GSP Research Club Report

Summary

We conducted a survey asking scholars (a) to divide a map of Kentucky into 5 or 6 regions, (b) to indicate which region they call home, (c) to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how 'correct' or 'pleasant' they think the speech in each region is, and (d) to note how confident they are of that rating. We are in the process of coding the data and figuring out different ways to extract information from them.
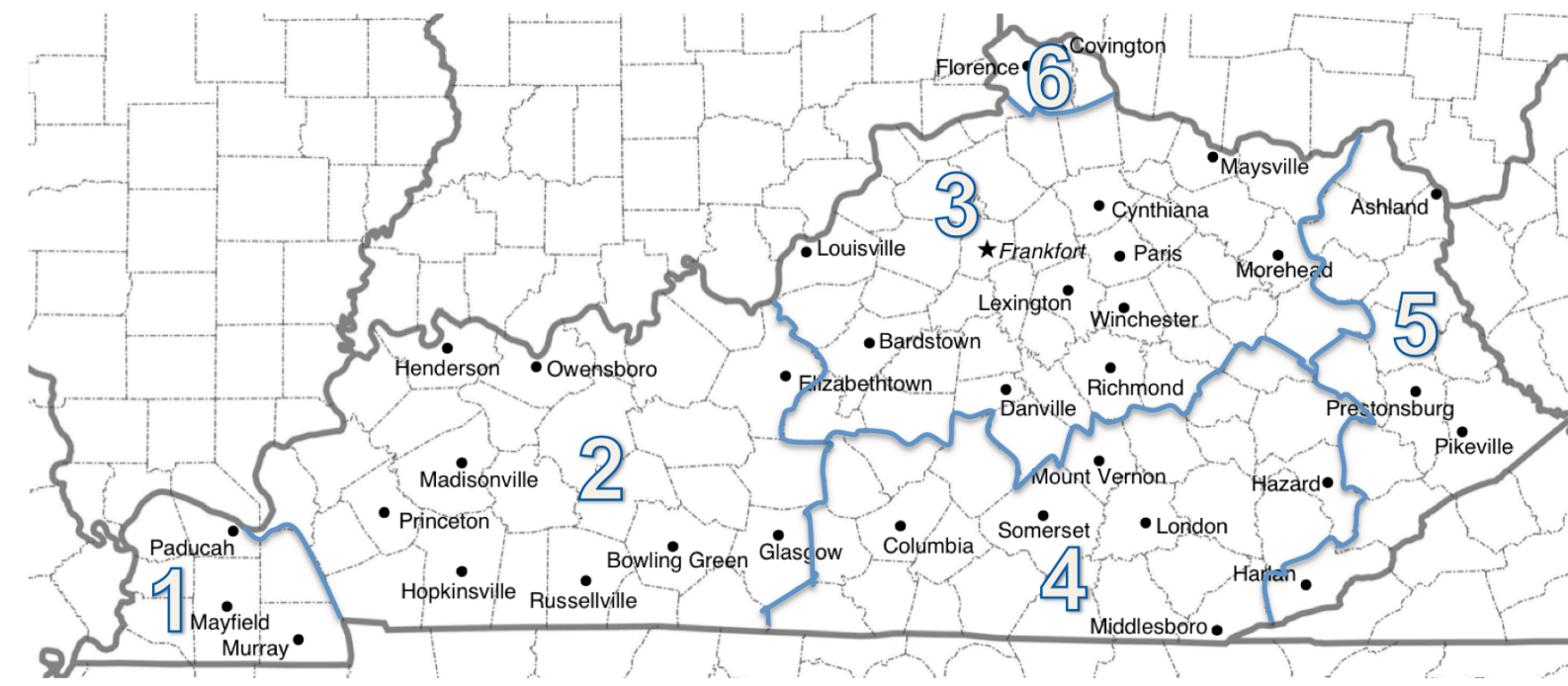
Background

Everyone speaks with an accent, but those who speak with accents that are associated with social prestige are less likely to consider their own speech to have an accent. Conversely, those who speak with socially less prestigious accents are more likely to consider their own speech to have an accent. When asked to judge the 'correctness' or 'pleasantness' of regional speech, people's responses tend to reflect their social judgments about the people of those regions — unless the region is their home, in which case other considerations interfere: in particular, people tend to assign more correctness and/or pleasantness to their home regions.
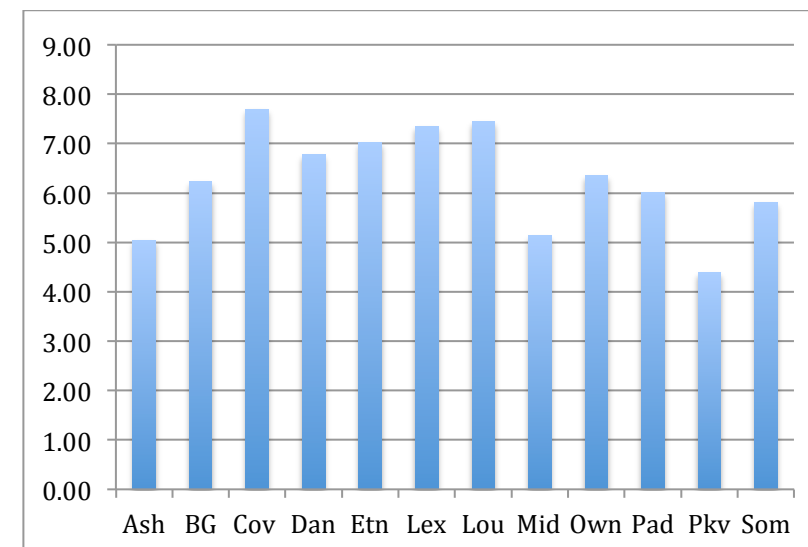
Preston, D. R. "Language attitudes to speech." In E. Finegan and J. R. Rickford (eds.), *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 480-492. Cambridge University Press.
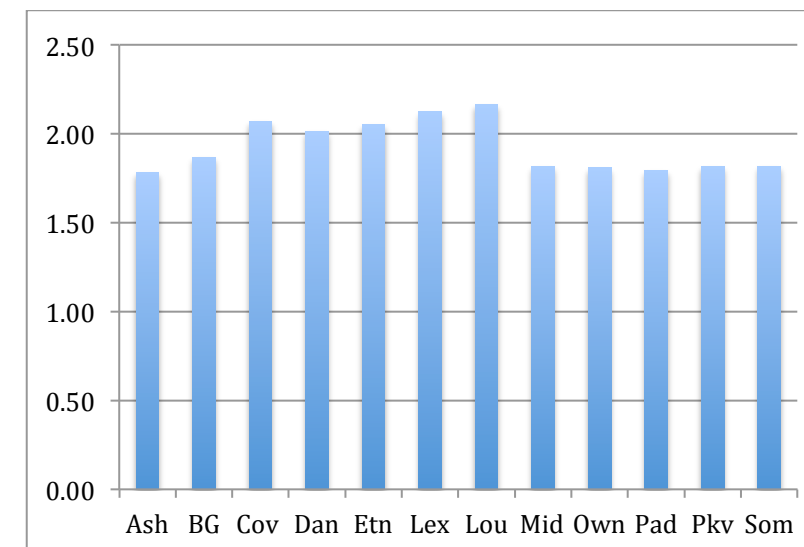
Data

- Out of 358 scholars, we have collected questionnaires from 245 (thus far).
  - 140 filled out 'correctness' questionnaires (82 male, 58 female).
  - 105 filled out 'pleasantness' questionnaires (50 male, 65 female).
- 12 cities were selected to initially code the data: **Ash**land, **B**owling **G**reen, **Cov**ington, **Dan**ville, **E**lizabeth**t**ow**n**, **Lex**ington, **Lou**isville, **Mid**dlesboro, **Ow**ensboro, **Pad**ucah, **Pik**eville, and **Som**erset. For each city:
  - What region was it assigned to? (1-6)
  - What was that region's rating? (1-10)
  - What was the confidence value? (1-3)
  - Is that region home (1) or not (0)?
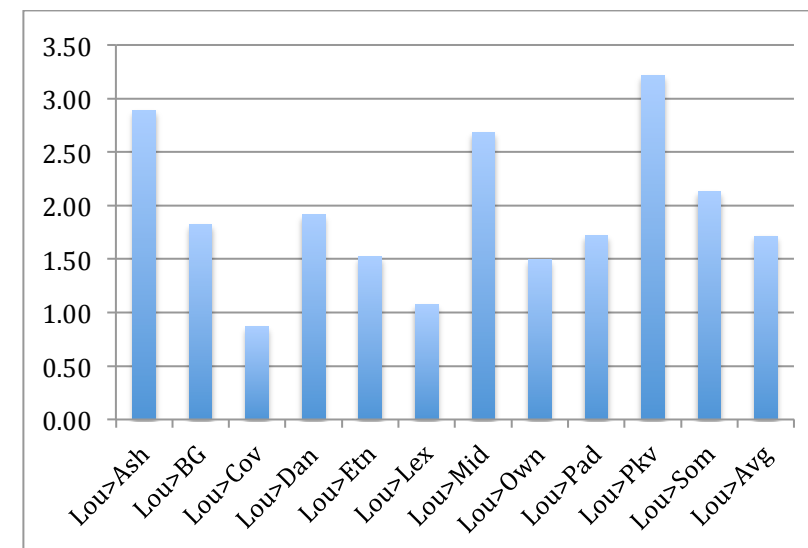- Only the 'correctness' questionnaires have been entered for analysis thus far.

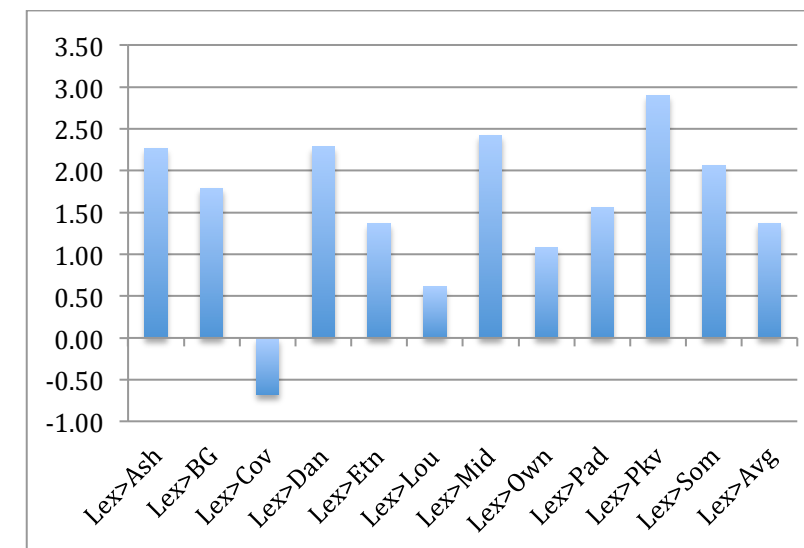*Example of a typical division of the KY map into 6 regions.*
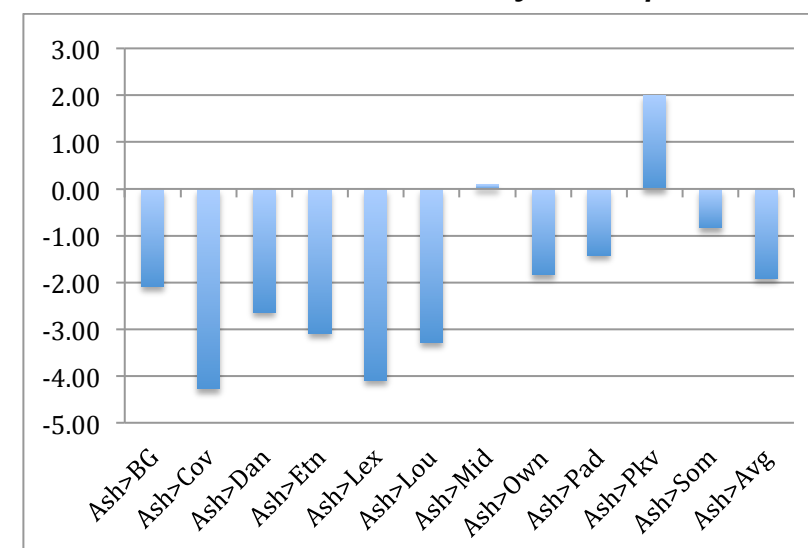

Average 'correctness' ratings
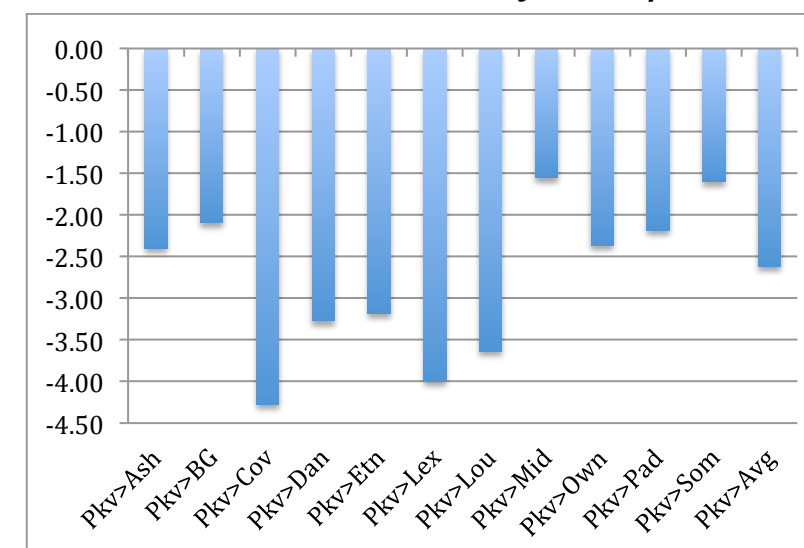

Average confidence values

If Louisville is in your home region, how much more correct is your speech?

If Lexington is in your home region, how much more correct is your speech?

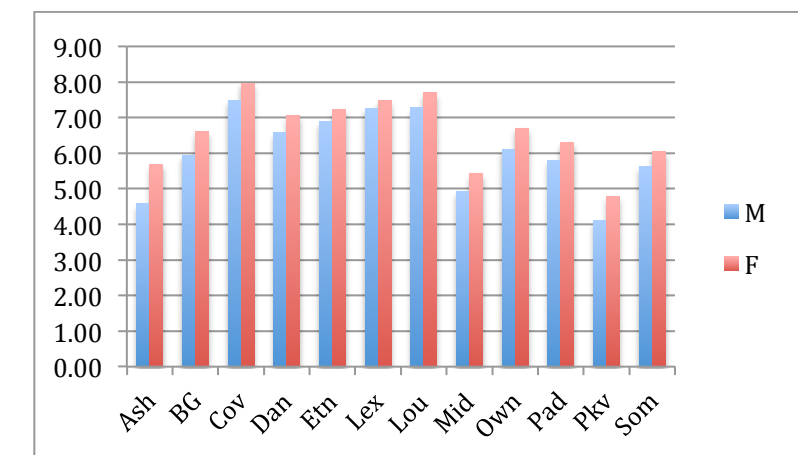*If Ashland is in your home region, how much more correct is your speech?*

If Pikeville is in your home region, how much more correct is your speech?
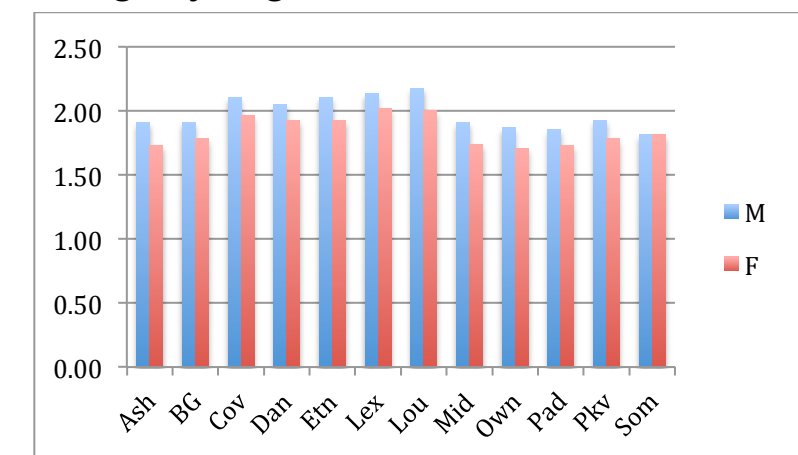
Expectations

- Tendency for higher social prestige in:
  - more heavily-populated urban areas
  - areas of relatively concentrated wealth
- Tendency for lower social prestige in:
  - less heavily-populated rural areas
  - areas of relatively concentrated poverty
- As expected, we found:
  - Louisville, Lexington, Covington are generally considered more 'correct'
  - Ashland, Pikeville, Middlesboro are generally considered less 'correct'

Still to do (we plan/hope)

- Enter remaining questionnaires for analysis, 'pleasantness' in particular.
  - People who rate their own regional speech as relatively 'incorrect' often compensate by rating it as relatively 'pleasant'.
- Compare male and female responses, e.g.:

Females' 'correctness' ratings are slightly higher across the board…

But males' confidence values are slightly higher across the board!

- Select more cities for coding the data.
- Generate maps for visualizing the data.

We'd like your help!

Do you have any ideas for other questions we might ask of these data? Please tell us!

The GSP Research Club is (alphabetically): Eric Baković, Elysha Calhoun, Clay Edwins, Alex Gray, Kelly Millay, John Nolan, Chaucey Slagel, Grant Sparks