

“MY ‘EH’ IS AUTHENTIC”; COMMODIFICATION OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN
MICHIGAN’S UPPER PENINSULA

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ABSTRACT

The following paper is an investigation of the historic, economic, social, and ideological processes that have shaped dialect awareness in Michigan's Upper and Lower peninsulas. The goal of this study is to explore dialect perceptions between "Yoopers" and "Trolls" with a specific focus on the tourist industry and material items. This work performs textual analysis of various commodified dialect features in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to examine the complex relationship between language use and identity. Secondary research is used to synthesize the historical, political, and cultural circumstances resulting in present day dialect features, while textual analysis reveals that material artifacts circulate ideas around Yooper identity through the linguistic concept of "enregisterment." My hope is that this paper will add to the growing conversation surrounding regional dialect variation and the effects of regional stereotypes on language use and identity.

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INTRODUCTION

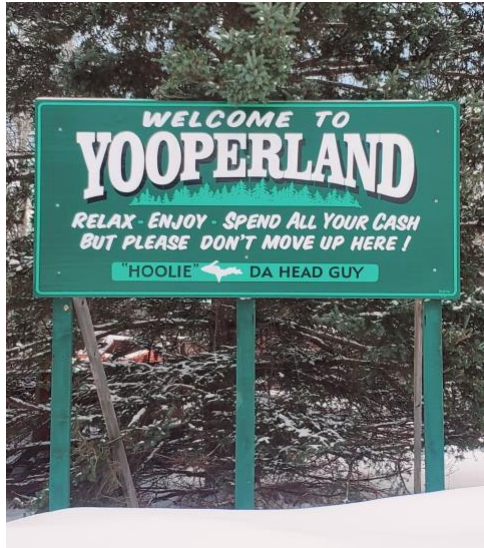


Figure 1. Da Yoopers Tourist Trap Sign, Ishpeming

At Da Yooper Tourist Trap in Ishpeming, Michigan, visitors are immediately surrounded by an abundance of commodities. After passing through a door with the sign “DA GIFT SHOP” overhead, keychains, magnets, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and an absurd amount of bumper stickers among other oddities flood the claustrophobic shelves and spaces of the store. At the counter, a woman is purchasing an item labeled “Yooper Word Processor,” which, upon closer look, is a block of wood with a wooden pencil taped to it. Tourists are captivated and charmed by such memorabilia—where it seems, truly, there is something for everyone—and each guest is sure to leave with a material display of the iconic and all-important symbol of the Upper Peninsula. The symbol of the peninsula, which outlines a long stretch of land with Keweenaw County extending the peninsula to its northernmost point into the frigid waters of Lake Superior, is represented on hundreds of items, with variations of text surrounding the symbol. On one white bumper sticker, the Upper Peninsula symbol is in the center. Circling the peninsula, the text reads: “If you haven’t been there, you wouldn’t understand.” Beside the bumper stickers is a display of beer

koozies, all of which have prominent outlines of the Upper Peninsula with a disproportionately small image of the Lower Peninsula just below. One koozie argues: “Da UP: Da Best Place.” Among gift shops in the Upper Peninsula, there is a consensus that the peninsula is a superior place—especially in comparison to Michigan’s other half, the Lower Peninsula. An investigation of the historic, economic, and linguistic factors contributing to this deep sense of place as represented on various commodities, specifically what it means to be “local” to the Upper Peninsula, is the driving force behind this paper. My hope is that this research may inspire continued examination of regional dialect variation and the effects of regional stereotypes on language use and identity.

As one Sault Ste. Marie resident writes for a *Pure Michigan* informational page, a Yooper can be defined as “one of dem people from over da bridge” (“What Is a Yooper?”). The term “Yooper” is used as an identifying marker to describe residents of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, while “Troll” refers to residents who live beneath the Mackinac Bridge in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. To be clear, I am writing from the position of a Troll who spent each summer over the bridge. From a young age I have been infatuated with the antiquated allure of the Upper Peninsula, with its dated roadside pasty shops and motels, and small, lakeside towns with slogans such as *Epoufette: Place of Rest* that doubtlessly live up to the name. The ritualistic anticipation of crossing the five-mile-long Mackinac bridge then paying a Yooper four-dollars at the tollbooth seemed, to my younger self, like gaining entrance into another country. Though it is easy to romanticize seemingly unusual places and its people, the characteristics that make that place unique in the eyes of outsiders are often representative of the personal values and beliefs of those who live there. The relatively recent settlement history along with the Upper Peninsula’s distinct geography and peninsular isolation has led to perceptions of a dialect and identity that is

uniquely Yooper. The study is concerned with the concept of “sense of place,” which refers to the attitudes surrounding the environments in which humans live and how shared perceptions and values play a role in the development of sense of place (Nanzer 363).

Michigan is the only state with two separate peninsulas. The Upper Peninsula, bordered by Lake Superior to the north, Lake Huron to the east, Lake Michigan and the state of Wisconsin to the south and southwest, detached from the Lower Peninsula altogether by the Straits of Mackinac, is unusually isolated. This isolated region is often characterized as a mythical wilderness surrounded by seas of fresh water, with winters of brutal snow and mild summers fit for exploration and the occasional thrill of lake storms, and endless views of tree-covered, unspoiled land. Such descriptions are often dramatized, but it continues to be a magical and mystical place of awesome beauty for resident Yoopers and for the many who visit each year. Although the Upper Peninsula makes up 30% of Michigan’s landmass, most of Michigan’s population and its major cities are in the Lower Peninsula—the sparsely populated Upper Peninsula holds merely 3% of Michigan’s total population (Magnaghi 15). As dialects are formed in isolation and are the result of contact with other languages, the Upper Peninsula (UP), with its geographic isolation and historical culmination of many voices from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds is an interesting example of how certain linguistic features can define a region and the local residents. That said, it must be noted that there is no single UP dialect spoken across the peninsula, nor is there one particular way of being or sounding like a Yooper. As with any dialect, great variation exists among its speakers, and language is constantly evolving. However, this research is concerned with the dialect features of the UP that have been commodified, thus enregistered, by locals who assign social meanings to linguistic features.

RESEARCH TO DATE

While a substantial body of academic literature explores the connection between language, identity, place, and language attitudes among various cultures, peoples, and places, there is only a handful of linguists with a specific focus on Michigan. As identity is largely formed through ongoing interactions with insiders and outsiders of one's social and speech community, Michigan's two peninsulas offer insight into language attitudes and the effect of linguistic prejudice on isolated groups of people and on society as a whole. Sociolinguists Kathryn Remlinger and Wil Rankinen of Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, are the primary contributors to the growing body of literature on Michigan linguistics, specifically the Yooper dialect. Of note, rigorous linguistic documentation of the Yooper dialect stalled from the 1970s to the 2000s, and today research primarily focuses on the western and north-central regions of the peninsula. Rankinen's research has largely focused on the speech of rural immigrant-American communities located in Marquette County of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, with intensive research and study investigating the community's linguistic variables. Rankinen has published various studies concerning whether Michigan's UP is following the Northern Cities Vowel Shift or Canadian Raising ("The Sociophonetic" 161). Like Remlinger, Rankinen is also interested in Yooper words as a tool for self-expression and identity. Rankinen's 2019 study tracked the frequency of words such as *sisu*, *cudighi*, *chook*, *choppers*, and *swampers* across the UP and how closely these words are tied to identity ("UP Words"). Further research is necessary to track whether or not these words are increasing or decreasing in usage along with a greater list of loan words used from other languages (Anishinaabe, French Canadian, Italian, etc.).

In Remlinger's 2017 book *Yooper Talk*, the Yooper dialect is viewed as a cultural product linked to social identities. Remlinger's book is the most extensive piece of literature focused on the dialect of the UP. The term "Yooper"—emerging in the 1970s, finally appearing in the 2014 Merriam Webster Dictionary—Remlinger explains, is typically associated with the negative stereotype of the "...dumb, backwoods, 'poor slob', who doesn't speak 'correct' or 'proper' English" ("What It Means" 129). Remlinger's work explains how Yoopers have used perceptions of what is "correct" or "proper" to distinguish themselves from outsiders. Billboards and commodities often display shibboleths to display "right" versus "wrong" pronunciation—such as the pronunciation of the words "pasty" or "sauna," as Yooper pronunciation of these ethnic foods and other cultural activities will continue to signal the "most authentic" locals as well as insiders from outsiders ("Revised Perceptions" 176). Remlinger and Rankinen are the only linguists to take interest in how Upper Peninsula English is presented as a commodity. The production, distribution, and consumption of items featuring Yooper linguistic traits have solidified the idea that there is a Yooper dialect. Asif Agha's concept of "enregisterment" applies to the Yooper dialect through the process of commodification, where both insiders and outsiders acknowledge the distinctiveness of language in the peninsula. Enregisterment is the process in which ideas about language, language use, and its speakers are defined in limited, often stereotypical ways (*Yooper Talk* 27). A similar phenomenon has been studied in Pittsburgh with commodification of the Pittsburghese dialect. Like Remlinger, Barbara Johnstone found interest in how local speech was put on display—a process that both standardized and placed collective value on local vocabulary and language (Johnstone 157).

In addition to Remlinger and Rankinen, linguists Tramontelli, Waernér, and Pelto have contributed to the existing conversation by acknowledging the significance of underrepresented

populations in the Upper Peninsula, their influence on Upper Peninsula English today, and how dialect features that typify Upper Peninsula English have become stigmatized. Brendan Pelto of Michigan Technical University wrote in his article “Black-Americans in Michigan’s Copper Mining Narrative” about the lack of acknowledgement to the African American community in Copper Country’s past and current history, and he discusses whether or not the African American speech community would have played any role in forming the Yooper dialect (100). Russel Magnaghi furthers this investigation in his book *Upper Peninsula of Michigan: A History* by reporting on an African American logging and farming community that was forced to disband shortly after establishment (113). Groups of people who did stay—or were allowed to stay—played a significant role in current dialect features. Remlinger explains that the use of “da, dem, der, or dose” is associated with immigration patterns of the late 19th century and early 20th century, and its origin can be traced to Anishinaabe, Swedish, and Finnish languages—all of which do not have the *th* sound in their respective languages (*Yooper Talk* 51). Further, Waernér expands that the voiced *th* [ð] and voiceless *th* [θ] dental fricatives do not exist in the Swedish language. Because of the difficulty associated with both the voiced and voiceless *th* in words such as *this* and *them* (voiced) and *thin* and *both* (voiceless), Swedish immigrants, along with the Finnish, Anishinaabe, Italians, Germans, and Slovenes among others, would have replaced the fricatives with the alveolar plosives [d] and [t] (Waernér 10). By socially defined standards, this is not viewed as “good” English. Tramontelli’s perceptual dialectology study mapped where Michiganders think the best and worst English is spoken in the state and who they think speaks the best and worst English. Tramontelli found: “While the U.P. is described in terms of its geographic distinctiveness and specific lexical features unique to the region, perceptions of Detroit are racially driven by references to an African American population and stigmatized

language use” (1). Dialectology maps, reflected through the work of Trantomelli and McFarlane, help define where dialect boundaries lie within Michigan, and where so-called “standard” or “non-standard” English is spoken.

Joseph, Preston, and Preston’s book *Language Diversity in Michigan and Ohio: Towards Two State Linguistic Profiles* addresses the oversimplified impression that the Michigan and Ohio midwestern area is “accent-less.” Representations of the Lower Michigan and Ohio dialect in the media has led to its prestige and the idea that this idealized sound is seemingly accent-less, however, Joseph and others showcase the diversity of languages and dialects found in these two states as well as approaches to describing and understanding dialect diversity. Though this book was written in 2005, little has changed regarding language attitudes, which is exemplified through Jared Berry’s recent study. Berry’s perceptual dialectology experiment with Michigan-born college students concludes that their awareness of “educated” or “uneducated” language clearly defines ongoing issues of linguistic prejudice (78). Further, linguist Dennis Preston has produced a large body of work dedicated to attitudes and perceptions of language in the United States. Preston’s article “Language With an Attitude” revealed that nearly 150 people from south-eastern Michigan rated Michigan as the best area in the US for spoken English—America’s Deep South reflecting the “worst” English (48). Attitudes toward linguistic prestige for those of the Lower Peninsula is confirmed further when participants circled the Lower Peninsula on a map as a place where “average/normal” English is spoken. Of note, the UP was not circled; only Lower Michigan. Another work of Preston’s: “A Language Attitude Analysis of Regional US Speech: Is Northern US English Not Friendly Enough?” further analyzes these linguistic maps from a sample of Michiganders. When Preston refers to “Michigan” he is referring to the Lower Peninsula without explicitly stating it, and as there is no mention of the

Upper Peninsula, readers assume that Michigan participants in the study are all from Lower Michigan. Rosina Lippi-Green's book *English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States* and Paul Simpson's book *Language, Ideology and Point of View* also expand on accent-based language discrimination in American society. Lippi-Green explains in her introduction: "What linguists believe about standards matter very little; what non-linguists believe constitutes precisely that cognitive reality...one which takes speech-community attitudes and perception (as well as performance) into account" (24). The existing literature on dialects in Michigan contributes to a larger field of linguistic study which seeks to create public awareness about the interconnectedness of identity, language, and place along with how language attitudes affect communities, regions, and American society as a whole.

THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH IN MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

Diverse language contact in the Upper Peninsula is evident through the various place names today, such as “Presque Isle” in Marquette from Canadian French, “Keweenaw”, an Ojibwe word meaning passage-way, or “Swede Settlement Road”, a street acknowledging Swedish presence within Waucedah Township, MI, “Waucedah” meaning “talking stream” in Ojibwe (Remlinger, “What Makes a Dialect” 48). The dialect of Upper Peninsula English heard today is the result of immigration and language contact between English, languages spoken by immigrants, and the Indigenous Ojibwe—also known as the Anishinaabe—people of Copper Country. Where immigrants settled, who they settled near, and for what economic purpose are all factors contributing to linguistic features of Upper Peninsula English. To understand the dialect, including the phonology, vocabulary, and syntax, a historical understanding of Copper Country and the surrounding area is essential.

Bordered by Lake Superior, Lake Huron, and Lake Michigan, this large land mass is rich with copper and iron deposits, maple trees, wild rice, and an abundance of diverse plants, fish, and animals that encouraged seasonal villages along the lakes by the Anishinaabe people. For at least 5,000 years, Ojibwe people lived in the UP seasonally, and it was not until the 1600s that French missionaries, French Canadian voyageurs, and European explorers regularly visited the area (Remlinger, *Yooper Talk* 28). The fur trade encouraged close relations and language contact between the Anishinaabe, the French, and the English, and by the 1820s many of the Ojibwe people were in a state of poverty due to the declining fur trade and participation in a global economy which they had no control over. The Anishinaabe's autonomy over their land, independence, and language rapidly declined in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century with heightened racial prejudice against Native people and the necessity to shift their

economy and lifestyles away from their traditional way of life in order to survive. Beginning in the 1830s, missionaries and the federal government forced many Native children from the UP to attend boarding schools in hopes to assimilate them to American culture (Catton 85).

In the early 1800s, expeditions were made to investigate the rich iron and copper deposits in the UP, which settlers knew about from the Ojibwe, who had been sustainably mining it for thousands of years. With a determined effort to mine the region at large-scale, discovery of the world's largest deposit of copper in the 1840s drew thousands of immigrants to the Keweenaw Peninsula (Catton 36). Linguist Kathryn Remlinger in her book *Yooper Talk* explains that from the 1840s through the early 1900s, this booming timber and copper-mining region held a population of 80,000 in the year 1900 (40). Today, the population in this area is half of what it was in 1900. Because of the copper boom, this region became known as “Copper Country” and the adults who settled in this region of the UP were connected to the mines or the mining industry in some way. The prosperity of Copper Country encouraged an expansive immigrant and resettlement population. Magnaghi explains that, during the colonial period, the French and English made settlements for French Canadians, African Americans, enslaved Indians from the West, Métis, Irish, Scots, and Englishmen, yet the mining and timber industries continued to bring people from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Cornwall, Italy, France, Germany, Canada, and the Austro-Hungarian empire among other places (Magnaghi 136). Such an influx of people was common to mining frontiers in general, yet unusual for isolated spots such as the Keweenaw Peninsula.

These groups, along with others moving to the area from different parts of the Midwest or the East Coast, settled and mingled together mainly in the Marquette area and Copper Country, and the growing population and continuous revenue from copper and iron, businesses, and

education continued to draw laborers, teachers, artisans and others to the region throughout the early 1900s. War and famine also pushed people to this region of the UP from Scandinavia, Great Britain, and Central and Eastern Europe (Magnaghi 57). It is important to note that as many of these immigrant groups did not come to the UP with English language proficiency, they were often thought of as unintelligent and given unskilled jobs in the mines. Although, of course, they were not more or less intelligent than the English speakers, which included the mining managers who were Americans, Cornish, and Scots, the non-English speaking workers did not hold the wealth or education that many of the English speakers did; therefore, speaking English represented more profitability and opportunity in the mining industry. Having command over the English language also provided the opportunity to leave the area when copper profits began to decline—further associating social and high linguistic value with English. Cornish people were the first English speakers to settle aside from other Midwesterners or those from the East, and because they were skilled miners, their dialect was considered to be most prestigious (Remlinger, *Yooper Talk* 41).

The Upper Peninsula, with its major developments in mining and lumbering, has been home to many voices and cultures, and much history has been preserved through writing and publication. However, the lack of inclusivity in such documentation is concerning. Emphasis on Finnish, Swedish, and Italian history fails to consider the complete story of the peninsula – a history that includes people of color in Copper Country. Magnaghi explains: “at one point the Upper Peninsula had more of a diversity in its people than Detroit and many other places” (Magnaghi 136). When the Civil War broke out in 1861, a number of African Americans fled slavery and headed north to the Upper Peninsula for refuge. Census datum acknowledges there was a sizable African American population in the Keweenaw Peninsula during the 1850s and

1860s, yet most of what has been written has focused on those of European descent, such as the Germans, Cornish, Finnish, Italians, and Irish (Pelto 77). Pelto in his article “Black-Americans in Michigan’s Copper Mining Narrative” concludes that the decline of Black Americans in both Houghton and Keweenaw counties beginning in the 1870s may be due to the fact that the Civil War ended and white workers returned to the region, taking many of the jobs that black workers employed, displacing the African Americans and urging them to head south to look for work (4). The largest African American populations were in Marquette and Houghton, and Pelto explains that, of the early African Americans to settle the Keweenaw, they were known to work in a diverse array of occupations, including as sailors, undertakers, miners, trammers, hotel maids, and at least one physician. In the small communities of the Keweenaw, African American English (AAE) may have been spoken at home but among a very small population—as high as 10% in 1860, as low as 1% by 1870 (Pelto 112). However, Pelto explains it would be unlikely that the physician of the mostly white Eagle River community, John Peter Verdine, would choose to distinguish himself socially from his white patients through the use of AAE (12). Magnaghi also notes that, in Iron Country during the 1920s, an African American logging and farming community called Elmwood developed. After only a few years, a disagreement “fueled by racial hostility” forced this African American community of skilled loggers and farmers to disband (Magnaghi 113). Though there is not much information given, the colony simply vanished in 1929. Though there is archeological evidence and census data of African Americans living in and contributing to the economy in Copper Country, they are largely excluded from the Upper Peninsula’s history and influence on the dialect.

While men worked in the mines and related industries and were encouraged to learn English to gain social status in the workplace, women, with their lives centered around home,

church, farms, and their communities, tended to speak their first language. Cultural practices were also maintained at home and through social organizations like churches and ethnic clubs. The Italian Hall in Calumet, for example, hosted over 400 people on Christmas Eve in 1913. Attendees, who gathered on the second floor of the hall, were primarily men employed by the local Calumet mining company and their families. The workers in attendance had been on strike since July in demand for better wages. After six months of protest, families could not individually afford to provide their children with gifts and a feast, but a community-wide Christmas party at the Italian Hall granted a feeling of normalcy. In the midst of celebrating, however, whether as a joke or with malicious intent, an anonymous person cried “fire!” thus leading to a stampede where fifty-nine children and fourteen adults were trampled to death (Penn 84). Many of the witnesses present at the tragedy did not speak English fluently nor as a first language, and the witnesses were not permitted translators at the inquest. The local newspapers lacked a focus on the victims of the Italian Hall Disaster and the court sought to clear any rumors, including first-hand accounts from witnesses, that a pro-mine perpetrator wearing a Citizens’ Alliance pin yelled “fire” that evening to terrorize the miners on strike. Prohibiting interpreters from the inquest further victimized the grieving protesters and allowed the mining company to protect their name (Penn 86). Along with this tragic example, Remlinger also explains that churches alone reveal the vast linguistic diversity of the area in 1908. There is evidence of language-based churches ranging from French, Italian, Croatian, German, and English-speaking churches among others. Further evidence that communities are multilingual come from newspapers being printed in six different languages throughout the early 1900s. Additionally, in 1908, students enrolled in the Calumet Public Schools, located in Houghton County, claimed 40 different nationalities (Remlinger, *Yooper Talk* 62).

Of all of the languages spoken in the area, Finnish has had the most significant effect on English. It is especially significant in the northwest of the Upper Peninsula as a result of decades of contact between Finnish and English. For one, the Finns were the largest group to immigrate to the area and one of the last to arrive. Whereas immigrant languages are typically lost by the third generation, the Finnish language was maintained in the UP for over four or five generations. Unlike German, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, and French, Finnish is not related to English—it is part of the Finno-Ugric language family rather than the Indo-European language family—which made learning English more difficult for Finnish people (Waernér 12). They also tended to be literate, whereas other immigrant groups were not. With the ability to speak, read, and write in their home language, the Finns maintained their language longer than any other immigrant group, and the long contact between Finnish and English is integral to the dialect of the UP today (Remlinger, “Everyone Up Here” 123). In 1896, Suomi College—known today as Finlandia University—was founded in the heart of Copper Country in Hancock, Michigan, by J. K. Nikander, a bilingual, Finnish, Lutheran priest and the first president of the college. Nikander feared the loss of Finnish identity and theology, and the primary mission of the college was to preserve Finnish culture and language, train Lutheran ministers, and teach English to prepare immigrants for work in the United States (“Finlandia”). The college soon became a theological seminary, and although the seminary separated in 1958 and became a liberal arts college, Finlandia remains one of 26 universities and colleges affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Holli 141). To this day, the university offers a Finnish and Nordic studies program with Finnish language and cultural classes. In the late 19th century, because most people did not speak English as a first language, people were mainly learning English from others who spoke English as a second language in an accented English. As people mixed and mingled and

came into contact with each other and English, a variety of English slowly took shape. These languages collectively affected the sounds, words, and grammar that have formed what today we recognize as “Yooper Talk” or “Yoopenese”, or Upper Peninsula English.

UPPER PENINSULA ENGLISH

Kathryn Remlinger explains in her article “Everyone Up Here: Enregisterment and Identity in Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula” that, although many of the features that typify English in Copper Country are not particular to the region, they are typically perceived to be uniquely “Yooper” (119). As explained on a billboard in Marquette County by Gauthier Insurance Company, there are two ways to pronounce the word “sauna” —either as [saʊnə] “sow-na” or [sanə] “saw-na”—but there is only one *correct* way. The sign reads: “We don’t insure Saw-nas, we do insure Sow-nas” (Remlinger, “What Makes a Dialect”). The “saw-na” pronunciation is more widespread throughout most of the Midwest and American English, and certainly most Trolls use this pronunciation, while the “sow-na” pronunciation offers reflection into the sociolinguistic past of language contact in the Upper Peninsula. As described in the previous section, because immigrants and settlers learned English from people who spoke English as a second language, the English that emerged in Copper Country was an “accented” English (Remlinger, “What Makes a Dialect”). The pronunciation of [saʊnə] rather than [sanə], or [pæsti] for [pesti], are shibboleths, signaling insider and outsider identities, and the [saʊnə] pronunciation is a marker of Finnish American identity. Linguistic practices such as “sounding Canadian”—raising the nucleus of diphthongs before voiceless consonants—is an important marker of being an “authentic” local, of talking like a Yooper. Anthropologist Gregory Bateson’s concept of “schismogenesis”, which he defines in his 1936 book *Naven* as “a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals,” describes a process where insiders work to distinguish themselves as much as possible from outsiders (175). For residents and business people of the Upper Peninsula, this

often means a heightened performance or display of the local dialect—only “insiders”, those who call a sauna a [saʊnə], will be insured.

Across the Mackinac Bridge in the Lower Peninsula, the vowel sounds that characterize southern Michigan speech patterns are quite different. Southern Michigan speech patterns are reflective of the “Northern Cities” dialect. In particular, this dialect is set apart from others because of a chain shift in vowels, involving the clockwise rotation of six vowels /æ, ɑ, ɔ, ε, ʌ, ɪ/ (Hillenbrand 122). In William Labov’s book *Dialect Diversity in America: The Politics of Language Change*, Labov explains that the Northern Cities Shift was first discovered in 1972 from interviews with people in Chicago, Detroit, and Buffalo. Today, Ann Arbor, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo, Michigan, along with other urban speakers in cities situated within the “Inland North” also show linguistic evidence of the Northern Cities Vowel Shift (Labov 42). Though the shift evolved among the working class, Labov notes the shift is spreading upward with the leaders of linguistic change largely being upwardly mobile young women who have deep connections both within and outside of their local neighborhood (45). Socially, this dialect in Lower Michigan has been categorized as “Standard” or “General” American English. Representation of this dialect on the radio—and media at large—consequently influenced social constructs of the Southern Michigan dialect as being the most “proper” sounding dialect for educational, social, and professional settings. During the 1920s, what an “American” sounded like was in flux as a new national voice began to take form through the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) radio. In Vida Sutton’s 1933 article “Radio and Speech,” Sutton explains: “If we are a nation of slipshod speakers, with nasal, strident voices, all kinds of accents and peculiar dialects, limited vocabularies and ideas—as we are accused of being—we have in radio an echo and a mirror” (Sutton 12). NBC, faced with the opportunity to translate America to sound

through radio, wanted a voice representative of all—a newly, re-made “American” voice that could, seemingly, have the power to inspire a uniformity in spoken language from coast to coast. Thus, the NBC standard evolves, with the first radio news program featuring a voice from Detroit, Michigan. The authors of the 1951 *NBC Handbook of Pronunciation* are forward about their preferred accent in the introduction: “When a broadcaster speaks over a powerful station or nation-wide hook-up, he desires to use a pronunciation that is most readily understood...the broadcaster would be well advised to use a pronunciation widely known among phoneticians as “General American,” the standard presented in this book” (Bender and Crowell). This standard continues to dominate the media today. While researchers of the Yooper dialect have found little evidence of the NCVS affecting Northern Michigan (towns north of Gaylord, MI) and the UP, Travelet and Zumstein argue in their recently published article that while the NCVS isogloss splits Northern Michigan from Southern Michigan, recent data shows that there is a clear spread of the vowel shift into Northern Michigan, thus problematizing the very name of the linguistic phenomenon which appeals exclusively to cities (200). Although there may be recent evidence of the NCVS spreading to Northern Michigan and perhaps even parts of the UP, a significant amount of linguistic research reveals that Upper Peninsula English is more closely related to the phenomenon of “Canadian Raising.”

In Wil Rankinen's sociophonetic study of English in Marquette County, he describes Upper Peninsula English as a “...unique variety of English comprised of lingering substrate effects as well as exogenous effects modeled from both American and Canadian English linguistic norms” (“The Sociophonetic” vi). Moreton and Thomas explain that “Canadian Raising,” which refers to raising the nucleus of diphthongs before voiceless consonants, is by no means unique to only Canada and Michigan as numerous other northern states such as North

Dakota, Minnesota, and western New York State have undergone the process of Canadian Raising (14). In the Upper Peninsula, an example of this is *house* [həʊs] compared to [haus], and the shibboleths *sauna* [saʊnə] and *pasty* [pæsti] (Remlinger, “Everyone Up Here” 118). Given the close proximity of the UP to Canada and their similar settlement histories by the Anishinaabe, French, and English speakers, the relationship between the Yooper dialect and Canadian English is unsurprising. Rankinen also explains that both UP and Canadian English share lexicon items, such as the word “touque” or “chook” for a knitted winter hat, and the use of “eh” (“The Sociophonetic” 26). Ending a sentence with the word “eh” or “hey” is used as an invitation for agreement, or expecting to receive some indication of understanding (Waernér 11). Remlinger explains that the linguistic feature “eh” has a complicated sociolinguistic history, with language transfer from three different languages leading to its current use in the Upper Peninsula. This feature, Remlinger explains in her book *Yooper Talk*, is most likely a mix from Cornish English (*eh*), Anishinaabemowin (*en*), and/or Canadian French (*hien*) (51). As discussed previously, Cornish workers often held the more enjoyable jobs in the mines due to their English language proficiency; therefore, they served as the primary model of what English should sound like for newcomers. Additionally, because the Anishinaabe and Canadian French were in close contact by the mid-1800s and all three of these languages use this tag word in a similar way—like a rhetorical question or asking for confirmation, it is likely the case that all three languages contributed to its current use.

Along with the tag “eh”, perhaps the most prominent linguistic feature of Yooper English—widespread in Marquette and Copper Country, though not unique to this area exclusively—is the absence of voiced *th* [ð] and voiceless *th* [θ] interdental fricatives (Waernér 10). Remlinger explains that the coronal stop [d] for the voiced interdental fricative *th* is evident

in varieties of English in Wisconsin, Chicago, New Jersey, and New Orleans among many other places. Because the *th* sound is rare in most languages, when speakers of other languages speak English they typically substitute for the closest sound that they are able to produce, which is [d]. Through repeated contact between English and other languages, the transfer of [d] for *th* has become an important dialectal feature of many varieties of English (*Yooper Talk* 50). In particular, the use of [d] for *th* [ð] has become a stereotypical linguistic feature for the Upper Peninsula, immigrant, and working-class people. According to Remlinger, the use of “da, dem, der, or dose” is associated with immigration patterns of the late 19th century and early 20th century, and its origin can be traced to the Anishinaabe, Swedish, and Finnish—all of which do not have the *th* sound in their respective languages (*Yooper Talk* 133). Because of the difficulty associated with making the sound, Swedish immigrants would have replaced the fricatives with the alveolar plosives [d] and [t] (Waernér 10). The Yooper Creation Story is an excellent example of substituting [d] for *th*:

In da beginning dere was nuttin.

Den, on da first day, God created da Upper Peninsula.

On da second day He created da partridge, da deer, da bear, da fish, and da ducks.

On da third day He said, "Let dere be Yoopers to roam da Upper Peninsula" (Rankinen, “The UP Dialect” 17).

This passage, along with other works such as *Da Yooper's Glossary* and *So You Wanna Be a Yooper, Eh!* offer humorous descriptions of the dialect. Jim “Hoolie” and Jesse DeCaire explain in their informative 15-page glossary terms such as “Da Mitten: Another nickname Yoopers have for da Lower Peninsula”, while their guide to the “Age Old Question: What is a Yooper, Anyhow?” is addressed at length with headings such as “Why Beagles are da Best” and “Stuff to

Take Witcha to da Beach” (*Da Yooper* 3; *So You Wanna* 7-8). In the creation story above, the word “nuttin” also exemplifies the typical way of replacing the *-ing* ending in words such as “doing, going and nothing” with *-in* (Waernér 11).

McFarlane in her 2020 study “Language Regard in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula: Perceptual Dialectology Through the Mental Maps of Nonlinguists” found that participants believe there is a sizable Finnish speech community primarily located in the Keweenaw Peninsula, which is also supported by census data. All participants acknowledge Finnish heritage as being a formative part of the UP’s culture and Yooper identity (McFarlane). A Finnish grammatical feature distinct in the Yooper dialect is the absence of definite article *the* and indefinite articles *a/an* from speech. As Finnish is part of the Finno-Ugric language family, definite and indefinite articles do not follow the same grammatical rules as Indo-European languages such as English (Waernér 12). Instead, for Finnish, the meaning of *to* is included as a word ending, or suffix, on nouns, called a postposition (like near, at, to, toward). For example, in English one would say “I went **to** the store”, and in Finnish “Mina menin kauppa**an**” (Rankinen, “The UP Dialect” 22). Though not all speakers of the UP dialect use this linguistic feature, Remlinger explains that dropping the preposition *to* is a common feature of Yooper English when indicating movement toward a place, such as “Let’s go mall” or “I’m going post office” (*Yooper Talk* 5). An additional linguistic feature of the Copper Country area transferred from Finnish to English is [s] for *sh* [ʃ] and [l] for *fl*. In other words, Finnish does not have the *sh* sound; therefore, if one’s first language is Finnish, they often substitute [s] sounds for the common *sh* [ʃ] sound in English. Further, the consonant cluster *fl* does not exist in Finnish, so the [f] might be omitted as a result of language contact and transfer between Finnish and English. Remlinger also notes that the Finnish alphabet does not include the letter C, and instead uses K

for [k] sounds (“Yooperisms in Tourism” 264). Evidence of this can be viewed on a street sign in Hancock, MI near the once-booming Quincy Mine which operated from 1846-1949. The street sign reads, “Kowsit Lats.” Many of the people who lived in the mining community down the road from this sign were of Finnish background and spoke Finnish at home, and in this area existed a communal pasture for workers to graze their cows. Thus, the official name of the road became “Kowsit Lats”—or, rather, “Cowshit Flats” with Finnish English pronunciation. Surely many tourists pass this sign each summer on their way to Copper Harbor, yet to understand the humor behind the sign, a historical understanding of the language contact in this area is necessary (Remlinger, “What Makes a Dialect” 49). As society and dialects change over time and English becomes the dominant first language spoken among residents with Finnish heritage, most speakers today do not substitute the [s] for *sh*, yet this pun remains as evidence of the language contact between Finnish and English.

As with any feature of a dialect, no speaker uses these features all the time, or they may be used situationally. However, due to the cultural impact and vast ethnic groups from immigration to Copper Country, there are numerous loan words that act as shibboleths, separating UP insiders from outsiders. Remlinger in her article “What Makes a Dialect a ‘Dialect’? The Roots of Upper Peninsula English” lists numerous lexical features and their cultural influences. Throughout the west, northwest, and northcentral Upper Peninsula, the word “choppers,” which are long-sleeved mittens and comes from the Anishinaabe word “minjikaawan,” is used with high frequency. “Cudighi,” which is a spicy Italian sausage, is frequently used in the north central UP along with “sisu,” a Finnish word meaning perseverance in the face of adversity (“What Makes a Dialect”; Rankinen, “UP Words” 22). Remlinger also mentions the word “bakery” in the UP to refer to all baked goods, from German influence, and

the word “pank,” which means to tightly pack down snow. Pank, which is heard in the west, northwest, and north-central UP, is particularly interesting because although it is commonly understood to be a Yooper term, “pank” is also used in Pennsylvania and Upstate New York. All three regions—Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York—have a common history of mining in certain areas where the word “pank” is used. In Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian, the word “banka” —“banke” in Danish and Norwegian—is quite similar; therefore, this word must have emerged from workers who immigrated to work in the mines in these regions. There is no concrete evidence to support the origin of the word “pank,” yet its evolution from Scandinavian languages is reasonable as Finnish also lacks the voiced [b] consonant, thus substituting [p] for [b] (Remlinger, “What Makes a Dialect”). Additionally, knowing how to “correctly” pronounce the words “pasty” or “sauna” is a telling sign of identity, along with Finnish stress patterns on certain words. Rankinen gives an example the towns Toivola and Calumet, where local residents place stress on the first syllable: TOIvola and CALumet (“The UP Dialect” 26). Using these vocabulary words, including the use of “dontcha” for “don’t you,” “da” for “the,” and “eh” signals the speaker’s knowledge about the Upper Peninsula, language use, and culture, but also demonstrates the meaningful links between language and place.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF UPPER PENINSULA ENGLISH MATERIAL ARTIFACTS

What follows is an examination of commodified enregistered features in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and a discussion of what commodification signals about identity and relationship to place. Sites for data collection primarily included gift shops in Ishpeming, Ironwood, Gulliver, Manistique, and St. Ignace, Michigan. Building on Michigan's leading linguist Kathryn Remlinger's research, my analysis of materialized dialect features provides further evidence of various items that put local Yooper speech on display while linking speech to a particular social meaning. Remlinger explains, "When dialect features are used as marketing tools, talk about talk, language ideologies, and cultural values combine not only to sell physical items but also to sell ideas about the dialect, residents, and region" (*Yooper Talk* 73). Further, Remlinger explains that dialect can be used as a marketing tool, bought and sold, because the dialect is an enregistered, recognized, and validated local feature ("Yooperisms" 264). Enregisterment is the process through which a register is redefined and is based on a limited set of linguistic features and results in a singular idea of a dialect, one that is tied to a specific place and certain group of people ("New Vistas" 3). While traveling through the UP, I recorded over 30 items evidencing language commodification from shops including Da Yoopers Tourist Trap (Ishpeming), Ben Franklin (Ironwood), Zodiac Party Store (St. Ignace), Treasure City (Manistique), and BG's IGA Market (Gulliver) with an additional 10 items displaying local pride and attitudes toward the Upper and Lower peninsulas. For the sake of scope, only 10 of the 40 artifacts will be presented in this paper. Specifically, in narrowing down my pool of examples, I chose to exhibit items that display values, attitudes, and beliefs about sounding Yooper and being Yooper. The following examples express attitudes toward the connection between dialect and identity in relation to stereotypes about "good" and "bad" English. I argue that material items

displaying beliefs about language also work to reinforce and maintain language attitudes. Commodification of the Yooper dialect can be viewed on bumper stickers, license plates and other signs, t-shirts, hats, baby clothes, mugs, key chains, disposable and reusable water bottles, and perishable foods among other things. Messages on stickers are presented most clearly, and although these same messages appear on multiple different material items, I have intentionally presented mainly stickers in the following section for clarity. The historical and linguistic understanding of Upper Peninsula English, as described in previous sections, help address questions such as: What makes local speech a potential commodity? How are larger cultural frameworks and ideologies represented in material culture? How does selling regional identity help separate insiders from outsiders?



Figure 2. Yooper Stickers



Figure 3. “Pure Yooper”

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is notorious for being forgotten. Promotional material and maps, historically and today, often omit the peninsula altogether or represent it incorrectly. Recently, a 2021 Jeep Superbowl advertisement did not include the UP on a map of the United States, while the words “To the ReUnited States of America” panned across the screen. On Twitter, The Upper Peninsula’s official account wrote to Jeep: “Hey @Jeep. Upper Peninsula here, do you notice anything missing from your map, perhaps 33% of Michigan? Sincerely, The Upper Peninsula of America #ReUniteTheUP” (Marini). In 2020, Fox News labeled the UP as

“Canada,” while other recent maps color-code the UP as being connected to Wisconsin in statehood rather than Lower Michigan. Such instances may reflect genuine ignorance, yet Michigan’s own promotional material has historically erased the UP from advertisements. In response to Michigan’s 1982 “Say Yes to Michigan!” campaign, Upper Peninsula resident Jack Bowers created the “Say Yah to Da U.P., Eh!” now-infamous bumper sticker in 1984 (Carlisle). In Figure 2 and Figure 3, the symbol of the Upper Peninsula is represented on each sticker. In fact, while browsing through any gift shop in the UP, it is difficult to find an item without the symbol. The Upper Peninsula, a peninsula that continues to be ignored, dismissed, or entirely omitted from advertising, developed a brand of its own with materials hyper-focused on language, place, and identity, purposefully excluding Lower Michigan from most items. As negative connotations developed from outsiders—especially from Trolls below the bridge—the UP exploited their own stereotype of the “dumb Yooper” who lives in a remote wilderness and “sounds ignorant” (Remlinger, *Yooper Talk* 95). Bowers’ parody of Michigan’s slogan is a turning point for Yooper dialect and identity as marketing begins proudly displaying their dialect features. The linguistic features displayed on this sticker (eh, da, and yah) bring attention to a place that seems impossibly far away to Michiganders of the Lower Peninsula and elsewhere. The slogans “Pure Yooper” and “100% Yooper” displayed in Figures 2 and 3 continue to satirize dominant Michigan slogans like “Pure Michigan” as Yoopers, through material items, display their perceived uniqueness and separation from the lower half of the state.



Figure 4. “Less Yooper”



Figure 5. “House Divided”



Figure 6. “Eh” Authentic

What distinguishes “good” English from “bad” English is purely socially constructed. All dialects are grammatical and rule-governed. English grammatical structures, no matter how different they may be from “Standard English”, are neither good nor bad, yet with an increase in tourism and contact from outsiders now in the Upper Peninsula, the local UP dialect became stigmatized as “bad” English compared to the “good” English that most Trolls and tourists spoke. Although the Yooper dialect is not a very well-known dialect throughout the United States or the world, derogatory stereotypes of Yoopers “sounding ignorant” among other negative labels fostered linguistic prejudice, especially in Copper Country. When Remlinger interviewed a Yooper in his mid-twenties who interviewed for a job in the Lower Peninsula, the interviewee reported: “When I went for my interview. They asked me about my—the way I talk and that. If everybody talks like me, uh, [those] who are up here” (*Yooper Talk* 91). In this example, though unrelated to the job itself, the interviewee is interrogated about his dialect. Using language like “down there” and “up here” to refer to the Upper and Lower peninsulas maintains a boundary between dialect and place—an “us” versus “them” mentality, where each peninsula has its own pride in relation to the land, people, and language. Although linguistic discrimination often pushes Yoopers to modify their accents situationally, their dialect is a marker of identity and pride, not a burden they wish to change or remove—despite outsiders perception of Upper Peninsula English. Language is the most obvious way to mark who one is as an individual, and tourism in the UP has enabled Yoopers to own their identity and display their pride and culture as a commodity. This is exemplified in Figure 4: “I’m learning to speak more English and less Yooper EH!” and Figure 6: “My ‘eh’ is Authentic.” Figure 4 represents how outsiders perceive the Yooper dialect as being different from the Inland North, “Standard American” dialect spoken in the Lower Peninsula. Yoopers are highly aware that their dialect is

distinct from Trolls in the lower half of Michigan. While Figure 4 is an ironic way of addressing stereotypes that Yoopers speak “bad” English, the expression of “eh!” bordering the UP symbol emphasizes the connection between land and place. Likewise, Figure 6 expands on what it means to be “local” to the UP. To express a certain authenticity associated with the “eh” spoken in the UP is the result of economic, sociohistorical, and ideological processes.

Particularly in the northwestern UP, value is given to dialect features such as “eh,” “yah,” and “da,” as these words are the result of immigrant and Indigenous language contact (Remlinger, “New Vistas of Dialect” 8). To be authentic, in this case, is to identify with a history dating back to ancestors in the copper mines—from hard-working “immigrant” to present day, rural “local.” Achieving the label of a “real” Yooper is thus primarily based on pronunciation and familiarity with regional vocabulary words, including features such as “Yooper” and “Troll”, which creates a boundary between the two peninsulas and reinforces distance and differences between culture and language. “Sounding like a Yooper” is a dialect that no longer reflects any particular ethnic group; rather, sounding Yooper is a mix of sounding Finnish, Italian, German, French Canadian, or Irish. With heightened contact from the bridge opening, the UP dialect became undoubtably distinct from Michiganders in the Lower Peninsula. Although the history of the English language is not deeply rooted in the Upper Peninsula, by the mid-twentieth century the dialect has had an adequate amount of time to develop. With English-only education requirements in place and parents wanting their children (these would have been children born in the 1920s or 1930s, growing up during the second World War) to speak English instead of their home language, there is a shift from immigrant English-language learners to second and third-generation citizens (Macedo 15). As the tourism industry booms in the mid to late 1900s, Yoopers are sounding like “Yoopers” rather than like an Italian, a Finn, or a German. Of note,

before the construction of the Mackinac Bridge, certainly outsiders visited the UP, but crossing a bridge is far more accessible than driving all the way around Wisconsin or taking a ferry across the lake. With greater language contact from outsiders, stereotypes about Yoopers and their dialect have been created and maintained—connecting identity and language with linguistic prejudice.



Figure 7. “Yooperland Border Patrol”



Figure 8. “Fun Side of the bridge”

The 2008 “Pure Michigan” campaign sought to connect the tourist industry with a feeling of nostalgia for a quiet, tranquil, restorative vacation in the seemingly endless forests, sands, and sparkling lakes of Michigan. There is, of course, no such thing as a “pure” landscape; this idea is imagined by the residents who live there, and imagined by the tourists who flee from their increasingly urban lives to a remote, romanticized vacationland in Michigan (Carlisle). An examination of the messages presented on the t-shirts in Figure 7 and Figure 8 reveal attitudes toward an influx of tourists in the Upper Peninsula—conflicting attitudes that date back to the construction of the Mackinac Bridge in 1957. Prior to 1957, the Upper Peninsula was completely separated from the Lower Peninsula. This isolation from outsiders cultivated the Yooper dialect

and identity, separate from the more urban and populated lower half of the state; therefore, the construction of the Mackinac Bridge led to mixed feelings—some welcomed the influx of Trolls from the Lower Peninsula to contribute to the tourist industry, while others found the increased contact threatening to Yooper identity and all that contributes to it; the dialect, the land, and the people (Magnaghi 13). This difference of rural-versus-city-dweller significantly defines insiders from outsiders, and as Northern Michigan, particularly the UP, came to represent an idyllic place of rest from urban and industrial landscapes, Yoopers welcomed the tourist industry with skepticism (Burd 35).

Yoopers have long felt exploited by the Lower Peninsula, primarily from the belief (an inaccurate, though wide-spread belief among rural residents) that tax dollars disappear to the state capital in Lansing with little return to the UP, thus the idea was born that the UP should break away from the Lower Peninsula and form America's 51st state. Although this was never approved, largely because the UP, ironically, could not support itself financially as independent from the Lower Peninsula, such ideas to form the “State of Superior” are still conveyed through material items (Carlisle). Jim and Jesse DeCaire explain in *Da Yoopers Glossary* that “Yooperland” can be defined as: “The only Third World Country located between Canada and the USA” (15). As pictured in Figure 7, “51st State” is written across the image of the UP, surrounded by the text: “GUARDING DA BORDERS, PROTECTING OUR STUFF.” The overall message of the “Yooperland Border Patrol” t-shirt is fiercely defensive against all outsiders. The UP has been sold to tourists as a pristine getaway for the past 50 years, which is not without environmental exploitation and a transformation of the landscape. The “stuff” of the Upper Peninsula so dear to residents—the lakes, forests, rivers, dunes, and wildlife—is under threat with the inflow of thousands of tourists each year. T-shirts communicating the UP as the

51st state in need of protection reveals a deep-rooted fear that the UP is in a state of vulnerability. The t-shirt in Figure 8 explaining “RELAX You’re on the FUN side of the bridge” demonstrates the economic necessity of tourism in the UP while dismissing the Lower Peninsula as a boring, perhaps miserable, more urbanized place. Michigan’s campaigns advertise Northern Michigan as a place to “relax” and have “fun”, and in turn, Yoopers have built a material industry that provides a platform for identity, beliefs, and a space to mock stereotypes, as necessary.

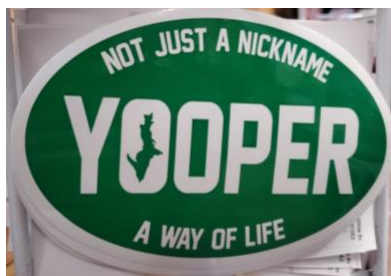


Figure 9. “Way of Life”

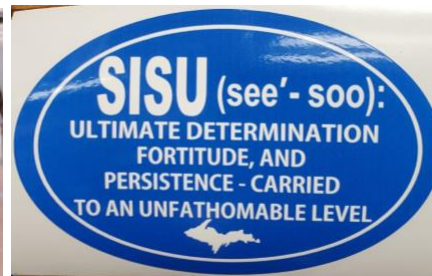


Figure 10. “SISU”



Figure 11. “Da Grace of God”

In 1929 when the mining operations began diminishing rapidly with the Great Depression, despite high rates of unemployment, Upper Peninsula residents coped with the challenges of poverty by relying on their community, farming, fishing, and hunting (Magnaghi 102). Such resilience in a remote landscape, with harsh winters and little support from the Lower Peninsula, the Yooper identity became synonymous with being self-reliant, proud, and independent. From various nations, individuals and groups of people had immigrated to the UP in hopes to achieve the “American Dream” and help build a nation, and after 50 years that dream ended and transformed into a different one. “Sisu”, as pictured in Figure 10, is a Finnish concept for strength in the face of adversity. Yoopers have largely built their identity, way of life, and language off of Finnish influence, and certainly there is no shortage of material items to display pride associated with being of Finnish descent. Performance of local identity through the use of enregistered features, such as “DA” in Figure 11, is a display of Finnish identity and power.

Richard Dorson's work, "Dialect Stories of the Upper Peninsula: A New Form of American Folklore" brings into question how discrimination against other ethnic groups led to the Finn's influence and power in Copper Country. In 1946, Tom Ristell of Houghton recounts a story of an Irish hunter who stops at a Finn farmhouse to ask for some water. A Finnish woman answers the door and demands, "What natchional you be anyhow?" The hunter says, "I'm Irish." She says, "Plenty water in de 'wamp for you, Irish booger" (Dorson 146). Although outsiders may consider Finnish English grammatical structures "improper" or "bad" English, language is tied to power, and as "sounding Finnish" is tied to the Copper Country dialect, Finnish discrimination against other ethnic groups may have been a leading factor in their cultural and linguistic dominance. As other groups that settled in the UP, or the Indigenous people of the UP, are seldom represented in gift shops if at all, it seems that the perceived "way of life" in the UP continues to promote Finnish dominance and values.

CONCLUSION

Identity and language attitudes are inseparable factors affecting language variation, and in some places—like the Upper Peninsula—enregistered features become a valuable commodity, used to sell things like bumper stickers as well as a regional identity and sense of place. Tourism has been the backbone of the UP’s economy since the mid-nineteenth century, bringing outsiders and locals into contact with each other following World War II and the construction of the Mackinac Bridge (Remlinger, “What it Means”). With the increase in tourism, social values shifted. The creation of marketed items is a result of historical, economic, and ideological processes, and the sale of commodified dialect features contribute to dialect enregisterment of Upper Peninsula English. By putting local speech and beliefs on display, value is given to the dialect and speech, thus becoming connected to social meanings (Johnstone 160). The term “Yooper” has evolved to evoke more positive than negative connotations, mainly as a result of shifting economies to the tourism industry and advocacy for the dialect through marketing materials. I propose that a mixed method study focused on the linguistic security or insecurity of Yoopers, as compared to Trolls, would contribute to a growing body of research on language use and regional variation of dialects in the Midwest. Regional linguistic security varies from individual linguistic security—as no one speaks exactly the same, or shares the same experiences—yet such a study may reveal, I predict, that Yoopers have *more* linguistic security than their southern half, despite the stereotype that speakers from Lower Michigan seemingly have the most ideal, “accent-less” sounding dialect. Dennis Preston found in his work “Linguistic Insecurity Forty Years Later” that Michiganders from Lower Michigan reveal an even stronger insecurity than that reported from speakers of New York City. The security in Lower Michiganders’ speech has dropped significantly throughout the past 40 years as a result of the Northern Cities Vowel Shift. Preston defines linguistic insecurity as a “speakers’ feeling that

the variety they use is somehow inferior, ugly or bad” (“Linguistic Insecurity” 304). Preston’s study did not extend to residents of the Upper Peninsula. Such a study in the Upper Peninsula could reveal if there is a correlation between the commodification of Yooper dialect features and linguistic security. Regional linguistic security may be influenced more by a person’s connection to local shared beliefs about identity, place, and language norms rather than an individualistic focus on “standard language ideology”—the belief that some language varieties are more correct than others (Lippi-Green 57). While residents of Lower Michigan certainly adhere to “standard language ideology,” evidenced by their ranking Lower Michigan the “best” place for spoken English in Preston’s 1996 study, this does not necessarily correlate with linguistic security. Expanding on this research may be telling of how linguistically subordinate groups, stereotyped as being “linguistically deficient” in some way, are more secure and proud of their dialect in contrast to the idealized “standard” spoken by upper- and middle-class folks (Lippi-Green 69; Preston, “Linguistic Insecurity” 305).

In Richard Bailey’s article “Yooper – It’s Michigan’s Second Language, Eh?” Bailey acknowledges the common argument that regional dialects, including the Yooper dialect, are dying, becoming more homogenized by the media and increasingly globalized world (Bailey). In contrast, Remlinger argues that regional dialects are only getting stronger because of factors such as “identity, geographic borders and isolation, and cultural differences” (*Yooper Talk* 139). Contributing to this debate is the fact that the population in the UP has been dwindling. A study by Jessica Ulrich from the Carsey Institute surveyed 1,008 residents from five counties in the UP to better grasp why; lack of employment opportunities along with an increase in “brain drain” are the outstanding reasons (Ulrich 4). This alone, however, does not mean “death” for the dialect. It is evident, through material items, that Yoopers seek to distinguish themselves from outsiders.

Upper Peninsula English, which physically connects dialect, people, and place while profiting economically off of the region's distinguishable linguistic features, may even become more distinct as thousands of tourists from around the world are drawn to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and other areas of natural beauty in the UP each year. Yoopers may feel pressure to maintain their local identities through dialect, yet there is no doubt that the local dialect is continuing to evolve and change, as it has been throughout the past century. The dialect has experienced incredible transformation throughout the 19th century. From immigrant and Indigenous languages practiced to English-only laws, from copper mining to an economy heavily reliant on tourism, from a remote and isolated peninsula to a romanticized advertisement of idealized wilderness and fun, now connected to the land, culture, dialect, and people of Lower Michigan—the UP has transformed, and the dialect will continue to as well. How significant these transformations will be is difficult to gauge, yet no matter how nostalgic Yoopers are for their roots, for their yearning to be the tough, proud, independent people their grandfathers and grandmothers were, one thing is certain: language is always changing. Yooperland will continue to be shaped by tourism and its evolving sociolinguistic history. The longevity of the dialect largely depends on the attitudes and perceptions toward Upper Peninsula English from insiders and outsiders, along with economics, social and cultural events, and language ideologies—as all affect one another—and there is further research to be conducted to build on Remlinger's studies. Exploring the process of language commodification in the UP is important for understanding what Upper Peninsula English is, what set of local forms of the dialect have been enregistered, and how history and stereotypes influence language, place, and identity.

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