Ch 10 case studies

- "The most beautiful lg is French"
- NC and Midwestern dialects
  (and perceptual dialectology)

Background preparation:

- *Kaplan (2016), Ch 10, "The most beautiful language is French", section 10.3*

1. Myths and research questions

- Ch 10 "myth": 'The most ___ language is ___'

- Case-study section theme:

  'Are some dialects more beautiful than others?'

- How does this case-study theme relate to...

  - The "myth"
  - Topics presented in the rest of the chapter (discussed last time)?
  - Other chapters in the book?

2. 'Standard' dialects are 'pleasant'

- We saw last time that in perceptual dialectology studies, there is a tendency for the **standard** variety of a language to be judged as '**pleasant**'

- Kaplan raises **two hypotheses** about the reason for this link between standard status and pleasing aesthetics — what are they?

2. 'Standard' dialects are 'pleasant'

- We saw last time that in perceptual dialectology studies, there is a tendency for the **standard** variety of a language to be judged as '**pleasant**'

- Kaplan raises **two hypotheses** about the reason for this link between status as standard and pleasing aesthetics — what are they?

  - inherent value hypothesis
  - imposed norm hypothesis

- What kind of experiment could attempt to distinguish between these hypotheses?

3. Anecdotal evidence: Lg change and variation

- If some language properties are inherently superior, we should see certain patterns in language typology

  Examples?

3. Anecdotal evidence: Lg change and variation

- If some language properties are inherently superior, we should see certain patterns in language typology

Examples?

  - Certain historical changes should be consistently viewed as improvements
    - Is "standard English" rhotic or non-rhotic? (see lecture outline from Ch 2 discussion)

  - The same properties should be considered prestigious in all language communities

3. Anecdotal evidence: Lg change and variation

- Are there, in fact, language patterns that are common across unrelated languages?

  - Some examples from WALS: [1] [2]

- Is 'intrinsic (aesthetic) value' the only explanation for high typological frequency?

  - What factors do linguists more typically propose (aka argue about)?

4. Giles et al. (1974b)

- Athenian vs. Cretan Greek
  - Who was their participant (listener) population?
  - What was the task?
    - How were the language samples created? Presented?
    - What were participants asked to rate?

- Results

Table 10.1 *Mean ratings of the two Greek dialects. t-values test whether the Athenian and Cretan varieties received significantly different ratings; none did. Smaller numbers indicate greater presence of the relevant attribute (prestige, intelligence, etc.). Table 1 of Howard Giles, Richard Bourhis, Peter Trudgill, and Alan Lewis, 'The imposed norm hypothesis: A validation,' The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60(4): 1974, 405–410.*

| | Evaluative Scales | | | | | |
Greek Dialects	Prestige	Aesthetic	Intelligent	Tough	Amusing	Sophisticated
Athenian	4.70	5.39	4.22	4.33	6.33	4.89
Cretan	4.61	4.96	4.20	4.46	6.61	4.74
t values (d.f. $= 45$)	0.28	1.45	0.08	0.19	0.47	0.87

4. Giles et al. (1974b)

- Any concerns about methodology or results?
    - Order of presentation?
    - Who made the Greek recordings?

5. Moreau et al. (2014)

- Different varieties of Wolof

  - Who was their participant (listener) population?

  - What was the task?

    - How were the language samples created? Presented?

    - What were participants asked to rate?

5. Moreau et al. (2014)

- Results (Kaplan 2016: 230)

  - Both groups of students were right a little more than 60% of the time; Moreau et al. report that their performance was better than chance ($p < 0.001$ for both groups).

  - Moreover, neither group of students performed significantly better than the other ($p = 0.706$).

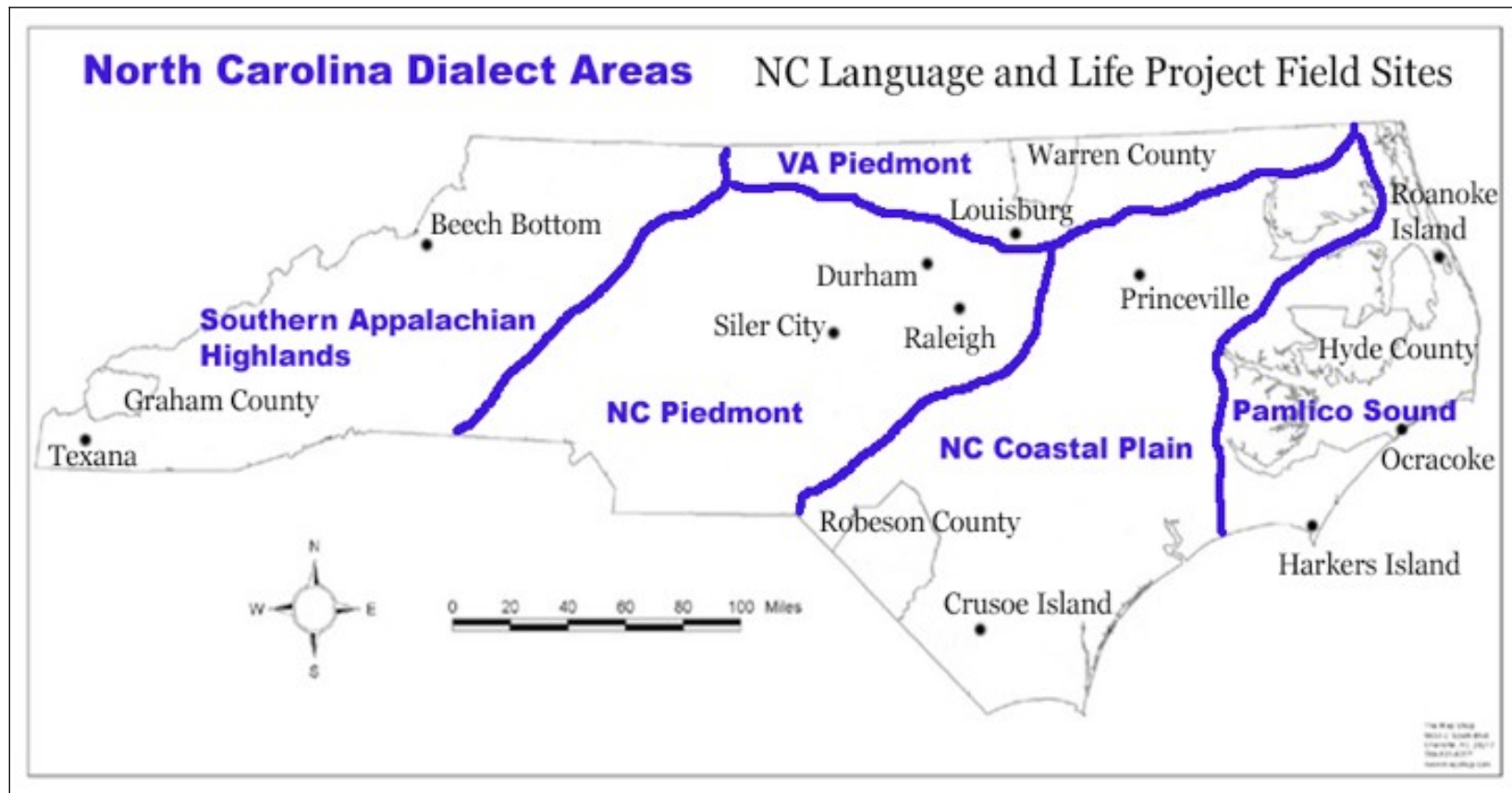- Any concerns about methodology or results?

6. General discussion

- To what extent were the experiments discussed evaluating beauty vs. other kinds of aesthetic (etc.) qualities?

- What are some reasons Kaplan gives for the small amount of research in this area?

- **Dialectology** of NC:

NC dialect map (from the NC Language and Life Project, NCSU)

3. NC dialects

- Examples of NC dialects
  - Voices of North Carolina — 8th grade dialect awareness curriculum (NCSU)
  - International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA), NC page

4. Do Midwesterners have an 'accent'?

- The following discussion is based on:

  Niedzielski, Nancy (2002). Attitudes toward Midwestern American English. In Daniel Long and Dennis R. Preston (eds.), *The Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, vol. 2, 321–328. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
  [Link to ebook through UNC Libraries]

- with additional detail from this overview article at Slate.com:

  Mifsud, Rob (2012). Vowel Movement: How Americans near the Great Lakes are radically changing the sound of English. Slate.com, Aug 22, 2012. [Link]

4. Do Midwesterners have an 'accent'?

- Midwestern speech is typically rated highly 'correct' by speakers around the US

- Midwestern speech is also typically rated highly 'correct' by Midwesterners

- However…

4. Do Midwesterners have an 'accent'?

- The Northern Cities Vowel Shift: Background
  - The Wikipedia article (Inland Northern American English) is really good
  - Audio examples and vowel charts from Penny Eckert (scroll down for Detroit)
  - Bill Labov discussing the NCVS (YouTube); if you're feeling brave, also skim through the comments

4. Do Midwesterners have an 'accent'?

- What Midwesterners *think* about their speech
  - Mifsud's description of Niedzielski's work [link]

    Nancy Niedzielski, an associate professor of linguistics at Rice University, told 50 NCS speakers that she was going to play a recording of a speaker from Michigan saying the word B-A-G, which she spelled out for them. She then asked the test subjects to identify whether the signal they heard sounded like *byag* (the NCS pronunciation), *bag* (the "standard" pronunciation), or *baahg* (a vaguely British pronunciation). Not one of the 50 subjects said that they heard the NCS pronunciation.
  - See some of Niedzielski's own discussion: [link]