Changing Roles of Regional Boundaries and Isoglosses

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Research questions:
  Why are the **geographic boundaries** of dialect features **where they are**?
  Why do **different types** of linguistic feature have **different boundaries**?
I'm addressing these questions by comparing two case studies in **New York State**.

Case study 1: *-mentary* words (Dinkin & Evanini 2010)
Words like *elementary*, *documentary* are frequently pronounced in Upstate NY with
  secondary stress on penultimate syllable: *eleméntàry*, etc.
Oldest speakers (born **before 1943**) use stressed penult **less** than younger speakers do;
  this suggests stressed penult is an **innovation**.
For conciseness, only reporting one *-mentary* study here; others have similar results.
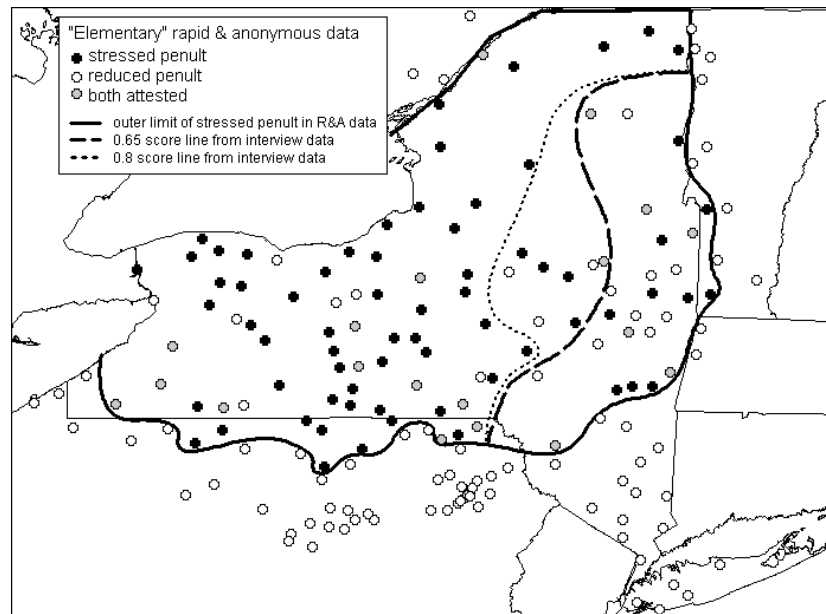
Results of rapid and anonymous *elementary* telephone survey, plus isoglosses from interview data

Rapid and anonymous telephone survey on *-mentary*:
• Evanini and I phoned school offices across New York State and adjacent parts of
  Pennsylvania, etc. to elicit the word *elementary* in natural conversation
Principal **results**:
• *-méntàry* absent in northwestern Pennsylvania; sharp boundary with western NY
• Further east, *-méntàry* seems to roughly respect traditional **North–Midland boundary**
  (Kurath 1949) in Pennsylvania
• *-méntàry* exists in all parts of New York State **except NYC area and Long Island**
  —i.e., it is an Upstate New York feature, but absent from Downstate.

-méntàry distribution follows communication patterns and culturally salient boundaries:
Historically **low traffic flow** across North-Midland line in north-central PA (Labov 1974)
  —so *-méntàry* boundary here corresponds to a communication minimum.
In NW PA, **high** traffic flow across historical North-Midland line (Evanini 2009);
  and there, the *-méntàry* line corresponds to the **state** boundary instead.
Upstate/Downstate line is the **most culturally salient regional boundary** in NY State:
  In a map-drawing task given to 20 informants from central New York,
 an Upstate/Downstate line was the most frequent regional division drawn (17/20).
Upstate/Downstate boundary corresponds to **no other known linguistic feature**.

Most frequently drawn regional boundaries in New York State by 20 people from Oneonta area:
  17/20 drew Upstate/Downstate boundary; 16/20 drew Western NY / Central NY boundary.

Case study 2: the **Northern Cities Shift** (Dinkin 2009)

NCS is found in **Inland North regions**, but not **Hudson Valley or North Country**
  Hudson Valley name suggested by dialect region with similar boundary defined by
  Kurath (1949) on the basis of **lexical** features.

Dialect regions defined on the basis of NCS scores
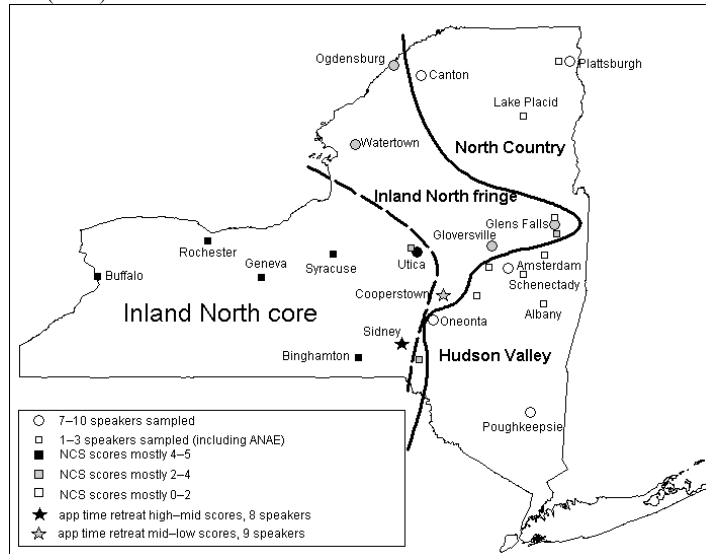
This linguistic boundary **doesn't correspond** to modern-day **communication patterns**,
  but to **settlement** patterns: NCS communities settled mainly from **SW New England**.
Although 1800s settlement history is **not relevant to modern communication patterns**,
  it's still reflected in this modern dialect boundary for the NCS.

Synthesizing the two case studies

To sum up, NCS and -*méntàry* have **very different boundaries**:
• **NCS**, a systematic **phonetic** feature, has boundaries corresponding closely to
  settlement boundaries from the 1800s.
• **-méntàry**, a **lexically specific** feature, has boundaries corresponding to present-day
  culturally salient boundaries and communication patterns.
Can we find patterns like this for **other dialect boundaries**?
• NCS boundary **in Ohio** matches 19th-century settlement history also (Thomas 2010).
• The **soda**/**pop** boundary (Campbell 2003) matches the **Western**/**Central** NY boundary,
  the **second most frequently identified** region in the map-drawing task.

So again, the **phonetic feature** matches **settlement patterns**,
  while the **lexical feature** matches **popularly recognizable cultural boundaries**.

Settlement boundaries are **hundreds of years old**, not very relevant to modern life;
  but the origin of the NCS is seemingly **much more recent than that**.
Hudson Valley / Inland North boundary in New York **was** known to Kurath (1949),
  but on the basis of **lexical** rather than **phonetic** features.
North/Midland boundary in Ohio was initially defined through lexical features as well.
Most of these lexical features are now **archaic or rare agricultural terms** (Labov 2010).

In other words:
• In early research, **lexical isoglosses** were found to match **settlement boundaries**.
• As those lexical features have become obsolete, **phonological** dialect features have
  emerged with the **same geographic boundaries**.
• **New lexical features** have emerged, many with boundaries corresponding to modern
  communication patterns and **culturally salient regions**.

What is the **explanation for this pattern**?
Lexical change **takes place rapidly** and can be **noticed as soon as it happens**.
• It spreads relatively quickly along lines of communication that are relevant at the time.
Sound change may **start small** and/or result from **subtle phonetic prerequisites**.
• The early precursors of major phonetic change may **escape contemporary notice**.
• These **precursors** develop along lines of communication **when they originate**.
• But **by the time** major changes develop, culturally salient regions **may change**
  —thus major phonetic features match **historic** regional boundaries, not current ones.

This suggests a **general proposal** on the two kinds of dialect boundaries:
  Today's lexical boundaries are ***tomorrow's phonetic*** boundaries.

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