




2019

SHIFTING PERSONAS: A CASE STUDY OF TAYLOR SWIFT

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Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2019.381>

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SHIFTING PERSONAS: A CASE STUDY OF TAYLOR SWIFT

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Linguistic Theory & Typology
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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2019

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SHIFTING PERSONAS: A CASE STUDY OF TAYLOR SWIFT

This thesis analyzes how Taylor Swift has changed the way she expresses her Southern identity, specifically her dialectal features, over the course of her career and through her switch from country music to pop music. There were two processes to assess the change in Swift's speech: the production of /ai/ tokens in interviewed speech and the perception of dialectal change by fans in the comment sections of the interviews on YouTube. Seven interviews on YouTube and their comment sections were used as the data source for this study. Production of /ai/ was measured through an auditory analysis to determine whether tokens were monophthongal, diphthongal, or somewhere in the middle. Perception was evaluated by scraping the comments from the YouTube videos and running key word searches related to accent. The results of the production portion of the study confirm that there has been a decrease in monophthongal tokens of /ai/ from 2007-2019 in Swift's speech. The results from the perception part of the study show that fans do notice a change in "sounding Southern" and try to explain that change through either labeling Swift as "fake" or by positing other theories related to Swift's individual life experiences (such as moving around the country). The implications of this study point to how dialectal features are linked with identity performance, and also how non-linguists justify changing dialectal features.

KEYWORDS: [Identity, Southern Identity, Accent, Monophthongization]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 <i>Research Questions</i>	1
2. Literature Review and Background	2
2.1 <i>What’s in an Identity?</i>	5
2.2 <i>Southernness</i>	8
3. Data and Methods	11
3.1 <i>The Interviews</i>	13
3.2 <i>Production</i>	15
3.3 <i>Perception</i>	17
4. Discussion.....	23
4.1 <i>Video Comments</i>	25
4.2 <i>The Role of Identity</i>	29
5. Conclusions and Future Research.....	30
APPENDICES	32
<i>Appendix A: Taylor Swift’s First Radio Interview</i>	32
<i>Appendix B: Taylor Swift on Becoming a Musician</i>	40
<i>Appendix C: Interview Before the Grammys</i>	45
<i>Appendix D: Swift on Good Morning America</i>	49
<i>Appendix E: The Making of 1989</i>	53
<i>Appendix F: Taylor Swift on Ellen Part 1</i>	54
<i>Appendix G: Taylor Swift on Ellen Part 2</i>	57
References.....	61
VITA.....	64

LIST OF TABLES

[<i>Table 1.</i> List of Taylor Swift albums and genres.]	2
[<i>Table 2.</i> Context about each interview].....	14
[<i>Table 3.</i> Results of the auditory analysis of /ai/ tokens in interviewed speech.].....	15
[<i>Table 4.</i> Number of comments featuring key words in each of the categories.].....	18

LIST OF FIGURES

[<i>Figure 1</i> . Labov’s map of /ai/ mophthongization in the United States.].....	3
[<i>Figure 2</i> . Image of the vowels involved in the Southern Vowel Shift].....	8
[<i>Figure 3</i> . Graph of Swift’s decrease in monophthongal /ai/ from 2007-2019.].....	16
[<i>Figure 4</i> . Graph of Swift’s increase in diphthongal /ai/ from 2007-2019.].....	17
[<i>Figure 5</i> . A thread of comments about Swift's accent differences].....	21
[<i>Figure 6</i> . The continuation of the thread from Figure 5]	22
[<i>Figure 7</i> . Photo from <i>Taylor Swift</i> (2006)].....	24
[<i>Figure 8</i> . Screenshot from “Blank Space” (2014)]	24
[<i>Figure 9</i> . Screenshot from “Look What You Made Me Do” (2017)]	25
[<i>Figure 10</i> . Screenshot of the comment section (Hollywood Times, 2014)]	26

1. INTRODUCTION

Many musical performers reinvent themselves throughout the course of their careers. This can be seen with artists like Madonna and Prince. However, fewer artists are able to completely switch genres successfully. Taylor Swift is an example of someone who came into fame as a member of one genre of music—country—but is now no longer associated with that genre and instead is known for a different one—pop. Throughout this thesis, I am interested in discovering how Swift’s change of musical genre changed other aspects of her identity. Further, I am interested in finding out how Swift fans engage with and explain the changes seen in Swift over her career.

1.1 Research Questions

My research questions for this project are as followed:

- Do other people notice a change in Taylor Swift’s accent throughout her career? How do they describe the change?
- To what extent does Swift’s monophthongization of /ai/ change over the course of her career?
- What roles do dialectal features play in identity performance?

In order to answer these questions, I analyzed YouTube videos of interviews of Swift as well as the comments on those interviews. By analyzing the interviews, I was able to confirm that Swift’s monophthongization of /ai/ has changed over the years. Further, it has changed in the direction of becoming less monophthongal, which aligns with her presentation of musical identity throughout the years. Analyzing the comments of the YouTube videos provides answers to the fans’ perception of what dialectal features do for

Swift. The analysis of comments also gives insight to how non-linguists describe the change in Swift’s accent. Fans mainly attribute the change in dialectal features to be a result of Swift being “fake” or they justify it by Swift moving around the country to where those Southern features are not present.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

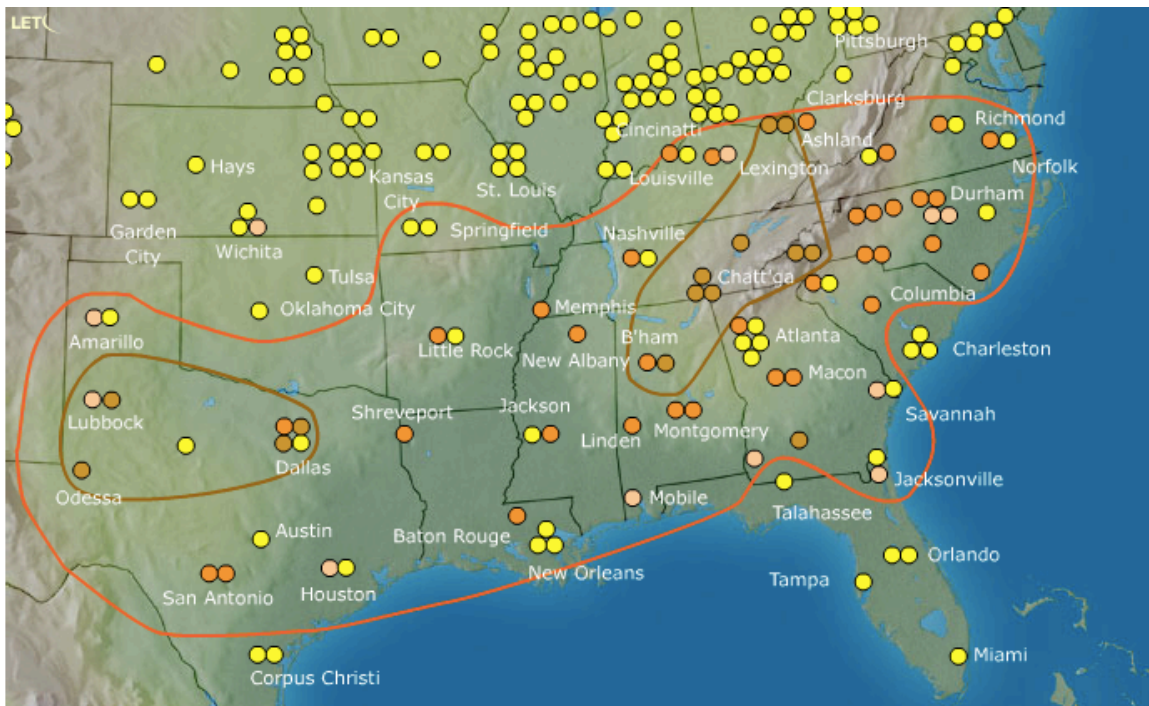
Taylor Swift is an interesting case study of how identity interacts with dialectal performance. Throughout the years, Swift has transitioned from a country starlet to a pop icon. Swift has released six albums so far in her musical career. The first four albums are listed on iTunes with the genre as country while the latest two albums are listed as pop music. Table 1 shows all of Swift’s albums with the listed genre according to iTunes.

[Table 1. List of Taylor Swift albums and genres.]

Year	Album Title	Genre on iTunes
2006	<i>Taylor Swift</i>	Country
2008	<i>Fearless</i>	Country
2010	<i>Speak Now</i>	Country
2012	<i>Red</i>	Country
2014	<i>1989</i>	Pop
2017	<i>Reputation</i>	Pop

With that, her accent has seemed to change from a Southern accent to an accent without those Southern features. Throughout this thesis, I will describe how identity plays into dialect performance, will break down how the changing of Swift’s accent is perceived by fans, and identify the change in monophthongization of Swift’s /ai/ vowel throughout the course of her career.

Taylor Swift, while known for starting as a country star from Nashville, spent her early years growing up in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania. By the age of 10, Swift was already singing in public venues, and at age 11 she performed the National Anthem at a Philadelphia 76ers' game. Her family moved to Nashville at age 14 in order to help further her music career (Biography.com, 2014). This is when Taylor Swift probably acquired the Southern dialectal features that can be heard in her early music as well as in her early interviews. Figure 1 is a map (Labov et al., 2006) that shows where the monophthongization of /ai/ occurs within the United States. Within the red outline are the areas where monophthongization of /ai/ occurs before voiced obstruents and in word final position. Nashville is located within this boundary, but the area in which Swift grew up in Pennsylvania is not.



[Figure 1. Labov's map of /ai/ mophthongization in the United States.]

Tagliamonte & Molfenter (2007) describe a case that is very similar to Swift's childhood with respect to acquiring a second dialect. In that study, the focus was on children who were moved from Canada to England during early childhood. The children in this study ended up sounding local within a few years of living there, however the children in this study were also only about 4 years in age. Therefore, they were still in the process of developing their first dialect (Chambers, 1992), while Swift, at age 14, had a trickier process to go through to attain the Southern accent. This is because studies (Payne, 1980) have found that children ages 10-14 do not have the same ability to acquire even the simpler rules of a second dialect, while children at younger ages can acquire more complicated rules of a new dialect. As will be further discussed later in this thesis, Swift has significantly reduced the amount of monophthongal tokens that are present in her interviews. This is consistent with Payne's research about older kids not fully acquiring rules of a second dialect. However, Payne also found that there was a great deal of individual variability within the results of dialect acquisition.

Commenters on Taylor Swift's videos on YouTube seem to be in tune with the fact that her speech has changed over the course of her career. The commenters posit several explanations for this, some saying that her Southern accent was just completely fake. However, Swift's experience can also be explained through the concepts of indexicality, performativity, identity and authenticity. These comments will be analyzed in more detail in later sections.

2.1 What's in an Identity?

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) introduce the concepts of “sameness” and “difference” with respect to identity. These are states that emerge through social interactions and account for how identities are chosen. For instance, a person identifies with something either as a way of joining in and showing sameness and solidarity or as a way to mark that they are different from the people who do that thing. Bucholtz and Hall cite several identity studies that deal with different groups and how they identify. One of the examples is the distinction between the Norteñas and the Sureñas (Mendoza-Denton, 2008; 1996). These two groups mark themselves as distinct based on national allegiance, and with that comes different language use as well as style of dress between the groups.

In this case, Southernness goes hand in hand with the country music scene. Country music in the United States has a long history of using Southern features as a part of marking its identity. This is how New Zealand singer, Keith Urban, can have Southern features in his songs, but sound very much like someone from New Zealand in interviews. Southernness and performativity of Southernness are a seemingly integral part of American country music. So, in this sense, it is understandable that Swift sounded Southern when she was singing country music and was a part of that culture. The idea of authenticity also comes into play when talking about certain features being used at some points and not at others. O’Hanlon (2006) discusses this topic in regard to Australian hip hop. In Australian music, hip hop is the only genre that does not try and approximate the American accent, other genres, such as pop music, try hard to simulate American pronunciation of vowels and rhoticity. However, because hip hop has the reputation of “keeping it real” the local dialect seems to be preferred. O’Hanlon evaluates this by looking at five variables based

off of Trudgill's earlier work with British music (1983). The results of the study show that Australian hip hop artists have the least amount of American sounding tokens in their music (O'Hanlon, 2006). However, the group with the most American sounding tokens is pop music. This points to the notion that "Australian singers can be said to modify their pronunciation towards the group with which they want to identify while singing-- generally speaking, Americans" (p. 200). This sort of modification of pronunciation is how singers, like Keith Urban, can appeal to the target audience, whether that be for country music or in hip hop.

The concept of difference could also explain why now that Swift is in pop music, she distances herself away from that identity by not using Southern features in her songs or in interviews. In the reverse scenario, there are artists like Darius Rucker who came into fame by doing pop music but are now known for doing other genres. Darius Rucker used to be the lead singer of Hootie and the Blowfish, which was a pop/ rock/ alternative band most famous in the mid to late 90s. However, now he is known as a country singer and especially known for the popular song, "Wagon Wheel". Similar to Swift, his /ai/ vowels sound much more monophthongal in his country music than they do in his pop music.

Another way to look at identity is through indexicality and indexical orders. Silverstein (2003) and Johnstone et al. (2006) define and describe three levels of indexicality: the first level is the use of variation, this just means that there is something that can be seen as different across, in this case, dialects. The second level is where social perceptions have an effect and the variation is perceived by listeners, but unconsciously. Finally, the third order of indexicality is where variation is fully realized and becomes a stereotype that can be manipulated in order to reach a goal. In the case of Taylor Swift,

her change in dialectal features would be a case of this third-order type of indexicality. This is because at the point where a feature is a third-level indexical, it can be used for a purpose by speakers, and this is what Swift seems to do—manipulate the feature depending on the situation and audience for which she is performing.

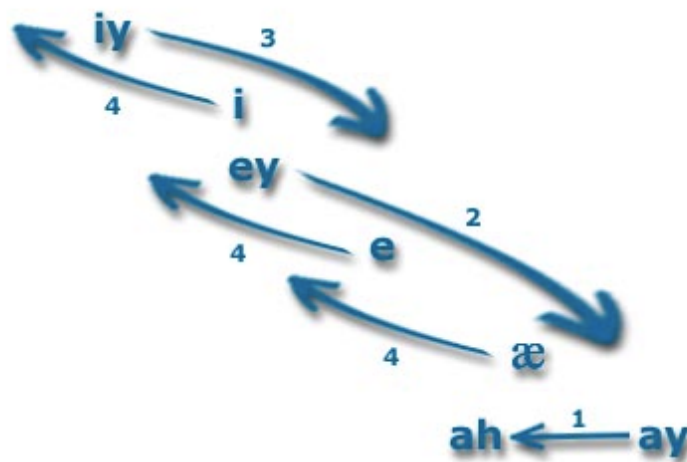
It is important to note that indexicality does not exist without context (Hanks, 1999). That is to say, that no specific act or way of speaking inherently points to anything else. By making certain linguistic choices, one is making a stylistic choice. According to Irvine (2001), style is a way to mark oneself as different and is part of the larger system of distinction. For Taylor Swift, this stylistic change can be seen two different ways. The first way is the assumed change in style when she first moved to Nashville. She adapted to the expectations of country music and therefore adopted Southern features. In terms of style, this shift would mark her as going away from her starting point in order to present as a Southern country singer. However, when she switched styles of music to pop, her style of speaking also shifted. This time, the shift was away from those Southern features and instead she has a more mainstream way of speaking that matches a more mainstream genre of music.

Identity within the musical performance space is dynamic. Performers change their image and sound seemingly constantly. In a study of Australian singer, Beccy Cole, it was shown that the singer had several different personas that she would shuffle through. Sometimes the shift would depend on the crowd or what sorts of messages she was trying to convey on a given night (Bauder, 2016). This is a more extreme example than what Swift has done in her career; however, it shares the same essence. A performer's identity

expression largely depends on what the performer is performing. Certain aspects of a performer will be brought to light depending on what message is trying to be conveyed.

2.2 Southernness

Southernness in respect to linguistic features is hard to pin point. However, there are some more salient features that are common in the South than others. The Atlas of North American English (Labov et al., 2006) cites that /ai/ monophthongization is a feature that is known in the south. The monophthongization of /ai/ is part of the chain shift known as the Southern Vowel Shift featured below in Figure 2 (Labov et al., 2006). Monophthongization can be seen below as step 1 of the shift (represented as /ay/ going to /ah/).



[Figure 2. Image of the vowels involved in the Southern Vowel Shift]

Monophthongization of /ai/ typically happens before voiced consonants such as words like “ride”. It also occurs in open environments such as “my” and “I”. However, for most Southern varieties, the vowel is not expected to be monophthongal before a voiceless

consonant, such as in the word “night”.¹ Montgomery (1997) identifies some of the salient distinctions of Southern speech as being the “greasy/greazy” difference and also monophthongization of /ai/. As far as Swift’s speech, the focus for comparison is the difference in monophthongization over time.

The manipulation of Southern features has been shown to be a tactic used by some women (Johnstone 1999, 2003). These studies look at how women from Texas can manipulate their performance of Southernness to accomplish goals. Johnstone (1999) relays how different women use the features associated with Southern speech in order to gain status or have men see them a certain way. In Johnstone’s study, Terri King is a business woman who puts on a Southern accent so that men are more likely to buy things from her, and according to King, her “southern drawl is what makes her \$70,000 a year” (Johnstone, 1999, p. 505). The article also details the uses of Southern features by other women as ways to relate to in groups or other speakers. In later work, Johnstone draws on other parts of sounding Southern that can be manipulated or are otherwise stereotypical of a Southern speaker in literature or film. This includes politeness and different syntactic structures that can be found in the speech of Southern speakers (Johnstone, 2003). The takeaway from Johnstone’s work is that people can and do manipulate Southern features for certain reasons, whether that be advancements in career, or as a way to relate to others.

There has been work on establishing Southernness, and there are many ways to measure it. Reed (2018), for example, takes the same speaker and measures her

¹ The monophthongization before voiceless consonants is usually associated with Appalachian English. It is important to note that the area in which Swift grew up in Pennsylvania does not fall in the counties listed as a part of Appalachia according to the Appalachian Regional Commission (Counties in Appalachia 2019). Therefore, it is not expected that Swift would have monophthongal /ai/ before voiceless consonants.

monophthong production at different parts of her life. The first set of data come from a speech the speaker did in high school. The second set of data come from the speaker twenty years later in a sociolinguistic-style interview setting. Reed uses the concept of rootedness to explain why this speaker has lost her Appalachian monophthongization. He posits that “either the different cultures or different subcultures provided Suzanne with different ways of orienting herself, using the realization of /ai/ as a means of exhibiting her orientation” (Reed, 2018, p. 421). He goes on to say that this is a personal choice that only she can make and decide why it happened. However, her connection to the place, Appalachia, seems to have some bearing. This is similar to my hypothesis about Taylor Swift. Swift was rooted in country music when she first started out, which necessitated the use of Southern dialectal features. However, as her shift in music genre occurred, her ties to country music changed, and thus her production of Southern features also changed. This change in Swift’s accent is often pointed out in YouTube comments which indicates that it is not only a production change, but a perceptual change.

Swift fans have strong opinions on the state of her music and where she started. People notice that she sounds different. But how do they explain what is going on? Further, why does it matter? These questions, as well as questions about what fans think about Swift’s accent, can be addressed through the subject of folk linguistics. Folk linguistics is a field that assesses how non-linguists explain a linguistic phenomenon. When proposing the concept of folk linguistics, Hoenigswald (1966) said,

... we should be interested not only in (a) what goes on (language), but also in (b) how people react to what goes on (they are persuaded they are put off, etc.) and in (c) what people say goes on (talk concerning language). It will not do

to dismiss these secondary and tertiary modes of conduct merely as sources of error. (Hoenigswald 1996: 20)

This is an important approach to take in this thesis because most of Swift's fans are not linguists, however, they still are vocal about the changes that they notice. This is evident in the YouTube comments of Swift's older, and even to some extent, newer videos. Not only have they realized the change, but they seem to have strong opinions about what caused it, and those attitudes are important to understand.

3. DATA AND METHODS

The methods used for gathering data in this thesis were mainly through the transcription of YouTube videos of Taylor Swift in interview settings (appendices A-G). This methodology was chosen because it allows for the measurement of the production of /ai/ while also providing a way to gather the perceptual reactions of fans. It was important to use spoken speech that can be found in interviews, rather than focus on her singing, because of how closely Southern identity is linked with country music. Many country singers sound Southern in their music regardless of if they are from the South, but in an interview, those Southern features are not necessarily going to be present. Therefore, an interview setting is ideal for assessing how dialectal features have changed along with other presentation of identity (through clothing, makeup, etc.). Sounding Southern in music but not in spoken speech can be seen in interviews with other country singers such as Keith Urban or Shania Twain. Both of these singers can be heard using Southern features in songs—such as monophthongization—but in interviewed speech, they speak using their native dialect, which for Urban is New Zealander and Twain is Canadian.

The data is divided into two parts: the production of /ai/ and the perception of Swift by fans. For the production aspect of the project, an auditory analysis of monophthongization was conducted and then compared between two native English speakers to establish interspeaker reliability. Tokens for analysis were chosen based on whether the /ai/ token had a voiced sound following it or was in an open context. I excluded counting tokens of /ai/ when they were used in a false start position. I also did not include /ai/ preceding a tap for an underlyingly voiceless consonant, for instance in words such as, “exciting”. I excluded these words because they tended to pattern the same as though the /ai/ was followed by a voiceless sound. There were three possible categories for which to place a token of /ai/. The first category was ‘monophthong’. A sound was classified like this if the listener heard only one vowel quality. The next category was ‘diphthong’. A token was placed into this category when the listener could hear both of the vowel qualities. The third category was a middle ground or glide reduction category. This was for the tokens that did not clearly belong in either of the other categories.

In order to gain understanding of the perceptual component of this project, I scraped YouTube comments from the interviews using a YouTube comment scraper program. Comments were scraped and then downloaded to be analyzed. Comments were organized by video first and then searched for key words to help sift out which comments were relevant in talking about attitudes and perceptions of speech. The words that I used to search the comments were “accent”, “sound”, “talk”, “Southern”, “different”, “fake”, and “country”. The most directly related word in the list for this goal is “accent”, however “sound” and “talk” can also be used to describe speech. In order to target if fans were noticing Southern features, I included the words “Southern” and “country”. Finally, for the

purpose of understanding some of the attitudes behind the comments, I included the more polarizing words “different” and “fake”.

3.1 The Interviews

Seven videos containing six interviews were used for this thesis. Table 2 gives a brief overview of the context of each video. In most of the interviews, Swift is talking about her career and music in some sense. All of the interviews take place with Swift and one interviewer except for the 2014 interview where Swift is just answering questions about her new album (*1989*); in that video, it is only Swift on camera, and the person asking the questions is out of frame, and their voice is also edited out of the video.

[Table 2. Context about each interview]

Year (Appendix #)	Place/Interviewer	Content Overview
2006 (Appendix A)	Radio interview with cmntexas. One of Swift's earliest videos on YouTube (by interview date, not necessarily by postdate).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early country influences • CMA Music Fest • Connection to fans
2007 (Appendix B)	Interview with Herb Sudzin in a trailer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to Nashville • Doubtful guitar teacher • Role in recording process Myspace
2008 (Appendix C)	Interview with Lizzie from Blender right before the Grammys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammy parties • Being nominated Swag bags
2012 (Appendix D)	Interview on <i>Good Morning America</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about album <i>Red</i> • Working with other creators • Answers fan questions
2014 (Appendix E)	Alone on screen talking about album <i>1989</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences for <i>1989</i> • 1980s pop music
2019 (Appendix F)	On <i>Ellen</i> being interviewed by Ellen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks about <i>Reputation</i> Easter eggs in <i>Entertainment Weekly</i> cover
2019 (Appendix G)	On <i>Ellen</i> being interviewed by Ellen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks about washing her legs • New cat • Talking about "Me!"

3.2 Production

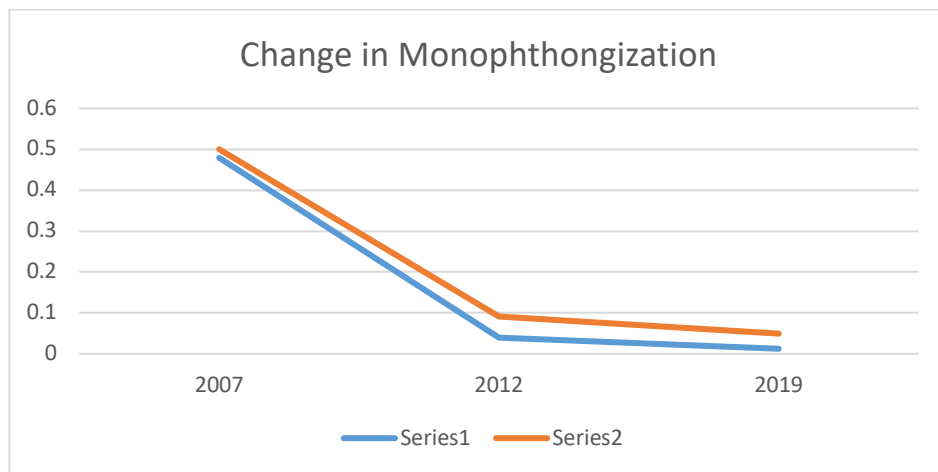
Three video interviews with Swift were analyzed for monophthong production. The first interview was from 2007, the second interview was from 2012, and the third interview is from 2019. The Table 2 shows the percentage of /ai/ token categorized in the three categories outlined in the previous section. The number of tokens collected for each video was about 80. The 2007 video had the most analyzed tokens with 97. The 2012 video had 77 tokens, and the 2019 videos had 81 tokens that were analyzed total. The reason for two videos being used from 2019 is that they are from the same interview on *Ellen*, but they are separate videos on YouTube.

[Table 3. Results of the auditory analysis of /ai/ tokens in interviewed speech.]

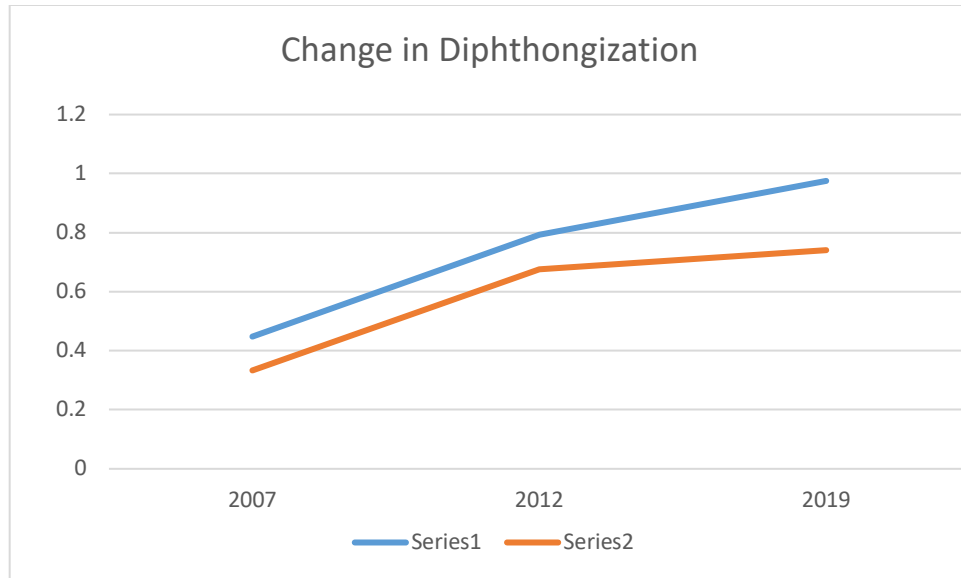
Year	% monophthong /a/	% diphthong /ai/	% Middle/ Reduction
2007 (Appendix B)	49.5%	34.0%	16.5%
2012 (Appendix D)	9.1%	67.5%	23.4%
2019 (Appendices F & G)	4.9%	74.1%	21.0%

Each token was listened to and then categorized by two University of Kentucky graduate students. The instructions for categorizing the tokens were the following: if you can hear the two distinct vowel qualities in /ai/, label it as a diphthong. If you only hear one vowel quality, label it as a monophthong. If what you hear is somewhere in the middle or a reduced vowel, label it in the middle category. The participants did not have difficulty in completing this task and showed to be consistent in the total numbers in each category. The main point of separation between the participants was the use of the middle category. One participant ended up utilizing that category more often than the other participant. This was especially true in the tokens from 2012 and 2019.

From the years 2007-2019, there has been a big change in Swift's production of a monophthongal /ai/, as seen above in Table 3 and below in Figures 3 and 4. She went from having the monophthong version of /ai/ about fifty percent of the time to having it less than five percent of the time. Two t-tests (one for monophthongal production and one for diphthongal production) were performed to test whether the difference in production was significant between the start of Swift's career in 2007 and her current position in 2019. The change in monophthongal /ai/ production from 2007-2019, seen in Figure 3, is statistically significant ($p = 0.0016$ $\alpha = 0.05$). The change in the amount of diphthongal /ai/, seen in Figure 4, however, does not reach a level of statistical significance ($p = 0.1$ $\alpha = 0.05$). This change in production confirms that the commenters are noticing real differences in how Swift speaks.



[Figure 3. Graph of Swift's decrease in monophthongal /ai/ from 2007-2019.]



[Figure 4. Graph of Swift’s increase in diphthongal /ai/ from 2007-2019.]

3.3 Perception

In order to navigate the comment section of the videos, keyword searches were performed on each individual video. The goal of this was to find out what fans were saying about Taylor Swift’s speech and how they were justifying it. Table 4 shows the breakdown of number of comments in each of these categories for each video. The numbers in the table are the raw number of comments using each designated word. It is important to note that some comments mentioned multiple key words and were therefore counted in all of the appropriate categories.

[Table 4. Number of comments featuring key words in each of the categories.]

Year	2006	2007	2008	2012	2014	2019A	2019B
“Accent”	1	6	93	0	0	0	0
“Sound”	0	0	22	0	3	6	9
“Talk”	1	1	35	5	4	33	65
“Southern”	0	0	10	0	0	0	0
“Different”	1	2	24	1	1	6	10
“Fake”	0	7	22	0	2	9	5
“Country”	2	3	50	3	2	3	4
Total	73	74	736	148	95	1686	2240
comments							

All of the comments that mention Swift’s accent are from before 2012. A note about the 2019 videos is that in those videos, she was appearing on *Ellen*. Therefore, the commenters on those videos were not just commenting on Taylor Swift, but also on Ellen. This played out especially in the “talk” category as Ellen says at one point in the video “let’s talk about ‘Me!’” and generated an audience response of laughter. So, a lot of the comments in that category are just repeating this line. While accent was not specifically brought up in the 2019 videos, two different commenters stated that Swift sounds like Kim Kardashian in the interview. Excluded from the numbers in the chart are the comments

about Swift speaking French and her accent in regard to that. These comments are excluded because they are outside the scope and the focus of this study.

The videos that received the most comments in the areas I was looking for are the videos from before 2012. In the three videos from that time period I looked at, Swift has Southern features in her speech. This is shown through the auditory test that I ran as well as the fans reactions. The video with the most comments that fell into the categories I outlined was the 2008 video of Swift being interviewed before the Grammys. This is mostly because of a long thread of comments directly in response to a comment about Swift's changing persona in her career. The 2008 video of Swift was not posted on YouTube until 2014, so all of the commenters are posting much after the interview date. For perspective, 2014 was also the year that Swift's album *1989* was released, or in other words, Swift was no longer a country singer at the time that this video was posted. However, at the time of the interview, she was about to release her second album and was still very much considered a country singer.

Here are some of the comments that match the key words I searched for in the comment sections. They are separated by which key word search they appeared. The example I list for "fake" is an example of the type of comment that showed up in multiple searches.

"Accent"

Omg her accent was so thick (cmntexas, 2017)

-Interview in 2006, comment posted in 2018

Wow Taylor's accent really changed over the years (Sudzin, 2007)

-Interview in 2007, comment posted in 2017

oh my gosh she had such a thick accent then! (Hollywood Times, 2014)

-Interview in 2008, comment posted in 2014

“Sound”

Taylor sounds like a Kim Kardashian (DeGeneres, 2019B)

-Interview in 2019, comment posted in 2019

“Talk”

She can talk however she wants to talk <3 :) (Hollywood Times, 2014)

-Interview in 2008, comment posted in 2014

“Southern”

The one big problem: This is NOT a thick southern accent! Not even remotely close.[...] (Hollywood Times, 2014)

-Interview in 2008, comment posted in 2014

“Different”

Pop or country... It doesn't matter. We love you for who you are and what you do for us. I'm excited to hear more of 1989. Out of the Woods is different but amazing. (Recording Academy/ GRAMMYs, 2014)

-Interview in 2014, comment posted in 2014

“Fake”

Well her "country" accent was fake. We don't talk like that in Philly. (Hollywood Times, 2014)

-Interview in 2008, comment posted in 2014


“Country”


I miss Taylors country songs... She's just not pop...(ABC News, 2012)

-Interview in 2012, comment posted in 2012

An example of how commenters engage with each other can be seen in Figures 5 and 6 below. This thread demonstrates how different commenters react to the explanation

of Swift's change in accent can be attributed to being "fake". This thread comes from the 2008 interview of Swift before the Grammys (Hollywood Times, 2014).

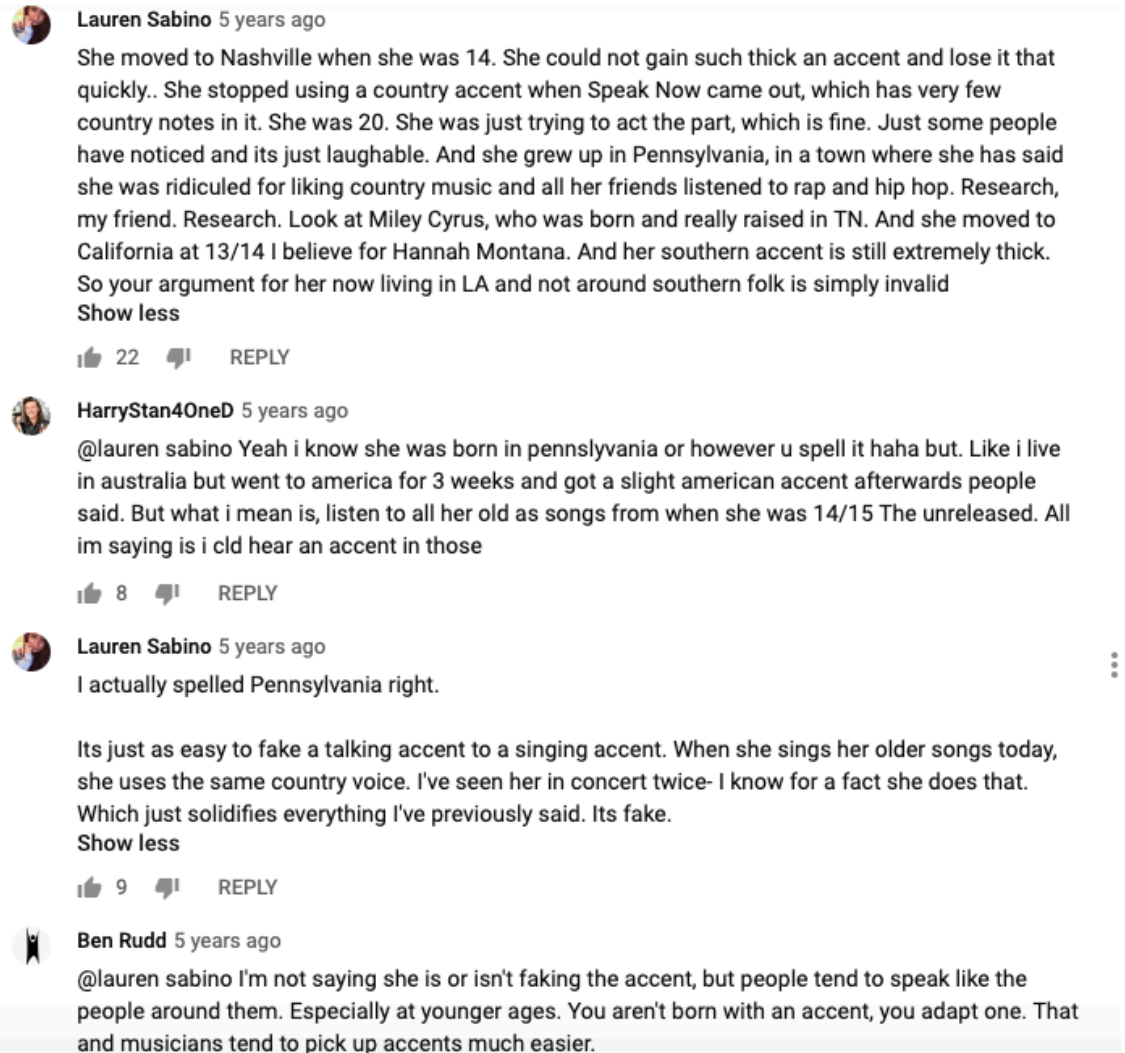
 **Lauren Sabino** 5 years ago
Haha when she used to fake a country accent
👍 114 🗨️ REPLY
Hide replies ^

 **Lishan Felicite** 5 years ago
she didnt fake it -.- wow
👍 20 🗨️ REPLY

 **Lauren Sabino** 5 years ago
She did not grow up anywhere near the south. Watch home movies, her nor anyone else had them. And she's stopped doing "country" music in the lat 6/7 years and guess what?! No more country accent AT ALL. Stop being an ignorant fan and face facts. I'm not insulting her talent, just her dignity
👍 34 🗨️ REPLY

 **HarryStan40neD** 5 years ago
@lauren sabino She grew up in nashville, Home of country music. She was surrounded by people that talk with accents. The reason she doesnt now is because the last 6/7 years she has been hanging out in LA with completely different people that are a complete different style to the way she was brought up so slowly the accent died down. What im saying is whether or not she was born in the south, Who wld fake an accent? In her older unreleased songs you can hear her completely sounding the way she sounds now.
Show less
👍 54 🗨️ REPLY

[Figure 5. A thread of comments about Swift's accent differences]

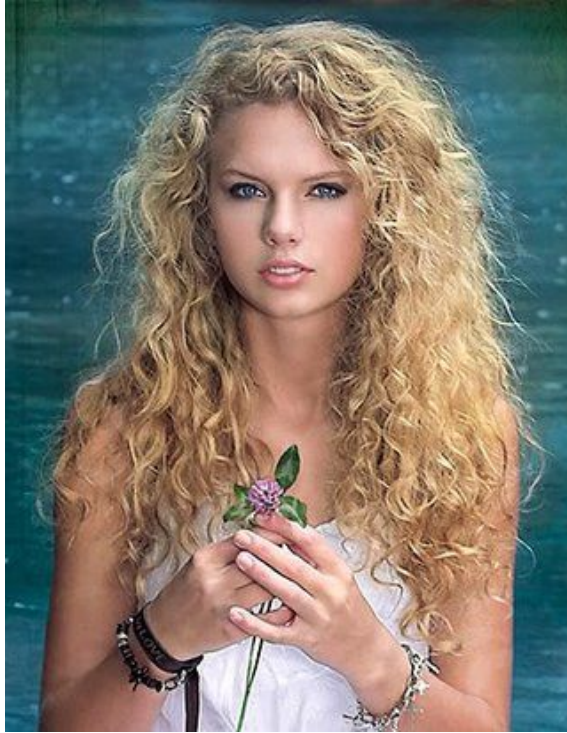


[Figure 6. The continuation of the thread from Figure 5]

This comment thread features most of the keywords: fake, country, accent, and talk are all featured in this discussion. As previously said, the fans and commenters posit different theories for why Swift’s accent has changed. Lauren Sabino (Figure 6) also points to the fact that when Swift sings her old songs at her current concerts, she still has that “country voice” which would indicate, from Sabino’s perspective, that the accent was all a part of a Southern persona that Swift was putting on at the time and for that specific genre of music.

4. DISCUSSION

When Swift emerged onto the music scene, she was only known as a country singer and she self-identified as a country singer. Swift has said, “the moment came when [she] decided [she] wanted to be a country artist was when [she] was eight years old and went to [her] first concert which was a LeAnn Rimes concert” (Appendix A). So, this desire to be a part of the country music world started at a young age for Swift. As a country artist, Swift released 3 albums that were either all country songs or had the majority of songs under the country genre according to iTunes. Swift really started to branch into pop music with her 2012 album, *Red*. *Red* features music that sounds more electronic and has a heavier bass drum to feel more like dance music. Examples of these dance songs are “I Knew You Were Trouble”, “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” and “22”. During the time of the first three albums, Taylor Swift was often referred to as an American sweetheart, however by *Speak Now*, she had gained a reputation as a girl who would date guys and then immediately write songs after a break-up. *Red* was the album where Swift got to “really explore the edges of what [she was] allowed to do” (ABC News, 2012) in terms of her sound and style of music. The following album, *1989* (2014), was when I would argue that the “current day” Taylor Swift came to be. *1989* is a full pop album, and during that time, Swift adopted her signature red lipstick look with straighter blonde hair, which is a long way from where she started as a country singer. Figure 7 (Swift, 2006) below is an image of Taylor Swift in the album art from her first album, *Taylor Swift* while Figure 8 (Swift, 2014 “Blank Space”) is an image of Swift in her more recent (from *1989*) video for “Blank Space”.



[Figure 7. Photo from *Taylor Swift* (2006)]



[Figure 8. Screenshot from “Blank Space” (2014)]

In the era of *Reputation* (2017), Swift quite literally disassociated herself with her former persona. This can be seen in the music video for “Look What You Made Me Do” where Swift features all of her previous versions of herself fighting to get to the top of a

mountain and then says the line that the old Taylor can't come to the phone right now because she is dead. The image of this moment can be seen in Figure 9 (Swift, 2017 "Look What You Made Me Do"). The point of all of this is that Taylor Swift has been working her way away from the country image—and the things that go with it—for a while. So, her music, along with her other features of identity—her dress, instrument choice in music, and her dialectal features—have moved toward the more mainstream image that she now has.

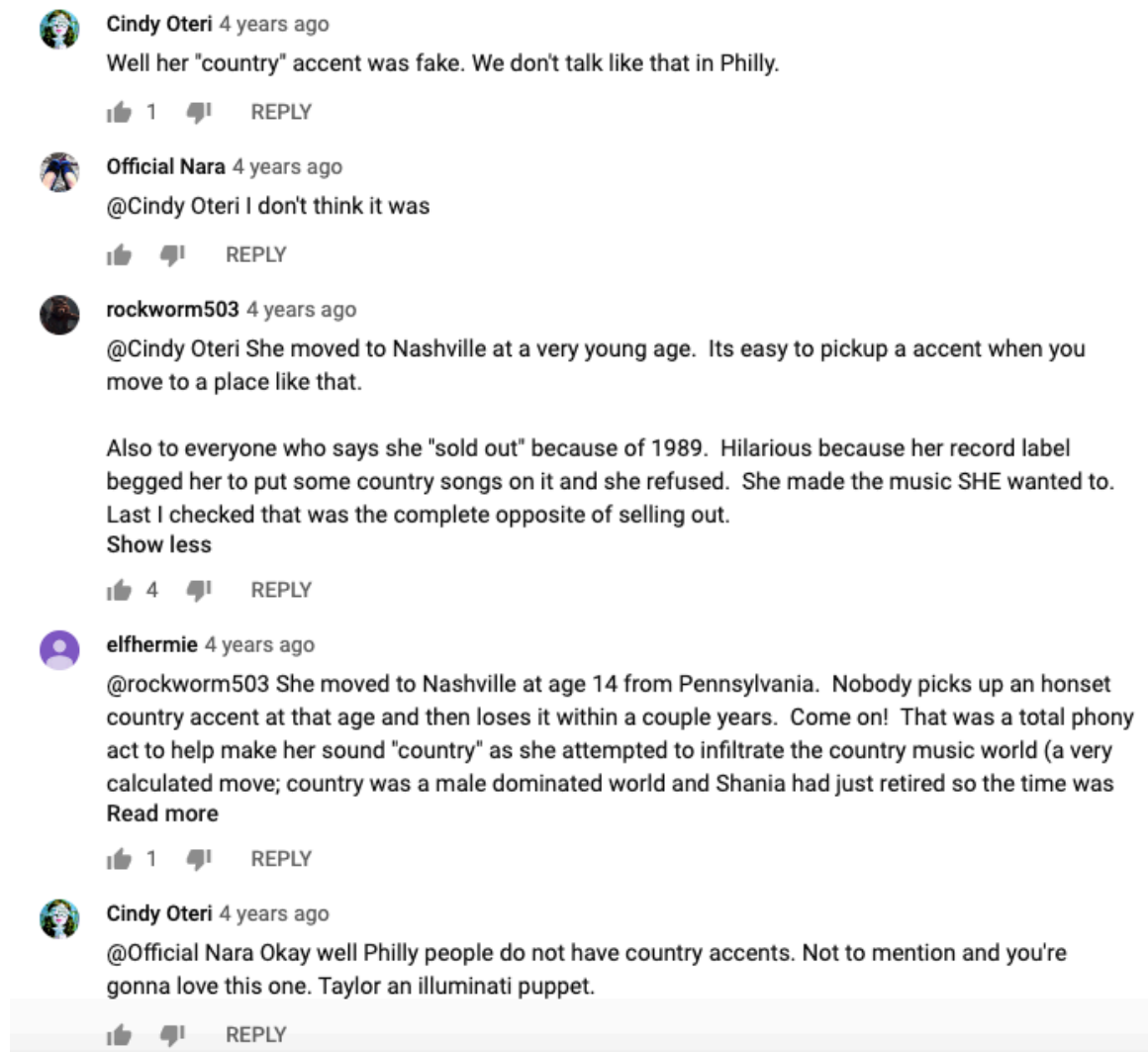


[Figure 9. Screenshot from "Look What You Made Me Do" (2017)]

4.1 Video Comments

A lot of the comments specifically talking about Swift's accent came from the 2008 pre-Grammy video (Hollywood Times, 2014), specifically in response to one original comment. The original comment posted on the video was by "elfhermie" who essentially just said that Taylor Swift is different now than she was in this interview. This comment

was posted during the 1989 era of Taylor Swift (and the Swift in the video was *Fearless* era Taylor Swift). However, after that post, a lot of commenters joined in either defending Swift or calling her a sellout. In response to the main comment, “Official Nara” said, “she lost her country accent too 😊” (Hollywood Times, 2014). Figure 8 below is a screenshot from the comment section in response to “Official Nara” (Hollywood Times, 2014).



[Figure 10. Screenshot of the comment section (Hollywood Times, 2014)]

The comment by “Official Nara” sparked a lot of discussion about accent and what it means to have one and who has what kind of accent. As seen in Figure 10, the initial

response was to call the Southern accent “fake”. This was justified by the commenter because they claim to be from Philadelphia and are therefore knowledgeable about the local accents. Other comments justify the loss of Swift’s accent to moving around the country; this is also how they attribute her gaining the accent—from moving to Nashville at a young age. There is also a back and forth dialogue between these commenters about *who has* an accent and who can have a “country” accent. On the one side, there is Oteri who makes the claim that no one who grew up in Philadelphia can have an accent like that because they are in the city. However, other commenters present the information that they have cousins that live there and have a “country accent”. This argument is an example of dialect identification (Preston, 1999). Dialect identification in the comments also extends to commenters saying that when they have watched home videos of Swift as a child, they recognize her voice as either Southern or not Southern (there are conflicting verdicts on that).

A common theme throughout the comment sections was the critique on who Taylor Swift is at her core. Even in the newer videos, there were sentiments that Taylor Swift is a country singer and forever will be. In 2012, a commenter said, “I miss Taylor’s country songs... she’s just not pop...” (ABC News 2012) and similarly, a commenter in 2019 posted “I wish she[‘d] sing country again, that[‘s] her true color” (DeGeneres 2019A). The thought that Swift fans know who she *truly is* is mirrored in how Swift speaks about her fans. In her interview with *Good Morning America*, she states that her fans can tell whether or not gossip about her is true because “they know [her]” (ABC News 2012). She shares similar thoughts in 2019 when talking about her fans being good at figuring out the Easter Eggs she leaves behind, however, she does not exactly say those words that time.

The idea that Swift's accent was all a hoax is a common reaction to the fact that she no longer sounds like that. In addition to being attributed to fakeness, a number of commenters also attribute the accent change to being "deliberate" or calculated. In the long thread previously mentioned from the interview before the Grammys, commenters express sentiment that the Southern accent was just a way to "infiltrate the country music world". A comparison that was made throughout the comments was with Miley Cyrus to compare degrees of authenticity of being from Nashville (this can be seen in Figure 6 above). The commenter went on to say that Miley, while being outside of Tennessee for about the same time as Taylor Swift, has retained her accent while Swift has ditched hers. This comparison is to push the point that it was all fabricated and that a "real" Southerner would sound like that regardless of where they live. Some commenters claim that Swift in general is being fake in the interviews. These comments are especially prevalent in response to comments calling her "sweet". However, in the comments, "sweet" has less to do with dialect and more to do with overall image.

In the most recent videos I looked at, I found more than one comment that compared the Taylor Swift in the video to Kim Kardashian. This comparison truly exemplifies how much Swift has changed and represents herself today. The commenters who said this did not give specific reasons as to what reminded them of Kim Kardashian, however, based on watching the videos, only a couple of explanations seem plausible. The first explanation is potentially the amount of creak used in the 2019 interviews. Creak is typically defined as "...compressed and thick vocal folds, resulting in slow vibration, hence low fundamental frequency (f_0), and low air flow rates" (Podesva 2013: 429). Creak is a possible explanation because Kim Kardashian has been criticized by the media for using creaky

voice and vocal fry, so that might be a salient feature for comparison. However, compared to the other video interviews, the amount of creak used by Swift in any given interview did not seem significantly different than another interview, but this is an area for future research.

4.2 The Role of Identity

As some of the commenters from the interviews pointed out, identity plays a key role with what is expressed. However, in contrast to what some of the more cynical commenters say, it is not necessary that any of these expressed features be “fake”. This can be seen in cases such as Reed’s concept of rootedness. Just because a person has a dialectal feature and then in the future does not seem to have it or vice versa, neither one of those scenarios have to be fake. It has to do with how and to what extent a person is connected with something, and to what degree of difference or sameness that person is trying to associate with a certain group (Bucholtz and Hall). A lot of the commenters had similar feelings about the role of country music in the way that Swift talked or presented herself. They had the feeling that something about country music was the cause for the dialectal differences.

The importance of looking at Taylor Swift as a case study for this type of identity study is because she showcases how identity presentation can shift over time. She also shows how expressions of identity can shift in order to reach certain groups. While some of the commenters would write this off as being “fake”, it is important to note that people change their representations of self and therefore their expressions of identity in general.

There are different aspects of an individual's identity that they display with certain groups and not with others.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

My research questions for this project were to figure out if there was a difference in actual production of /ai/ across Taylor Swift's career, how her fans perceived the change in Swift's overall speech production, and then to assess how dialectal features play into social persona and expressions of identity. The results of my study showed that there is a decrease in the amount of monophthongal /ai/ Swift produced in interview settings from 2007-2019. Swift fans have a few ways to define the change, but the main definition is attributing the discrepancy in accent to Swift being "fake". When talking about her accent and calling it fake, they are only talking about when Swift has the Southern features. By this I mean that no one is calling her lack of monophthongal /ai/ "fake". So rather than thinking that she hides the Southern features now, the thought is that she artificially added them in when she was a country performer.

By looking at Taylor Swift one can see how she shows that dialectal features can change with identity performance. Further, Swift fans have noticed that Southern dialectal features are an integral part of being a country music performer. Looking at Taylor Swift also shows that a person can successfully navigate through changing personas with differently indexed attributes and potentially use certain dialectal features to connect with broader or more specific audiences. Swift is an example of how musicians, and professional performers in general, use dialectal features to connect with fans.

The limitations with this study come with the fact that this is only one person. However, areas for future research would include looking at other musicians to see how their music differs from their interviewed speech. This has been done with Alim's (2002) article comparing Eve and Juvenile with their interviewed speech versus their albums and their copula variation. That study showed that the more an artist thought about the words, in the case of lyrics, the more likely a copula would be absent than in the more casual interviewed speech. In other words, the artists were shown to have a strategic use of style when it came to copula variation. Another question would be what affect does a different type of audience have for dialectal features of these musicians? More research could also be done on why commenters think that Taylor Swift now sounds like Kim Kardashian. What are the features that are standing out as the same? Another aspect for further study is looking into more parts of the Southern Vowel Shift, such as the PIN/PEN merger, to see if Swift is consistent with that throughout her career, since that merger is not as iconic as /ai/ monophthongization in the South. Finally, another avenue for future research into this topic is to do some sociolinguistic style interviews to address some of these questions head-on.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Taylor Swift's First Radio Interview

Taylor Swift Age 16 First National Radio interview 2006 (cmntexas 2017)

TS: Well, country was always what I was in love with. I was just naturally drawn to it, I got my first country album when I was six. And that was the first LeAnn Rimes album

INT: Really, okay. Was that "Blue"?

TS: It was "Blue" and I was just absolutely in love with it and just really inspired by her and everything she did. And I think the moment came when I decided I wanted to be a country artist was when I was eight years old and went to my first concert which was a LeAnn Rimes concert and I was like holding up this huge banner in the front row it's like "I love you LeAnn" like a stalker and had sent her all these letters and this package of like drawings and pictures of me and stuff to her hotel room the night before and I had a HUGE blonde fro when I was little, like it's a lot bigger than it is now @@

INT: I did too, I know where you're coming from.

TS: @ So she recognized me in the audience.. and had actually taken time to like read my letters and stuff and when she was going around shaking hands with people in the audience she looked down and I was like "LeAnn did you get my letters?" And she goes "I sure did, Taylor." And that was,

INT: Wow

TS: That was the moment where literally it all just clicked for me that if I could ever make one little kid feel that way or one person feel the way she made me feel then it would all be worth it.

INT: Wow, so is that something you hold with you, that you're gonna try to, you know return that to some- one of your fans in the future

TS: I've always tried to do that and anybody who emails me I really try hard to get to everybody's email and you know it's really hard 'cause you get so much input from people and it's hard to, you know, write everybody back 'cause there's not enough enough hours in the day but.. um you know meet and greets after shows, I've been known to do meet and greets for three to four hours if I have time.. unless they're like pulling me off to get on a plane or something I wanna be there and meet everybody who I can possibly meet because I really appreciate everything they're doing to help me just by being there.

INT: Wow well I know you have quite a uh web following an online following

TS: Online's cool because it really brings people together that you know it gives people an outlet to.. communicate with people. You know, it's just really cool.

INT: Yeah no kidding, well uh how was your experience at CMA Music Fest this year? I know you had—

TS: It was great

INT: — a big line

TS: CMA Music Fest was amazing and you know nobody knew who I was at ALL like I was just completely like a salesperson the whole time because um you know my single was about to come out in like ten days I think it was and so we had these booths in the big convention center and I was standing at a booth and people would line up in front of the booth and I- everybody who would go by would be like “my name's Taylor Swift I have a single coming out in ten days it's called 'Tim McGraw' yes it's called 'Tim McGraw' no it's not about Tim McGraw no I'm not a stalker it's called 'Tim McGraw'” you know and all this stuff, “please request it on the radio” and you know there was like one person who'd heard it and stuff so you know it was just so cool because I still you know people will show up at my shows with pictures we took at the CMA Fest

INT: Yeah

TS: And it just- it really... it's really cool to know that those people will remember you because country fans are amazing ((audio cuts off end of “amazing”))

((Jump in interview))

TS: I came up with the concept to this song in math class.

INT: In math cla-okay

TS: Freshman year and just started singing the hook to the song. So.. after school, this was during a period of time I'd gotten a publishing deal when I was fourteen with Sony

INT: Yeah

TS: And was writing every single day after school, did that for about two and a half years ((she clears her throat)) and then you know would come home at like, nine pm and do my homework and go to bed. So I wanted to write after school and sat down at the piano and wrote this song in fifteen minutes. And I never even thought about it for like three months completely shelved it and had no idea that people would be able to... you know, relate to it the way that they are.

INT: Yeah

TS: So you know this song was a complete accident so

INT: Have you met Tim yet?

TS: I have not

INT: Oh okay so

TS: I've never talked to him, I've never met him it's just you know I-I didn't really write the song to get to meet Tim McGraw but you know I've heard that he likes it, which is good, it's consolation((?))

INT: So you know that he's listened to it obviously

TS: Yeah

INT: Okay

TS: My agent went and played it for him for the first time and the first thing he said was "I gotta go play this for Faith"

INT:@@@

TS: And he went and played it for her and he came back and he was like, "we love this song, but I don't feel like I deserve it" he was like "I'm not I'm not a George Jones I'm not a legend." And I thought that was so cool

INT: But obviously you know he meant enough to you to write this song—

TS: Well, he is a legend to my generation

INT: —he inspired you

TS: You know he's been around for the majority of my life you know

INT: Yeah what do you think about years down the road somebody writes a song "Taylor Swift"

TS: Do it

INT: Do it @

((Jump in interview))

TS: Advice for aspiring song writers?

INT: Yeah

TS: Write down everything you see. But write down everything you feel and you know a—you don't have to be in love or be in a relationship to write about it.

INT: Mhm

TS: And you don't have to necessarily have a boyfriend to write like you have a boyfriend or broke up with one or and um don't have successful relationships, they're no fun to write about

INT: Of course not! Boring songs!

TS: I'm just kidding @@@ um yeah I mean being a song writer is what will differentiate you from the rest of the pack like I said you know, Nashville is full of the most gorgeous girls and it's so intimidating until you find something that is different about you

INT: Yeah

TS: And that sets you apart and if you're starting to write songs then you're on the right track and I commend you for that because you're awesome and you're already starting to think outside the box because I really respect other song writers.

INT: Yeah. Well I mean you are you're a very beautiful girl, you know

TS: Awe

INT: Tall, blonde hair, beautiful

TS: Thank you

INT: like you said you write your own songs so going into this but you knew that you know that you really had to to prove that to people

TS: Mhm

INT: not just a pretty face with a pretty voice

TS: Well you're nice I could talk to you all day

INT: @@@

TS: @@

INT: But no so you seem to have an old soul do you get that a lot?

TS: Thank you um when people say that I consider it probably the nicest compliment you could possibly give me and you know I'll never admit to it because I grew up just like everybody else. But you know I just think that um I have the best job in the world and I like to talk about it @@

INT: I'll fight for that, I think I have the best job in the world

((Jump in interview))

TS: When I was twelve

INT: When you were twelve?

TS: Yes

INT: You're kidding me

TS: Yes, I wrote this song when I was twelve and it was during that period of time that I was talking to you about when I wasn't accepted in school and.. you know I'd wake up some days and not know if people were gonna talk to me... And I had a really tough time of it and I think it was because you know I sang country music and I was taller than everybody else and you know it just I wasn't doing anything different or talking different or acting different or acting like I was better than anybody but you know I found myself a lot of times just... alone. So this is the song that was produced from that and I think a lot of the songs that I've written have been produced from that feeling of being alone.

INT: Yeah. Yeah well a lot of your friends, did everyone else listen to pop music? And the whole country thing did your friends go "why country?"

TS: Everyone else was gangstas

INT: Oh, really okay

TS: @@@ Yeah they um they liked pop and rock and I love good music. When people ask me what kind of music I like I tell them I like GREAT music. You know and it.. I think great music is not genre definable and I think oh I think the BEST music is country music—

INT: —Yeah

TS: But anything that's really great and lyrically strong and good I'll listen to but country music is what I love to sing and it's-it's who I am and you know that's just how it is.

INT: Who are you listening to now?

TS: Who I'm listening to now? I love Miranda Lambert and I'm gonna go up to her at the CMA's and be like "okay you don't know who I am but I love you and I don't care if we're both blonde and play guitar but I love you" and also Jake Owen has a really cool CD.

INT: Yeah, yeah you and Miranda seem to have a little bit in common too

TS: Well she's awesome so thanks

INT: She does that whole uh you know gonna get you back kinda music

TS: She's awesome and also Jack Ingram is... amazing and he's got some stuff coming out that's gonna like blow your head off it's awesome

INT: @@

TS: He's GREAT!

INT: Well uh let's talk about the song "Picture to Burn" this is um. I don't know, can I dedicate this to my exes?

TS: Yeah

INT: Okay, I'm gonna do that

TS: Well um this is a song before I play it live I always tell people first of all I want everybody to know before I play this song that I really do try to be a nice person... but if you break my heart or hurt my feelings or are really mean to me, I'm gonna write a song about you.

INT: So watch out!

TS: YES @@

((Jump in interview))

INT: —and that's an age we download music

TS: Oh yeah

INT: It's just what we do you can—you can download this.. BUT but there's a reason to get it

TS: You have done your research Lance

INT: I have

TS: You have

INT: I've been studying, um uh I won't give away any of the secrets but tell people what they can find in the liner notes

TS: Okay well um the lyrics inside the CD jacket and I dunno but when I get a CD that's the first thing I read and—and the thank you section and everything I wanna like I'm just trying to find something about the artist that you know is personal and I've tried to make this album really personal... and one of the things that I did was I encoded all these secret messages into every song lyric and um it sounds really complicated but it's not like all the letters are lowercase except for random capitalized letters—

INT:— right

TS: All throughout the song. So if you're reading the lyrics and you're like "why is that 'A' capitalized?" It's because it's art of a code.

INT: It's a code!

TS: And if you um if you write down all the letters in order if you're really bored it's a rainy day or something,

INT: Yeah

TS: It'll spell out a code about the song or just you know wh-who the song's about or a name of who the song's about

INT: A certain guy maybe?

TS: @@ Maybe—

INT— Maybe I dunno—

TS: —Maybe—

INT: You have to go out and buy it and that's something you can't download so

TS: Yeah you can't download that

INT: You gotta go buy that plus it's enhanced

TS: Yeah!

INT: Yeah!@@@ Alright so who's idea was that? Did you come up with that?

TS: That was my idea um The Beatles did uh an album where um if you played it backwards back when they had records and stuff um it would—

INT: —Yeah, way back then

TS: Well, you know. Back before they had CD's they has records um

INT: @@@

TS: You would play it backwards and it would say Paul is dead Paul is dead all these secret messages and stuff and I can't really do that with CD's because you can't play it backwards. SO this was as mysterious and creepy as I could get so

INT: @@ the mysterious and creepy Taylor Swift

((Jump in interview))

INT: Let's do a little bit of fill in the blank uh I wouldn't be where I am today without blank

TS: Oh wow

INT: or some place, thing it doesn't matter

TS: I wouldn't be where I am today without my guitar.

INT: Your guitar, okay

TS: As unoriginal as that is and how many people probably ay that when they sit here... but I wouldn't be where I am today without my guitar or my dad

INT: So guitar or your dad

TS: Yeah he's the super fan. Cuz- and my mom too because my mom's like the realistic one and my dad's like the super fan so they're awesome they balance each other out like my dad's the one running around the concert's with the Taylor Swift t-shirt on and my mom's the one running around back stage trying to get all the equipment together so it's great

INT: That's good and alright and uh if I wasn't a recording artist I would be a blank

TS: You're gonna think I'm weird, I would be a um a cop

INT: A COP?

TS: Not like a traffic cop but like a CSI cop

INT: Oh okay

TS: Like a crime scene investigator

INT: Like you're gonna investigate things, right

TS: I took criminal justice two years and I- I really like it like I like law but not enough to be a lawyer.. so and I like-like those shows where they've got like the dead body and they wanna find everything so like SVU

INT: Wow!

TS: Yeah, I'd wanna be like a crime scene investigator... or design dresses. @@

INT: Okay so we're investigating a dead body or we're designing dresses or we're singing, you gonna write a song about that?

TS: Uh, probably not

INT: No?

TS: I don't think a lot of people could relate to it

INT: @@ Everybody on CSI. Alright well I wanna get into one more song "I Should've Said No" before we get to it, where does this song come from?

TS: This song comes from a guy who cheated on me and shouldn't have because I write songs.

INT: Yeah no kidding

TS: Yeah y'all should- y'all should try to encode the um message in that song cuz it's pretty obvious

((Jump in interview))

TS: Because I will love you if you will and I've written every song on it and it's honest and um the lyrics. The lyrics are you know basically what are the strongest thing about this album. Other than the fact that it's really personal it's not like "promo shot" it's like, it's got snap shots in it and you know I-I've always tried to keep things really personal so you might get to know me a little better.

INT: Who did you, I don't wanna say model your career after, but who's somebody you said, "I want that career"

TS: I think Kieth Urban has had a great career because he didn't get thrust into it all of a sudden you know he worked so hard to get where he is and you know just really did show after show after show after show and didn't have any really like TV exposure or anything that catapulted him into it with his music that purely got him where he is

INT: Yeah, no kidding. Alright, I'm excited! Are you gonna get a copy?

TS: Of um

INT: Are you gonna go buy a copy of your own?

TS: Yeah! Definitely yeah I'm doing some in store um signings and I think I'll definitely go like up and buy my own CD and see if the cash register person like looks up and sees if it's mine. I think THAT would be cool.

INT: Are you anxious to get phone calls from friends who are gonna find out information that they didn't know you knew. Maybe ex boyfriends.

TS: Oh yeah um I dunno depending on who's calling that'll be really interesting

Appendix B: Taylor Swift on Becoming a Musician

Taylor Swift Interview 2007 (Sudzin 2007)

INT: You went to Nashville 11 looking for a record deal, huh?

TS: I did actually um

INT: With a couple demo tapes of karaoke songs

TS: Yeah that was—

INT: That's pretty cool to do

TS: —That was before I played guitar or wrote my own music

INT: Yeah, yeah exactly

TS: And I think that trip really made me realize that there are girls in Nashville who are gorgeous and have amazing voices

INT: Yeah

TS: And wanna do the same thing that I wanted to do and I had to figure out a way to stand out

INT: Yep you did

TS: And for me I went back home and I started playing a guitar and writing my own music and... in that sense I could walk into a room and play my own instrument and I could play my own songs that I'd written and that way I wouldn't have to depend on anybody... creatively.

((Jump in interview))

INT: You play a twelve string guitar?

TS: I do actually, yeah

INT: Why did you pick twelve over the conventional uh

TS: Well I-I took a bunch of lessons when I was little, really little, like ten and eleven and stuff um guitar on six strings and I had this one.. real. Jerk. of a teacher who who I was asking him, I was like so “what’s the difference between a six string and twelve string guitar?” And he goes- he goes “uh, I don’t even need to answer that for you because there’s no way that you’ll be able to play a twelve string guitar—

INT: Wow

TS: — at your age and your fingers aren’t developed enough and there’s no way you’d be able to play it.” So the next day I went I picked out the twelve string guitar that I wanted and @@

INT: There you go

TS: Um and um waited I think about six months until um Christmas came around and I got that twelve string guitar and I would play it every single day until my fingers bled

INT: Wow, wow

TS: And, you know... at first it seemed really hard and then I just realized that if I put my mind to something then it was really mind over matter and maybe my fingers weren’t long enough or developed enough to play it but I played it

INT: wow

TS: And so you know, it’s, it’s really exciting to see that you know HA... guitar teacher.

INT: There you go!

TS: That’s kinda why I mean for me I’m really competitive—

INT: Yeah

TS: —and I’m really stubborn—

INT: Yeah, yeah

TS: So if you tell me I can’t do something,—

INT: You’re gone((?))

TS: —I’m gonna go do it

INT: You’re gonna get it done too

TS: @@

INT: You’re gonna get it done.

((Jump in interview))

INT: How much input did you have in the whole process of recording this CD?

TS: I had a lot of input—

INT: —a lot of creative input

TS: You know, I was there was never ever a recording session where they were tracking instruments that I wasn’t there

INT: Okay

TS: Um and you know asking “hey Nathan, can you turn this up I need to hear a little more mandolin” or you know different songs that had piano... different things you know when I write a song I hear how it’s supposed to sound.

INT: Wow

TS: In my head. And um I can hear the production, I can hear what the drums are doing and you know I can hear what the mandolin’s doing, what the bass is doing what everything is doing when I’m writing that song. So um usually when we go into the studio, all I have to do is sit down with Nathan for about ten minutes and say look this is how I want this to sound and he just puts it all to life.

INT: Wow... wow. You’re the first female artist to go top ten since Gretchen Wilson did three years ago?

TS: Yeah

INT: That’s a cool

TS: It’s very exciting

INT: That's cool

TS: It's really exciting because um you know radio has just been so great to me and um I went out on about a six month radio tour I think

INT: Wow

TS: A lot of artists go out on a six WEEK radio tour

INT: Sure

TS: And I wanted to go out and I wanted to meet everybody that I possibly could

INT: Yeah, sure!

TS: And so it really paid off and the people who called in and requested this song I owe it- owe them so much because they're the ones who kept the song going

INT: Exactly

TS: And it ended up being a top five single for me.

((Jump in interview))

INT: I read where it says "I consider myself a songwriter first and foremost and I have never written anything I don't mean." Is that a true statement?

TS: That is a true statement!

INT: Okay

TS: Um I think that's on my Myspace on my Myspace I

INT: I dunno where I picked that up.

TS: On my Myspace I tried to write my bi-biography not, you know, as somebody else was writing it, you know a lot of artists have "so-and-so is the best, you know, musician ever" ((mocking tone)) and I just didn't wanna have my biography be like that so I decided to write mine first person

INT: Mhm

TS: And um, you know, telling about who I am as a person and what I like and what I don't like what-what annoys me, what I LOVE, you know, stuff like that and I thought 'cause I always wanted my favorite artists to do that. I always thought it would have been cool if the country artists that I l-looked up to when I was little, would've- would've given the fans something really... cool, something some real personal information, not too personal but just what their favorite food is, stuff like that, you know, you never hear that kind of stuff and I always thought it was kinda cool

INT: ?? Maybe it was on Myspace, what's your favorite food, cheesecake.

TS: Mhm. Yeah!

INT: I read that

TS: So I thought it was pretty cool to- to give these people information about me because I'm not scared of it.

INT: No why not, what's wrong with cheesecake?

TS: I don't have anything to hide.

INT: No, I like cheesecake too

TS: @@@I know!

((Jump in interview))

INT: Wha-wha-what's your website?

TS: My website is www.taylorswift.com or hit me up on Myspace which is myspace.com/TaylorSwift

INT: Okay. Advice. You have any advice for anybody that wants to, you know, so what'd you learn so far? That you would give that advice to?

TS: @ How long do you have?

INT:@@ Stay with it?

TS: @@ Um, you know there's so many things that you learn throughout the way and I had so many people give me, you know, advice

INT: Mhm

TS: When I was younger and I can't say that I listened to any of it.

INT: Right

TS: I- all the lessons that I learned, I had to learn by myself. And I-I think this is one of the professions that you really have to learn by doing it.

INT: Right

TS: And, you know, you don't learn how to... not have stage fright BY hearing somebody give you advice about it

INT: Right, that's true.

TS: You learn how to not have stage fright by getting up on stage three hundred times in a row to the point where it feels like you're just standing on your bedroom singing to the mirror.

INT: That's that.

Appendix C: Interview Before the Grammys

Taylor Swift's Interview 'Before She Was Famous' By Blender! (Hollywood Times 2014 [int 2008])

INT: Hi this is Lizzy, we're in Los Angeles with the lovely Taylor Swift. Grammy nominee. How are you feeling about this big Grammy weekend?

TS: I'm feeling awesome about it actually—

INT: —Yeah?

TS: It-it's fun. I went to my first pre-Grammy party last night

INT: Oh yeah?

TS: It was really fun um I never really thought that I'd, you know, being a country singer, get to play a show with like Timbaland—

INT: — I know—

TS: And Flo Rida. What what

INT: @@

TS: You know.. it was pretty exciting, I'm not gonna lie.

INT: Were they nice to you?

TS: Yeah! Timbaland was awesome—

INT: —What was Timbaland like?

TS: Hé was like “hey”

INT: Did he really do that?

TS: And I'm like “I'm such a big fan I love everything that you do” and he's like “thanks”

INT: @@

TS: And I was like, that was so cool.

((Jump in interview))

TS: I didn't change anything in my show

INT: Mm-mm you didn't it was great yeah

TS: You know I had my banjo player go out there and play a solo I was like "this is the only banjo you guys are gonna hear all night!" You know

INT: So give it up

TS: I just feel like um you shouldn't change who you are just because of what kind of room you're playing in

INT: Yep

TS: And it turned out that... it was kinda well-received. You know?

INT: People were really into it yeah

TS: It wasn't like anybody heard banjo and booed

INT: @@ No banjos here

TS: Which is always good.

INT: Who do you think is- you're in best new artist category is tough competition but

TS: Amy Winehouse

INT: You think Amy Winehouse has it

TS: Yeah I think she's gonna win it ALL the way from London!

INT: I know

TS: Yeah she's gonna win it or Feist will win it

INT: Do you- are you disappointed that Amy's not gonna be here?

TS: I mean I think that it's probably good for her that she's like.. you know... in rehab and stuff

INT: Yeah

TS: You gotta kinda worry about the person and I think it would be superficial of me to say "no she should be in LA and compromise her health so she can be on the Grammy's" you know, she's gonna be on the Grammy's anyway. But she's just gonna be in like a healthier.. um.. less risky situation which is always good

INT: You think she made the right call

TS: Yeah! Definitely.

((Jump in interview))

TS: I'm a huge fan of Paramore

INT: YES, I remember you saying that, why do you like Paramore so much?

TS: Because they're awesome? And they're from Nashville so they're REALLY cool.. people

INT: Are all people from Nashville just really cool?

TS: Well there's-they're all really down to earth. Most of them. Um whenever you're around Paramore they don't act like they're just you know I mean some people are like "I'm in a rock band I'm awesome. I'm better than everybody else." And Paramore is just so laid back and so cool and.. um I think that's really exciting

INT: So you feel like you're in a category with a lot of people you respect

TS: YES definitely. I'm just excited to be nominated.

INT: Sure

TS: It's not really something like I'm going in and I'm gonna be disappointed if I don't win because I'm probably not gonna win you know? So I'm just going in there like being the only country singer in the category

INT: Yeah

TS: That's... winning in itself.

((Jump in interview))

TS: I got everything at Gift Easy Suites. There were these really super cute jeans

INT: Uh-huh

TS: And I'm such a loser that I don't even know what size jeans that I wear because I only wear dresses? and so I'm sitting there and they're like "okay well we'll give you what size do you wear?" And I'm like... I don't know. And so so I was opting for the bigger size and they're like "oh no you're this smaller size" **((really monophthongized on 'size'))** and I'm like no I'm the bigger size and so they gave me both...

INT: Wow

TS: How cool is that that they gave me two pairs of jeans.

INT: This is what happens when you become a rock star.

TS: Well, you know it's been pretty cool. I'm liking it.

((Jump in interview))

INT: If you were gonna have anybody uh in-in all of the music world present you the Grammy award if you win, who would you like to have up there? Say “and it’s Taylor Swift winner of the best new artist”

TS: Oh Justin Timberlake. I would probably

INT: @ really?

TS: Yeah

INT: Okay why?

TS: Uh ‘cause I would like run up and give him a great celebratory hug but I would like not let go.

INT: @@

TS: And it would.. yeah anyway Justin Timberlake, but Carrie Underwood has presented me with every award—

INT: —Oh right—

TS: —that I’ve ever won so it would be cool if she presented me with this one.. if I won it, which I won’t win it, but if I were to win it

INT: I’m just saying theoretically

TS: But if I were to win it, theoretically I would probably want it to be Carrie so that it could be like you know three in a row.

INT: So has she been giving you the inside scoop on sort of navigating this whole award show craziness or you seem like you got it kind of

TS: No, we both kind of approach it differently like she

INT: Yeah what’s her approach?

TS: She’s always really.. collected and perfect when she accepts her award shows like when she accepts her awards she’s so well spoken and eloquent and-and when I accept awards

INT: You’re like no that’s not me

TS: I’m like (mock ugly crying) “oh my god” and it’s ridiculous and it it’s out of control and I start crying and I cant breathe and I start stuttering... so that how

INT: So that’s your approach.

TS: So those are our different approaches to accepting awards. Like she’s really good at it and I’m not

((Jump in interview))

TS: Here's what I always do, I bet against myself for awards. Um Amy, I'm gonna bet on Amy... like ten dollars, okay so if Amy wins, I don't- I'm not sad 'cause I lost, I'm happy 'cause I got ten dollars

INT: Right, okay, I like this system

TS: And if she doesn't win... and I win, then I won't be mad that I have to give someone ten dollars 'cause I won.

INT: @@ I think this is an excellent plan.

TS: Thank you it works for me so I'm just gonna stick to it

INT: Well I hope you lose ten dollars

TS: Thank you, I appreciate that

Appendix D: Swift on Good Morning America

Taylor Swift 'GMA' interview 2012 (ABC News 2012)

INT: Well you have done it again, congratulations.

TS: Thank you so much

INT: It seems like you're having a lot of fun here this morning

TS: This is crazy! There's so many of them out there and in here and it's just amazing. I'm so blown away

INT: Well we are all blown away as well an-and this album, "Red" um you've really branched out here. Working with all kinds of different partners and I saw that you called it your "most adventurous album yet" what did you mean by that?

TS: I think for me with this album I just.. I tended to really explore the edges of what I'm allowed to do and um exploring kind of pushing myself and taking myself out of my comfort zone which is writing alone and going and working with my heroes. Song writers that have influenced me my whole career. It's-it really really kind of challenged me in the best way possible

INT: What's different about writing with someone else?

TS: Well uh everybody has their own different process. Some people start with like making a track, some people like I just grab a guitar and make stuff up. Some people- everybody's got a different way of doing things and what it felt like was.. being 22 kind of learning from my absolute heroes and-and exploring how they do what they do and it was really a amazing learning experience

INT: You know I was just telling you, my little girl has been walking around the house for weeks singing we are never ever ever getting back together. I don't think they understand

TS: (laughs) Cuz they're seven and nine ((really monophthongized))

INT: Seven and ten

TS: Seven and ten yeah they don't know. But I'm glad they're singing it though

INT: They're definitely singing it. Now I know you're not gonna name the man who this was about but I-I read somewhere that it was designed to drive the ex absolutely crazy. What is that about?

TS: I maybe said that one place? Maybe? On a bad day? Um but I think for me like music is my way of understanding what I'm feeling. When I started writing songs when I was twelve, I would like run to my room and write songs about a difficult day at school or something like that. And-and it's kind of carried me my whole life and allowed me to kind of filter through really complicated emotions and make them simple.

INT: So what comes to you first? The seeing? The feeling? The tune?

TS: Well it's always different. It's like sometimes it's a fragment of lyric and melodies. Sometimes it's like a background vocal or a post hook or something like that. And it's like it's like getting the first puzzle piece and you have to at that point figure out where it fits in the grand scheme of things and-and fill in the rest of the song

INT: We have got all kinds of questions coming in for you on Twitter and one of them comes from "TheLuckyOne1313" who wanted to know "which song on 'Red' was the hardest to write emotionally?"

TS: Uh the song "All too Well" was the hardest to write because it took me a long time to filter through everything that I wanted to put in the song. It started out being probably like a ten minute song, which you can't put on an album. And I had to filter it down to like a story that could-could work in the form of a song and I called my friend and cowriter Liz Rose and I said come over we've gotta filter this down and it took me a really long time to get it to its final ((monophthongized)) form

INT: So in some ways are you writing all the time

TS: Yes. All the time. I wrote a new one like two days ago

INT: Wow

TS: It doesn't matter if I'm preparing for a record or I'm about to put one out, writing is just a way that I just live and I write about the way that I'm living.

INT: And if you were to write a song about your love life right now, happy song? Sad song?

TS: I.. don't really talk about my love life. I kind of sing about it a lot um because I really think that it sounds more- more poetic and romantic with music behind it.

INT: And it's more true to you in that way

TS: Yeah absolutely. And that's like you know my fans know that I'm gonna give them the real version of what happened to me in my music. And they know that you know what they read on blogs or gossip sites or whatever may or may not be true. And they can kinda tell like if it's true or not cuz they know me.

INT: So what have you learned about how to navigate your whole private life in such a public- when you're living in such a public fishbowl. Look at all the people out here right now

TS: Well I don't mind any of that (points to the fans outside the studio) at all. I don't really- there's- there is nothing wrong with that. But you know there is sort of a pressure to not make a mistake and I'm at an age where you know you're supposed to be like learning lessons and all that and making mistakes and it's okay! But it's you know I have to really kinda minimize the mistakes that I make because it's important that I that I um... I have these people that count on me. So that's- that's part of it that I have come to terms with you know

INT: I think you're doing pretty well with not making too many mistakes

TS: Thanks! That's nice.

INT: You ready for a lightning round?

TS: Lightning round, Yeah! I LOVE LIGHTNING ROUND

INT: GMA Hot seat. Okay. There it is right there you're on the hot seat appropriate dress this morning. Okay number one, favorite tv show?

TS: Uh CSI, Law & Order, Grey's Anatomy, Girls, Mindy Project

INT: Wow I think there were five there

TS: Watch so much tv you have no idea

INT: All good ones right there! First celebrity crush

TS: Taylor Hansen

INT: Wow you are fast

TS: (nods) yeah

INT: What's your hidden talent?

TS: Oh! Um antique shopping and putting together my friend's apartments when they're not there

INT: Lara Spencer did you hear that, antique shopping! Uh go to comfort food

TS: Oh um mm Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal or um pop tarts.

INT: Wow, do you know you share a favorite comfort food with?

TS: Who

INT: Robert Pattinson

TS: Wow!

INT: Cinnamon Toast Crunch comfort food

TS: This is exciting news!

INT: I can't believe that I know that but okay. And what is your favorite place in the whole world and why?

TS: My favorite place in the whole world is... Nashville because it's my home it's music city it's like everybody there is so artistic and so creative and- and nice! Everybody's really friendly which is good.

INT: You are so good at this game.

TS: Thank you so much!

INT: @@ Let's get some more Twitter questions. We have one from "Swiftness13" and uh who writes "you've achieved so much so far, what's left on your list that you really want to achieve?"

TS: Lots. Um I think you know for me I would love to um I would love to have this album be something that really I'm proud of and put together the tour and have it be a show that's worth people paying their money and spending the evening with us to- to see it. You know I-I wanna make this show better than anything we've done before.

INT: Of all the new kinds of music you tried in this album, which one was the- the most fun or even the most challenging for you?

TS: Well the one that was the most fun was on the song called "I Knew You Were Trouble" and I started it out on piano and I knew that at the end of the chorus I wanted it to have this crazy bass drop and so I brought it to my cowriters Max Martin and Johan Shellback who are AMAZING and they were able to we just like took this song to places I didn't think that my music would ever go.

INT: Your parents have um have done so much for you I know and they moved to Nashville many years ago when you wanted to start out singing. And we got another question from Kieth Sargent who wanted to know how your parents are adjusting to your success

TS: @ They're great with it um my dad is like he goes around with all these guitar picks of-from my tour in his pocket and just hands-hands them to strangers and is like "hey I'm Taylor Swift's dad, nice to meet you"

INT: @@@

TS: And he makes friends everywhere he goes and like loves it and my dad's like the friendliest guy in the world and my mom is-is really sweet because she um she has a gr- she has really great taste and she has really logical opinions and so I ask her for advice about everything. We're really close

INT: And finally, Judy Berryhill wants to know "what in life brings a smile to your face?"

TS: Oh my god, so much. Um mostly uh.. like cats and um... mostly cats

Appendix E: The Making of 1989

Taylor Swift New Album 1989 was inspired by late 80's Pop (Recording Academy / GRAMMYs 2014)

TS: It's interesting um how many people potentially can surround you if you get to a certain point in your career. Knowing that you're only being influenced by only your thoughts and your opinions on things I think that's the problem I have with the idea of having an entourage, that would be what I wouldn't want. For people to tell me that all of my ideas are good. Because all my ideas are not good. @@ And I need people around me to tell me that.

((Jump in interview))

TS: I like to take two years to make an album because I like to give myself time to evolve and change and challenge myself to try new things. Um I tend to write for the entire two year process but usually the things I write in the first six to eight months get thrown out, not because they.. weren't great songs but because they don't fit my-my idea of what the new album should be and you know when people say that they like one of your albums like when people told me that like "Red" was their favorite album I'd done I didn't take that as so I should make that again. I took that as great, awesome now I wanna- I wanna make them like this album just as much if not more than the last album but I want them to like it for different reasons.

((Jump in interview))

TS: This is a much smaller group of people who I worked with on "1989". Um and I did that because I wanted this album to be more sonically cohesive than "Red" was. I was

very proud of “Red” for a lot of reasons... one of the things that I wanted to work on for this new album was I wanted it to have its own sound that was not all over the place.

((Jump in interview))

TS: The sonic inspiration uh for this album really kind of harkens back to the sounds of late 80s pop. I loved how they were being so experimental, they were taking so many risks. Um you look back to that time in pop music and in pop culture and fashion... everybody seemed to be kind of bucking the system. Everybody kind of was like “well we’ll wear neon... you gonna say we can’t?” Uh we’re gonna act how we want, love who we want, be who we want, say what we want, and so I was very inspired with this album, you’ll hear like flickers and hints of 80s synth pop in there and that’s because I love the way that people were living their lives.

Appendix F: Taylor Swift on *Ellen* Part 1

Taylor Swift on the Rumored ‘Avengers: Endgame’ Easter Eggs (DeGeneres 2019A)

INT: Keep in mind, that we- you haven’t been here in... four? No how long has it been?

TS: Yeah, four years, I was recovering from the fall

INT: No no no, but but look at all the content we had and you haven’t been here in four years. You think you’d wanna come back ‘cause you had so much fun.

TS: I know and now I have.

INT: Okay and now you have come back

TS: Yeah I have come back. I had an album out called “Reputation”

INT: I know

(Audience cheers)

TS: Oh you guys. You guys are friendly. Um yeah with the album I just basically wanted to just make music and not explain it

INT: Yeah

TS: Um but I missed you—

INT: —it worked out—

TS: —so much. It was really—

INT: —you still sold a bunch of albums without even talkin’

TS: @

INT: Well usually people go to promote their music because it helps sell albums. You don't have to do that

TS: Well that's nice of you to say. I mean I-I am having fun being back here. It's been really great to be back here and like I definitely do- I think as a song writer I ENJOY communicating about what I've made. Like I really do like that part of the process. But I also just feel like with my career I wanna do what feels right at the time.

INT: Yeah

TS: You know like so it just at that time I-I coined this phrase "there will be no explanation, there will just be reputation" 'cause I am dramatic.

INT: Yeah

TS: That's a very dramatic thing but it rhymed, it was kinda catchy and I... so I stuck with it

INT: Right, is that in uh one of. Your songs 'cause if it isn't it should be.

TS: Thank you no. And I think it's a little late for that 'cause now we're onto like another different album

INT: I know but you still could have that

TS: For an album that's not "Reputation"?

INT: Yeah

(Audience laughs)

TS: It's a little off brand

INT: No. No. No.

TS: But I will think about it.

INT: No just like clothing comes back in style, you can come right back around to that topic again if you like

TS: It'd be like a vintage

INT: You can do anything you want Taylor Swift.

TS: Thank you for saying that

INT: You know, you- I really- people-people thought "oh god she's been away for so long how is this album gonna do" and they put so much- I don't think pressure on you because I don't think you felt—

TS: —Yeah there's pressure

INT: Really?

TS: Yeah for sure

INT: Oh okay because it seemed like people were like expecting this not to be as-as good and that album to be as and-and you just came back and proved them all wrong

TS: Aw

INT: It's true

TS: Thanks

INT: Because you didn't worry about how certain people do things you do things your own way and- and it all works out for you

TS: Thank you so much

INT: You're welcome. Now let's talk about me. (Audience laughs). Um no not talk about me but so these uh these here let's talk about you're on the conversation of Entertainment Weekly you have all these Easter eggs on here, right?

TS: Yeah yeah and I feel like

INT: Explain what the eggs are to people who don't understand

TS: Yeah 'cause I think it's I think it's that is necessary. So it's like when we say "Easter eggs" we're not ONLY talking about like Easter eggs that you go on an Easter egg hunt for on Easter. It's like kind of uh like uh it's kind of like a clue, like a foreshadowing kind of thing. I like to plant Easter eggs in a video like that will be like a lyric from unreleased music or like a little hint or wink to what's coming in the future.

INT: Right

TS: Um so yeah like that was kind of the theme when we did the Entertainment Weekly thing on. It's just been really fun to kind of expand the musical experience past just listening to a song. Like I also want people to be like watching the music video and what's that thing in the background and what's that song playing underneath there and what's- what's the reason she said that in French so.

INT: Right because people and-and usually your fans are pretty good at figuring it out, right?

TS: They're excellent at figuring it out

INT: What is the worst- what- how far off have they been? What's the worst they've been?

TS: Oh man um well, there were some fans that thought I had something to do with Avengers: Endgame.

INT: Oh really

TS: Which I would-which I would have loved to have been asked but I wasn't.

INT: No you weren't.

TS: Asked to be in at all

INT: Yeah

TS: Because we had the single coming out the same day and I have a song that was called "Endgame" and so they're were like oh my god she's going to defeat Thanos and... I let everyone down.

INT: Yeah, yeah

TS: AGAIN

INT: That's-well- that was confusing. On your jacket you have a lot of things on here but you don't have something that um next time you wear a jacket um

(Ellen gives Taylor a pin of Ellen dressed in a cat costume)

TS: (gasps) Thank you

INT: You're welcome

TS: It's you as a kitty cat

INT: And that's two things you love.

TS: Those are the two things I love the most in the world

INT: Together- put together

TS: Yeah

INT: Alright we have to take a break

TS: Thank you

INT: I'll let you cry about that. We'll be back

Appendix G: Taylor Swift on *Ellen* Part 2

Does Taylor Swift Wash her Legs in the shower (DeGeneres 2019B)

INT: We're back with Taylor Swift who was just telling me about washing her legs in the shower. I couldn't hear you, did you say you DO wash 'em or you don't?

TS: I do cuz when you shave your legs, isn't the shaving cream is like soap right?

INT: Yeah, it is. That is- I think that's the reason that most women wash their legs because we have to because we shave our legs.

TS: Yeah

INT: Yeah

TS: So that counts so yeah

INT: Oh for sure

TS: Good, I'm on the right side of history then

INT: Unless you're not shaving and then you're then you're not washing. SO whenever you're not shaving you don't wash you're saying

TS: No I don't- I don't think I would say THAT

INT: Well it seems like- it seems like you did just say it

TS: But I kind of ALWAYS shave.. my legs

INT: Every day?

TS: .. well I mean yeah

INT: EVERY day?

TS: Yeah!

INT: God you must be hairy. @@

TS: @@ ... so sweet

INT: Well I don't know why you don't come here more often. Um alright let's talk about "Me!" We were just playing it during the commercial break which I love that song I love that video so much

TS: Thank you

INT: That must have been so fun to shoot.

TS: It was-it was so fun that's actually um

INT: Is that your new kitten?

TS: That's my new kitten Benjamin

INT: Wait did first of all let's finish talking about the video because it's so good. Brendon Urie, right? Is that his last name?

TS: Brendon Urie is one of the most—

INT: —From Panic! At the Disco—

TS: —incredible performers.

INT: Yeah, he is amazing. I love that y'all were together in that

TS: Oh yeah I mean he does this little dance coming up or he already did it but all his little dances are like.. THAT @@ (she mimics the dance he's doing in the video behind her) Look at him, he's like. He's just like- he would raise the energy in any situation. And like he was- he was just amazing.

INT: Alright we're gonna get to the kitten in a minute. But um did the speaking French in the beginning of it does that mean something?

TS: Yeah. Definitely.

INT: Okay, did you know French already or did you learn it for that?

TS: I've tried to learn French several times in my life because I think it's a really beautiful language.

INT: It is beautiful

TS: And I definitely made sure I had native French speakers on set cuz I didn't wanna butcher the language of love

INT: Right

TS: Like that's not what I came here to do.

INT: Say something to me in French right now

TS: Um you're putting me on the spot. But I mean "je suis calme"?

INT: Ah, thank you

TS: I dunno

INT: What does that mean?

TS: It means "I am calm"

INT: Oh

TS: Uh je ne peux pas tu parler quand t'es comme ça ((?))

INT: Ahh that's good. That's a good one. I don't know what that means but that sounded real French. Alright, um

TS: It means "I love cats."

INT: Okay so let's talk about cats

TS: (under her breath) no it doesn't

INT: So that kitten.. it doesn't? @

TS: No

INT: So was that kitten just there to be in the video or did you- and THEN you took it home or did you put it in the video and it was yours already?

TS: He was- he was a little cat actor. He was there apparently there was.. I didn't know this at the time, all I know is, we had to have a kitten in the scene cuz I wanted to have the scene where it's like you know he gives me a ring, I'm like no. He gives me flowers, I'm like no. And then he gives me a KITTEN and I'm like YES. Absolutely. You know me. Clearly. Um and so you know they show up with this little kitten and the- his handler was like, do you wanna hold him first? And I was like absolutely I do. And so they hand me this tiny cat and I've never really experienced a cat that the second I held this little kitten, he started purring like a motor. And I was like okay, whose cat is this? You're really lucky whoever owns this cat and then the girl was like actually, he doesn't have a home. And then I just my eyes turned into hearts. I just immediately was like I-I-I can't think about anything else.

INT: And- and so how did the other two get along. You can't just bring a cat home. Cats don't- they're not like that.

TS: They're like little puff balls getting into fights. Like marshmallows throwing each other like

INT: That's good then. And his name is Benjamin

TS: Benjamin Button

INT: Mhm that's right

TS: Because it's an incredible movie

INT: Yes it is.

TS: It's an incredible film.

INT: He ages backwards.

TS: Yeah

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