Development of locality judgments and implicit language attitudes

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Background

- Attitudes about dialect groups can be measured implicitly by having listeners rate individual talkers
  - Talkers of standard dialects tend to be rated highly on status-related measures
  - Talkers of non-standard dialects may be rated highly on solidarity-related measures, reflecting covert prestige (Giles & Billings, 2004)
- Language attitudes develop over time
  - 9- and 10-year-olds' language attitudes better reflect widespread American English regional stereotypes than 5- and 6-year-olds' language attitudes (Kinzler & DeJesus, 2013)
  - Language attitudes change through adolescence (Giles, 1970)
- Some language attitudes are related to regional dialects, but their relationship to actual places is generally not tested

Research Questions

1. When do listeners learn which regional dialects are local to them?
2. When do listeners show different attitudes about different regional dialects?
3. How does the development of locality judgments relate to the development of attitudes about regional dialects?
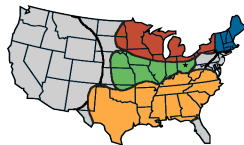
Methods

Listeners

- Tested in the Language Sciences Research Lab at a science museum in central Ohio
- 240 monolingual American English speakers ages 4-75 years
  - 76% had lived in Ohio (46% had lived *only* in Ohio)

Age	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13
N	24	24	24	24	24
Age	14-15	16-17	18-34	35-49	50+
N	24	24	24	24	24

Stimulus materials

- Sentence: "She had your dark suit in greasy wash water all year"
- Talkers: 3 women from each of 4 regions in the United States (Midland (M), North (N), New England (NE), South (S))
(TIMIT Corpus, Garofolo et al., 1993)

Methods (continued)

Procedure and analysis

- Participants heard sentences and rated each talker on labeled 5-point scales measuring the attributes **from Ohio**, **smart**, **rich**, **honest**, **friendly**
- Ratings were blocked by attribute (12 trials per block)
- Blocks were presented in random order for each participant
- Ratings were analyzed using linear mixed-effects regression models

Predictions

- Midland and North should sound local and should be rated relatively high on measures of status and solidarity
- New England and South should sound non-local and should be rated relatively low on measures of status, but perhaps high on measures of solidarity
- Some regional dialect differences should be evident by age 9-10

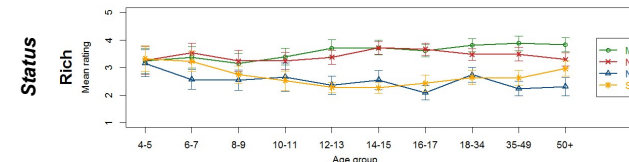## Results
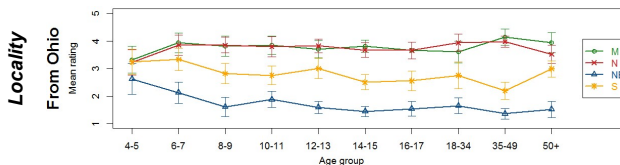
Midland and North are **from Ohio**.

- By age 4-5, New England is not
- By age 8-9, South is less **from Ohio** than Midland and North, but more **from Ohio** than New England
  - Initially more robust for listeners who had lived in Ohio, but consistent for all listeners by age 14-15
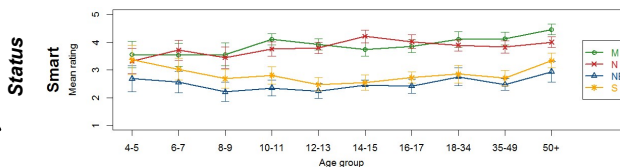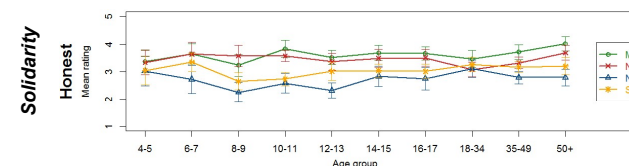

Midland and North are **smart**.

- By age 4-5, New England is not
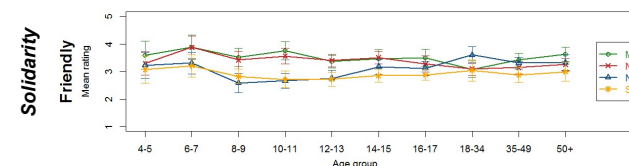- By age 8-9, South is not

Results (continued)

Midland and North are **rich**.

- By age 10-11, South is not
- By age 12-13, New England is not

For all ages, Midland and North are **honest**, but New England and South are not.

For all ages, Midland, North, and New England are **friendly**, but South is not.

Discussion

- Ohioans stigmatize talkers from the South but not the North (Campbell-Kibler, 2012)
  - Talkers from the South were downgraded on all status and solidarity measures, though covert prestige was evident in friendliness ratings for talkers from New England
  - Talkers from the North were identical to Midland talkers
- Some locality and attitude differences were observed by age 4-5
- Differences in locality judgments were more complex than region-based differences in attitudes (3-way vs. 2-way difference)