the sociolinguistic habitat of Australia to contribute an ‘informed’ opinion. Nevertheless, note the significant jump in percent when paper respondents moved from the “best” English question to the “worst” English question. Below are three responses that demonstrate this shift from providing an answer to hedging an answer.

1. Best: *Sydney because that’s where I live*
   Worst: *No idea.*
   [Male, 37, first generation]

2. Best: *Main cities, Better access to education*
   Worst: *I haven’t traveled much outside of Sydney*
   [Female, 23, third generation]

3. Best: *ALMOST everywhere.*
   Worst: *not sure*
   [Male, 36, first generation]

Arguably, this phenomenon is due in part to both the social acquiescence bias and the observer bias. On the whole, it appeared as though paper respondents were far more willing to provide ‘complete’ responses to the survey, as they came in brief contact with the researcher upon its distribution (i.e. observer bias). However, for some participants, the polemical nature of these questions overruled the observer bias and the “political correctness effect” took over. Instead of providing responses to the second, more judgmental question, participants hedged their response or provided an excuse as a way to challenge the question itself and the ideologies it suggests. Thus, in sum, although particular groups or perceived speech varieties were frequently marked in responses to
this survey, the equally salient trend of a hesitance to respond or lack of response cannot be ignored. If there is a degree of a class or ethnic-based social stratification at work in Australia (or, at the least, a ‘systematic othering’), then it is not shared or comfortably recognized by all Australians.

A separate yet related factor that may further contribute to this trend in responses can perhaps be found in reconsidering the historical evaluations of AusE and its speakers on the whole. Preston (1997) and Tasmasi’s (2003) work on the perceptions of U.S. speech varieties revealed that Americans in southern states were more hesitant to provide evaluations of “best” and “worst” language varieties than their northern compatriots (cited in Bucholtz et al. 2008). Preston and Tamasi determined that this reluctance of southern U.S. speakers was stemmed in the stigmatization they have often faced from other American English speakers. In other words, because the speech community has faced stigmatization, they felt uncomfortable assigning stigmatization onto other communities. Up until the mid-twentieth century, AusE was regarded with openly negative attitudes, which took effect on the manifestation of ‘cultural cringe’ in Australian cultural identity (cf. pg. 11). Similar to southern American English speakers, perhaps respondents to this survey were hesitant to provide linguistic evaluations because their own language has faced a history of subordination from within and beyond the nation itself.

On this note, a curious trend emerged from responses to the map-labeling exercise and online regional variation questions, where, in several cases, participants marked rural regions in the nation where the speech of their residents is characterized by “raw Aussie accent(s)”, “strong Australian accent(s)” “heavier Aussie accents”, “traditional
Australian” or “thicker Australian”, all suggestive of Broad Australian (cf. Mitchell 1946). It is critical to note the connection here to Willoughby et al.’s research (2013), which determined that that AusE, particularly Broad Australian, comprised their participants’ “mythscapes” of AusE as a whole (2013:42). In their study and in this one, participants referred to Broad Australian as a marked variety of AusE (cf. pg. 11, 21), but also as the quintessential Australian accent. Mitchell identified the nature of Broad Australian as indicative of national identity as well, writing, “Since it is, above all, the speech that is characteristic of Australia, that marks the speaker as Australian among other speakers of English” (1946:14). Thus, Australian national identity has ties to this marked variety, one regarded high on solidarity but low on status (e.g. Bradley and Bradley 2001, Willoughby et al. 2013). Albeit implicitly expressed, these responses may suggest traditional notions of ‘cultural cringe’, but also notions of Australian egalitarianism and national solidarity.

Indeed, Blair and Collins (2001) have discussed this notion of national solidarity, suggesting how it, on its own, has perpetuated and strengthened notions of linguistic uniformity of AusE. Summarizing Blair’s previous assertions (1993), they write:

The development of linguistic divergence, which recent social and political factors might have been expected to promote, has apparently been retarded by the fact that an Australian’s sense of national identity is stronger than any sense of regional identity. (2001:9)

Thus, although variation of AusE is indeed not as diverse when compared to American or British English, perceptions of its regional uniformity have been socially reinforced by a

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31 Willoughby et al. employ Bell’s definition of “mythscapes” as “temporally and spatially extended discursive realm[s] in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, negotiated and reconstructed constantly” (Bell 2003:66, cited in Willoughby et al. 2013).
sense of nationalism and, arguably, national egalitarianism. Put simply, perceptions of linguistic homogeneity are realized within the larger ideologies of national unification.

While Blair makes an interesting point, he nevertheless underplays the substantial intricacies that comprise AusE speakers’ perceptions of the language. As conveyed in the diversity of survey responses of this study, AusE speakers do perceive regional variation in AusE, though what constitutes their notions of regional variation is inherently different to traditional linguistic assessment. This paper has argued that perceptions of regional variation are closely tied to perceptions of social variation and the folk reasoning driving those perceptions. Together these perceptions create a larger metalinguistic understanding of the variation of AusE on the whole. Yet whether speakers’ perceive the language as homogeneous, heterogeneous or even a bit of both, it is how Australians understand the essence and implications of linguistic variation itself that is the next crucial question. It should not be forgotten that folk perceptions of social variation and regional variation are created through folk definitions of variation in the first place.

This proposed direction of research involves unraveling the complex, abstract notions of how language variation is defined by nonlinguists at large. In studying something so naturally broad, then perhaps it is most appropriate to start from the ground up—to study in detail the elements of microlinguistic and macrolinguistic perception of language through further in-depth analyses. For the Australian context, a starting point could be the very topics surveyed in this study, for there is much exploration to be done with regards to, for example, the social stereotyping of bogans, discourse on immigration, ideals of egalitarianism or realities of social stratification. In any case, such research would further
identify and diversity understandings of how folk language perceptions fundamentally inform and comprise local insights of Australian English, culture and society.

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