Linguistic and non-linguistic regions in perceptual dialectology
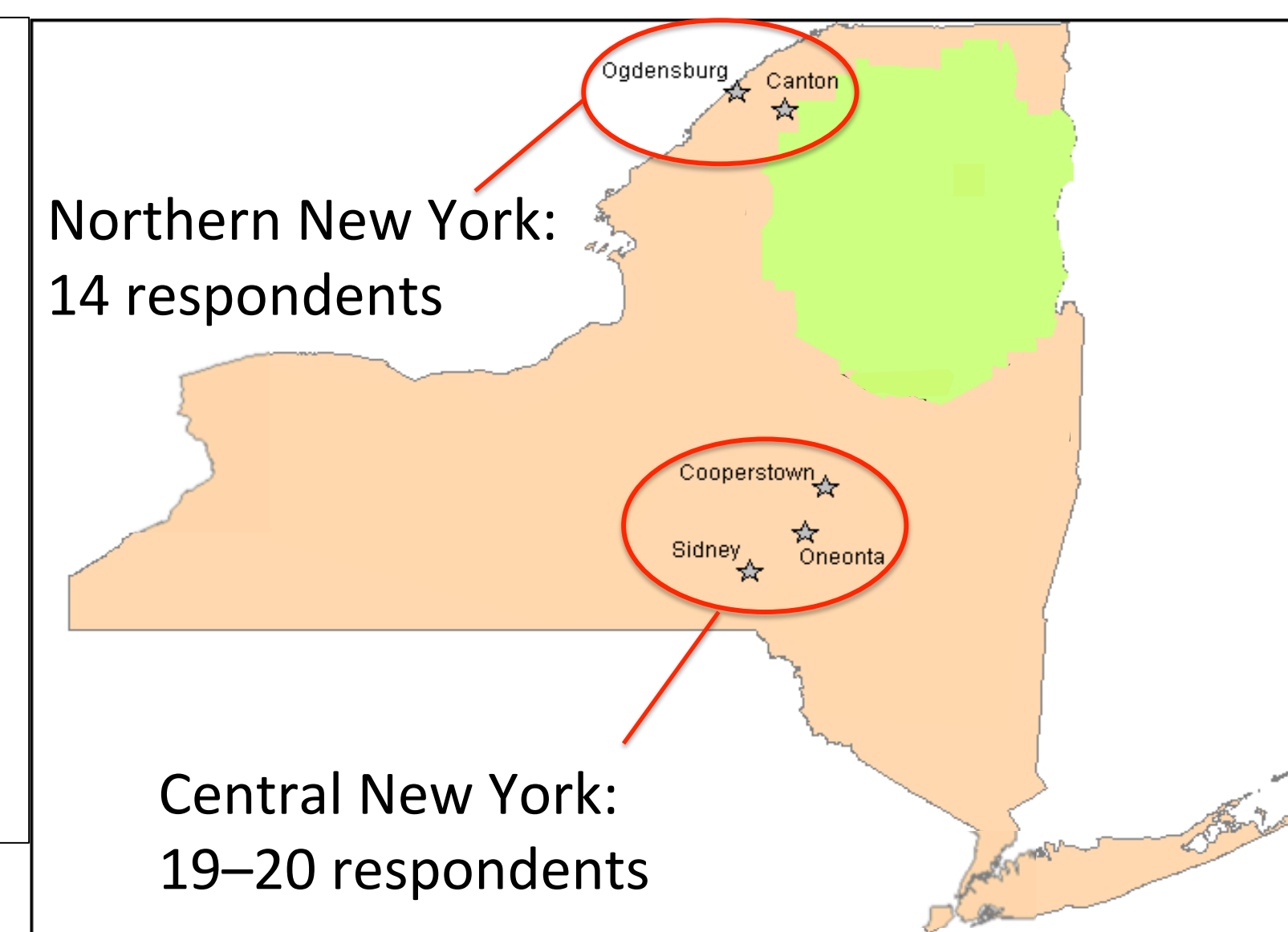## Aaron J. Dinkin, University of Toronto

Map-drawing tasks ask **non-linguists** where they **believe** distinctive dialect areas are located. But what are these ideas based on?
Inoue (1996) finds correspondence of hand-drawn dialect maps to "ordinary geographical maps" and "stereotypical… geographic labels".
So: **to what extent** are beliefs about **dialect** regions just a **relabeling** of nonlinguistic beliefs about general-purpose regions?

Methodology:
People in two regions of New York State were asked to perform two map-drawing tasks:
- What do you think are the major **regions of the state?**
- Where are different **accents or ways of speaking** located?

Northern New York:
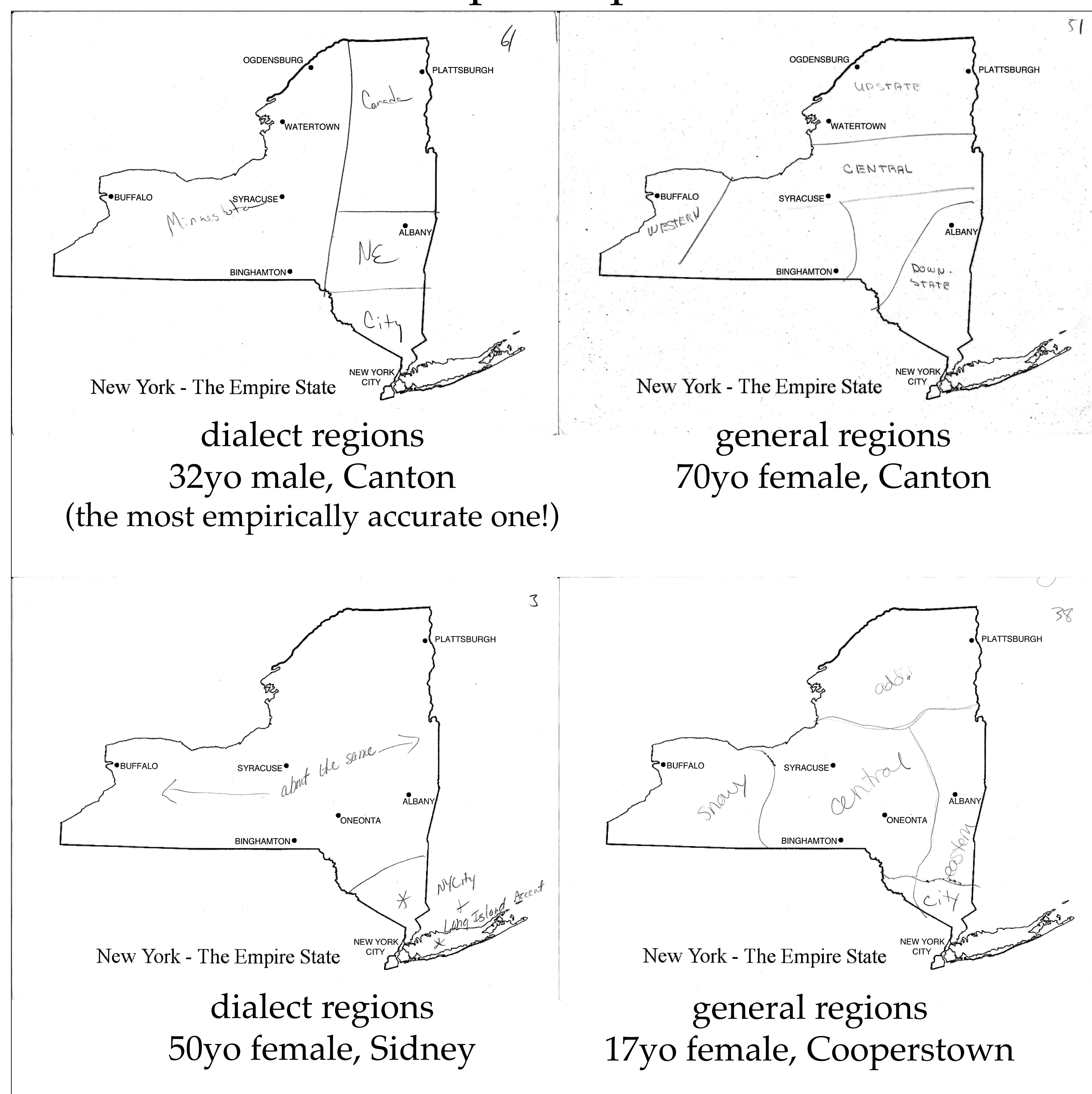14 respondents

Central New York:
19–20 respondents

Overall results: dialect maps
- **Broad consensus** (88%) that the New York City area is a **dialect** region
- **No other dialect region** was drawn by more than 28% of respondents
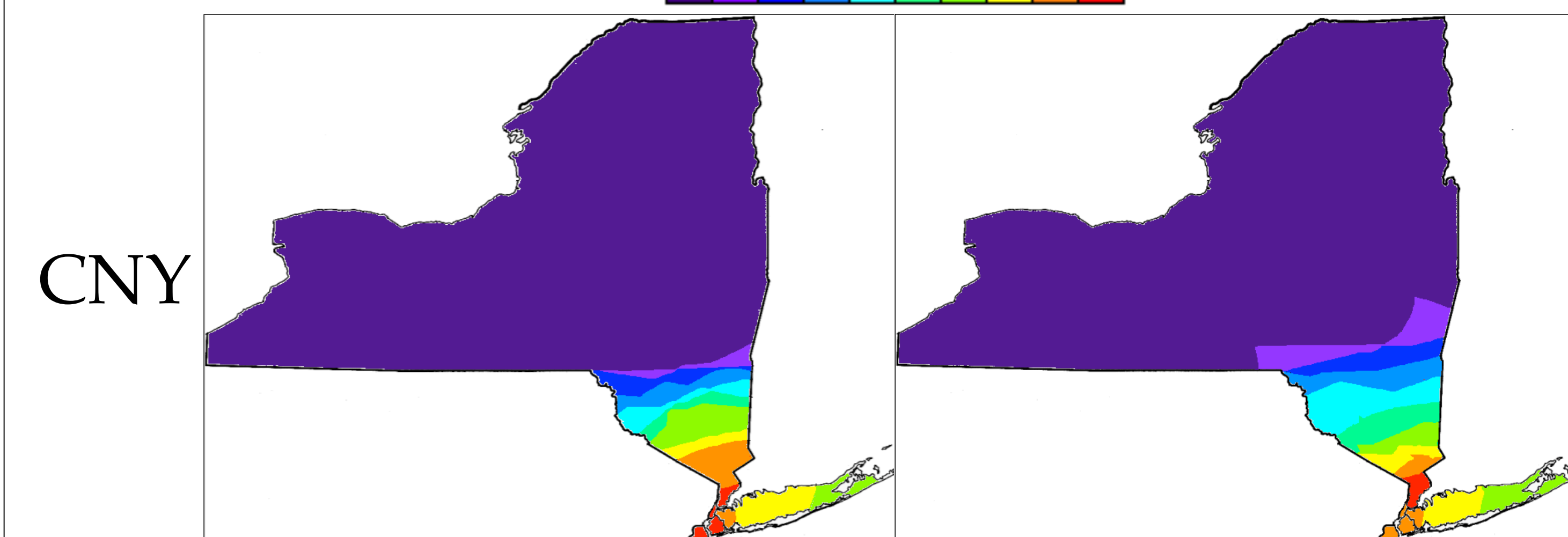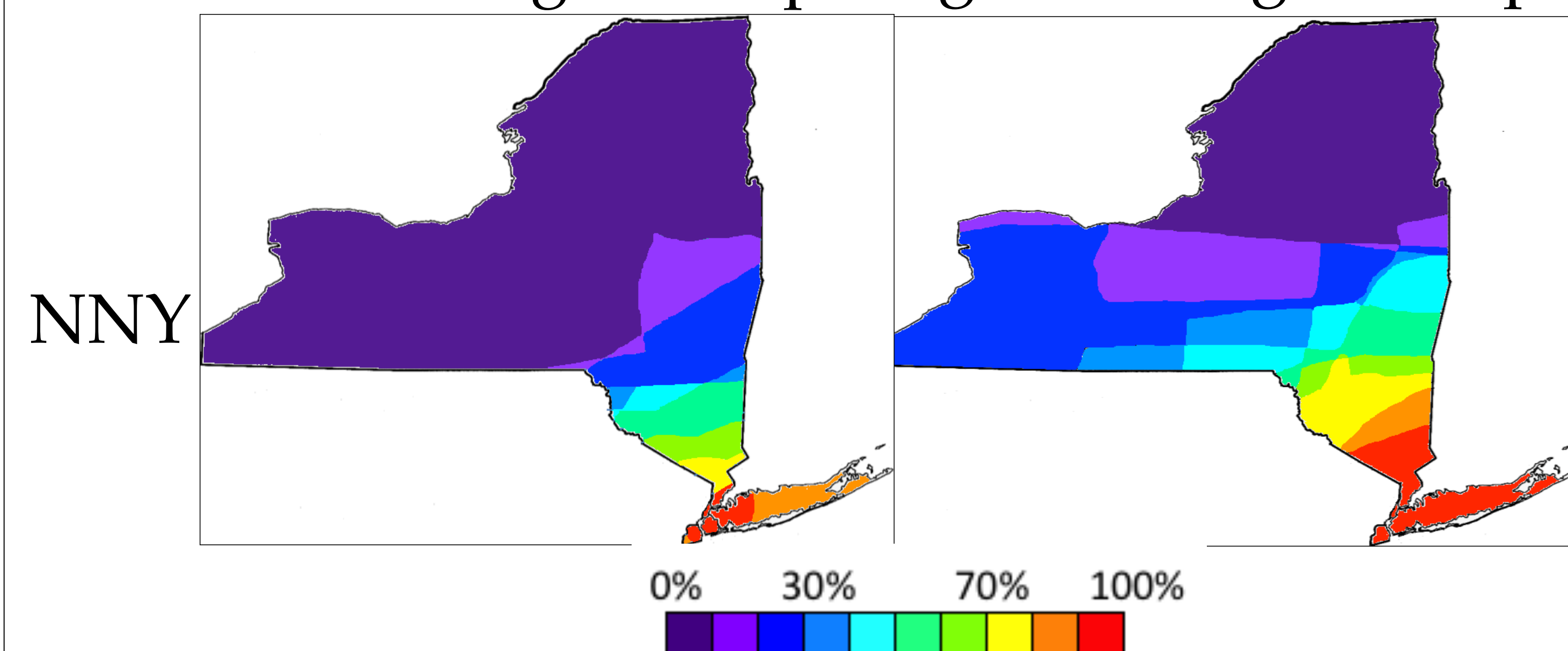- **No systematic difference** in **dialect** maps between NNY and CNY

Overall results: non-linguistic maps
- Several commonly identified regions/boundaries:
  - **Downstate** area around NYC; North Country; Central NY; Western NY
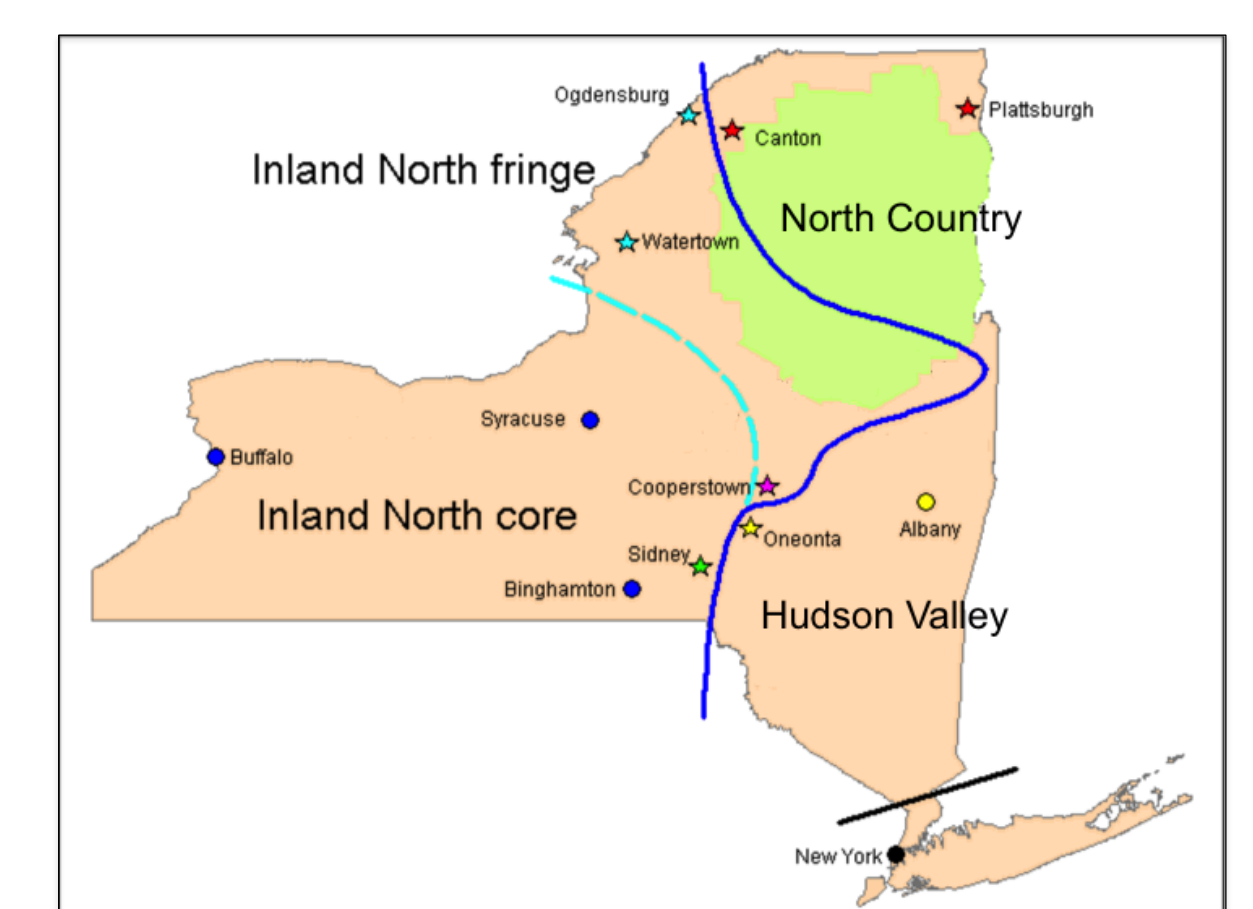- NNY **much less likely** to draw compact Downstate region than CNY

Example responses:

dialect regions
32yo male, Canton
(the most empirically accurate one!)

general regions
70yo female, Canton

dialect regions
50yo female, Sidney

general regions
17yo female, Cooperstown

Comparison: smallest region containing NYC
dialect region maps   general-region maps

NNY

CNY

0%   30%   70%   100%

NNY and CNY are in agreement that there's a dialect region around NYC in the southeast part of the state, but NNY is much less convinced that there's a similar general-purpose region.

empirical dialect regions

Conclusion:

Non-linguists' responses on **where dialect regions are** are not just regions that are culturally salient for other reasons—people do seem to have **geographic opinions** on **linguistic questions** that can differ from more generic geographical opinions on what regions of importance exist.