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Benson, Erica J.

American Speech, Volume 78, Number 3, Fall 2003, pp. 307-330 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

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FOLK LINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS
AND THE MAPPING
OF DIALECT BOUNDARIES

ERICA J. BENSON
University of Wisconsin--Eau Claire

The mapping of dialect boundaries in the United States has traditionally been based solely on production data. This traditional approach neglects a rich data source, namely, perceptions of and attitudes toward language varieties. Perceptual dialectology, also known as folk dialectology, is concerned with the beliefs that nonlinguists—"the folk"—have about language variation, factors that can play a critical role in language maintenance and change. Folk perceptions of dialects have been compared to traditional dialectological and sociolinguistic findings, and such comparisons have demonstrated that the folk employ factors other than linguistic differences in constructing their mental maps. While some perceptual studies have shown that folk boundaries parallel linguistic divisions to some extent (e.g., Mase 1964; Lance 1999), others have found that subjective regions are influenced by such factors as political and civil demarcations (e.g., Sibata 1959; Preston 1986; Inoue 1996; Lance 1999). Does this render the findings of studies in perceptual dialectology invalid? Certainly not. Studies in perceptual dialectology need not be used only to confirm or contradict production boundaries. Indeed, studies in perceptual dialectology can inform our understanding of the criteria that are important to the folk in defining dialect regions and should be considered in the construction of dialect maps.

In the United States, the state of Ohio is an ideal area in which to investigate the folk perceptions of boundaries and their relationship to production boundaries. Several traditional studies have examined dialect diversity in the area, and the proposed boundaries have raised a number of interesting questions. Ohio is a linguistically complex region, where dialect mixture appears to be a defining characteristic (Marckwardt 1957, 8; Carver 1987, 192; Thomas 1989/93, 205; Frazer 1996, 85). Most dialect projects, including the Linguistic Atlas Projects (LAP), the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE 1985–), and the Telephone Survey (TELSUR) conducted by sociolinguists at the University of Pennsylvania (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 1997), have typically divided Ohio into three
dialect areas. Although it is unfortunate that the Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States (LANCS), the atlas project relevant here, never produced a definitive map of the dialect boundaries of the area (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Wisconsin), some scholars, including Marckwardt (1957), Dakin (1966), and others, have used LANCS data to postulate boundaries within this region. Lance (1994) incorporated Marckwardt’s and Dakin’s findings into his map of United States dialects, seen in figure 1, which is based on the largely phonetic/phonological and lexical data from LAP. The lexical data collected for DARE were mapped by Carver (1987), as shown in figure 2. Finally, the TELSUR project data, based on the phonological features of 240 respondents in urban areas of the United States, is mapped in figure 3 (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 1997). In the remainder of this paper, these proposed boundaries are referred to as LAP (fig. 1), DARE (fig. 2), and TELSUR (fig. 3). I now present a brief description of production boundaries in Ohio based on these mappings.

LANCS data support an extension of the previously established LAP Northern dialect boundary westward through the northern quarter of Ohio, the boundary line below “A” in figure 1 (Marckwardt 1957, 4, 8). The DARE-based Northern dialect boundary is similar, as shown in figure 2 (Carver 1987, 202). The TELSUR map differs slightly in that only the northeast corner of Ohio is in the Northern dialect area, as seen in figure 3 (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 1997). (More recent work by Labov, Ash, and Boberg [forthcoming], however, puts the northern third of Ohio in the Northern dialect area.)

The dialect areas south of the Northern boundary, that is, in the central and southern parts of Ohio, are not uniformly agreed on. LAP data led scholars to divide central and southern Ohio into two parts: a North Midland area that extends from the Northern dialect boundary down to the Old National Road, an important settlement route through central Ohio (paralleled by today’s Interstate 70), “C” in figure 1; and a South Midland area extending from the Old National Road almost down to the Ohio River border, “D” in figure 1 (Marckwardt 1957, 4, 8). The patterning of DARE data prompted Carver to label the area from the Northern dialect boundary down almost to the Ohio River border as “Lower North,” as shown in figure 2, a labeling deliberately intended to highlight this region’s relationship to the Northern dialect area (Carver 1987, 202). Carver described the Lower North as “a broad and complex transitional zone [c]aught between the strong opposing pulls of the cultures to the north and south” (193). In addition, Carver noted that within this 200-mile wide transition zone between the Northern and Southern dialect areas, no
Figure 1
Dialect Divisions from Seven Atlas Studies
(Lance 1994, 352–53)

1–18. Kurath (1949, fig. 3)
1. Northwestern New England
2. Southeastern New England
3. Southwestern New England
4. Upstate New York and western Vermont
5. Hudson Valley
6. Metropolitan New York
7. Delaware Valley (Philadelphia area)
8. Susquehanna Valley
9. Upper Potomac and Shenandoah Valleys
10. Upper Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh area)
11. Northern West Virginia
12. Southern West Virginia
13. Western North and South Carolina
14. Delmarva (Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, and southern Delaware)
15. Virginia Piedmont
16. Northeastern North Carolina (Albemarle Sound and Neuse Valley)
17. Cape Fear and Pee Dee Valleys
18. South Carolina

A. Marckwardt (1957, maps 2 and 3)
B. Allen (1964, 92, map 6.1)
C and D. Dakin (1966, 3: 104, fig. 174)
E. Faries and Lance (1993, 253)
F and G. Wood (1971, 358, map 83)
F. Mid Southern
G. Plains Southern
H. Eastern Highlands
I. Nashville Basin
J. Western Highlands
K. Piedmont
L. Central Plains
M. Upper Delta
N. Atlantic Coast
O. Gulf Coast
P. Coastal Black Belt
Q. Eastern Piney Woods
R. Central Piney Woods
S. Western Piney Woods
T. Lower Delta
U. Lower Western Plains
definite linguistic boundary marker exists. Carver is not alone in doubting the existence of a Midland dialect, and a rich debate on the subject has flourished in recent years (e.g., Bailey 1968; Carver 1987; Davis and Houck 1992, 1996; Frazer 1993a, 1994, 1996; Johnson 1994; McElhinny 1999; Ash 2000; Flanigan 2000; Flanigan and Norris 2000). In the TELSUR map, similar to the LAP map, two Midland areas are defined. A North Midland area encompasses the northern half of Ohio (excluding the northeast corner), with the southern boundary of this area running in an east-west line just north of Columbus. A South Midland region covers the southern half of Ohio, with the southern border of this area running just south of the Ohio River in West Virginia and just north of the Ohio River along the Kentucky border, as seen in figure 3. (More recent work by Labov, Ash, and Boberg [forthcoming] no longer acknowledges this North Midland–South Midland division, and their latest mapping of the dialect areas in central and southern Ohio closely resembles the DARE map.)

In all three maps, some portion(s) of southern Ohio’s border region along the Ohio River is shown as belonging to a different dialect region than areas to the north. LAP has major and minor dialect boundaries running through southeastern Ohio, as seen in figure 1. DARE data led Carver (1987, 202) to include the central-southern tip of Ohio in his Upper South region, as shown in figure 2. The TELSUR map places the
southwestern portion of Ohio’s southern border region in the Southern dialect area, seen in figure 3.

Several questions about the dialect areas in Ohio (and the entire area between the Northern and Southern dialect regions, for that matter) are raised by these and other studies. Is there an important east-west dialect boundary across the middle of the state? If so, does it divide Ohio into two halves of a Midland area that are together distinct from the Northern and Southern areas around them (like LAP and TELSUR)? Or is nearly all of Ohio essentially a southern extension of Northern speech (like \textit{DARE}/Carver’s “Lower North”)?

\textbf{METHODS}

To address the above questions and to supplement and clarify the aforementioned studies, a pilot study of 12 respondents from four cities was conducted in March 2001: two from Athens, in southern Ohio; four from Lancaster, in southeast-central Ohio; four from Columbus, in central Ohio; and two from Findlay, in northwestern Ohio (fig. 4). Respondents were all upper working/lower middle class, between the ages of 30 and 70 (five between the ages of 30 and 49, seven age 50 and over); five were female and
seven male. All respondents were lifelong residents of their respective areas and had not lived outside of the region for any extended period of time.

The methodology used here was borrowed from Preston’s work on perceptual dialectology (e.g., Preston 1986, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 1996b). Two survey instruments were used with respondents to explore their beliefs about the dialect areas in and around Ohio. The first survey instrument is a blank map of Ohio and surrounding states, namely, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky, and West Virginia (the completed map by respondent 2 is shown in fig. 5), a much smaller area than the United States maps used in most previous perceptual work. Respondents were asked to circle and label areas where people speak differently or similarly. Since a hand-drawn-map task does not directly reveal any information about the intensity of the differences among those areas outlined or not outlined (Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 77), a second survey instrument, henceforth known as the degree-of-difference task, was used. In the degree-of-difference task, respondents were given an alphabetic list of 23 cities in and around Ohio (see table 1) as well as a map of Ohio with these cities labeled on it, as shown in figure 6, and were asked to rank the cities on a four-point scale, indicating the degree of difference from the speech of the city they live in: 1, exactly like you; 2, a little different; 3, somewhat different; and 4, different. The respondents’ raw scores were converted to means scores for each area. The means scores were then divided into four groups (1.00–1.75; 1.76–2.50; 2.51–3.25; 3.26–4.00) following Preston
FINDINGS

SOUTHERN OHIO FINDINGS. In the hand-drawn-map task, the two respondents from southern Ohio did not agree completely on the dialect areas in Ohio; one left the state of Ohio unmarked, claiming there were no differences in Ohio speech, while the other divided Ohio into two dialect areas. Respondent 1 circled Ohio as a whole and did not put any label on it. He noted that “Ohio would be all for me. I don’t notice there’s any difference in Ohio.” Furthermore, this respondent indicated that he “never noticed much difference” among speakers in Ohio, Indiana, and lower Michigan. Respondent 2, however, divided Ohio into two parts. The entire northern part of the state down to central Ohio as well as the western part of the state
was unlabeled, while the southern third of the state, along with Kentucky and West Virginia, was labeled “hillbilly slang” (fig. 5). In further discussion, respondent 2 likened the speech in the northern and western portion of Ohio to that in lower Michigan, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. In contrast, respondent 2 said of speakers in southern Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia, “we have more of a twang to our words.” She went on to say that the speech in “southern Ohio is like West Virginia but not as twangy.” Although these two respondents did not agree on the dialect areas in Ohio in the hand-drawn-map task, they were more consistent with each other in the degree-of-difference task.

In the degree-of-difference task, the means scores from the southern Ohio respondents (see n. 2) divided the state north of Columbus, as shown in figure 7. Interestingly, in their comments, they indicated that the dividing line between north and south is Interstate 70 (i.e., the Old National

### Table 1

Respondents Ratings on Degree-of-Difference Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Southeast-Central</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Northwestern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6</td>
<td>R7 R8 R9 R10 R11 R12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>2 3 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>2 2 2 1 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charleston, W.Va.</td>
<td>3 2 3 3 3 3</td>
<td>4 4 3 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chillicothe</td>
<td>1 1 4 2 1 1</td>
<td>3 3 1 2 1 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>1 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>2 2 2 1 1 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>2 3 1 1 3 3</td>
<td>3 2 3 3 2 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>1 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayton</td>
<td>1 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit, Mich.</td>
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<td>4 2 2 4 2 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Findlay</td>
<td>1 3 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>2 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Wayne, Ind.</td>
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<td>– 1 1 – 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis, Ind.</td>
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<td>2 1 1 – 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexington, Ky.</td>
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<td>4 4 3 4 4 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lima</td>
<td>1 3 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>2 2 1 2 1 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisville, Ky.</td>
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<td>4 4 3 4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mansfield</td>
<td>1 3 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marietta</td>
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<td>4 4 3 – 3 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, Pa.</td>
<td>4 2 1 1 3 3</td>
<td>3 2 3 2 3 3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4 3 2 1 4 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandusky</td>
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<td>2 2 1 1 1 2</td>
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<td>Toledo</td>
<td>2 3 1 1 2 2</td>
<td>3 2 2 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeling, W.Va.</td>
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<td>4 4 4 4 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngstown</td>
<td>– 2 1 1 3 3</td>
<td>2 2 3 1 2 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zanesville</td>
<td>1 1 1 2 1 1</td>
<td>1 3 1 2 3 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 6**
Area Cities Map for Degree-of-Difference Task

**Figure 7**
Means Scores of the Degree-of-Difference Rating by Southern Ohio Respondents
(1 = exactly like you; 2 = a little different; 3 = somewhat different; 4 = different)
Road mentioned previously), which runs east-west across the central part of the state through Zanesville and just south of downtown Columbus. Respondent 2 remarked that “more broken hillbilly slang” is used south of I-70 than north of it.

An examination of the respondents’ ratings of cities outside Ohio shows that cities to the north and west—Detroit, Fort Wayne, and Indianapolis—were considered as different as those of northern Ohio. The ratings of cities to the south and east make it appear that the southern Ohio respondents perceive a boundary at the Ohio River (i.e., the Ohio state border): Wheeling, Charleston, and Louisville were rated “a little different,” and Lexington and Pittsburgh fell in the “somewhat different” range.

In summary, the respondents from southern Ohio seem to recognize two dialect areas that divide the state approximately in half along an east-west line. Moreover, areas north of the Ohio-Michigan border are likely to be included with the northern part of Ohio, while somewhat mixed results were found as to whether areas south of the Ohio River border are perceived to be in the same dialect region as southern Ohio. Such mixed results reflect Preston’s findings for southern Indiana respondents, who differentiated their own speech from that in Kentucky in certain tasks (i.e., hand-drawn maps and ratings of correctness and pleasantness) but claimed similarity in a degree-of-difference task (Preston 1993a, 347, 356; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 82). Interestingly, the southern Ohio respondents reversed this pattern by including parts of Kentucky and West Virginia in a dialect region with southern Ohio on hand-drawn maps while differentiating the speech in cities in southern Ohio from that in cities across the Ohio River border in Kentucky and West Virginia in the degree-of-difference task.

SOUTHEAST-CENTRAL OHIO FINDINGS. In the hand-drawn-map task, three of the four respondents from southeast-central Ohio (i.e., Lancaster) treated Ohio as one unified dialect area, while the remaining respondent outlined three areas. Respondents 3, 4, and 5 made no divisions in the state. In fact, all three equated the speech in Ohio with that in lower Michigan and Indiana, and respondents 3 and 4 also included Pennsylvania. Respondent 6, however, outlined three areas in Ohio: The northeastern part of the state was labeled “Amish/Mennonites”; the southern part of the state along the Ohio River border was circled together with West Virginia and eastern Kentucky and given the label “hillbilly”; and the remainder of the state, outlined together with Indiana and lower Michigan, was not labeled.

In the degree-of-difference task, the means scores from this area closely parallel the results from the hand-drawn maps. Nearly all of the cities in
Ohio fall within the range of “exactly like you”; only two areas, the north-east corner of the state (i.e., Cleveland and Youngstown) and the city of Chillicothe in south-central Ohio, are considered different, as seen in figure 8. Cleveland and Youngstown were rated “somewhat different” by respondents 5 and 6 “due to the large black population,” while Chillicothe was rated “different” and “a little different” by respondents 3 and 4, who could not specifically identify linguistic differences, but respondent 4 likened the atmosphere in the city to “stepping back in time.” Note that cities to the north and west—Detroit, Fort Wayne, and Indianapolis—were not considered different from the majority of Ohio; however, cities to the south and east were “a little different” (Wheeling, Lexington, Louisville, and Pittsburgh) or “somewhat different” (Charleston).

In summary, the respondents from southeast-central Ohio seem to agree that the speech within Ohio is largely the same, with a few pockets of difference attributable to the cultural or ethnic background of the residents. Furthermore, the dialect area that encompasses most of Ohio ex-

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**FIGURE 8**

Means Scores of the Degree-of-Difference Rating by Southeast-Central Ohio Respondents

(1 = exactly like you; 2 = a little different; 3 = somewhat different; 4 = different)
tends beyond Ohio’s northern and western borders into Michigan and Indiana but most likely stops at Ohio’s southern and eastern borders.

CENTRAL OHIO FINDINGS. The respondents from central Ohio (i.e., Columbus) tended to outline and comment on more dialect areas than respondents from the southern parts of the state. In the hand-drawn-map task, respondents 7 and 8 divided Ohio into the same two parts: (1) an unlabeled area that covered the majority of Ohio and was circled with Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, and (2) an area that encompassed the region along Ohio’s southern border as well as West Virginia and Kentucky. Not surprisingly, respondents 7 and 8 had little to say about area 1 but a great deal to say about area 2. Respondent 7 described the speakers in 2 as having “more of a drawl in their voice,” and respondent 8 stated that in “the bottom 25% excepting Cincinnati, you get the West Virginia and Kentucky influence,” which he labeled “Southern.”

Respondent 9 also divided the state into two areas, but quite differently. For this respondent, the speech in the greater part of Ohio, excepting the northeastern corner, and all of Indiana is “Midwestern twang.” The northeastern corner of the state, centered around Cleveland, and lower Michigan are labeled “upper Midwest twang.” Respondent 9 explained that people in northeastern Ohio “have their own way of saying things, their own dialect . . . [like] what you would find in New York or western Pennsylvania.”

Although respondent 10’s map was not at all illuminating (she simply wrote in a few state and city names), her comments revealed that she, too, recognized a number of discrete areas. Respondent 10 stated that Ohio is divided into three areas. Northern Ohio speech is characterized as sounding “more like the Michigan, Chicago drawl” (an unusual use of “drawl” to refer to Northern speech); in the central part of Ohio, “we speak a little more sophisticated” than the Northerners and Michiganders; and in the southern part of the state “closer to West Virginia . . . [they have] a different kind of drawl in their voice.” Furthermore, in reference to the North/South distinction, respondent 10 said, “Even close to Columbus . . . they sound like they’re from Kentucky; as you go towards Toledo, their drawl isn’t as distinct.”

In the degree-of-difference task, the means scores of the central Ohio respondents reveal three areas of difference in Ohio, as shown in figure 9, relatively consistent with the results from the hand-drawn-map task. Northern Ohio, excepting Sandusky (a well-known tourist destination), was rated “a little different” (Toledo and Youngstown) and “somewhat different” (Cleveland). Respondent 7 stated that Cleveland and Toledo have “a differ-
ent feel... not the same as Chicago and New York, but getting toward where it is.” Respondent 8 attributed the differences in Cleveland, Youngstown, and Toledo to their urban identity: “It just seems like they are more metropolitan.” A second area of difference for these respondents is the southeastern quadrant of the state, south of Columbus and Zanesville and east of Dayton and Cincinnati. The means scores for this area range from “a little different” for Chillicothe and Portsmouth to “different” for Marietta. Respondents 7 and 8 seem to believe that the differences in this area have to do with an urban/rural distinction: respondent 8 stated that “people in larger cities tend to be more alike; people in smaller towns like Chillicothe, well their vocabulary is different,” and respondent 7 described Chillicothe as “more of a hometown place, more mom and pop stores.” Respondent 10 attributed the differences in Portsmouth and Marietta to their proximity to Kentucky and West Virginia, respectively. Not surprisingly, the overall means scores reveal that the speech in the cities in Kentucky and West Virginia was as different from Columbus as the speech of Marietta. In the areas outside Ohio, cities to the west were not considered different from central Ohio, while areas to the north were as different as Cleveland.
Finally, the speech in Pittsburgh was perceived to be as different from Columbus as Youngstown.

In short, the central Ohio respondents divided the state into several dialect regions with varying degrees of differentiation. A large central region was perceived as similar dialectally; however, the northeast and northwest corners were considered a separate area, as was the southeastern portion of the state. In addition, the central Ohio region extends west into Indiana, and the Youngstown region likely extends east to include some part of Pennsylvania. Areas to the north of the Ohio-Michigan border were included in the northern Ohio dialect region, and areas to the south of the Ohio River were grouped with at least some portion of southern Ohio.

**NORTHERN OHIO FINDINGS.** The respondents from northern Ohio, similarly to those from central Ohio, divided Ohio into several discrete areas in the hand-drawn-map task. Respondent 11 carved the state into three parts, as shown in figure 10. The northern half of Ohio excluding the northeast as well as the northern two-thirds of Indiana is the area where “good plain English” is spoken. The northeastern corner of the state was called “slight Dutch,” to demonstrate what respondent 11 perceived as a
linguistic relationship to Pennsylvania, which was labeled “strong Dutch.” The southern half of Ohio and the southern third of Indiana were given the label “strong hillbilly, fast”: “They slur their words a lot, and they run them together terribly. They talk so fast that you got to ask them half a dozen times what they said.” The southern Ohio/southern Indiana region is contrasted with the “hill long drawn out slower” of Kentucky and West Virginia, which “is all drawl, drawn out; not a Texan drawl but a hillbilly drawl.”

Respondent 12 drew four areas on his map. The northwestern part of Ohio, the southeastern tip of Michigan, and the northeastern part of Indiana were labeled “like me.” The northeastern corner of the state, the area around Cleveland, was called “city talk” and was described in the discussion as follows: “There is in the city some kind of dialect. I don’t quite get it . . . they just talk kind of strange.” The central Ohio area around Columbus was considered “educated” because “most of the people I know are educated. They talk with the big words; no dialect there particularly.” Finally, the southwest corner of the state, the area around Cincinnati and into Kentucky, was labeled “slow & drawn” and compared to the “hillbilly talk” of Kentucky and the “coal mine talk” of West Virginia.

Once again the degree-of-difference means scores correspond closely to the responses in the hand-drawn-map task. As seen in figure 11, the northwestern and the central parts of the state, including the cities of Toledo, Sandusky, Mansfield, Lima, Findlay, Columbus, and Dayton, were perceived as being very similar. The northeastern corner, including the cities of Cleveland, Youngstown, and Akron, was rated “a little different.” The city of Zanesville was considered to be “somewhat different.” The cities in the southern third of the state—Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Portsmouth, and Marietta—were all in the “different” range. Beyond the state’s borders, not surprisingly, cities in Indiana were rated the same as central and northwestern Ohio; Detroit was given the same rating as cities in northeastern Ohio; Pittsburgh was given the same rating as Zanesville; and cities south of the Ohio River were given the same rating as southern Ohio.

In summary, the respondents from northwestern Ohio perceived at least four major dialect regions that appear to extend beyond state borders. Central and northwestern Ohio constitute one dialect region that extends westward into Indiana. A second area encompasses northeastern Ohio and extends northward into Michigan and possibly eastward into Pennsylvania. A potential third area is found in southeast-central Ohio and may extend into Pennsylvania. A fourth region is found in southern Ohio and extends across the Ohio River into Kentucky and West Virginia.
DISCUSSION

Several findings emerged from this study, and I will discuss three, in detail, in this section. First, folk perceptions can be collected in a relatively small geographical region. Most perceptual dialectology studies in the United States have examined nonlinguists’ beliefs about the dialect areas in the entire country (e.g., Preston 1986, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 1996b; Hartley 1999; Lance 1999; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 45–96); few have investigated folk perceptions on a smaller scale. Although early studies in the Netherlands (Weijnen 1946; Rensink 1955) and Japan (Grootaers 1959; Sibata 1959) focused on the perception of speech within small geographical regions, Preston (2002, 68) argued in favor of a nonlocal approach in the United States “since U.S. dialects do not (usually) reveal the same finely-tuned local differences one finds in rural Japan and Dutch-speaking areas.” The present study demonstrates that folk perceptions can, in fact, be elicited in smaller regions in the United States, using hand-drawn-map and/or degree-of-difference tasks. The results clearly show that respon-
dents are able to define dialect regions and make judgments about the
dialect differences between cities in a seven-state area and even within a
single state.

Second, respondents from different parts of the state of Ohio respond
differently. Overall, respondents from southern and southeast-central Ohio
perceived fewer dialect differences than those from central and northwest-
eren Ohio. In the hand-drawn-map task, northwestern and central Ohio
respondents outlined or labeled an average of 2.8 regions while the south-
east-central and southern Ohio respondents averaged 1.5 regions. These
findings parallel the behavior of Preston’s Michigan and Indiana respond-
dents, respectively (e.g., Preston 1996b, 305). In addition, the perceived
degrees of differences between cities on the second task were greater
among central and northwestern Ohio respondents (see figs. 7, 8, 9, and 11).

What can account for these differences? Certainly factors like the
respondents’ amount of exposure to speakers from other parts or amount
of travel may play roles. In addition, the small sample size may be a factor;
however, the high degree of agreement among respondents in each area
coupled with the parallels to other studies suggests otherwise. Neverthe-
less, more research is needed in this area. The most tenable explanation for
the differences among respondents from different areas has to do with
their linguistic security and insecurity. The respondents from northwestern
and central Ohio, like Preston’s Michigan respondents, have high linguis-
tic security, believing themselves to be, in the words of respondent 11,
speakers of “good plain English.” The respondents from southeast-central
and southern Ohio are more like Preston’s linguistically insecure southern
Indiana respondents. These differences in linguistic security are illustrated
by the respondents’ treatment of these areas during data collection. Re-
pondents from all four of the data collection sites made few comments
(and no negative ones at all) about the speech of central and northwestern
Ohio and, for the most part, rated these areas as being “exactly like you” in
the degree-of-difference task, implying that the speech of these areas is
unremarkable, that is, the norm. Not surprisingly, as Preston found as well,
respondents did not hesitate to apply descriptive labels, mostly pejorative,
to southern parts of the state (e.g., Preston 1996b, 306; Hartley and
Preston 1999). Further paralleling Preston’s findings of the saliency of the
South is the fact that all northwestern and central Ohio respondents
commented on the speech in southern Ohio, equating it to the speech in
West Virginia and/or Kentucky and/or also explaining it as a rural phe-
nomenon (e.g., Preston 1996b, 306–10; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 59–
65). In fact, some of the comments even condemned the speech of south-
ern Ohio as virtually unintelligible. Such behavior is very much like that of Preston’s southeastern Michigan respondents, who did not hesitate to apply harsh labels to and negatively evaluate the speech in the Southern United States (e.g., Preston 1996b, 306–10; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 59–65).

Without a doubt, the dialects are more often stigmatized in the southern part of the state than in the central and northern parts, and the linguistic insecurity of respondents from southeast-central and southern Ohio is further seen in their behavior in the hand-drawn-map and degree-of-difference tasks. Respondents from the southern parts of the state attempt to align themselves with the dialects to the north by making fewer distinctions in Ohio speech. For example, in the hand-drawn-map task, four of the six of southeast-central and southern Ohio respondents made no distinctions in Ohio, and most of their comments focused on the idea of Ohio as a unified dialect area. These respondents, however, all distinguished their speech from that in border states to the south. A similar tactic was employed by Preston’s linguistically insecure southern Indiana respondents, who aligned themselves with states to the north yet distinguished themselves from states immediately to the south on a task that rated the “correctness” of speech (Preston 1993a, 346–47; 1996b, 319; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 64–65).

Third, perceptual dialectology and traditional dialectology can yield similar results. Nearly all of the hand-drawn and composite degree-of-difference maps show some overlap with the production boundaries detailed earlier in this paper: (1) The northern region (excepting Sandusky, a popular tourist destination), which was perceived by all respondents except those from southern Ohio, is similar to the Northern dialect area found in all production studies. (2) Respondents from all over Ohio recognize a southern dialect boundary at the Ohio River, a feature also noted in all production studies, although some respondents (e.g., those from central and northwestern Ohio) extend Southern influence rather farther north than most production studies do (notable exceptions are Flanigan 2000 and Flanigan and Norris 2000), and some pay much less attention to the Ohio River as a southern boundary. (3) The major dialect boundary identified by southern and northwestern Ohio respondents, which cuts the state in half just north of Columbus, is similar to the boundary between the North Midland and South Midland regions of LAP and TELSUR; however, the no-boundary version of Ohio, found on the hand-drawn maps of one southern respondent and three southeast-central Ohio respondents, is more like the DARE representation (and, as previ-
ously noted, the more recent TELSUR characterization [Labov, Ash, and Boberg forthcoming]).

How might these perceptual findings be used to enlighten some of the questions raised by the production studies discussed earlier in this paper? First, there is too much perceptual support for an east-west boundary through the middle of Ohio (also found in the LAP and earlier TELSUR studies) to suggest that one does not exist. Second, the perceptual work suggests at least a tentative decision about the more general question of whether a Midland dialect area exists (as the LAP and TELSUR interpretations suggest) or whether a transition zone of northern and southern features (suggested by Carver’s labels of “Lower North” and “Upper South”), is more likely. The perceptual data favor both. There is a Midland area in Ohio, south of the distinctly Northern (and for many of the perceptual respondents distinctly urban) territory of Ohio’s north, particularly its northeast, that extends down to southern Ohio but not to the Ohio River. This Midland area is divided into two parts in central Ohio, probably just north of Columbus. This line is not simply a minor boundary that divides the Midland, as in LAP and TELSUR; it is a major boundary that marks the northern extent of Southern influence. From a perceptual point of view, this boundary is an important demarcation of Southern features likely prompted by the saliency of the South, often noted in other perceptual dialectology studies (e.g., Preston 1986, 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 1996b; Hartley 1999; Lance 1999; Niedzielski and Preston 2000, 45–96). The area between the Northern dialect boundary and the boundary north of Columbus is certainly North Midland. The area south of the Southern demarcation down to southern Ohio is best characterized as “Midland South.” The Midland South shares features with the North Midland and with the South, particularly the Appalachian South, and becomes more Southern as one approaches the southeastern corner of the state. Finally, north of the central and eastern Ohio River border, including the cities of Marietta and Portsmouth, is a minor boundary between a more Appalachian South and the Midland South, a distinction realized in the thicker line in the LAP map (fig. 1). Note that this resolution of the Southern character in both production and perception for southern Ohio is not like the DARE characterization of much of southern Indiana and Illinois (the “Hoosier Apex”; see fig. 2), which leaves those areas in its Lower North.

In summary, then, the production-perception map of Ohio has the following features, outlined from north to south, as shown in figure 12:

1. A major boundary isolating the urban northeast and northwest, doubtless one characterized by the Northern Cities Chain Shift in pronunciation but
obviously one also with lexical distinction (fig. 3), and a minor boundary isolating Cleveland as more distinctively North.

2. A major boundary through central Ohio that runs roughly along the line shown in the LAP (fig. 1) and TELSUR (fig. 3) maps. This major boundary identifies the extent of Southern influence in Ohio. The area south of the line described in (1) above and north of this major boundary is North Midland. The area to the south of this major boundary is Midland South, characterized by both Midland and Appalachian Southern features.

3. A minor boundary around a more distinctly southern area in the Ohio River border region, dividing the Midland South of Ohio from a more distinctly Appalachian South. These two degrees of “Outer Southern” are probably best characterized by a continuum of increasing Southernness, both in production and in perception, which would perhaps be better illustrated by shading on a map than by sharp boundaries.

Of course, there is much left to be done. The TELSUR work focuses on urban areas and leaves the detail of many of the boundaries discussed here unstudied. More local work will need to be done in production as well as perception. The more recent TELSUR work (Labov, Ash, and Boberg
forthcoming) also points out the uniqueness of Cincinnati, a feature not always recognized by the folk respondents in this study, although figure 9 shows the reluctance of some respondents to rate it along with the Midland South area of Ohio. The urban character of some areas, frequently commented on by the respondents, is obviously important in outlining and identifying the urban northeastern Cleveland area. Although these results are suggestive, it must be remembered that an extremely limited number of respondents provided the data used here to characterize the speech of an entire state.4

CONCLUSION

Traditional dialectology studies have typically focused on mapping dialect forms and have been less concerned with the attitudes of speakers. Production studies alone, however, allow us to see only narrowly the geographical distribution of dialect forms at a single point in time. Perceptual studies can provide a more complete picture of speech communities on their own and in relationship to each other, allowing for a more comprehensive look at the present with insights into the past and the future. For instance, these data give evidence of the desire for speakers of central and northwestern Ohio to maintain a distinct identity from southern Ohio and northeastern Ohio speakers. From a southeast-central and southern Ohio perspective can be seen a desire for some degree of unity in Ohio speech, doubtless a self-serving move stemming from the speakers’ linguistic insecurity.

Perceptual dialectology is a necessary component of traditional dialectology and sociolinguistic studies that map dialect boundaries and, more generally, of language variation studies. Perceptual dialectology not only allows us to uncover respondents’ attitudes, beliefs, and identities but also better paints the full picture of variation in and across speech communities.

NOTES

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dennis R. Preston for advising me on many aspects of this project, most especially for his guidance in applying the folk data to the production data through the development of the composite perceptual-production map (fig. 12). I am also grateful to Carol Preston for her helpful suggestions and editorial comments on many drafts of this paper.

1. “Linguistic Atlas Projects” (LAP) refers to several autonomous regional atlas projects that used similar methodology and were intended eventually to form the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. Although most of the
atlases remain unpublished, their data are archived at the University of Georgia under the direction of William A. Kretzschmar, Jr., and a significant portion is available on-line at http://hyde.park.uga.edu.

2. Because of the small number of respondents in this pilot study, the use of means scores was intended to be methodologically illustrative only. Nevertheless, respondents proved to be very consistent in their ratings. Respondents from the same region used the same or an adjacent rating for each region rated, with the following exceptions only:

1. The two southern Ohio raters rated Findlay, Lima, and Mansfield 1 and 3, and Pittsburgh 4 and 2.
2. The four south-central Ohio respondents rated Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Youngstown 1, 1, 3, and 3 and Chillicothe 4, 2, 1, and 1.
3. The four central Ohio respondents rated Cleveland 3, 3, 1, and 2 and Detroit 4, 2, 2, and 4.

3. The proposal offered here was jointly developed by Dennis R. Preston and me.
4. This is not the first production-perception map ever drawn. Daan (1970) is an excellent example of an attempt to map Dutch dialect boundaries on the basis of both approaches. The original is a beautifully made large color map; there is a black-and-white reworking of this map in Preston (1999, 28–29).

REFERENCES


