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 that confirms or rejects 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?

- In terms of syntax (sentence structure)
- In terms of semantics and pragmatics (meaning)
- In terms of prosody (pronunciation)

We are especially interested in their prosodic properties... aspects of pronunciation related to rhythm and intonation

**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 Prosodic Findings**

**WH-marked Yes/No Questions have Special Prosody:**

- As noted in our earlier analysis, the WH-word in these questions must carry main sentence stress (see left figure).
- Additionally, the contraction of “what” and the verb “is” appears to be impossible in these questions (see right figure):

  - Standard WH-question: What IS he? A scientist?
  - Standard WH-question: WHAT’s he? A scientist?
  - What-marked Question: ✓ WHAT’s he? A scientist? * WHAT’s he? A scientist?

- These two prosodic factors encode the semantic and pragmatic meanings that these questions carry.