

1. INTRODUCTION

A GREAT DEAL OF SCHOLARLY RESEARCH has addressed the issue of dialect mapping in the United States. Dialect mapping is the practice of dialectologists and sociolinguists aimed at defining dialect boundaries within a given area. These maps are typically created by grouping linguistic isoglosses, geographical boundaries for specific linguistic features, and are based on large survey projects where field-workers collect data about speakers' pronunciation or lexical inventory.

These studies are usually designed to present an overall picture of the dialect landscape. But what is often missing in these types of projects is an attention to the borders of a dialect region and to what kinds of identity alignments can be found in such areas.¹ This lack of attention to regional and dialect border identities is surprising given the salience of such borders for many Americans, as evidenced by, for example, the great success of Walt Wolfram's community-based research projects and documentaries in small, local communities like the Outer Banks, in larger regions like Southern Appalachia, and even among large ethnic communities like English-speaking Latinos across the United States.² This salience is often ignored by dialectologists, as nonlinguists' perceptions and attitudes have been generally assumed to be secondary to the analysis of "real" data, such as the phonetic and lexical variables used in traditional dialectology.

In this book, Louisville, Kentucky, is considered as a case study for examining how dialect and regional borders in the United States impact speakers' linguistic acts of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), especially in the production of such identities, through the use or nonuse of certain linguistic features thought to be representative of said identities and in the perception of such identities, including both insider and outsider perceptions of the identities being produced by Louisvillians. According to Labov, Ash, and Boberg's (2006) *The Atlas of North American English*, Louisville is one of the northernmost cities to be classified as part of the South. Its location on the Ohio River, on the political and geographic border between Kentucky and Indiana, places Louisville on the border between Southern and Midland dialects.

In traditional dialectology studies, dialect borders, like those in Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006), are usually depicted as being static, with a linguistic feature present on one side and absent on the other. Such a depiction lacks recognition of the fluidity and hybridity of identities that likely exists

in the borderlands, and in Louisville, as in other third spaces (e.g., Bhabha 1994; Bhatt 2008), this fluidity of identities is exhibited through the linguistic production and perception of those identities that speakers claim.

Thus, the goal of this project is to show how these Louisville border residents categorize their own and other regional varieties of English, to examine how outsiders view the language and identities of people there, and to investigate the ways in which speakers produce and perceive the regional identities attributed to them. Through the examination of a variety of production and perception data, I show that the nature of identities at the border is neither simple nor straightforward. Louisvillians vary in their attitudes toward and production and perception of certain linguistic features in a way that indicates that they experience the border as the coming together of at least two distinct regions, one Southern and one non-Southern, seemingly choosing to align or disalign with different ones depending upon the interaction. Non-Louisvillians, on the other hand, view the urban center as the other in the largely rural state; at the same time, they perceive Louisville speech to be rather prestigious. Identity at the border, then, is shown to be fluid, complex, and dynamic, where speakers constantly negotiate, contest, and shift between identities, in the active and agentive expression of their amplified awareness of belonging brought about by their position on the border.

This project, then, not only adds to our specific understanding of the linguistic situation in Louisville, a rather understudied locale within sociolinguistics, but it also extends and expands our understanding of language and identity construction and the particular case of the effects of borders on such identities. In what follows, I situate this study in the realms of traditional dialectology, identity studies, border research, and perceptual dialectology and provide a short synopsis of the remainder of the book.

1.1. DIALECT MAPS AND FEATURES

There is a rather long history of dialect mapping in the United States. At least as early as the 1930s, the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada was launched, and Hans Kurath took the lead in organizing the project (Chambers and Trudgill 1980, 17). It was divided into several regional surveys spanning several decades, including the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (Kurath et al. 1939–43), Kurath's (1949) *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, Atwood's (1953) *A Survey of Verb Forms in the Eastern United States*, and, perhaps most famously, Kurath and McDavid's (1961) *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States*. Kurath's work produced the

map in figure 1.1, one of the earliest maps attempting to divide a small portion of the country into dialect areas.

Later works in the same tradition include the *Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest* (Allen 1973–76), the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* (Pederson, McDaniel, and Adams 1986–92), and the *Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* (McDavid and O’Cain 1980), as well as the unpublished *Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States*, the *Linguistic Atlas of Oklahoma*, the *Linguistic Atlas of the Pacific West*, the *Linguistic Atlas of the Pacific North West*, and the *Linguistic Atlas of the Rocky Mountain States*. The Linguistic Atlas Projects, as they are collectively called, are currently maintained by Kretzschmar at the University of Georgia, and the image found in figure 1.2 represents the complete geographical scope of the projects.

These early studies were largely based on lexical inventories and the geographic distributions of specific words. Another project focusing on regional vocabulary is the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE 1985–2013), which began in the 1960s and just recently came to comple-

FIGURE 1.1
Kurath’s (1949) Word Geography of the Eastern States

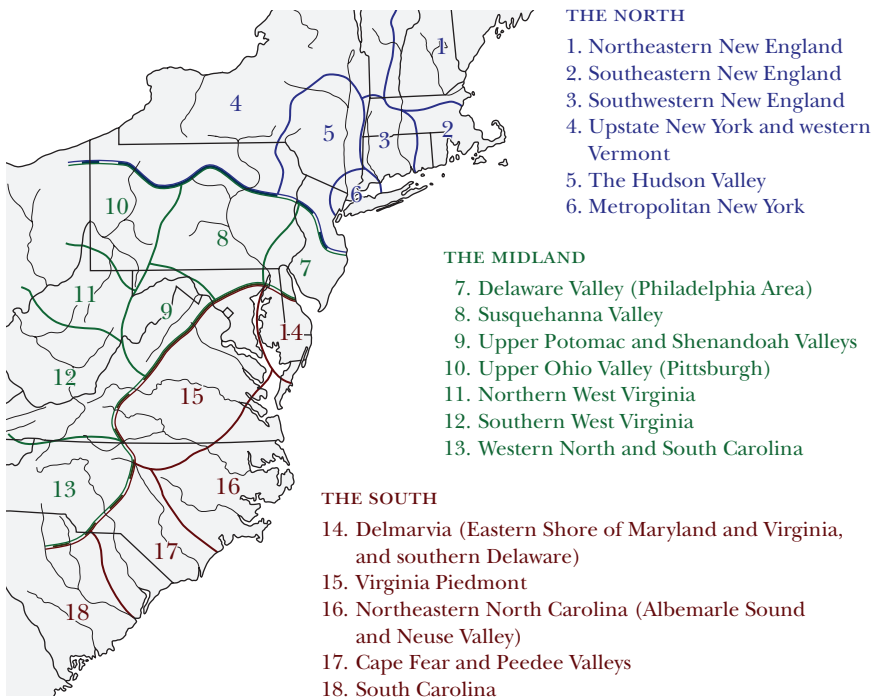
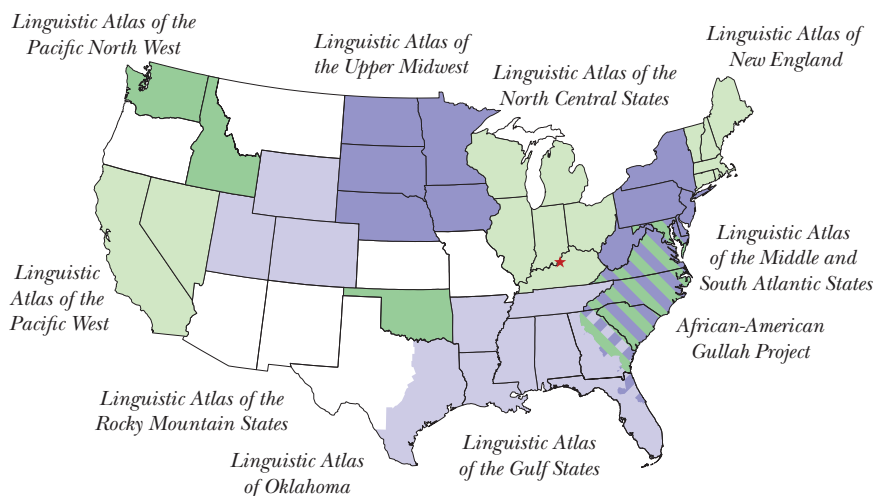


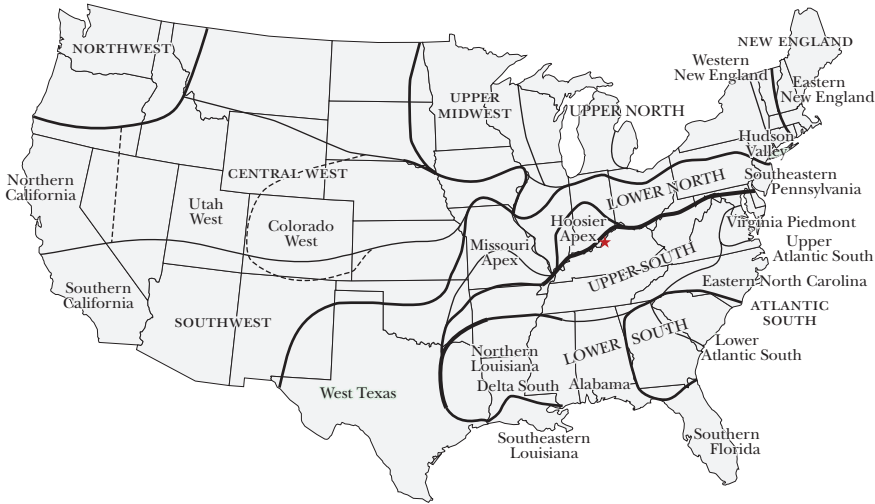
FIGURE 1.2
Linguistic Atlas Projects Geographical Distribution (Kretzschmar 2004)



tion with the publication of the last print volume. This immense project included lexical and pronunciation data from all 50 states and has produced six print volumes in total, and a full electronic version is now available (<http://www.daredictionary.com/>). Carver (1987) used data from this project to produce the map in figure 1.3, which, until fairly recently, was the most commonly cited picture of dialect variation in the United States (Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 2006, 118). Carver's three major dialects, called North, South, and West, with small subdivisions therein, were based primarily on lexical data; however, these dialects also correspond to the patterns of vowel pronunciation presented in Labov (1991) and have served as the basic understanding of dialect divisions in the United States since the creation of Carver's map.

More recently, Labov, Ash, and Boberg published *The Atlas of North American English* (2006), a rather large-scale project providing "the first comprehensive view of the pronunciation and phonology of English across the American continent" (3). Instead of examining lexical inventories as had been the custom in traditional dialectology, the authors focused on phonetic variation in the language varieties present in the United States because, as they contend, the vowel patterns are what truly distinguish regional dialects of English in this country. Interviews primarily consisting of spontaneous speech and word lists were conducted via the Telsur project, a telephone survey carried out in the 1990s, which focused on area

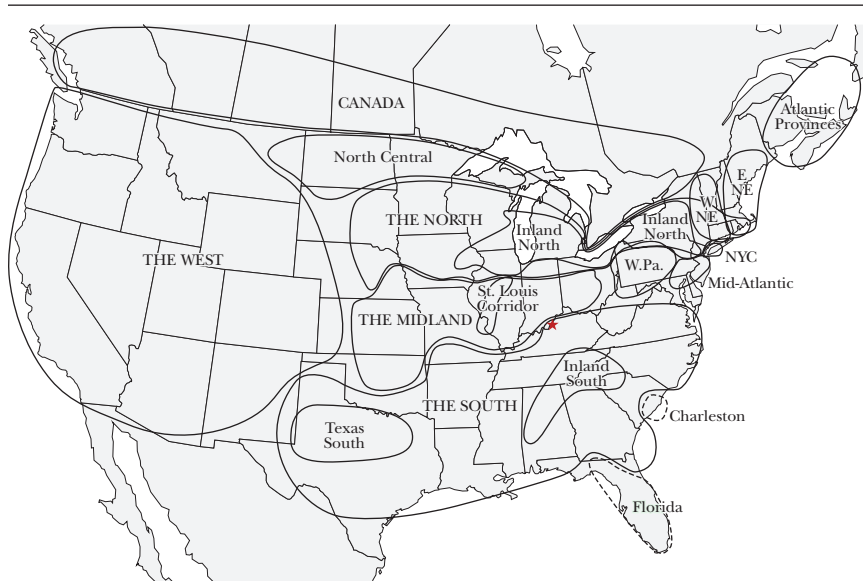
FIGURE 1.3
Carver's (1987) Map of U.S. Dialects



natives and their pronunciation patterns. The overall picture of the dialect landscape as determined by Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) is shown in figure 1.4.

As can be seen simply by comparing figures 1.3 and 1.4, dialectologists do not always agree on which lines to draw and how and where to draw them. For example, there has been some dispute about the existence of a Midland region, the appropriate divisions therein, and the durability of the boundaries, if they exist (cf. Kurath 1949; C.-J. Bailey 1968; Carver 1987; Davis and Houck 1992; Frazer 1994; Johnson 1994; Thomas 2010). Carver did not suggest the existence of a Midland, preferring instead to divide his North and South dialects into two main subsections: an upper part and a lower part. Carver's Lower North, however, corresponds well with Labov, Ash, and Boberg's Midland area, though the subdivision of the South from Carver's map is not the same as the divisions made in the Labov, Ash, and Boberg's South. These types of disagreements can affect how dialectologists classify particular parts of the country. One place where there seems to be a great deal of agreement is in the location of the northern boundary of the South. There is a long tradition of claiming that the Ohio River essentially serves as this northern border (i.e., Carver 1987; Labov 1991; Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006). In Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006), the line around the South, as seen in figure 1.4, has been drawn based on the pres-

FIGURE 1.4
Labov, Ash, and Boberg's (2006, 148) Map of North American Dialects

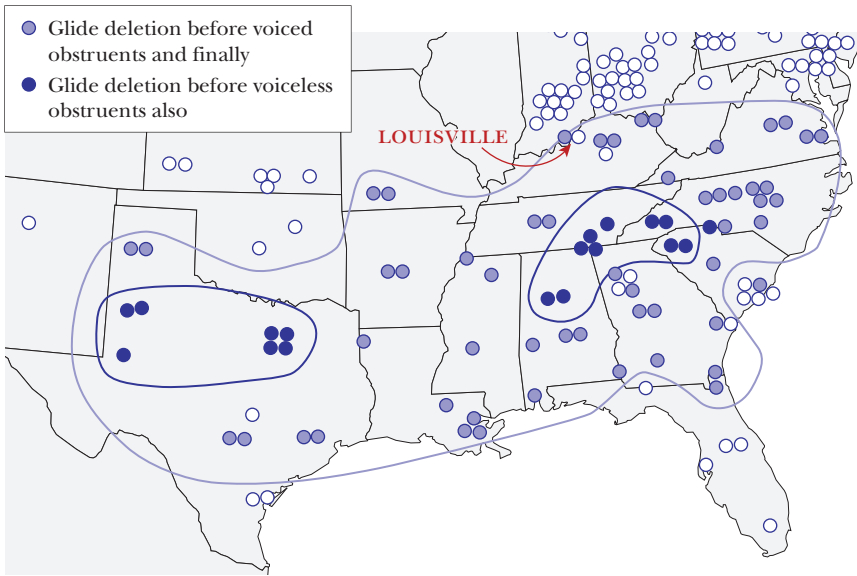


ence of a particularly Southern speech feature, monophthongization or glide deletion in the diphthong /aɪ/ in phonetic environments preceding voiced consonants (as in words like *ride*) and in open syllable contexts (as in words like *pie*). This line reaches just along the northern border of Kentucky, generally following the path of the Ohio River, as can be seen more clearly in figure 1.5.

The Ohio River, then, serves not only as the political and geographic border between Kentucky and Indiana, but also as the border between Midland and Southern speech. The arrow added to figure 1.5 indicates Louisville's location, just at the collision point of these two speech areas. An important caveat about Labov, Ash, and Boberg's atlas is that while it focused on the speech of individuals in urban settings, only one or two speakers were considered in most locations. The authors noted that it thus could not be considered an accurate description of the internal variation within a specific community and claimed that they hoped their work would "stimulate local studies to provide a more detailed view of the sociolinguistic and geographic variation in a given area" (3).

This call actually serves as one of the driving forces behind the current project. By examining the map in figure 1.5, it becomes clear that the positioning of Louisville as a Southern city, at least in terms of linguistic pro-

FIGURE 1.5
Labov, Ash, and Boberg's (2006) Boundary of the South



duction, seems somewhat arbitrary. Louisville is represented as a cluster of two points of different colors at the intersection of Southern and Midland dialects. The different colors for these two points indicate that one speaker exhibited the defining feature while the other did not. This difference in linguistic responses forces a reanalysis of the place of Louisville in the dialect map. In previous research examining the status of /aɪ/ in the speech patterns of Louisvillians (Cramer 2009), I showed that speakers' production often more closely matched speakers in the Midland dialect region and differed from the monophthongal pattern exhibited by Southerners. These results suggest that the situation on the isogloss border is more complicated than Labov, Ash, and Boberg suggest.

The position of Louisville is further complicated by the vague descriptions of the Midland dialect in the literature. Scholars often suggest that much of what is found in the Midland area is not unique to the region, claiming that all features found there are also found in the North or the South (Kurath and McDavid 1961). The area near the Ohio River in particular has been called a transition zone (Davis and Houck 1992; Johnson 1994), and it has been claimed that "[t]he lack of regularity in the Ohio Valley Midland is thus a simple reflection of the fact that the total Midland area is characterized as much by being not Northern and not Southern as

it is by a body of uniform and universally used vocabulary” (Dakin 1971, 31). Therefore, a speaker in such a transitional position might be expected to produce some sort of identity that is Southern and, at the same time, non-Southern.

These facts depict Louisville as a rather complex locale for linguistic investigation. What is more, the act of drawing lines around areas, or more precisely, groups of people, and giving them names like “South” or “Midland” based on phonetic and lexical differences ignores the fact that those lines necessarily imply group belonging and group distinction. At the collision point of two dialect boundaries, then, we find border regions, areas portrayed as “zone[s] between stable places” (Rosaldo 1988, 85; Appadurai 1988, 19), which serve as dynamic sites for identity construction. In much of the previous dialectology research, this question of identity has been left relatively unexplored.

1.2. LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND THE BORDERLANDS

Linguistic studies of identity tend to focus on specific socially constructed categories like gender identity or nationality. The main assumption in the study of identity, particularly in linguistic anthropology, is that it is ultimately socially constructed (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). A structural perspective, one that assumes the static nature of identities, has been shown to be untenable (cf. Holmes 1997; Bucholtz 1999), and the current sociocultural perspective assumes that identities are dynamic and emerge within the context of an interaction “through the combined effects of structure and agency” (Bucholtz 1999, 209).

Bucholtz and Hall explain that “[i]dentity is the social positioning of the self and other” (2005, 586), making identity not only about an individual and how he or she is similar to some group. Identity also includes the ways in which we differentiate ourselves from others as well as the ways in which we describe others, which can often say more about the individual speaking than it does about the one being described (e.g., Galasiński and Meinhof 2002).

The question of how identities are constructed becomes quite complex when we consider what happens near borders, in the borderlands. While a border may simply be conceived of as a line (often a political or geographic boundary), the borderlands are considered to be strips of land on either side of the border (Bejarano 2006), “a region and set of practices defined and determined by this border that are characterized by conflict and contradiction, material and ideational” (Alvarez 1995, 448). Thus, in addition to being physical or geopolitical lines, borders can be conceived

of as constructed by the communities under discussion, and the relevance of any given boundary can vary and change shape over time (Avineri and Kroskrity 2014).

These regions are locales for the convergence of political, social, and other identities (Flynn 1997). In these regions, identities are constantly challenged and transformed. Alvarez claims that borders and borderlands represent graphically the conflicts associated with the current organization of the world, adding, “For it is here that cultures, ideologies, and individuals clash and challenge our disciplinary perspectives on social harmony and equilibrium” (1995, 449).

Alvarez (1995) examines the history of borderland studies in anthropology. He claims that the anthropological investigation of borders grew out of many studies along the U.S.-Mexico border (e.g., Bustamante 1978; Hansen 1981; Stoddard, Nostrand, and West 1982) and that these studies provided the model for the study of other national borders. These researchers found interest in the U.S.-Mexico border because of its unique status as a boundary between the first and third worlds. These early studies were concerned mainly with issues of immigration. Later, anthropologists moved toward folklore and cultural products at the border as a way of investigating aspects of identity and cultural conflict. The field was further encouraged by native anthropologists challenging the traditional notions of subject and object in anthropological research, taking it upon themselves to investigate their own border communities from an insider’s perspective. As more studies on this and other borders developed, the field of borderland studies quickly became a vibrant area of research.

The notion that borders serve as lines between distinct behaviors has been as pervasive in linguistic research as it has been in anthropological research. Traditional dialectology often focuses on drawing isoglosses, which suggest that distinct linguistic behaviors exist on either side of the line. But, if linguistic borders are anything like the borders studied by anthropologists (and they are), one might expect to find much more interesting behavior at the borders. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) turned their attention to one of these isoglosses to see whether the line actually served as a division between two distinct linguistic behaviors. Their focus was on a line between southern and northern England, where speakers vary in their pronunciation of *ʊ/ʌ* and *a/ɑː*. They suggest that areas around the isogloss, like borderlands, represent transition zones for the variables, where speakers exhibit variation in pronunciation.

Most linguistic or anthropological studies dealing with border identities have drawn on the situations found at national borders like, for example, the U.S.-Mexico border (e.g., Alvarez 1995; Bejarano 2006; de García 2006), the Uruguay-Brazil border (e.g., Carvalho 2006, 2010), or

the Ireland–Northern Ireland border (Zwickl 2002), particularly in places where some rather large point of contention (i.e., immigration, language choice, religion) further separates the two nations. Bejarano (2006) examined the many distinctions in identity made by people at the U.S.-Mexico border (Latino, Chicano, Mexican, Mexican-American, etc.) that the majority of U.S. society ignores. Among her informants were both American-born and Mexican-born youths, who, in their identity creations, contested the relative Mexicanness or Americanness of their counterparts. She found that their identity positionings were tied up with their understanding of citizenship and the salience of linguistic choices. Participants were able to present their level of Mexicanness or Americanness based on both their birthright, so to speak, and their choice of English, Spanish, Spanglish, or code-switching between the languages. Bejarano emphasizes the contestation of identities that occurs in border communities, saying, “The borderlands thus is a place where people face simultaneous affirmations and contradictions about their identities” (22).

Some studies, though rather few, have examined the impact of regional borders on identities and identity construction. Llamas (2007), however, has demonstrated that a regional border can also serve as a dynamic site for identity construction and has done so through an examination of the linguistic practices in a community in England. In Middlesbrough, a city located on a regional and dialect border in Northern England, speakers not only vary in their production of linguistic variables, but also in their attitudes toward the varieties spoken nearby, such that a generational shift is evident in the construction of particular regional identities. Other studies, like Hazen’s (2002) work in Warren County, North Carolina, present a focus on regional identities in the American context, which can aid linguists in the understanding of “how speakers conceive of themselves in relation to their local and larger regional communities” (241).

Attaining this understanding and recognizing that regions and their respective language varieties are of great importance to Americans is crucial to the study of regional linguistic variation. These issues are even more important when examining the borders of those communities. In this examination of Louisville, I consider the social facts of the city’s place in the United States and attempt to present a picture of the perception and production of particular regional identities in light of such facts. Louisville’s location on the Ohio River puts the city at numerous kinds of borders: political, geographic, linguistic, historical, cultural, and perceptual. As a border town, Louisville represents a location “where languages [dialects] are in contact, thus giving rise to issues of language use, ideology and attitude all intrinsically related to social, cultural and national identities” (Carvalho 2014, 1)—or for our purposes, regional identities—and it is likely

that more than one regional identity is expressed by people in this city. As such, it will be necessary to address the complexity of mapping linguistic choices to identity construction in border towns in order to capture the sociolinguistic nuances of the language-identity interface.

The study of communities at borders serves to further our understanding of how borders impact linguistic variation and identity construction. It is not enough, however, to point to these external factors in creating an understanding of Louisville as a border town. It is important to discover whether people in Louisville recognize this border nature as well. As Johnstone (2004) noted, and Llamas (2007) made clear through her own study, understanding speaker ideologies is necessary for our understanding of identity alignments. One cannot simply assume that the border is salient for speakers without getting a sense of their attitudes about it, and it is in speaker's attitudes that one can discover ideological dispositions.

1.3. ATTITUDES, IDEOLOGIES, AND FOLK LINGUISTICS

Silverstein (1979, 193), in a seminal work, defined language ideologies as a "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use." Perhaps more simply, Kroskrity (2004, 498) defines them as "beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social worlds." They are seen as imbued with the political, social, and moral issues prevalent within a community (Irvine and Gal 2000). Additionally, ideologies, like identities, are seen as dynamic entities, not static ones (Woolard 1992; Kroskrity 2004).

In studies of language ideologies, it becomes clear that individual speaker ideologies, particular linguistic forms, and specific social uses of these ideologies and forms are interconnected. Each one is thought to shape and inform the others, and within this triad, "language ideology is a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk" (Woolard 1992, 235). However, as Woolard (2008) has noted, it is quite difficult to focus on all three variables at the same time.

Perhaps this difficulty explains why previous dialectological studies were focused almost exclusively on linguistic variation, seeing attitudes as secondary, or as interesting parallel research. Variationist studies and language attitudes have often seemed to be separate ventures (Milroy 2004). This separation can be traced back to the early American structuralist tradition, particularly those scholars influenced by Bloomfield, who famously claimed that speaker ideologies only serve as distracters to genuine linguistic analyses (Bloomfield 1944). Milroy's (2004, 161) call for "a framework for incorporating into mainstream variationist work an account of language

attitudes, treated as manifestations of locally constructed language ideologies” encourages a move away from this structuralist perspective and toward an understanding of the locally relevant social categories before beginning linguistic research.

Folk linguistics is a framework of linguistic analysis that allows for a comprehensive picture of linguistic variation of a place. This field has a long history of connecting the ideologies of speakers to the realities of linguistic variation. Despite the prevalence of the Bloomfieldian perspective for much of the mid-twentieth century, Hoenigswald (1966) incited interest in the beliefs of speakers, or “the folk,” in linguistic research. He suggested that linguists should be concerned not only with language as production, but also with how people react to language and how people represent language in talk about language.

Perceptual dialectology is a branch of folk linguistics that has its focus in what nonlinguists say about language and linguistic variation, including where they think it comes from, where they think it exists, and why they think it happens. It, too, has a long history, with some of its earliest roots in the Dutch (Weijnen 1946; Rensink 1955) and Japanese (Sibata 1959) traditions. Research in modern perceptual dialectology, firmly rooted in the research paradigm of Dennis Preston (e.g., Preston 1989; Preston 1999; Long and Preston 2002), has produced a wealth of knowledge about language perceptions and production, and the tools of Preston’s work utilized in numerous American studies (e.g., Preston 1989; Benson 2003; Fridland, Bartlett, and Kreuz 2005; Fridland and Bartlett 2006; Blake et al. 2008; Bucholtz et al. 2007; Bucholtz et al. 2008; Evans 2011) have been used around the globe to describe the views of nonlinguists (e.g., Coupland, Williams, and Garrett 1999; Demirci and Kleiner 1999; Kuiper 1999; Diercks 2002; Long and Yim 2002; Moreno Fernández and Moreno Fernández 2002; Romanello 2002; Montgomery 2007).

The tools used in these studies are varied, but certain tasks are routinely used in perceptual dialectology studies. One of the key ways in which the folk beliefs of a population have been investigated involves the drawing of a mental map of a location. A mental map, as a theoretical construct, is conceived of as the image one has in his or her mind about a certain place. Work in cultural geography (e.g., Gould and White 1986) has indicated that getting people to draw these maps can give us some insight into how they see their world. Many perceptual studies have focused on nonlinguists’ production of hand-drawn maps of regional dialectal variation in the United States. In these studies, respondents are asked to draw lines around areas on a blank map of the United States (or one with little detail) where people “speak differently.”³

An important focus in many folk linguistic studies is on how different a particular variety is perceived to be with respect to a respondent's own variety. For Preston, this task often involved having respondents rank each of the 50 states (plus Washington, D.C., and New York City) in terms of difference from how they speak. Additionally, participants rank the states and the two cities with respect to certain social characteristics, like the levels of pleasantness and correctness of the language variety spoken in a place.

Mental maps can give linguists clues about subjects' perception of space, which provides added ethnographic detail of the group under examination. Additionally, studies of folk beliefs can enhance our understanding of linguistic variation, in that it is unlikely that nonlinguists experience linguistic change in a way completely unrelated to the ways traditional dialectologists have described it (Niedzielski and Preston 2000).⁴

Work in perceptual dialectology has shown linguists why the perceptions of language users matter for linguistics. To express exactly why we need to consider folk beliefs in linguistic analyses, Preston (1993b, 252) has stated that

[w]ithout knowledge of the value-ridden classifications of language and language status and function by the folk, without knowledge of where the folk believe differences exist, without knowledge of where they are capable of hearing major and minor differences, and, most importantly, without knowledge of how the folk bring their beliefs about language to bear on their solutions to linguistic problems, the study of language attitudes risks being:

- 1) a venture into the investigation of academic distinctions which distort the folk reality or tell only a partial truth or, worse,
- 2) a misadventure into the study of theatrically exaggerated speech caricatures.

Without a clear understanding of the ways in which community members construct and perceive their own and others' languages and identities, we lose the important social and cultural information that informs our research. The borderlands serve as an area where these ideologies are particularly important in determining how speakers express belonging with respect to place.

While this book explores how real the border is for Louisvillians, some preliminary anecdotal evidence provides insight into the importance of this border in the imagination of many Louisvillians. For instance, when I asked Louisville participants about the position of Kentucky in the regional geography of the United States in a study on styles and stereotypes in the South (Cramer 2013), one participant exclaimed, "Man! We are just right on the border!" When prodded about Louisville's regional position, it has been my experience that University of Kentucky students, especially those from

Louisville, tend to be split on the city's relative level of Southernness. Additionally, numerous blogs, polls, news columns, and other forums online present varying positions on the question of Louisville's regional affiliation; for example, a poll at City-Data.com asked the question "Louisville, KY... southern or midwestern?" with the majority of people selecting Midwestern (City-Data.com 2007), while SkyscraperPage.com asked a similar question with the majority of responses pointing to Southern (SkyscraperPage.com 2008). Even more telling than the number of responses in these forums is the content of the posts, which further suggest the border experience of residents.

Utilizing the tools of perceptual dialectology will aid in our understanding of Louisville's place in the regional and dialectal landscape of the United States from the perspective of Louisvillians as well as from the perspective of outsiders. These tools will link the beliefs and attitudes of Louisvillians and non-Louisvillians to the realities of linguistic production in the city.

1.4. DATA AND METHODOLOGIES

The data analyzed in this book come from several different sources. Some of the primary data, which include the mental maps and language attitude surveys of 23 Louisvillians, most of who claim to have spent all or nearly all of their lives in the city, were collected in 2009. The participants in this part of the project were selected using the friend-of-a-friend method (Milroy 1980). As the data were collected outside of the context of the educational setting, it was not expected that participants had any formal training or knowledge about dialects or dialectal variation, though I did not ask this question. There were 10 female and 13 male respondents, ranging in age from 18 to 66. All participants were white native speakers of English. Individual and summary information about these participants is available in the appendix.

Following the models of mental mapping discussed in much of the folk dialectology research (Preston 1989, 1999), participants were given a physical copy of a map of a small region of the United States and were asked to draw lines around areas they consider to be dialect regions. The map used in this study can be found in figure 1.6.

Additionally, participants were asked to provide labels for the varieties they distinguished, and, after completion of the map, they were asked to complete a language attitudes survey about each variety they delimited. In this task, participants listed the labels used on their maps, and, using

FIGURE 1.6
Image Used for Mental Maps with Louisvillians



a four-point scale, rated these varieties in terms of the following social characteristics: difference (with respect to their own variety), correctness, pleasantness, standardness, formality, beauty, and education.⁵ The survey featured 10 questions: 7 questions using this four-point scale and 3 open-ended questions dealing with other ways in which a particular variety might be described, the reasons for selecting a particular label, and the meaning behind the selected label. The questionnaire used can be seen in the appendix.

More recently, similar data were collected from people across the state. This data set comes from 250 Kentuckians and was collected by 37 undergraduate students in a course on Language in Kentucky in the fall of 2011. As part of an assignment, student researchers were instructed to go back to their hometowns and collect maps and language attitude surveys from at least five people age 18 or older.⁶ Extra credit was given for students who collected more than five maps. Because of this collection method, many of the participants were relatives of the student researchers. It was again assumed that the participants had little or no expert knowledge about dialects, though this question was not explicitly asked. Instead, students were strongly discouraged from asking their friends from linguistics classes.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 87. There were 135 female participants and 113 male participants, with 2 participants opting to omit their response to this question. Unlike the first survey of this sort, discussed above, these data include responses from nonwhite participants. While

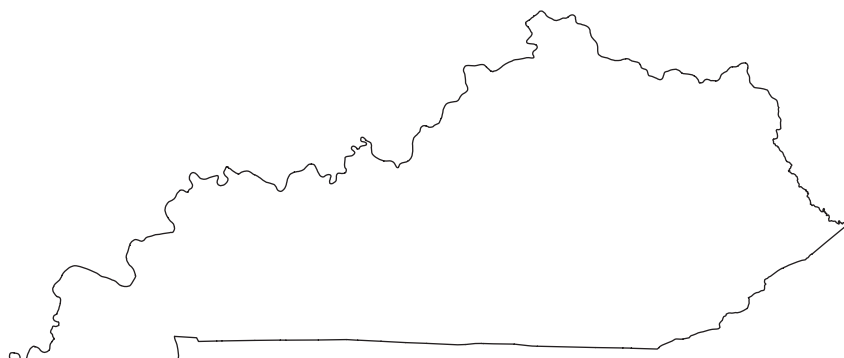
individual information about these participants would prove to be unwieldy for this book, I have provided summary information about all participants in this data set in the appendix.

The task in this project was the same as that described for the larger regional map, but participants were given a map of Kentucky only (figure 1.7), instead of the entire region (figure 1.6), requiring participants to consider more closely the variation that exists within the state itself. Perhaps because of the nature of data collection, not all maps generated by this task were usable. Some participants did not follow directions or the student researchers were not clear in providing assistance. Ultimately, 233 of the maps were deemed usable in this study and were analyzed following the procedures outlined below. While examinations of outliers in perceptual dialectology research has proven useful (Evans 2013), those maps are not presented or analyzed herein.

Once participants had completed the map drawing activity, they were once again asked to provide information regarding their language attitudes with respect to the regions they had delimited on their maps. The same questionnaire that was used in the regional study was used in this state-only study, and, as before, those questions can be found in the appendix.

To analyze the map data in these two data sets, each individual map was scanned and regions were digitized using ArcGIS, a tool that utilizes geographic information system (GIS) technology to connect the perceptual data to the world in which those perceptions are enacted. The goal in the analysis is to create a composite map featuring the most commonly delimited regional varieties. In selecting regions to digitize, I analyzed the specific labels used to determine which areas were most frequently used.

FIGURE 1.7
Image Used for Mental Maps with Kentuckians

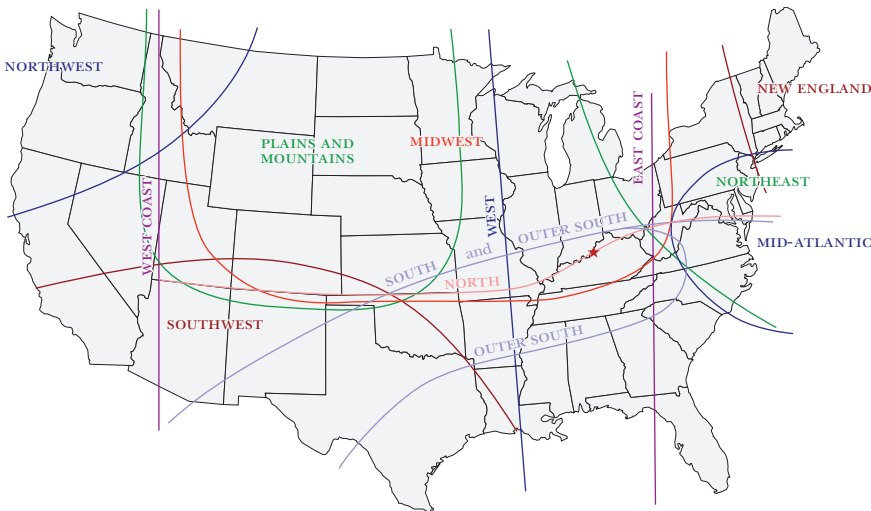


However, having free choice of labels, though a solid, bottom-up approach, presents analytical difficulty. How clear is it that “Southern” means the same thing in every map? Preston (1989) provided a template for hand-drawn maps, which aided in the conversion from individual maps and labels to a composite map. This template can be found in figure 1.8. Preston’s template did not seem to encompass the entire spectrum of regions Louisvillians wanted to represent in the regional survey and was, perhaps obviously, even less useful with the Kentucky-only map. Thus, geography and frequency of occurrence were also considered in selecting which regions to represent in the composite maps. While the participants’ original labels will be referenced when describing the nature of the varieties they delineated, the composite maps use the overarching category labels used to analyze the language attitudes data.

Using the overarching category names as a starting point for the analysis of language attitudes, I examine how participants perceive the varieties of English they have delimited. Using statistical methods, specifically a post hoc Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test, I compare the scores for different varieties to determine which varieties are perceived as better than or worse than others with respect to the social descriptors given in the language attitudes survey. More details about this test are provided in chapter 3.

FIGURE 1.8

Template for Choosing Labels in Hand-Drawn Map Activity (Preston 1989, 127)



While these first two data sets use slightly adapted versions of the traditional tools of perceptual dialectology, additional data were collected using methodology found in much of the folk linguistic research: rating the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and New York City in terms of degree of difference, level of pleasantness, and level of correctness. These data were taken from 68 Kentuckians in an online survey, which employed Qualtrics survey software, conducted with the help of an undergraduate research assistant in the spring of 2012 as part of an independent study. In this survey, participants were asked to rate each state and the two cities on a scale of 1–10 for correctness and pleasantness and a scale of 1–4 for degree of difference (following the methodology of Preston’s early work, as summarized in Niedzielski and Preston 2000). In these scales, a lower response indicated a lower level of agreement (i.e., less different, pleasant, or correct).

As with the map drawing activity, it was assumed (though not verified) that participants would have little or no technical background in the study of dialects. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 80 and represented many different parts of the state, including 8 respondents who claimed to be from somewhere other than Kentucky. In total, 21 males and 47 females participated. Only 2 participants indicated a race/ethnicity other than white.

The demographic survey was slightly different for this data set. Participants were given more freedom to describe their demographic categories (i.e., questions were open-ended), which meant the student researcher and I had to define how to group participants in the initial analysis of the data. For instance, based on the city reported as his or her hometown, each participant was placed in a region of Kentucky, with Louisville set apart for the current analysis. This survey also explored whether the participants’ perceptions of themselves having a “Southern accent” (by self-report) impacted the ratings given to each state. Summary data for the participants in this survey (based on these variations in demography) can be found in the appendix.

In terms of data analysis, traditional statistical methods (e.g., means, ANOVAs, *t*-tests) are used to determine which varieties Kentuckians hold in high esteem and which ones they do not. The data are also presented in graphical form, using choropleth maps created in ArcGIS. More details about these methods are found in chapter 3.

Finally, the production data come from an original SOAPnet⁷ reality television show, *Southern Belles: Louisville* (2009). The short-lived show, described as a “docussoap” or “docudrama,” follows the lives of five Louisville women in their 20s and 30s, detailing their experiences as friends, as professionals, and as bachelorettes. It is a typical reality show, with segments of free conversation, long stories, and monologues, also known as “con-

fessionals,” spoken directly into camera.⁸ These women form a group of friends, very involved in different aspects of life in Louisville.

The show premiered May 21, 2009 and aired only 10 episodes, concluding on July 23, 2009. SOAPnet’s press release describes the show as follows:

“Southern Belles: Louisville” is a real-life “Sex and the City” that takes place in the South, but not the South that stereotypes are made of. The backdrop is the progressive, art-centric and warm community of Louisville, Kentucky. The series will showcase the intense friendships and family values that are part of the Southern way of life. These five contemporary and independent women are all at critical crossroads in their lives: Some are confronting their biological clocks, some are still looking for Mr. Right and are trying to find their career paths, and one is preparing for her wedding. [SOAPnet 2009]

Thus, the show is positioned as being representative of the South, and as such, one might expect the women to also be appropriate representatives. Also, positioning Louisville as Southern, using stereotypical notions of warmth and family values, yet somehow non-Southern, depicting the city as art-centric and progressive, with the implication that these characteristics are not stereotypically associated with the South (despite a history of both phenomena in the South), adds to our understanding of Louisville as a border city.

Below I describe each of the five women who star in the show. These descriptions are based on my own ethnographic understanding of the women in watching and transcribing the show.

Emily, the youngest member of the group, is the daughter of rather religious parents, including an overprotective father who owns his own company. Her parents want her to get involved with the family business, but Emily would rather pursue her own dream of becoming a television reporter, specializing in entertainment news. Her main focus during the show is whether to move to Las Vegas for an opportunity in television, despite her family’s wishes for her to stay in Louisville.

Hadley is characterized as the “girl next door,” who has a penchant for “bad boys.” She cannot seem to decide what she wants in life; she began a Ph.D. but decided to take a break from school to work as a personal assistant. The show follows Hadley’s adventures in dating and deciding on a career path.

Julie, the oldest and only African American member of the group, is a model who discovers that her career must change course because of her age. She must now look for roles for older women. She is single, which she claims is caused by her devotion to her career. Julie wants a husband and

a family but fears she may be short on time. In the show, the audience sees her battle with juggling a career and a dating life.

Kellie, like Julie, feels the pressure of time. She is 32 and has already been divorced twice. She desperately wants children, but the man she is dating during the course of the show does not want children. The show deals extensively with how Kellie will resolve this issue. During the show, the audience comes to understand the many trials Kellie has struggled through in her life: two divorces, a miscarriage, an eating disorder, a drug addiction, and a complicated early family life.

Shea, the daughter of a wealthy Louisville doctor, is portrayed as spoiled and snobbish. She is and wants to continue to be a part of Louisville's high society. Her fiancé, however, does not share the same background. The show chronicles their courtship. Throughout the show, the audience sees Shea's desire for expensive things, which makes her fiancé nervous about their lives together. The focus is on Shea's desire to get married right away.

Overall, the characters are similar in many ways, but differ in some: Shea comes from money, while Kellie had married into money and lost it in the divorce. Hadley is portrayed as not having a lot of money, though she still gets to enjoy some of the pleasures of high society by having these friends. Their ages range from 24 to 34, a rather large range for a small group of friends. Yet the show insists that these women are life-long friends, with traditions and a history. The show features interactions between all five women, as well as subplots involving individuals and smaller groups, perhaps indicating that certain relationships are more cemented. A summary of the ethnographic data about these women, gleaned from a press release (SOAPnet 2009), as well as my viewing of the show, is presented in table 1.1.

For the analysis of the production of identity, I examined the production data for specific phonetic features typically associated with Southern dialect areas, including the Southern Vowel Shift (SVS) (see Fridland 1998, 2001; Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006) and the front lax prenasal merger (the PIN/PEN merger) (see G. Bailey 1997; Labov 1996; Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006; Thomas 2008), as well as for one feature that seems to be resisted in Southern speech, namely the low back vowel merger (the COT/CAUGHT merger) (see Frazer 1996; Gordon 2006; Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006; Irons 2007). The vowel classes under investigation include /aɪ/, /eɪ/, /ɛ/, /i/, /ɪ/, /u/, and /oʊ/ for the SVS; /ɛ/ and /ɪ/ in prenasal position for the PIN/PEN merger; and /ɔ/ and /ɑ/ for the COT/CAUGHT merger. Additionally, tokens for /æ/ and /ʌ/ were included as control vowels in the analysis of the SVS. These vowels are thought to participate minimally, if at all, in the SVS, making them potentially stable vowels. These stable vowels were used to measure the general patterns of movement for the vowels involved in the shift, providing a reliable evaluation across speakers.

TABLE 1.1
The “Southern Belles” of SOAPnet’s *Southern Belles: Louisville* (2009)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Further Information</i>
Emily	24	Caucasian	Father owns a business; would rather be a television reporter
Hadley	26	Caucasian	“Girl next door”; trouble with career and dating life
Julie	34	African American	Career as a model; has been cautious in love and career
Kellie	32	Caucasian	Divorced twice; married into money; frank and honest
Shea	28	Caucasian	From wealth; seen as snobbish; wants to marry now

The claim is that the presence or absence of particular linguistic features serves as an index of certain linguistic identities. Therefore, I present an acoustic analysis of the speech of each of the five women, discussing in detail which linguistic features are present and which are absent in each woman’s speech.

The data consist of more than seven hours of broadly transcribed video taken from this television series, and the complete transcript served as a corpus of vowel tokens. For the SVS, a program was designed to randomly select words in the transcript that featured one of the vowels under analysis, using *dictionary.com* as a database for anticipated (“standard”) pronunciations. When words were randomly drawn that could not be located in the dictionary, they were judged by the author (e.g., *bootylicious*). In cases where there were two possible tokens of the same vowel class in one word, I used a coin flip to determine which vowel to analyze. For each subject, a word was used only once per vowel class, so as to avoid duplication of the same exact token, which, because of television editing processes, was quite possible. Plurals, homophones, and contractions, thus, were not considered to be the same word. For the /aɪ/ vowel tokens, prevoiceless environments were not used, since monophthongization is less likely in these environments. Also, words like *a*, *the*, and *and* were not used as tokens because of the reductive nature of such words in natural speech. Finally, the word *Louisville* was rejected as a candidate because of the issues associated with the pronunciation of the city’s name.⁹

For the mergers, following Hazen (2005), vowel tokens were extracted from single syllable words wherein the vowel under investigation appeared in noninitial position before [n] or [m] (for the PIN/PEN merger) or before [t] or [k] (for the COT/CAUGHT merger). In all, at least ten tokens were selected for each of the vowel classes under investigation for each subject, for a total of 110–15 target tokens per speaker.¹⁰ For the SVS, five tokens

for each of the control vowels were also collected, ultimately resulting in 115–20 total tokens per speaker.

Each target word was subjected to spectral analysis using Praat (various versions; for the most recent version, see Boersma and Weenink 2015). For each word, I hand-selected the vowel in Praat through visual inspection of the spectrogram. The boundaries of the vowel were determined by listening to the speech sample, zooming into the spectrogram, looking for the higher energy bands typical of vowel formants, and identifying the end of the preceding phoneme and the closure of the following phoneme. This type of acoustic analysis is necessary and better than traditional methods of transcription, especially when the analyst is a member of the speech community under examination, because, as Feagin noted, “It is particularly difficult for a member of that speech community to hear local vowels as being different from the standard vowel charts” (1986, 90). More detailed information about the analysis of each vowel class can be found in chapter 6.

Considering the project as a whole, it is expected that these many types of data can provide the most complete picture of how Louisvillians view their own variety, how they view the varieties of others, how others view the varieties spoken in Louisville, and how those perceptions do or do not line up with facts of production. My approach to research is multidimensional, drawing insights from many theoretical traditions, including those from the fields of linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. I use methods from folk linguistics, anthropological studies of borderlands, and traditional phonetic and sociolinguistic analyses to present a precise analysis of speakers’ identity positionings in and of Louisville.

1.5. MOVING FORWARD

This book presents a picture of regional identity in Louisville that is chaotic and confused. It begins, in chapter 2, by considering the messy social facts of Louisville’s location at many kinds of borders. The chapter serves to demonstrate how Louisville is located in the borderlands, positioned between two worlds, one Southern, one not, by presenting a discussion of the specific geopolitical, sociohistorical, linguistic, perceptual, and cultural situation present in the city. The description of Louisville as “a place between places” (Llamas 2007) provides support for the investigation of linguistic practices and language attitudes in this particular borderland. It is because of Louisville’s position, history, and cultural confusion that one can expect to find interesting insights into general identity construction and the more specific effects of borders on identity positionings through an examination of linguistic practices.

To better understand how Louisvillians experience their own regional identity, it is important to recognize how Louisvillians see the dialect landscape of the United States in general. Chapter 3 portrays some of the broader beliefs Louisvillians have about language variation. The data explored in this chapter (correctness and pleasantness ratings of the states and two cities, regional and state-only individual and composite maps, and language attitude data from the regional and state-only surveys) reveal how Louisvillians understand and label regional varieties of English spoken in the United States, what attitudes they have toward those ways of speaking, and how these impressions are realized through stereotypes and generalizations. To examine Louisvillians' folk perceptions of dialectal variation, the data examined in chapter 3 include not only the mental maps they draw, but also the labels they employ for the varying dialects of English they distinguish and their attitudes toward different varieties.

More specifically, however, this book is concerned with where Louisvillians see themselves as belonging. The regional linguistic identity of Louisville from the perspective of Louisvillians is presented in chapter 4, which locates Louisville within this broader dialect landscape, showing how Louisvillians view the specific language situation in their own city. To know if Louisvillians see their categorizations of Louisville as appropriate, I explore speakers' ideologies about the different categories they depict. Since the premise of the book is that Louisville is positioned at a border, chapter 4 also addresses whether Louisvillians represent this same border nature in their placement of Louisville in the dialect landscape of the United States and in their attitudes toward their own speech. The maps and attitudes data explored in this chapter are the same as those encountered in chapter 3, with the focus turned on the placement of Louisville in the dialect landscape. This chapter also includes an examination of the degree of difference data from the ratings of the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

However, because identity is about the self and the other (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), it is not enough to suggest Louisville's regional identity positionings based on the perspectives of insiders alone. In chapter 5, data from other Kentuckians and a few non-Kentuckians are presented to show where outsiders think Louisville belongs. The data in this chapter include the correctness, pleasantness, and degree of difference ratings of the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and New York City and the state-only maps and language attitudes data of non-Louisville participants. While Louisville has been painted as being located on a border, in actuality, it is likely that the entire state is located at a border (Cramer 2012). This chapter explores how other Kentuckians distinguish themselves from Louisvillians not only

by looking at the broader dialect landscape of the United States, but also by examining the specific distinctions made within the state.

Once the on-the-ground categories for labeling and discussing regional linguistic identities have been established, the realization of these categories through linguistic means can be examined. Chapter 6 connects the beliefs of Louisvillians and non-Louisvillians about regional identity to the production of certain linguistic variables associated with different regional varieties of English by exploring the production data described above. This chapter identifies how well the categorizations made by nonlinguists match up to those made by dialectologists. Specifically, because dialect maps often position Louisville as part of the Southern dialect region, we must examine production data for elements of Southern speech.

Finally, chapter 7 brings together the facts presented in the previous chapters to depict regional identity at the borders as very fluid and complex. I summarize the results of the overall project, indicating how identity alignments in the borderlands are neither simple nor straightforward. Instead, identities in these areas are constantly contested and always in contention, and the speech patterns of people from the area reveal their split identities.

It is my hope that, by exploring certain questions about language and identity in regional borderlands, the answers will not only help us better understand the specific linguistic situation in Louisville, a rather understudied location, but also provide some insight into the dynamic nature of linguistic (and other) borders, pointing specifically to the ways in which identity work is interactionally located and ideologically produced in the space between relatively stable dialect areas. That is,

[w]ithin a language ideology framework, speakers' own comments about language and other social phenomena are used as a means of interpreting and understanding linguistic variation in the community, thus allowing insight into social psychological motivations for sociolinguistic differences that may be otherwise inaccessible to the analyst. [Llamas 2007, 581]

This book reveals that people in Louisville do not have a uniform way of classifying their city in terms of regional identity. This lack of uniformity suggests that Louisvillians see themselves as located at a border or at the intersection of at least two cultures in the dialect landscape of the United States. Louisvillians appear to be constantly contesting and negotiating the identities they attribute to themselves and those attributed to them by others. They seem to shift in and out of regional identities with ease, producing both Southernness and non-Southernness in their linguistic production and perception of identities.