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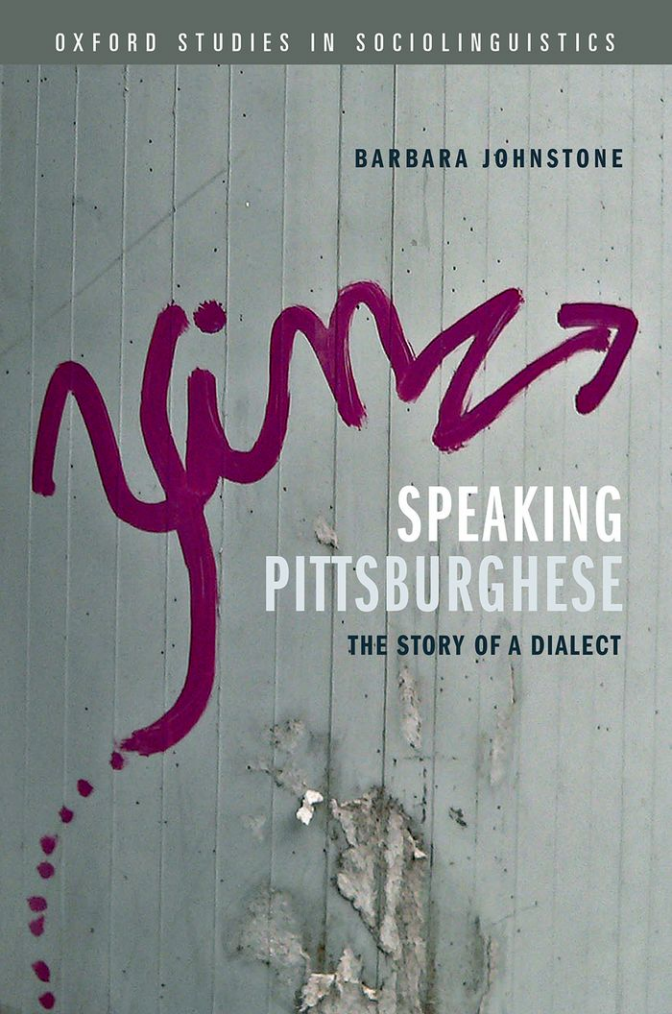
BARBARA JOHNSTONE



SPEAKING PITTSBURGHESE

THE STORY OF A DIALECT

Speaking Pittsburghese

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Speaking Pittsburghese: The Story of a Dialect
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Speaking Pittsburghese

THE STORY OF A DIALECT

BARBARA JOHNSTONE

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YINZ

Yinz, as in *you all*. Like a big bathroom
we're all politely sharing. The name of an old friend
from school you've lost touch with. The sound of a zipper
after good sex. The tiny washing machine part
you stamped out on the assembly line.
That record album you wore out playing
in 1971. An open invitation—no rsvp necessary.
The nickname of your son's best friend. The secret word.
A $2 winning lottery ticket someone slipped
in your birthday card. A friendly wrong number.
The shortcut through the South Side. Two girls
in matching outfits at Kennywood—their private laugh
in the bathroom. A child's sticky fingers—the sound
they make wiping on your pant leg. A late-night beer
on a barstool in Carrick. The TV clicking off
after a Steelers' win. The first bird of spring
reminding you you're from Pittsburgh, PA.
Yinz coming outside to play?
You bet.

—*James Daniels*

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Pittsburgh is a medium-sized city located on the Allegheny Plateau in the southwestern part of the US state of Pennsylvania. In many ways, it is a typical city of the US northeast. Pittsburgh's economy, once dependent on manufacturing, changed dramatically during the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Rust-belt, deindustrializing cities like Pittsburgh, Buffalo, or Cleveland have fewer inhabitants than they once did, and many of those who remain have family roots or personal experience as unskilled or skilled-on-the-job industrial laborers. Like those in other rust-belt cities, Pittsburgh's economic planners have tried to capitalize on the city's universities and healthcare infrastructure to create a new "eds and meds" economy. As in other rust-belt cities, buildings and natural resources once devoted to industry are being refashioned for recreation, tourism, and other forms of consumption: there are bicycle trails and parks along the rivers where there were once steel mills and coal depots, and pleasure boats in the once-toxic water. One large steel-mill site now contains a shopping center, another an upscale apartment complex, another a high-tech economic incubator.

Sociolinguistically, however, Pittsburgh is unlike most other US cities. Students of regional variation in American English such as Hans Kurath (Kurath 1949; Kurath and McDavid 1961), William Labov and his colleagues (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2005, 271–275), and others have found the Pittsburgh area interesting because it is linguistically distinctive. Laypeople from southwestern Pennsylvania have also noticed this. Most people from the Pittsburgh area are aware of, and many are interested in, the idea that Pittsburgh has a unique way of speaking and that speaking this way is a key element of a Pittsburgher's identity. In fact, Pittsburghers talk about "Pittsburghese"—their word for what they think of as their dialect—a great deal. "Authentic" Pittsburghers speak Pittsburghese or can at least talk about it. People play with Pittsburghese, performing bits of it to show that they have the knowledge associated with being local. Pittsburghese is represented in written form on coffee mugs, T-shirts, shot glasses,

and other souvenirs, often in connection with the city's image or one of the city's sports teams. Bits of Pittsburghese are used to form new words such as *Yinzer*: a person who says *yinz* instead of *you guys* or *y'all*, hence a person who is authentically local. Pittsburghese appears in YouTube videos, in the names of rock bands and museum exhibits, in sports-fan ballads, in graffiti tags. Sounding like a Pittsburgher means different things to different people, and these meanings have changed over time. Pittsburgh is thus a compelling site for studying how, why, and when language, place, and identity can come to be related and how these relationships evolve.

This book explores how the meanings of Pittsburgh speech and Pittsburghese are created, contested, and circulated, and what kinds of work these meanings can do. I trace the history of linkages between linguistic form and social meaning in Pittsburgh, showing how sounds, words, and bits of grammar that once did no social work became linked with social class, and then increasingly with Pittsburgh the place. I show how these processes have been shaped by local historical, economic, and ideological conditions, primarily over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. I then explore the particular activities and experiences during which linguistic forms become linked, for particular speakers, with particular ways of being and acting. These activities include face-to-face, everyday conversation, which is the speech genre to which sociolinguists typically devote most of their attention. But ideas about how linguistic forms and meanings are linked are also formed in other genres of talk and writing, for various purposes, and different ideas are made possible and likely in different ways by the existence and availability of different communications media. People link linguistic forms to social identities when they talk or write about Pittsburgh or Pittsburghese; when they design or use artifacts that represent local speech; when they listen to or argue with experts on the subject of sociolinguistics; and when they put on performances, fleeting or carefully staged, of local characters.

The story of Pittsburghese provides a number of lessons for sociolinguists. In order to understand the history of Pittsburghese, I have had to build a model of social meaning and its shifting relationship to linguistic form over time. Trying to describe a city, rather than a smaller, more homogeneous community, has led me to see how important it is to think about the sociolinguistic world from multiple perspectives, as it is experienced by different people, positioned differently in the social and economic world, living in different kinds of neighborhoods, and at different times. The resulting picture is more disorderly, more layered in social space and in time, than models that involve orders of indexicality or indexical fields tend to suggest. It is also, I think, more interesting in some ways.

The story of Pittsburghese also encourages sociolinguists to reimagine what we call "dialect awareness" as a set of interrelated social and rhetorical processes rather than just a mental state. The fundamental first step in becoming aware of anything is noticing it, and noticing is a social process, a process that takes two

(or more). People notice things because other people point to them in one way or another, sometimes by talking about them. People become aware that (for example) *yinz* is "a Pittsburgh thing" not just by hearing Pittsburghers say *yinz*, but by having it pointed out that Pittsburghers say *yinz*. (In fact there are lots of people—including readers of this preface—who now know that *yinz* is a Pittsburgh thing without ever having heard a Pittsburgher say *yinz*.) Furthermore, the phenomena we have often gathered under the rubric of dialect awareness can range from having the sense that one particular friend uses one word or sound differently ("You know, Ann always says that") all the way to "knowing" that there is a "dialect" with a name and a semiofficial dictionary.

Further, the story of Pittsburghese has something to tell us about language change, sociolinguists' first concern. The story of Pittsburghese shows us something important about why linguistic features that are "stereotyped"—features that people are aware of, talk about, try to avoid in everyday speech—drop away over time and about the relationship between socially marked speech features and social identities. It turns out that the people who use stereotyped features in everyday speech are not, on the whole, the people who attribute meaning to these features, so such people cannot be projecting social identities associated with those features. Pronouncing words like *downtown* and *out* with a monophthongal /aw/ sound ("dahntahn" or "aht") is one of the most stereotyped features of Pittsburgh speech: it sounds more Pittsburghy, to put it another way, than almost anything else. Young Pittsburghers are less likely to monophthongize the /aw/ in words like *downtown* and *out* ("dahntahn" and "aht") than their parents or grandparents are, and younger people may think older people sound more Pittsburghy. But the older people may not be aware that they are saying "dahntahn" or "aht," and even if they wanted to stop, they might not be able to. Using local variants may, in other words, sound local, but possibly not as much to the people who use them as to people who do not. Sociolinguistic stereotyping and the loss of stereotyped features are related, but not because people who once used stereotyped features stop using them.

The story of Pittsburghese is also important for Pittsburghers, and I have tried to write this book in such a way that people who are not sociolinguistics can make sense of it. This is not easy when we are talking about speech sounds and details of the structure of phrases, and it might require some patience on readers' part. Linguists will have to put up with the eye dialect spellings I have used to make my arguments accessible to nonlinguists, and nonlinguists will have to agree not to worry about the details that are hidden in the phonetic transcriptions. Mainly, what is required is an open mind to all the things language does for us besides just being a way of packaging facts. Think what you like about Pittsburghese—it's fun, it sounds like home, it's what makes us special, it's an embarrassing relic of the past, it's ugly, it's a bad joke—it is an indelible part of Pittsburgh's cultural heritage. I would not want children of

mine to have no choice but to speak in a way that can sound uneducated and unintelligent, but I would want them to appreciate the role of Pittsburghese in the history of Pittsburgh. If I am making an argument to my fellow Pittsburghers, it is that we should be taking the story Pittsburghese as seriously as we take the story of steelmaking or the stories of immigrants, because they are all intertwined.

The story of Pittsburghese is predictable in many ways. Once we see how linguistic variation, history, and identity can become connected to each other in settings like Pittsburgh, we can see this happening in other places in similar ways, and we can see that it has happened before and might happen again. At the same time, the story is a patchwork of coincidences. Pittsburghese is the phenomenon it is and plays the role it does because all sorts of contingencies have come together here over the last 250 years: because Pittsburgh is hilly, because Sam McCool's in-laws suggested he put his money where his dialectological mouth was, because the steel industry boomed at the turn of the twentieth century and busted toward the end of the twentieth c century, because of YouTube, because American baby boomers became adults in the 1970s and 1980s, because Robert Parslow was at the University of Pittsburgh when he was, because personal computers became available in the 1980s, because I moved to Pittsburgh when I did, and because of a thousand other things. For me, discovering that all these things came together exactly as they did, when they did, has been the most exciting part of this project. I hope people who decide to use what I have found to explain what is happening in other settings will be alert to the fact that the details will inevitably be different in interesting ways.

The story of Pittsburghese is a story about people noticing language in particular ways, so it seems only fair to describe how I noticed Pittsburghese. Like the history of Pittsburghese, the history of this project is full of contingency, full of little things that just happened to come together when and where they did. Before moving to Pittsburgh in 1997 to teach at Carnegie Mellon, I spent ten years at Texas A&M University. I had had no particular interest in regional speech before moving to Texas, but being for the first time in my life a linguistic outsider in the United States (the fact that I was a Yankee—a northerner—was apparent from my accent), I began to notice the consequences regional accents could have. At the same time, my Texas A&M colleague Guy Bailey opened my eyes to the richness of the data from the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States*, for which he had been a fieldworker, and the power of variationist sociolinguistic methods, which he was using in his research on African American speech in Texas. By the time I left Texas, two graduate students and I had launched a study of the linguistic styles of a dozen Texas women, focused on the combinations of sociolinguistic resources that came together in their public voices (Bean 1993; Johnstone 1995; Johnstone and Bean, 1997).

Moving to Pittsburgh meant moving much closer to my hometown in central Pennsylvania. On earlier visits to State College I had often changed planes in Pittsburgh, where I heard the vowel that made the airport announcements sound like home. If I had given the matter any consideration, I would have guessed that people in Pittsburgh sounded like the "locals" in the area I grew up in. Arriving at Carnegie Mellon to teach in the rhetoric program, which is oriented toward standard English in institutional settings, I had no particular plans to study Pittsburgh speech. Then, at a used-book sale on campus, I came across a copy of *Sam McCool's New Pittsburghese: How to Speak Like a Pittsburgher* (McCool 1982). The little book struck me as problematic, and I thought that at some point I would need to address some of what I then saw as errors in it. I started collecting newspaper and magazine articles that mentioned Pittsburghese, surprised at their frequency and curious why people talked about local speech so much. But other work was more pressing, and it was not until the fall semester of 2000 that I was able to work such a project into a class I was teaching on rhetoric and place. The work we did as a class (Johnstone, Bhasin, and Wittkofski 2002) suggested that monophthongal /aw/, the phonological feature of Pittsburgh speech that turned out to be the most prevalent in the newspaper and magazine corpus, may have dated only from the beginning of the twentieth century, and that it was not disappearing from working-class men's speech as quickly as might be expected. We thought there might be a relationship between the attention paid to this feature and its persistence but realized that it would take a great deal more work to figure out what the relationship was. In the meantime, I was coming to see that my initial reaction to Pittsburghese had been wrong. It would be a lot more interesting (and a lot more likely to accomplish something) to try to figure out why there was a dictionary of Pittsburghese than to try to explain what was wrong with it from a linguist's point of view.

Without the impetus of a colleague, I might not have pursued the project beyond the 2002 article. In the meantime, however, Scott F. Kiesling had been hired by the University of Pittsburgh as an assistant professor of Linguistics. Kiesling's background in quantitative variationist sociolinguistics complemented my background in qualitative approaches to linguistic style, and we shared an interest in the study of language in use, so we teamed up to organize a research-planning workshop and apply for grants. We were lucky to secure generous seed funding at this stage from the University of Pittsburgh and through a Berkman Fellowship and a grant from the Department of English at Carnegie Mellon. This enabled us to bring together a group of sociolinguists who had done projects like the one we envisioned or who had worked on features of midland American speech, several historians of the Pittsburgh area, a University of Pittsburgh sociologist, a folklorist with the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, a British geographer who was studying Braddock, Pennsylvania, and a communication designer.

At the 2002 planning workshop, I expected my colleagues to tell us how to carry out a standard sociolinguistic survey of Pittsburgh aimed at correlating the usage of local-sounding variants with demographic facts like age, gender, and socioeconomic class. And so they did, but they also encouraged us to think about Pittsburghese, the funny-spelled words on coffee mugs and T-shirts, the jokes, and the dictionary. They helped us frame research questions about how the Pittsburghese phenomenon intersected with the facts about Pittsburgh speech, questions which turned out to be the most fruitful ones we asked.

In the fall of 2003, funded by a University-Supported Professional Leave from Carnegie Mellon University, I began to conduct interviews in two of the four Pittsburgh-area neighborhoods we had settled on: Forest Hills and Lawrenceville. In the meantime, Kiesling and I successfully reapplied for grant funding for the Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project (PSSP), each of us receiving support for collaborative work from the US National Science Foundation. I was able to continue interviewing in Forest Hills and Lawrenceville and start in Cranberry Township. In 2005, I applied for and received supplemental funding from the National Science Foundation for interviews in the primarily African American Hill District.

By 2006, interviewing was mostly over, although other kinds of research continued. As we started to analyze the material we had collected, we also brought together a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to help us decide on the best ways to disseminate our results to Pittsburghers. The CAB consisted of some of the people I had interviewed, representatives of local archives, a retired steelworker, educators, and a web designer. Talking to Pittsburghers about what we were finding was a crucial part of the work that is represented in this book. In the course of planned efforts to spread the word, via a website, a set of podcasts, in media interviews, and in presentations to community groups, I got to hear Pittsburghers talking about Pittsburghese and reacting to how I talked about it, and this has fed back into the story I tell here in many ways.

This book represents only one outcome of the Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project, but it is impossible to disentangle the story of this book from the story of the PSSP as a whole. Nor is possible to separate the people who helped with the PSSP from the people who helped with this book. Over the course of ten years of research, thinking, talking about, presenting my work in public, and writing, I have asked a lot of people for help, a lot of people have offered help without my asking, and a lot of people have helped without even knowing it. I wish I could be sure that this list is complete, but I am sure it is not, and I thank the people who are not on it but should be as well as the people who are.

From beginning to end, my sometimes-collaborator and always-advisor Scott Kiesling has been a source of ideas and encouragement. I can't thank Scott enough for all the work he has put into this project since that lunch at the Thai place on Craig Street where I asked if he wanted to be involved. Scott has worked

with me both in publicly visible ways (we have coauthored a journal article, a book chapter, and a number of presentations at conferences and colloquia) and in ways that have been visible only to me and other coworkers. Scott has fitted the PSSP in among his many other projects and obligations for the last ten years, and I am counting on him to continue to do so.

Another key player in the story of this book has been Joan Beal. I met Joan at a conference in 2001, where she presented some of her research on language and identity in the north of England, showing how the "Geordie" dialect was evoked in spellings like < the Toon> (' the town') for a Newcastle soccer club. The things she described sounded very familiar. Furthermore, Joan had just moved from Newcastle to Sheffield, the steel-producing center of England and one of Pittsburgh's sister cities. Over dinner, we hatched plans for a conference on "Steel Cities." The interdisciplinary conference took place in 2006, in Sheffield; Joan did all the organizing work. By then, Joan had visited Pittsburgh, and I had visited Sheffield. We took each other on tours only we could love: we searched for dialect-themed T-shirts, visited shopping malls on steel-mill sites, looked at Bessemer furnaces and other remnants of the steel industry now repurposed for tourist experiences, drove through nearly abandoned mill towns, and talked about how the hilly topography of both cities shaped local speech and local identities. Unlike me, Joan is a historian of English, and her work on eighteenth-century pronouncing dictionaries and nineteenth-century dialect literature opened my eyes to the fact that the dialect-enregisterment process I was studying had happened before. In addition to her friendship and hospitality, Joan gave me the crucial insight that what was happening in Pittsburgh in the late twentieth century was not unique to Pittsburgh or to the twentieth century.

For funding, I am grateful to the Berkman Fund and the Department of English at Carnegie Mellon, and to National Science Foundation (award numbers BCS-0417684 and BCS-0417657). Time for research and writing was provided by Carnegie Mellon University, via University-Supported Leaves in 2003–2004 and 2010–2011, and by the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) at Albert-Ludwigs University in Freiburg, Germany, for a very generous six-month fellowship in 2011. The FRIAS fellowship was facilitated by Peter Auer, and I think him and everyone else who was affiliated with FRIAS in the spring of 2011 for new ways of thinking about language and dialect, some of which are apparent in this book.

Participants in our planning workshop in 2002 included (in addition to Kiesling and me) Sharon Ash, Susan Berk-Seligson, Sabine Deitrich, Doris Dyen, Maeve Eberhardt, Beverly Flannigan, Peter Gilmore, Joan Guerin, Kirk Hazen, Daniel Ezra Johnson, Paul Laxton, Bonnie McElhinny, David Miller, Michael Montgomery, Richard Oestreicher, Beth Lee Simon, and Walt Wolfram. Neeta Bhasin coordinated things so I didn't have to. Without these people's advice, I don't think I would have pursued the line of thinking that led to this book.

For helping me find interview contacts in Forest Hills, I am grateful to Ron Placone, Ken Gormley, Jane Freund, Vivian Broz at the Forest Hills Senior Center, Betty Evans, and Susan Lawrence and Toby Yanowitz, who had rowing friends everywhere. In Lawrenceville, I got leads from Michael Witmore, Kelly Delaney, my across-the-street neighbor Bonnie Isacke, Christiane Leach at Lawrenceville United, Barbara Thompson, Tim Haggerty, Allan Becer, Susan Gilpin, and Thora Brylowe. I am also grateful to the Lawrenceville branch of the Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh for space to conduct interviews. In Cranberry Township I got a huge amount of help from Marilynn McElhinny, who seems to know everyone, as well as from the staff of the Cranberry Township Community Center, who, among other things, let me use the library to talk to two retired teachers who were at the Community Center for Silver Sneakers class.

Jennifer Andrus helped with some of the Cranberry Township interviews and conducted some of them herself. She also helped me think through the basic structure of the argument I make in this book, transcribed parts of most of the interviews, and put up with a TV-less basement dorm room in Wales when I dragged her along to present part of the project at the University of Cardiff. Jenny did all this while working on her dissertation on a completely unrelated topic and enlarging her family by two active little girls. I can't thank her more. Trista Pennington is one of the most gifted fieldworkers I have ever encountered: resourceful, dependable, and an absolutely wonderful interviewer. I don't say much in this book about the African American Pittsburghers she talked to, but her work has led to a PhD dissertation by Maeve Eberhardt and several scholarly articles, and sociolinguists will continue to draw on it.

For giving me access to and helping me find archival material, I am grateful to Ron Baraff at Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area and Steven Doell at the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society. Alan Fried talked to me about his Pittsburghese.com website and, without my asking, put a link on it to my work. Sam McCool has been extremely generous, helping me fill in crucial details about his book, *How to Speak like a Pittsburgher*, and talking to me about the project more generally. I am very grateful to Sam, and to Twyla McCool, who got us together finally. Priscilla Parslow generously shared the papers of her late husband Robert Parslow.

The members of the Community Advisory Board, who advised us about how to take this project back to the people who made it possible, were Suzie Ament, Ron Baraff, Karen Billingsley, Mary Estep, Joan Guerin, Connie Placone, Ginger Placone, Lois Sharpe, Roy Smith, Jude Wudarczyk, and Mary Young. The graduate students who facilitated discussion were Jennifer Andrus, Dan Baumgardt, Maeve Eberhardt, and Trista Pennington. I am grateful to all of you.

I got help with transcription from Jennifer Andrus, Bill Blake, Roxana Botezatu, and Kate Hough. Scott Kiesling, Dan Baumgardt, Anna Schardt, and Neeta Bhasin helped with coding and analysis. Members of Chris Neuwirth's

Online Information Design course provided the initial template for the Pittsburgh Speech and Society website; Mark Thompson maintained and edited the site for several years; and Ed Galloway and other members of the staff of the University of Pittsburgh Archives Service Center relocated the site to where it is now, updated the visual design, and integrated it with the archived PSSP interviews. The podcasts that are part of that website were performed by Allan Becer, Kelly Delaney, Scott Kiesling, Connie Placone, and other participants in the PSSP. They were produced, pro bono, by my friends Don and Barbara Neumiller, and Don advised me on microphones and other recording equipment. Dan Baumgardt wrote the scripts, and Tom Mitchell helped me direct. The Newlanders let us use some of their music. Many journalists have also helped me spread the word about the PSSP. Chris Potter of the *Pittsburgh City Paper* has been an especially regular correspondent. Potter's intelligent questions helped me articulate ways to talk about the trickier parts of my story. Thank you to all these people, too.

I have talked to many scholarly audiences about this project, in the United States and elsewhere, and I have received a lot of useful feedback from those audiences. No matter where I am, there always seems to be someone from Pittsburgh in the room, and it is always especially interesting to hear their reactions. My main audience throughout the process, though, has been the members of SMiLe, our reading group on Social Meaning in Language. The group's membership has changed from year to year, but with Scott Kiesling and me providing the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon anchors, respectively, SMiLe has meet almost every week, every academic semester but one, for over a decade. The seeds of this book were planted the semester we spent working through Michael Silverstein's oeuvre, and our reading of Asif Agha's book and some books on working-class discourse helped me see how the characterological figure of the Yinzer works. Pittsburghese has been my test case for trying out everything we've read, and fellow SMiLers have listened to each step in my thinking about it (in addition to sharing some delicious food at our end-of-semester potlucks). Here is to all of you!

Many people have helped in the actual production of this book. John Oddo, Sam McCool, and Scott Kiesling read and commented on the manuscript. MAPW student Amanda Cardo copyedited it before I submitted it to Oxford University Press. Nik Coupland and Adam Jaworski, the editors of the Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics, welcomed the idea of this book and then the book itself. At Oxford University Press, Hallie Stebbens's enthusiasm for the project was a huge incentive. Thanks also to production editor Erica Woods Tucker and copy editor India Gray.

Finally, thank you to the magician outside the August Wilson Center on New Year's Eve, 2010, who performed a special trick to thank me for the work I was doing. I hope he reads this book, and I hope he likes it.

A Note on Transcriptions and Typographic Conventions

There is no such thing as a completely accurate transcript of speech. Any written transcription of talk can provide only a rough approximation of the experience of being part of a conversation. Extremely detailed transcriptions, full of special symbols and conventions for font and spacing, can be useful for making certain kinds of arguments, but they can also be distracting and so difficult to read that people don't bother to try. Since I am aiming for a readership that includes both language specialists and laypeople, I have tried to keep transcriptions in this book as simple and readable as they can be while still including the details that are necessary for illustrating the points I make. This means that I have not hewed to a single set of transcription conventions. In particular, some of the transcribed extracts in this book include no detail about how words are pronounced, others include only informal spellings meant to give a rough sense of the sounds of words, and others include technical phonetic transcription. Likewise, some transcripts include more detail about things like overlap (when two or more speakers talk at once) and things like laughter and voice quality, and others include less. When I have used conventions that differ from those of playscript dialogue, I describe and explain them as they come up.

In a book about language, it is inevitable that words get used in different ways. Most of the time, I use words the way they are normally used with their normal meanings. Often, however, I will be talking about particular words rather than simply using them, and sometimes I need to indicate what a word means. Sometimes I want a particular word to stand in for a whole category of words. I also quote people and texts, and I talk about how words are spelled. If I simply used quotation marks for all but the first of these ways of using words, it would quickly become unclear what I was doing. Thus I use typography to indicate how I am using a word. Here are the conventions I have tried to adhere to. (Sometimes

it is impossible to tell whether someone is citing a word or quoting it, for example, so there are judgment calls involved.)

For phonetic and phonemic transcription, I have employed the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) with two exceptions: the diphthongs that would be [au] and [ai] or [aj] in the IPA are represented in this book as [aw] and [ay]. This usage, borrowed from William Labov, is conventional in representing these sounds in American varieties of English, and it is consistent with how I have represented these sounds in almost all my previous published work about Pittsburgh speech.

Typographic convention	*Meaning*	*Examples*
italic type	Words and phrases being referred to rather than having their usual function.	The verb *redd up* comes from Scotch-Irish English. So does *slippy*. *Yinz* and various forms of the verb *jag* have long been included in glossaries of Pittsburghese.
"double quotation marks"	(1) Words and phrases taken from actual speech or written material.	(1) "It never occurred to me," says Molly G., "that *needs ironed* wasn't proper English."
	(2) Letters and sets of letters that are informal spellings to suggest to nonlinguists what a phonetic transcription sounds like. They are meant to be helpful, particularly to readers with North American accents, but they are not as precise as the phonetic transcriptions.	(2) Some Pittsburghers do not hear the difference between the sound of [da:nta:n] ("dahntahn") and the sound of [dawntawn] ("downtown").
'single quotation marks'	Definitions.	Still in use are *slippy* for 'slippery'; *redd up* for 'tidy, clean up'; *nebby* for 'inquisitive, nosey'; and other derivatives of *neb* (an older English word for the snout of an animal) like *nebnose*, 'inquisitive person'.

Typographic convention	*Meaning*	*Examples*
SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS	Represents a category of words that include the same vowel sound.	Words with the *out vowel include town*, *found*, *crowd*, *down*, *out*, and *around*. They hear people pronouncing CAUGHT and COT words the same way.
<angled brackets>	Illustration of how a word is spelled.	A word spelled <dahntahn> This pronoun is typically spelled <yinz> or <yunz> in Pittsburghese.
/slashes/	Used in the standard linguistic sense: a phonemic transcription.	This happens in syllables that do not end in /l/. So that /haws/can sound like [ha:s]
[brackets]	Used in the standard linguistic sense: a phonetic transcription. For nonlinguists, I use double quotation marks to suggest roughly what these transcriptions sound like.	Some Pittsburghers do not hear the difference between the sound of [da:nta:n] ("dahntahn") and the sound of [dawntawn] ("downtown").
((double parentheses))	In transcribed excerpts from interviews, they indicate who the speaker(s) was talking to, whether the speech was inaudible, voice quality, and the like.	((indistinguishable)), ((speaking to John K.)), ((sighs))

Permissions

The poem "Yinz" is used with the permission of the author, James Daniels.

The photograph entitled "Yinz Float" is used with the permission of the photographer, David Kent.

The two skits from the WDVE Morning Show discussed in chapter 8, and my transcription of them, are used with the permission of WDVE Radio.

I have discussed many of the ideas in chapter 2 at greater length in Johnstone, Barbara. 2004. "Place, Globalization, and Linguistic Variation." In *Sociolinguistic Variation: Critical Reflections*, ed. Carmen Fought, 65–83. New York: Oxford University Press; Johnstone, Barbara. 2010. "Locating Language in Identity." In *Language and Identities*, ed. Carmen Llamas and Dominic Watt, 3–26. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; and Johnstone, Barbara. 2010. "Language and Geographical Space." In *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation*, ed. Peter Auer and Juergen Erich Schmidt, 1: Theories and methods: 1–18. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. Parts of chapter 3 are adapted from Johnstone, Barbara, Jennifer Andrus, and Andrew E. Danielson. 2006. "Mobility, Indexicality, and the Enregisterment of 'Pittsburghese.'" *Journal of English Linguistics* 34 (2): 77–104. Parts of chapter 4 are adapted from Johnstone, Barbara, and Scott F. Kiesling. 2008. "Indexicality and Experience: Exploring the Meanings of /aw/-monophthongization in Pittsburgh." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12 (1): 5–33. Parts of chapter 5 are adapted from Johnstone, Barbara, and Dan Baumgardt. 2004. "'Pittsburghese' Online: Vernacular Norming in Conversation." *American Speech* 79: 115–145; Johnstone, Barbara. 2007. "Discursive Sources of Linguistic Diversity: Stancetaking and Vernacular Normformation." In *Diversity and Universals in Language: Perspectives and Implications*, ed. Yoshiko Matsumoto, David Oshima, Orrin Robinson, and Peter Sells, 167–196. Palo Alto, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Social Interaction, Stanford University; and Johnstone, Barbara. 2007. "A New Role for Narrative in Variationist Sociolinguistics." In *Narrative: State of the Art*, ed. Michael Bamberg, 57–67. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Parts of chapter 6 are

adapted from Johnstone, Barbara. 2011. "Making Pittsburghese: Communication Technology, Expertise, and the Discursive Construction of a Regional Dialect." *Language and Communication* 31:3–15. Part of chapter 7 is adapted from Johnstone, Barbara. 2009. "Pittsburghese Shirts: Commodification and the Enregisterment of an Urban Dialect." *American Speech* 84 (2): 157–175. Part of chapter 8 is adapted from Johnstone, Barbara. 2011. "Dialect Enregisterment in Performance." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15 (5): 657–679.

Speaking Pittsburghese

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1

Pittsburgh Speech and Pittsburghese

The first English-speakers to settle permanently in southwestern Pennsylvania were the Scotch-Irish, who arrived mainly during the 1700s.[1] Not surprisingly, they brought their English with them, a way of speaking influenced by the English of the northern counties, Scots (one of the related languages of Scotland) and Irish Gaelic. We know almost nothing about their pronunciation, but we know that they employed words that were different from those used by people who came from other parts of Britain to America: they "redd up" instead of tidying, called noses "nebs" and nosy people "nebby," and said the road was "slippy" when some English-speakers might have said "slippery." They used "whenever" for "when" sometimes and "needs done" for "needs to be done," and they called thorns "jaggers." Over the generations, Scotch-Irish words and grammatical features continued to be used in the Pittsburgh area, and, because the area was isolated from the East Coast, some of these features persisted for longer than they did elsewhere. In ways we cannot exactly trace, their pronunciation evolved differently than did the pronunciation of people in New York or Maryland, and they ended up with some distinctive sounds as well as distinctive words and bits of grammar. Newcomers, or at least their children, learned to talk the way the local people did. As a result, there is a distinctive set of language forms that can be heard in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Dialectologists studying the regional vocabulary of southwestern Pennsylvania in the 1940s noted the Scotch-Irish origin of many of the local words. A recent map of the dialect areas of American English shows a small circle in western Pennsylvania surrounding an area that differs from any other when it comes to how a particular set of speech sounds are related to one another and how they are pronounced (Labov et al. 2005, 271–275). Other visitors have sometimes noted peculiarities of Pittsburgh speech. A 1910 article in the *Pittsburg Dispatch* discusses distinctive "sayings and proverbs" from the Pittsburgh area (Carrell 1910), and, starting in the 1950s, writers for the *Post-Gazette* and the *Pittsburgh Press* regularly listed quirks of local speech that visitors remarked on.

For most of the city's history, however, Pittsburghers barely noticed the local way of speaking, if they were aware of it at all. Even today, many older Pittsburghers—including some who sound like Pittsburghers—say they never

noticed anyone with a Pittsburgh accent when they were growing up. Some of them observe that they must have been exposed to the accent but that they were unaware of it, because it was the way they themselves spoke and because they were surrounded by people who talked the same way. When it is suggested that they have an accent, many Pittsburghers are not sure what it is about their speech that people notice. Is it that they pronounce *north* as "nort"? That they drop the *g* in words that end with *ing*? That they use the word *downtown* to refer to the city's central business district, or that they pronounce it "dahntahn"? There were and are Pittsburghers who pronounce sounds and use words this way, a way that an outsider might find odd. But if there was a Pittsburgh-dialect area before the later decades of the twentieth century, it was only from the point of view of outsiders such as dialectologists. On the whole, Pittsburghers did not notice that their speech was different from anyone else's, and they did not talk about how they talked. A Pittsburgher who moved away in the early 1960s might have identified Pittsburgh accents with the working-class residents of the neighborhood down the hill; some teachers might have corrected students who used *you'uns* as the plural of *you*, and some (though by no means not all) might have flagged sentences like *My hair needs brushed* as incorrect. The terms *Pittsburghese* and *Yinzer* had not yet been coined.

When the emigrant of the 1960s returned to Pittsburgh in 2004, however, things were very different. By the early 2000s, Pittsburghese was hard to miss. Pittsburghese was no longer how the steelworkers in the next neighborhood talked; it was, if you believed what you heard, how all Pittsburghers talked. More and more, this way of talking was thought of as a unique dialect associated with being a Pittsburgher, not just with being uneducated or incorrect. In 2011, representations of Pittsburgh pronunciations, words, and bits of unusual grammar could be seen everywhere: on souvenir items like T-shirts and coffee mugs, on billboards and protest banners ("Yinz' Live in a Police State"), in museums and on the radio, in the names of city-betterment initiatives (Redd up Pittsburgh), rock bands (Enemiesofyinz), even literary magazines (*The New Yinzer*). A Subway sandwich shop welcomes "yinz" to Pittsburgh in its airport signage. Today, younger Pittsburghers are less likely to have strong Pittsburgh accents in their everyday speech than their parents are, but they are much more likely to be able to imitate a Pittsburgh accent in a self-conscious performance, sometimes very accurately. People agree about what words and structures are Pittsburghese, and they use a common set of words and structures to evoke Pittsburghese and Pittsburgh identities. According to them, and to the artifacts they are surrounded by, Pittsburghers say "dahntahn" instead of "downtown." They use *yinz* as the plural of *you*. On Sunday afternoons they cheer for the Pittsburgh "Stillers," not the Steelers, and they shop at the Giant "Iggle" (Giant Eagle).

As we will see, many of the words and bits of grammar that people think of as Pittsburghese can be traced to the English of the Scotch-Irish, and most can be

found in many other places besides Pittsburgh. Others have different sources, and some are representations of habits all English-speakers possess. How, then, did this particular set of words, phrases, and pronunciations become an icon of Pittsburgh, and why? What happened during the second half of the twentieth century to reshape a largely unnoticed way of speaking in southwestern Pennsylvania into a highly visible urban dialect called Pittsburghese? How has Pittsburghese come to be linked to local identity so strongly that Pittsburghese is alluded to almost every time people talk about what Pittsburgh is like or what it means to be a Pittsburgher? How do language, place, and identity get linked in this way? Why has this happened in Pittsburgh, and what characterizes cities around the world where similar processes are in play? What is it about a city's history, geography, and economy that leads people to make links between a particular set of linguistic forms, a geographical site, and a way of being? How are the links forged? More generally, how is it that local ways of speaking that are clearly in the process of homogenizing with neighboring ones come simultaneously to be celebrated more than ever before?

These are the questions that students of place, language, and identity across disciplines need to ask in the context of current social and economic change, and they are the questions I try to answer in this book. I show how a particular set of geographic, economic, ideological, and linguistic circumstances came together in Pittsburgh during a particular span of time to create the milieu in which Pittsburghese emerged into people's consciousness and gave it the shape and meaning it has. In the process, I show that the only way to piece together the story of Pittsburgh speech and Pittsburghese is to combine theory and method from linguistics, history, social theory, anthropology, rhetoric, and geography.

Although my aim is to trace the history of a dialect, what I am doing is not historical sociolinguistics in the usual sense. I am not primarily interested in reconstructing how different groups of people may have spoken in earlier times or in using archival sources to trace language change in the past. My project has more in common with what have been called "social histories" of language and dialect (Leith 1997; Wales 2006; T. Crowley 2012). Social histories of languages and dialects explore how historical events might have put people in contact with people who spoke differently, what historical facts led to language standardization, and what sorts of social and material facts caused languages and dialects to spread.

Whether they study remote times or recent ones, sociolinguists are often more interested in how people actually speak than in how they think they speak. However, I am not interested in Pittsburghers' everyday, vernacular speech as my primary focus. Rather, I want to understand how Pittsburghers' everyday accents are shaped by Pittsburghers' conceptions of how they talk, and, conversely, how people's actual speech shapes their conceptions. In this respect, this project shares some aims and methods with scholars of "folk linguistics" or "perceptual

dialectology" (Long and Preston 2000; Niedzielski and Preston 1999; Preston 1989), who take seriously what nonlinguists say about ways of talking and about particular linguistic variants. More explicitly than most perceptual dialectologists, however, I am interested in Pittsburghese, and dialects in general, as cultural products; that is, as the outcomes of complex chains of ideological and material conditions and social activities. Pittsburgh speech, as it is actually used and heard, is just one part of the material context that gave rise to Pittsburghese.

Like other research about how people perceive and talk about variation in language, the work I describe in this book has important implications for my colleagues in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Dialect awareness, linguistic focusing and standardization, the stigmatization and stereotyping of particular forms, and whole ways of speaking all arise from complex sets of social and historical circumstances and processes of meaning making that we cannot take for granted. We will not have a full picture of how and why language changes unless we think more systematically about the particular circumstances that give rise to larger scale patterns of variation. This book provides some conceptual tools for doing this. These tools are drawn mainly from recent work on semiotics that originates in the American pragmatist philosophical tradition, although some of these tools have been talked about in other terms in other strands of sociolinguistic research. I describe and then illustrate the idea of enregisterment, together with the related concepts of metapragmatics, reflexivity, and indexical meaning. I show how, using these tools, we can trace how particular ways of pronouncing sounds and particular choices among words and patterns of grammar become linked with social meaning, and we can explain when and why this happens. Using these tools, I show that dialect awareness is better conceptualized as a process than as a mental state. Dialect awareness is something that happens in social interaction as a result of social and rhetorical exigencies that can be described in detail. The detailed historical work that I model in this book also provides a way to understand why certain linguistic variants become stereotyped, in Labov's (1972c, 180) sense, and why stereotyped features tend to disappear from the speech community. I will show that, contrary to our usual understanding of this process, stereotyped features do not disappear because people who employ them stop doing so. Instead, stereotyping and the loss of stereotyped features result from two different though interrelated processes that involve two different sets of people.

My project is situated between city-scale explorations of urban speech like those of William Labov (1972a, b) and others (Kerswill and Williams 2000; Milroy 1987) and community of practice-scale studies like those of Eckert (2000) and others (Alim 2004; Mendoza-Denton 2008). I bring the ideas of practice and phenomenology to bear to highlight how the social meanings of linguistic forms vary among Pittsburghers in ways some larger scale studies have missed. Pittsburgh is not a community of practice in any but the most vacuous sense of the