Two kinds of questions in English:

**WH-Questions:**
- What is that?
- Who is that?
- Where is that?

WH questions require answers that fill in missing information.

**Yes/No-Questions:**
- Is that a car?
- Is that the boss?
- Are you at home?

Yes/No Questions require an answer to confirm or reject information.

WH-Marked Yes/No Questions in NYC English:

**WH-marked Yes/No Questions:**
- What are you, a scientist?
- What are we, John Dillinger?
- What did he, grow up on Staten Island?

WH-marked Yes/No questions contain both a WH-element and a Yes/No-element (the Yes/No component attempts to complete the WH-element).

Our Research Question:

What special properties do these WH-marked Yes/No Questions have?

- Syntactic (sentence structure)
- Semantic and Pragmatic (meaning)
- Prosodic (pronunciation)

We are especially interested in their prosodic properties...aspects of pronunciation.

Methods

A Corpus of NYC Speech:

Goal 1: Search scripts for examples of WH-marked Yes-No questions to explore their structure and meaning.

Goal 2: Inspect audio of these examples to explore their pronunciation.

Preliminary Results

**Special Syntax**

- “what” is the only WH-word that is possible.
- Pronouns are the only possible subjects.

**Special Meaning**

- These “questions” are not genuine requests for information; they are rhetorical.
- In all cases so far, the speaker seems to believe that the hearer believes the answer is “yes”

**Special Prosody**

- The WH-word receives main stress in WH-marked Yes/No Questions (unlike in standard WH-questions, where the verb or the object receives main stress).