

Exploring the Effects of Cross-Cultural Variation and Tourism in Utah English

Zoe E. Eldredge and Joseph A. Stanley

Brigham Young University

NWAV 51

October 14, 2023

Utah English

Background

- Headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City
- About 63.5% Latter-day Saint Population
- Mostly white
- Large amounts of tourism due to high variety in available outdoor recreation

Features

- FEEL-FILL merger (Faber & Di Paolo 1995)
- Some CORD-CARD merger (Bowie 2000, 2008)
- PIN-PEN merger (Krahnke 1979)
- 'Mountain' hyperarticulation (Stanley 2023)

Different than Mormon English (Baker-Smemoe & Bowie 2015)

Perceptions of Utah English

Semi-homogenous, more rural areas
and/or more southern areas perceived
as sounding more 'Southern'

Sometimes Southern (Huckvale 2023)

Mormon (Bowie & Morkel 2006)

Sometimes Californian (Huckvale 2023)

Sometimes negative (Savage 2014)

Less educated, less friendly, more rustic (Eddington
& Brown 2021)

Anecdotally White

1. Is there a difference in the perception of language from an area differing from the 'typical' Utah demographics?
2. Is there a difference in the perception of language from a high-tourism area compared to language from low-tourism areas?

About Park City

Northeast of SLC, 25 minutes up a canyon,
7000+ ft altitude

High Tourism Area

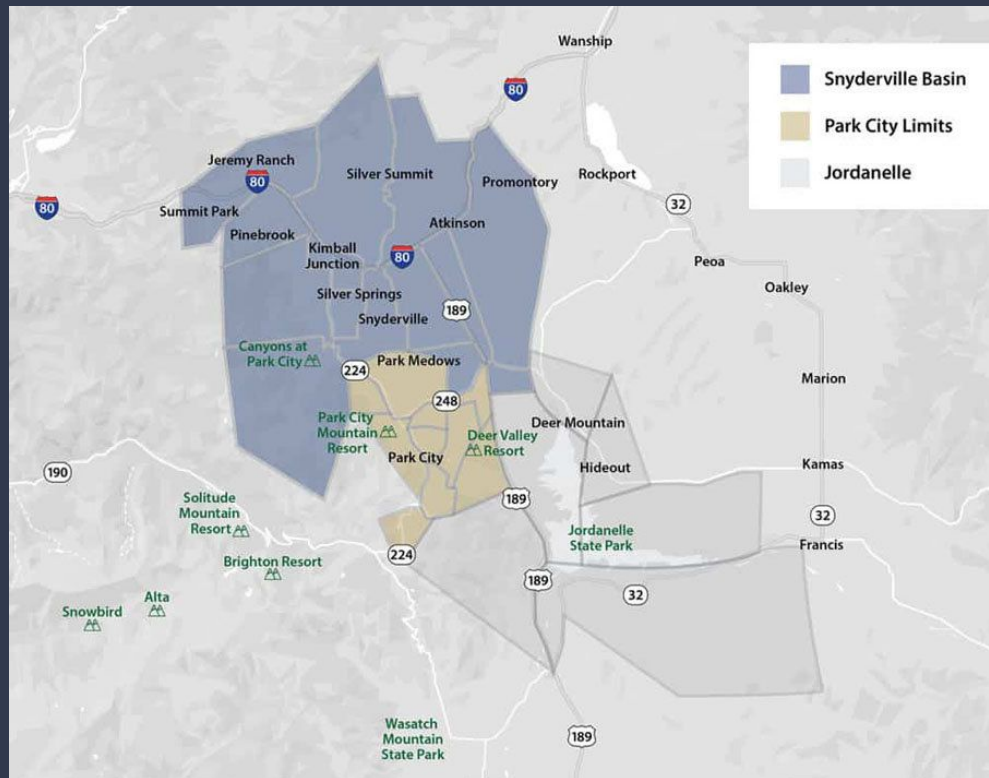
- Host of Sundance Film Festival
- Olympic breeding and training ground
- Host of professional snow sport competitions
- Home to many celebrity second (or fifth) homes

Lower Latter-day Saint density

- Approximately 10.9% Latter-day Saints
- Of that, about 35% are active in the religion



What qualifies as 'Park City'?



<https://www.parkcity4u.com/park-city-homes-for-sale/>

Study Methods

- Online survey played 12 audio clips from Parkites and other Utahns.
 - Also included an open-ended question about perceptions.
- Evaluated on friendly, laidback rich, trustworthy, professional, & Utah-ness
- Distributed through personal contacts, social media, flyers, Reddit
- 580 participants (plus 800+ bots ☐)
- Funny things that happened- being called Professor Eldredge by the Rabbi

White	464	87%
Black	26	5%
Native American	23	4%
Asian	11	2%
Other	10	1%

male	267	50%
female	257	48%
non-binary	7	1%
other	2	<1%

18–24	93	17%
25–34	264	49%
35–44	121	23%
45–54	39	7%
55–64	14	3%
65+	5	1%

Utah	199	39%
California	63	12%
40 other states	251	<5% each

Results: Parkites are “Mountain Surfer Dudes”

Ordinal logistic regression suggests that Parkites are evaluated as:

- Less professional
- Less laidback
- Less friendly

Chi-squared tests suggest that Parkites are more likely to be evaluated as being from the West Coast ($p < .05$).

Qualitative comments align with these findings →

Less professional

- “Midwest surfer rich guy”

Less laidback

- “The stereotype is that people are rich or stuck-up.”
- “Imitating a Parkite may look like an English accent of talking about their wealth and success.”

Less friendly

- “Aloof, guarded, surface-level friendly”
- “Lower your vocal cords and say something serious.”

West Coast

- “The speakers pronounce their R's and a slight ‘voice fry’.
People from the west coast seem speak with this accent.”
- “I'd say there are quite a few people from park city with a west coast accent.”
- “A twist of California upper class mountain areas”

Tourism and Language

- High tourism traffic = less personal interaction; less personal interaction = perceptions as less friendly and less laidback.
 - Superficial friendliness.
 - Have to be “on” all the time.
 - Perhaps a fossilized “customer service voice.”
 - Lacking investment in personalized connections because of the tourism.
- West Coast linked to tourism.
 - How much of our perception is based around what we expect/previous experiences?

References

- Baker-Smemoe, Wendy, and David Bowie. "Linguistic Behavior and Religious Activity." *Language & Communication*, May 2015, 116–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2014.12.004>.
- Bowie, D. "Early Development of the Card-Cord Merger in Utah." *American Speech* 78, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 31–51.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-78-1-31>.
- Bowie, David. "Acoustic Characteristics of Utah's CARD-CORD Merger." *American Speech* 83, no. 1 (2008): 35–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2008-002>.
- Bowie, David, and Wendy Morkel. "Desert Dialect (Utah)." In *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast*, edited by Walt Wolfram and Ben Ward, 144–48. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Eddington, David Ellingson, and Earl Kjar Brown. "A Production and Perception Study of /t/ Glottalization and Oral Releases Following Glottals in the US." *American Speech* 96, no. 1 (2021): 1–41. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-8620501>.
- Faber, Alice, and Marianna Di Paolo. "The Discriminability of Nearly Merged Sounds." *Language Variation and Change* 7, no. 1 (1995): 35–78.
- Huckvale, Chad. "Perceptions of 'Southern' in Utah English." Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2023.
- Krahnke, Karl. "Sociolinguistic Variation and the Vowel System of Northern Utah: A Preliminary Look." *Deseret Language and Linguistic Society Symposium* 5, no. 1 (April 6, 1979). <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/dlls/vol5/iss1/3>.
- Savage, David. "How We Feel about How We Talk: A Language Attitude Survey of Utah English." Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2014.
<http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5578>.
- Stanley, Joseph A. "Utahns Sound Utahn When They Avoid Sounding Utahn." Presented at the 97th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Denver, January 6, 2023.

Thank you

Joseph A. Stanley
Brigham Young University
@joey_stan
joey_stanley@byu.edu

Zoe E. Eldredge
Brigham Young University
Salt Lake Community College
zee22@byu.edu

	PC Female	Utah Female	PC Male	Utah Male
LDS	Extremely friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional West Coast Yes/Maybe Utah	Somewhat/extremely friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional Extremely professional West Coast Yes/Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat/extremely rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional West Coast Maybe Utah
Jewish	Somewhat/extremely friendly Somewhat trustworthy Extremely rich Somewhat/extremely laidback Somewhat/extremely professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat/extremely rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat/extremely professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat/extremely professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Neither friendly nor unfriendly Somewhat/neutral trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional Midwest/All over Maybe Utah
Other	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Extremely professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat/extremely rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional West Coast Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Somewhat rich Somewhat laidback Somewhat professional West Coast Yes/Maybe Utah	Somewhat friendly Somewhat trustworthy Neither rich nor poor Somewhat laidback Somewhat not professional West Coast/Midwest/Other _{1,2} Yes/Maybe Utah

	PC Female	Utah Female	PC Male	Utah Male
LDS	<p>more friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>more Utah</p>	<p>more friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>more rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>more professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>more Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>more rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>
Jewish	<p>more friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>more rich</p> <p>More laidback</p> <p>more professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>more rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>more professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>more professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Less friendly</p> <p>Less trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>Midwest/All over</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>
Other	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>more professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>more rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>Maybe Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Somewhat rich</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat professional</p> <p>West Coast</p> <p>more Utah</p>	<p>Somewhat friendly</p> <p>Somewhat trustworthy</p> <p>Neither rich nor poor</p> <p>Somewhat laidback</p> <p>Somewhat not professional</p> <p>West Coast/Midwest/Other</p> <p>more Utah</p>

Results

Midwest Mountain Surfer Rich Guy

- Potentially less Southern ($p = 0.07$)
- Still sometimes Californian— more West Coast ($p < .05$)
- Still white

Ordinal logistic regression suggests that Parkites are evaluated as:

- Less professional
- Less laidback
- Less friendly

Qualitative comments support these findings.

Less Professional perhaps associated with "Surfer dude" persona

-
- Negative stereotypes associated with "surfer dude persona" align with being less professional.
-
- Described as a rich, white 'mountain-surfer'

Metalinguistic commentary yielded that Park City sounds 'rich', 'nasally', and 'white'.

'Posh' 'arrogant' 'rich' 'nasal', 'snobby'

However, we haven't fully explored the many complex interactions between speaker demographics and listener demographics.

What does this mean?

Stereotype vs reality

Utah = local, Park City = supra-local

Tourism = West Coast -> Californian?

West Coast -> Affluent

Californian → Pan-regional

Everyone is laid back, trustworthy, and from the West Coast in Utah

'Unprofessionally uptight'?

Female -> Mormon -> Utah?

Fossilized customer service voice