Enregisterment of Pittsbrughese and the local African American community

Maeve Eberhardt *

University of Vermont, 85 S. Prospect Street, 517 Waterman Building, Burlington, VT 05405, United States

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Available online 10 September 2012

A B S T R A C T

In Pittsburgh, there is a recognizable, socially meaningful way of speaking, popularly known as Pittsbrughese. Through a number of metapragmatic and metadiscursive practices, Pittsbrughese has become enregistered (Agha, 2003, 2007), and thus ideologically linked to a specific persona, the authentic Pittsburgher (Johnstone, 2009, 2011; Johnstone et al., 2006). In this paper, I explore the enregisterment of Pittsbrughese in the local African American community, and the ways in which the dialect is a site for the expression and reproduction of cultural values linked to Whites in the city. For African Americans, Pittsbrughese is not only indexical of localness but specifically of White localness, which also has the effect of erasing social class distinctions that may otherwise be important to the meanings of Pittsbrughese for White residents of the city.

1. Introduction

In Pittsburgh, there is a recognizable, socially meaningful way of speaking that has come to be widely known as ‘Pittsburghese’ (see Johnstone, 2009; Johnstone et al., 2006, 2002). The social meanings and cultural values of Pittsburghese and its features have shifted over the course of several decades, from being primarily indexical of social class, to being associated more overtly with place (Johnstone et al., 2006). Through a variety of metadiscursive and metapragmatic practices, Pittsburghese has become enregistered (Agha, 2003, 2007), and thus ideologically linked to the social persona of the authentic Pittsburgher (Johnstone, 2009, 2011, forthcoming; Johnstone et al., 2006).

In this paper, I focus on the enregisterment of Pittsburghese in the local African American community, and the ways in which the local dialect is a site for the expression and reproduction of cultural values linked to Whites in the city. I argue that as for Pittsburgh speakers more generally, Pittsburghese for African Americans is enregistered as a particular way of speaking, identified as uniquely local. The groups diverge, however, in the other social meanings attached to the dialect, as evidenced in metalinguistic and metadiscursive practices. For African Americans, Pittsburghese is not only indexical of localness but specifically of White localness, which also has the effect of erasing social class distinctions that may otherwise be important to the meanings of Pittsburghese for White residents of the city. In these ways, the notion of Pittsburghese has become raced and exclusionary, creating boundaries between local Whites and African Americans. As will become apparent, however, this boundary making has not been the work only of Whites—African Americans are complicit as well in creating and maintaining an ideological separation between the ethnic groups, in part through the enregisterment of the local dialect.
2. The city of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh is a mid-sized city in Southwestern Pennsylvania, close to the Eastern border of Ohio. There are roughly 305,000 residents in the metropolitan area, about 26% of whom are African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, based on census data from 2010). Early in the country’s history, Pittsburgh was established as the nation’s industrial center because of its strategic geographic location at the confluence of three rivers (Killikelly, 1906). Early settlers included mainly those of Scots–Irish descent, though later years brought large numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (Dunaway, 1944; Faires, 1986; Hinshaw, 2002). African American migration to Pittsburgh began around 1875, when companies began to recruit African Americans from the South to fill positions in the mills, particularly during labor strikes, or periods of restricted immigration during war (Dickerson, 1986; Glasco, 2006; Gottlieb, 1987; Hinshaw, 2002).

As different ethnic groups arrived in the city, they settled in neighborhoods that became ethnic enclaves, separated by Pittsburgh’s hills and ravines. These neighborhoods were self-contained, providing everything from food markets to schools to churches, and often business and services were conducted in the native language of the immigrant population. Because of Pittsburgh’s topography, marked by its three rivers and a very hilly landscape, African Americans were forced to scatter throughout the city into four or five “mini-ghettoes” (Glasco, 1989). This fragmentation of the community prevented the formation of a strong and unified African American presence in the city, as there was no neighborhood until the 1930s that had a majority of African American residents. Furthermore, as Glasco (1989) notes, the dispersal of African Americans throughout the city created deep class divisions, as middle class African Americans were separated—both socially and geographically—from those in less advantaged positions. However, some neighborhoods were not as strictly segregated along ethnic lines. The centrally-located neighborhood called the Hill District, for example, was established as a diverse “blue-collar cluster”, housing African Americans alongside those of Jewish, Polish, and Italian descent, as well as people from other European backgrounds (Bodnar et al., 1982).

The economy in Pittsburgh boomed during World War II, and in the years immediately following as well. But over the next few decades, when the economy (both locally and nationally) was stagnant, Pittsburgh’s industries began a significant decline, which was to last until the 1980s. Between the 1950s and 1960s while other Northern cities continued to receive large numbers of new settlers seeking work in various industries, Pittsburgh saw a steady decrease in numbers of migrants of all backgrounds, and the number of African Americans relocating to Pittsburgh plummeted (Glasco, 1996). All of Pittsburgh suffered from the collapse of the once-flourishing industries, but African Americans were one of the hardest hit groups, in terms of unemployment rates and wage-earning (Glasco, 1989). African Americans were often the first to be fired during hard economic times in the industries, and the last to be hired back when things began to improve (Dickerson, 1986; Hinshaw, 2002). Moreover, these racial disparities in Pittsburgh were particularly noticeable when compared with what was happening on a national level (Glasco, 1989; Hinshaw, 2002). Racial tensions have continued to plague Pittsburgh, sparked by displacement of African Americans through urban renewal efforts, racially-motivated shootings and murders, and police brutality against African Americans (Fullilove, 2004; Trotter, 2001). The city is largely segregated today, and access to public transportation, quality schooling, and jobs is limited for many African American Pittsburghers. African Americans continue to lag behind Whites in terms of income, home ownership and school success, and lead by a significant margin in poverty levels and unemployment rates (Center on Race and Social Problems, 2007).

The neighborhood of the Hill District historically was recognized as the center of African American life and culture in the city (Fullilove, 2004; Glasco, 1989). For this reason, this neighborhood was chosen as the site for the research described in this paper, and participants were selected based on a close association to the Hill District. Almost all of the speakers were native to the Hill, and most had remained there for the majority of their lives. Some, however, grew up there but at the time of the interview lived in another neighborhood in the city. In a limited number of cases, the speakers did not grow up in the Hill, but in an adjacent neighborhood, and had close connections to the Hill, either through work, family, or church affiliation. Interviews were conducted between 2004 and 2007. Two female fieldworkers were involved in collecting the data for this study: Trista Pennington, an African American fieldworker native to Cleveland, Ohio, and the author, a White native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 36 interviews in total were conducted. Many interviews took place in participants’ homes. Others were conducted in a quiet public space, such as the local library. Interviews lasted, on average, between 1 and 2 h and were audio recorded on a Marantz PMD670 solid-state digital recorder with a Sony ECM-77b lavaliere microphone. The interview protocol used, from The Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project (headed by Barbara Johnstone and Scott Kiesling), was designed to elicit a variety of speech topics and speech styles (Labov, 1972). In the last modules of the protocol, participants were asked to talk about their neighborhood and the city of Pittsburgh, questions that aimed to understand how speakers have experienced the place of Pittsburgh, and how they orient to it. Finally, speakers were asked to talk specifically about local speech—what they knew about it, if they had heard of Pittsburgese, what features they were able to identify (if any). This metalinguistic talk allows the researchers to gain insight into speakers’ awareness of the local dialect, as well as their perceptions about who uses it. All names used in the current work are pseudonyms.

3. Pittsburgh’s Hill District

I turn now to a brief sociohistorical sketch of the Hill District, which provides a broader understanding of the relationship between African Americans and the larger city of Pittsburgh, helping to situate the arguments presented in the current work.
In the early 1900s, the Hill District was established as an ethnically diverse “blue-collar cluster” (Bodnar et al., 1982). Close to downtown Pittsburgh and several factories and mills along the river, the Hill District was a centrally-located neighborhood that attracted large numbers of African American, Jewish, Polish and Slavic workers who settled there. The Hill District became one of several neighborhoods for African Americans in the city, and over the years, slowly became a solidly lower-class African American district, as residents (African American and those of other ethnic backgrounds) achieved economic stability and moved to more desirable neighborhoods. Jewish residents moved in large numbers to Squirrel Hill, Italians moved to Bloomfield, and more affluent African Americans moved to Homewood, East Liberty, or “Sugartop” in Schenley Heights, which is adjacent to the Hill District.

The Hill District established itself in the early 20th century as one of the nation’s most prominent African American cultural districts. As the site of many nightclubs and bars, the Hill attracted nationally-acclaimed jazz musicians (many of whom were native to Pittsburgh) such as George Benson, Stanley Turrentine, and Earl Hines. Glasco (1989) writes, “As the district’s fame spread nationwide, Claude McKay, leading poet of the Harlem Renaissance, labeled the intersection of Wylie and Fullerton Avenues—in the heart of the Hill—“Crossroads of the World.” African Americans who grew up during this time speak nostalgically of the many stores, markets, theaters, and restaurants that lined the streets of the neighborhood. The Hill District today is drastically different. There are very few shops or restaurants in the neighborhood; there is no grocery store. Where there used to be jazz clubs, movie theaters, and restaurants, there now are crumbling buildings, boarded-up storefronts, and empty lots. Those African American interviewees who witnessed the Hill when it was flourishing not only recall those days fondly, but also express bitterness and resentment at the neighborhood’s current state. One of the most frequently recurring themes in interviews when discussing the Hill District is the lack of a grocery store, though at the time of writing, plans were finally in place to build one (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2012). Current residents often complain that they have to travel to nearby neighborhoods, such as the Southside (about 3 miles away and across the Monongahela River) to buy food. For many, this entails either depending on a friend or relative with a car, or paying for the bus (2 buses each way) or a jitney. In the excerpt below, Esther, an African American woman born in 1932, draws comparisons between the Hill District when she was a child and the conditions of the neighborhood today, expressing her dissatisfaction with there being no grocery store or other market to buy groceries as she talks with Trista, an African American fieldworker.

Excerpt 1.

Esther 1 What boggles my mind is
2 growing up in the Hill
3 you didn’t have to leave the Hill
4 like other
5 there were many neighborhoods that was like that
6 you didn’t have to leave the Hill for anything
7 you could buy clothes
8 you could buy shoes
9 we had fish mar-
10 fresh fish markets
11 we had um
12 groceries similar to Giant Eagle*
13 um we had
14 um
15 what do they call them
16 stores where you could buy dishes and a can opener
17 or a fan or
18 you know
19 they were all
20 you know
21 a cleaners
22 they were all there
23 they were all there
24 and now
25 there’s barely anything
26 in comparison
27 it just drives me crazy
28 it drives me crazy

---

1 A jitney is an unlicensed taxi, relied on heavily by African American communities in Pittsburgh.
The causes of there being, as Esther puts it, “barely anything” now in the Hill District, can be linked to several events. Plans for urban renewal have resulted in the demolition of large parts of the Hill District. This planning began in 1943, stemming from a group of leaders wanting to plan for Pittsburgh’s future success—the Allegheny Conference on Post-War Community Planning (Fullilove, 2004). The sentiment of that group and of the city at large with respect to the Hill District is articulated in the following segment from an article that appeared in 1943 in Greater Pittsburgh, written by George Evans, a member of the Pittsburgh City Council:

“The Hill District is probably one of the most outstanding examples in Pittsburgh of neighborhood deterioration... Approximately 90 per cent of the buildings in the area are substandard and have long outlived their usefulness, and so there would be no social loss if they were all destroyed... These streets should all be vacated and a new street pattern overlaid. This would effect a saving of probably 100 acres now used for unnecessary streets” (Evans, 1943, my emphasis).

The assertion that “there would be no social loss” is a remarkable comment on the disregard for the African Americans who inhabited the streets and neighborhood Evans wanted to see destroyed. Similar urban renewal plans were underway in African American neighborhoods throughout the country, particularly in areas that were close to a city’s downtown area, such as the Hill District. The goal was to replace the unsightliness and blight of these neighborhoods with new, modern spaces, into which (wealthier) Whites could move (Fullilove, 2004). This would give the affluent easy access to work and recreation in the city. But before they could do this, the area had to be ‘cleaned up’. Fullilove (2004) also notes that it was important to create “a buffer zone” between the downtown area and the poor, black area adjacent to it. In Pittsburgh, this was realized in the demolition of the Lower Hill to create the Civic Arena. The Lower Hill was the residential neighborhood closest to Pittsburgh’s downtown, and housed not only African Americans, but also Jewish, Polish, Italian, and other ethnic groups (Bodnar et al., 1982; Glasco, 1989). In the 1950s, the area was cleared out and razed to build the arena, a place for concerts, and the playing field for the Pittsburgh Penguins, the local professional hockey team (the arena was itself demolished in early 2012). Whites who lived in the Lower Hill moved to other city neighborhoods, many of which were fairly ethnically homogenous—Polish Hill, Bloomfield, Squirrel Hill. African Americans were left with somewhat fewer choices, not being welcome in such neighborhoods. Many moved to the Middle Hill, literally just up the hill from their old residence. Others moved to one of the predominantly African American neighborhoods in the city, such as East Liberty and Homewood. It was also around this time that federal money became available around the country for urban renewal efforts, and cities began creating public housing developments to hold poor African Americans and contain them in “islands of black life” (Fullilove, 2004).

During the riots that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, what remained of the business district in the Hill was destroyed. Since that time, the Hill has remained a desolate neighborhood, segregated from the rest of the city. The inhabitants are mostly African American, and largely poor. And now the Hill District faces the same displacement and destruction that it did some 50 years ago. A new phase of urban renewal sees the Hill District as a prime location, and has begun to demolish existing buildings and homes, some abandoned and some occupied, and build new ones in their place. Some public housing developments, such as Allequippa Terrace, have already been replaced with newer buildings. Residents who were forced to move are not ensured a new home in these developments. They have to meet eligibility requirements, and often the rent is beyond what is affordable for people in public housing. According to several Hill District residents interviewed for this project, there were initial promises of reduced rent, but the cost has gone steadily up, eventually forcing people out. All of these efforts are seen by residents as plans to “change the demographics” of the Hill, as Albert, an African American man who was 81 years old at the time of his interview, puts it. Other Hill District residents similarly expressed discontent at the obvious attempts of the city to move in non-African American groups. The excerpt below from Barbara, an African American woman (age 53; interviewed by Trista), highlights the dissatisfaction felt by many African Americans towards the larger White community of Pittsburgh.

Excerpt 2.

Barbara  1 I remember
          2 when they first started doing Crawford Square
          3 they put a big sign
          4 on a billboard saying
          5 ‘Welcome Back to the Hill’
          6 so
          7 to me

(continued on next page)
Barbara interprets the billboard welcoming people ‘back’ to the Hill as an advertisement that the neighborhood is changing in a way to be suitable once again for non-African Americans to take up residence there. The city accomplishes this by demolishing existing structures and building residences in which ‘your average African American’ cannot afford to live. As a result, people have felt powerless in combating the unfair situation they are presented with in their own neighborhood.

In her writing about the Hill District, Mindy Fullilove (2004) notes “All of these developments—turning over the land for uses important to white people, creating a buffer to downtown, and destroying people’s homes, then letting the land lie fallow—contributed to alienation between the African American community and the larger city.” These city projects, and the power of the city and its developers to force people to move and then destroy their homes is a point of bitter discontent among Hill District residents, current and former. There is, as a result, a strong lack of affinity for Pittsburgh. This negative orientation towards the city is critical to understanding the ways in which the city, its White residents, and, as we will see, their speech patterns, are viewed by local African Americans.

4. Pittsburgh speech and Pittsburghese

Sociolinguistic studies of Pittsburgh speech identify a number of characteristic regional features. Within phonology, Pittsburgh speech is characterized by a long-standing merger of the low-back vowels /a:/ and /a/, which is realized most often as a back and somewhat rounded vowel, rather than the more front and unround form found in other regions in which this merger is taking place (Labov et al., 2006; Thomas, 2001). The tense vowels /i/ and /u/ are often lax in Pittsburgh when they precede /l/, so that word pairs like steel and still, or fool and full, are realized with the same vowel (Johnstone et al., 2002; Labov et al., 2006; McElhinny, 1999; Thomas, 2001). The diphthong /aw/ in Pittsburgh may be pronounced monophthongally, so that /haws/ may be realized as [haːs] (Johnstone et al., 2002; Labov et al., 2006; Labov and Baranowski, 2006; McElhinny, 1999; Thomas, 2001). /ai/ may also be monophthongal, though generally only before the liquids /r/ and /l/, thus making words like towel and tile sound, identically, like [taːl] (Johnstone et al., 2002; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008; Labov et al., 2006; McElhinny, 1999). /l/-vocalization is also present in Pittsburgh (Johnstone et al., 2002; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008; Labov et al., 2006; McElhinny, 1999). Additionally, there are lexical items used in the region which generally are not found elsewhere: nebby ‘nosey’, redd up ‘clean up’, slippy ‘slippery’, and jumbo ‘bologna’, many of which came to Pittsburgh by way of the Scots–Irish who settled there (Johnstone et al., 2002; McElhinny, 1999; Montgomery, 1991). Similarly, the needs V-ed construction, as in These clothes need washed, or The table needs wiped, has its roots in the Scots–Irish settlers in the area (Johnstone et al., 2002; McElhinny, 1999; Murray et al., 1996; Stabley, 1959). Finally, Pittsburgh speech contains the “general extender” n’at ‘and that’, as in He likes golfing and fishing n’at, and the second person plural pronoun yinz (Johnstone et al., 2002; McElhinny, 1999).

All of these features have been documented in scholarly works; some of them also feature prominently in popular discourse about Pittsburgh speech, which has come to be known as “Pittsburghese”. Throughout the city of Pittsburgh, one can find various artifacts strewn with examples of Pittsburghese—these words and pronunciations of words believed to be unique to the city. Interest in the local dialect runs high, and commodification of Pittsburghese is pervasive: t-shirts, mugs, and other artifacts prominently display representations of local-sounding speech. Local newspapers and magazines sometimes run features on Pittsburgh speech (e.g. Fleming, 2008; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2001), and in special TV programs about the city, such as WQED’s Pittsburgh A to Z, Pittsburghese is often highlighted. Additionally, there are several Pittsburghese-themed websites, and the book How to Speak Like a Pittsburgher (McCool, 1982) has been in circulation for over 20 years.

Most commonly, items featuring Pittsburghese contain lists of those words or phrases (thought to be) unique to Pittsburgh, such as yinz and redd up. Additionally, phonological features surface in words shown with non-standard spellings to represent local pronunciation. For example, the laxing of /i/ before /l/ is commonly displayed in the item Stillers, for ‘Steelers’, the local professional football team. Another popular characterization of Pittsburgh dialect is the representation of ‘Iron City’ (a locally-produced beer) as Ahrn City, calling to mind the monophthongal pronunciation of /air/ that is sometimes heard. But the most frequently represented feature of Pittsburgh speech by far is the monophthongal pronunciation of /aw/, which appears

---

2 Some items, such as pop for ‘soda’, are shared with other regions, but are believed by many Pittsburghers to be unique to the region.
almost exclusively in the item ‘downtown’, almost always spelled *dahtnah*. In fact, Johnstone et al. (2002) found that in written representations of the local dialect, monophthongal /aw/ appeared three times more frequently than any other phonological feature.\(^3\) As such, monophthongal /aw/ is seen as a strong symbol of local identity for some (although not all Pittsburghers; see Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008).

As already mentioned, these features have been documented by linguists in analyses of Pittsburgh speech (e.g., Johnstone et al., 2002; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008; Labov et al., 2006; Labov and Baranowski, 2006); more relevant here is the fact that they play a central role in ideas about what it means to speak Pittsburghese, which is closely linked to ideologies about what constitutes authentic local identity. Moreover, descriptions of what it means to be a Pittsburgher often center on the ability to use and recognize features of the local dialect (Johnstone, 2007, forthcoming; Johnstone et al., 2006). As Johnstone (2007) explains, “When “authentic” Pittsburghers or Pittsburgh activities are described or parodied, local speech is almost invariably mentioned or performed.” As I discuss below, therefore, these forms have thus been infused with 3rd order indexical meaning (Silverstein, 2003). It is not only that the features of Pittsburghese are recruited in order to perform local identity; in addition, these performances comment on the use of the forms in other contexts, thus linking them to wider social meanings and personae.

5. Indexicality and enregisterment

Indexicality (see Silverstein, 2003) has become an important means for sociolinguists to discuss the link between linguistic form and social meaning, or between “macrosociological facts and linguistic practice” (Eckert, 2008). We understand particular variants to index, or point to, wider social meanings, such as facets of a person’s identity—it allows us to ‘hear’ that person as projecting an identity in that moment that is from a particular place, of a particular ethnicity, for example.\(^4\) Johnstone (2011) explains this with particular clarity when she writes, “The relationship between the pronunciation and the identity is an indexical relationship; we can say that the pronunciation indexes the identity. Just as pronunciations can index identities, by virtue of being experienced together with other evidence of them, so can any other kind of linguistic form: words, phrases, grammatical patterns, patterns of discourse, even linguistic consistency or inconsistency over a lifetime.” As Johnstone (2011) further explains, sometimes several of these form-meaning links come to be understood as being interconnected; in these instances, what Agha refers to as a ‘register’ is formed. Agha (2007) describes registers as “cultural models of action that link diverse behavioral signs to enactable effects, including images of persona, interpersonal relationship, and type of conduct.” When individual linguistic forms get incorporated into the bundle of other form-meaning relationships that form a register, they themselves are said to have become enregistered. As Agha (2005) defines it, enregisterment reflects “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users.” In other words, a distinct linguistic repertoire has come to index “speaker status linked to a specific scheme of cultural values” (Agha, 2003).

Not all indexical relationships become enregistered; this then prompts the question, why do some undergo this process? Johnstone et al. (2006) have addressed just this question in tracing the enregisterment of Pittsburghese (see also Johnstone, 2009). Specifically, Johnstone et al. (2006) detail the ways in which Pittsburghese and its codified list of features have, over time, become closely linked to place. As the authors discuss, Pittsburgh before World War II was relatively isolated. This isolation presented few opportunities for Pittsburghers to notice and/or comment on their speech patterns, because “they had no other way to sound” (p. 88); no one commented on Pittsburgh speech because everyone used it. At this point, Johnstone et al. (2006) note, features of Pittsburgh speech were indicators, in Labov’s (1972) terms and functioning at the 1st order of indexicality, in the language of Silverstein (2003). In other words, features could be identified and described by outsiders, but within the region, there was not yet social meaning attached to them. As more Pittsburghers began to enjoy increased social mobility, features of local speech came to be increasingly linked with working class speakers and ways of life. As the authors explain, “social mobility... gave Pittsburghers access to new variants of forms that had been relatively invisible in their speech or that of their neighbors. Once forms became variable, the choice among variants could... be invested with second-order indexical meaning such as class or correctness” (Johnstone et al., 2006). As local forms shifted from indicators to markers (Labov, 1972), they could be used to index social class distinctions, but also had the potential to be used to create solidarity among local people. The noticing of local speech features as producing a distinct way of speaking, and the deployment of these features to introduce such social meanings into discourse paved the way for forms within Pittsburgh speech to become enregistered as Pittsburghese. As Pittsburghers started to become more geographically mobile—going away for college and vacationing outside of the area, for example—these features of Pittsburgh speech were increasingly heard as local, as they marked speakers as being from the Pittsburgh region. Now in addition to being indexical of social class, these features had become strongly indexical of localness, and over time this became the primary index of Pittsburgh speech. Metalinguistic talk and other circulating discourses have helped, over several decades, to solidify a list of features as distinctive to Pittsburgh and, crucially, indexical of local identity. Not all features of Pittsburgh speech are recognized as Pittsburghese (/l/-)

\(^3\) The other features that appeared most frequently in representations of Pittsburghese were the latching of /l/ and the alveolar pronunciation of the morpheme – ing. Note that this second feature is not unique to Pittsburgh by any means; it is variable across the English-speaking world. However, its inclusion in representations of Pittsburghese serves to mark the dialect as non-standard.

\(^4\) However, we must be attentive to the “intentional fallacy” that Johnstone and Kiesling (2008) highlight, and be careful not interpret identity projections where they may not exist.
vocalization and the low-back merger are two examples of excluded features, which tend to operate below the level of awareness), but over the years, the list of features classified as Pittsbughese has become more consistent, with the same words repeated over and over again. As Johnstone et al. (2006) show, connections between the register and place are achieved in various ways, to make explicit the ideological linkage between this particular way of speaking and place. Pittsbughese-themed items very often showcase speech features overlaid on a skyline of the city, frequently appear in black and 'gold' (a shade of yellow), which are the city's colors. Moreover, these items are often sold alongside other souvenirs in places such as the airport and tourist destinations like the Strip District (a marketplace district with specialty food shops, outside vendors and restaurants) and Station Square (an old train station which now houses shops and restaurants). The connection between register and place is strengthened as well through the name 'Pittsburghese' itself, immediately identifying the register as tied to a region. As Johnstone et al. (2006) write, “On the stage set by the second-order indexicality of certain speech features, discursive practices and artifacts have emerged that have enregistered local speech in the local imagination as unique and unchanging and have strengthened and stabilized the ideological links between local speech and place, making other indexicalities less and less available for identity work” (p. 94–95). In other words, the previous linkages to social class have become less important (but are still in operation), as the connection with place has grown stronger.

The local identity that Pittsbughese may be used to evoke is, for many, a source of pride. This is evidenced by t-shirts with sayings such as “100% Authentic Pittsburgh”, or “Pittsbughers bleed black ‘n’ gold”, making reference to the city's colors, which are also the colors of the three professional sports teams—the Steelers (football), the Pirates (baseball) and the Penguins (hockey). One such shirt (see Johnstone, 2009, forthcoming) also includes the text, “The people of this great city are considered to be the nicest, warmest, and friendliest in the world. Native or visitor, when you leave this place the generosity and hospitality of its inhabitants leaves you longing to return.” This shirt captures an enduring theme in local discourse: it is not uncommon to hear (White) Pittsbughers note that they would never move or want to live elsewhere, whether or not they ever have. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Debbie, a White 44-year-old woman I interviewed in 2005 as part of the Pittsburgh Speech and Society Project.

Excerpt 3.

Debbie
1 I always say when we hit 51 South or North whatever
2 where ever we're coming back
3 it's always nice to be back here
4 It just seems like home
5 I've been here forever so it will always be home to me
6 Even if we ever move or we retire somewhere else
7 this will always feel like home to me

Pittsburgh still retains its image as a blue-collar town, and there is a feeling that people are kind, nice, and helpful—it is often labeled as ‘a city with a small town feel’. When speakers use Pittsbughese to project local identity, these cultural values are embedded in the performance. Indeed, this same t-shirt includes several example items of Pittsbughese, providing an ideological link between the way local people speak and the kind of people they are. Thus, the message of the t-shirt is clear: being an authentic Pittsbugher means knowing about and using Pittsbughese, just as much as being nice, warm and friendly. In countless examples, we see that the enregistrement of Pittsbughese has established that way of speaking as a central part of local identity; as a result, local speech forms are now available to project this local identity in a variety of linguistic, metalinguistic, and metadiscursive practices.

Johnstone et al. (2006) have additionally pointed out the solidarity-building function that Pittsbughese can serve, in unifying people from the same place. In a somewhat related manner, both Remlinger (2009) and Beal (2009) have discussed the ways in which discursive and metadiscursive practices surrounding enregistered forms can serve to maintain differences between insiders and outsiders within a region. In Copper County, Michigan (Remlinger, 2009) and in Newcastle and Sheffield, England (Beal, 2009), a select number of enregistered forms function as shibboleths, serving to immediately mark speakers as outsiders when they (inevitably) fail to pronounce the words correctly according to local norms. These enregistered forms have become available for speakers to use to self-consciously project a local identity. Furthermore, the cultural values that are attached to what it means to be from the region are embodied in iconic local figures, such as the “Yooper” (from ‘Upper Peninsula’) in Michigan, the steelworker and housewife in Sheffield, and the miner in Newcastle. These characters often appear alongside enregistered dialect forms, “reinforcing the link between linguistic forms and iconic local identities” (Beal, 2009).

In Pittsburgh, the iconic local figure is the Yinzer. Like the Yooper in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula (Remlinger, 2009), the name, derived from yinz, is explicitly linked with place and dialect (Johnstone, 2007). The Yinzer in Pittsburgh engages in local practices, such as cheering on the local sports teams (and “bleeding black ‘n’ gold”), eating pierogies and kielbasa, drinking Iron City beer, and saying things like dahntahn. Often the iconic figure of the Yinzer is male, is most frequently portrayed as working class, and is invariably White. As the embodiment of the authentic Pittsbughese speaker, the Yinzer also symbolizes the cultural values associated with using local speech. This is reflected in, for example, characters that DJ Jim...
Krenn has performed on the local radio station WDVE, such as ‘Stanley P. Kachowski’, a working-class Pittsburgher of Polish descent (see Johnstone, 2011; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008; Wisnosky, 2003).

Thus the metadiscourse surrounding Pittsburghese is not only raced—it is a way of speaking that is, explicitly or implicitly, associated with Whites—but it also in turn has the effect of excluding African Americans in Pittsburgh from the local identity connected to this enregistered way of speaking. If part of being an “authentic Pittsburgher” hinges on knowledge and use of Pittsburghese (Johnstone, 2007), then African Americans are excluded from this claim to local identity. The features of Pittsburgh speech described above have been documented for the most part for White speakers of the city. In studies of African American speech in Pittsburgh, the very most salient features, such as monophthongal /aw/, are virtually absent among this ethnic group (Eberhardt, 2009, 2010). In addition, Shelome Gooden’s work on intonation among African American women in Pittsburgh (Gooden, 2009) shows that African American women in the city appear to align to broader, supra-regional African American speech patterns, which underscores the “ethnolinguistic distinctiveness” that seems to be present among African Americans in the city of Pittsburgh (Gooden, 2009). African Americans in the city do exhibit some features of local speech that are below the level of social awareness, such as the low-back merger (Eberhardt, 2008). But importantly, those linguistic features which play a leading role in the definition of Pittsburghese are not found in local African American speech, thus in effect excluding African Americans from being ‘real Pittsburghers’. However, African Americans are complicit in this exclusionary process as well. As I argue below, being a Pittsburgher is not an identity claim that many local African Americans wish to make. From both sides, then, Pittsburghese serves to (re)create and maintain racial boundaries in the city. In a similar manner to the way enregistered forms operate in the Upper Peninsula and in Sheffield, in Pittsburgh, the metadiscourse surrounding Pittsburghese works to maintain and perhaps strengthen differences between Whites and African Americans as residents of the same city. Among African Americans, as the meaning of Whiteness is overlaid on top of localness, value judgments are produced about Pittsburghese and those who are perceived as its speakers.

6. African American perceptions of Pittsburghese

Within the African American community, there is also a relatively high level of awareness surrounding Pittsburghese. In sociolinguistic interviews, most interviewees were able to list features of Pittsburghese when asked about local ways of speaking. Although a few reported not having heard the term Pittsburghese itself, they were still familiar with specific salient features, such as yinz and dahntahn. And while many African Americans are aware of the t-shirts and other commodities featuring local speech, not one speaker produced one of these items during interviews, nor mentioned owning any or having interest in owning such items, in sharp contrast to Barbara Johnstone’s experiences interviewing local Whites (Johnstone, 2009), who reports that several of her interviewees brought out t-shirts, mugs and other such Pittsburghese-themed items during interviews to show her. Johnstone (e.g., forthcoming) has written about the strong interest in such locally-themed items in Pittsburgh, which does not appear to occur to such a large extent in other regions. In contrast, when asked about Pittsburghese t-shirts during an interview, one older African American man, Albert, responded, “nobody buy:s that.” Clearly, people do buy these t-shirts, and Albert is likely aware of that fact, but means to suggest instead that African Americans do not buy such items, already pointing at a distinct difference between Pittsburgh’s racial groups.

Associations between Pittsburghese and ethnicity are not made explicit in public discourse, consonant with Whiteness as an invisible social category (see Dyer, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993). However, metalinguistic talk by local African Americans reveals that race is central in the characterization of Pittsburghese. For African Americans, there is a clear semiotic link between what are heard as local features, localness and Whiteness. As Johnstone and colleagues have demonstrated for local Whites, African Americans in Pittsburgh also draw on highly codified lists that circulate as what the local dialect consists of; however, the features are somewhat more limited than those usually identified for Pittsburghese. For African Americans, the register of Pittsburghese is most often described as consisting of two local features: the monophthongal pronunciation of /aw/, as in dahntahn for ‘downtown’ and the second person plural pronoun yinz. The excerpt below, from Albert, clearly illustrates this ideological connection between features of Pittsburghese and White Pittsburgh speakers.

Excerpt 4.

| Maeve | 1 | Have you ever heard of something called Pittsburghese? |
| Albert | 2 | White |
|        | 3 | That’s a White thing |
| Maeve | 4 | What is it? Do you know what- |
| Albert | 5 | Yeah of course |
|        | 6 | They have |
|        | 7 | uh idioms like yunz’ |
|        | 8 | which means you all |

(continued on next page)
The answer that Albert provides to the question of what Pittsburghese is brings to light several key points about the enregistered dialect and how it is metadiscursively constructed within the local African American community. First, as already mentioned, Albert immediately connects this way of speaking with Whites in the city—after a pause (indicated in parentheses, in seconds), which serves to create a dramatic effect (see Mendoza-Denton, 1995); the repetition and subsequent pause in the following lines produce this same effect as well. In addition, Albert further creates distance between White and African American speech patterns by noting that there were other, different ways of speaking within African American communities, not present among Whites. In this way, Albert himself draws a boundary between the races in their use of language within the city. Finally, his answer reveals that, like Whites in the city, Albert and other African Americans also rely on the codified list of features of Pittsburghese that circulates within the city. His description of what Pittsburghese is centers on the two most salient features—yinz (2nd person plural) and monophthongal /aw/, which have become emblematic of the enregistered dialect, and by extension, localness and local identity. As already mentioned, monophthongal /aw/ is the most frequently represented phonological feature of Pittsburghese (Johnstone et al., 2002). While these and other features of Pittsburghese are commonly found on representations of it and in metalinguistic talk about it, Albert’s description of Pittsburghese, which includes only these two features, is highly representative of the way in which African Americans describe local speech. Other features, such as the laxing of /il/, and nebby, the term used in Pittsburgh for ‘nosey’, are, crucially, not considered part of Pittsburghese by local African Americans—to include them in a description would be implicating African Americans in the use of the local dialect, since African Americans use these features (as well as a few others) with frequency. Likewise, the most highly salient features of Pittsburghese, and those that are used to describe the register by African Americans, are not present in African American speech in the city (Eberhardt, 2009, 2010), as using these forms would index an undesired social identity.

These observations are also consistent with findings of previous studies of perceptions about Pittsburgh speech and its users. In a study about the use of Pittsburghese in radio skits, Wisnosky (2003) reports on survey results from 57 respondents (50 White, 7 African American). Upon hearing a portion of a radio skit featuring Pittsburghese, 100% of the survey participants indicated that they believed the speakers in the skits to be White (which, in fact, they were). When asked more generally about users of Pittsburghese, none of the respondents answered ‘African Americans’, while 73% answered “White”. There were some participants who thought that the use of Pittsburghese was “not limited to race”, with one participant indicating, “I think both speak it, but it’s more prevalent in whites”, though such comments were rare. Thus, while the issue of race is not generally made explicit in discourse about Pittsburghese, the results of this survey lend support to the claim that the register is indeed closely linked with race.

As I have tried to show, the social meaning of Pittsburghese is clearly indexical of not only place for African Americans, but also of race. What makes these two indices undesirable for local African Americans has to do with the orientation of the community towards the larger city. African Americans’ descriptions of the city are markedly different from Whites’, and rooted in perceptions of the city as racist and oppressive, and in a strong desire to leave, which have led to the strong negative orientation towards Pittsburgh, and as an extension, Pittsburghese as an expression of localness. One of the most striking explanations for Albert’s use of the pause here. Indeed, since Albert is talking with me, a White female, about race, it is possible that he is pausing to think about how to answer my question in a way that would not be offensive. However, I had established a good rapport with Albert before the interview was conducted, and that carried through while the interview was in session. In addition, we had talked about race quite openly before this point, and so I interpret this pause as providing more weight and dramatic effect. Certainly, however, Albert could have paused here to consider the best way to approach this potentially sensitive topic. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this alternative explanation to me.

At the same time, there can be strong pride expressed for the local football team, the Steelers, and many interviewees made note of their loyalty toward the franchise. One example of this type of local pride is found in the rap song “Black and Yellow”, by Pittsburgh-born African American rapper Wiz Khalifa, which was widely played leading up to the 2011 Superbowl, in which the Steelers competed.
ing examples of the relationship between the city of Pittsburgh and its African American residents has been the destruction and current gentrification of the neighborhood of the Hill District, discussed at length above.

Furthermore, African Americans, in contrast to many Whites, talk explicitly about the desire to leave the city. Pittsburgh is perceived as a racist town, one that oppresses and disrespects African Americans and African American life. In interviews, African Americans talk, for example, about Pittsburgh being the only place they have ever been called a ‘nigger’ and refer to it as “up South”, drawing a parallel between Pittsburgh and the region of the US that conjures ideas of racism for many people in the country (see e.g., Preston, 1997; Preston and Niedzielski, 2003). An example of this sentiment is provided below, during an interview conducted with Sheila, a 41-year-old African American woman.

Excerpt 5.

Sheila 1 It's always been a racist town
2 as far as I know
3 um
4 you know when I was younger
5 I never
6 paid attention to it I guess
7
Trista 8 Okay
Sheila 9 Never had a need to pay attention to it
Trista 10 um-hum
Sheila 11 But as I grew older and began to go into the workforce
12 I found out
13 [like]
Trista 14 [You] start to see that it is
Sheila 15 You all suck
16 (laughs)
17 You know
18 you all are all racist and
19 I wish I could do something to all of y'all and not go to jail
Trista 20 um-hum
Sheila 21 I probably would
Trista 22 um-hum
Sheila 23 But
24 It's a
25 It's a racist town

As Gooden (2009) also discusses, some residents, such as Sheila, report that they stay in the city only because they have family there. Others express a strong desire to leave as soon as they are able to (financially or otherwise). This lack of positive local orientation thus means that the enregisterment of Pittsburghese as a local way of speaking simultaneously evokes ideas of racism and oppression, and is a social identity in opposition to those that are constructed within the African American community.

These feelings are projected onto the characterological figure (Agha, 2007) of the Yinzer. For African Americans, this is intimately tied to and reflective of the oppression and racism that African Americans have been exposed to in the city, as expressed in an interview with Brianne (39 years old) in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 6.

Maeve 1 Have you ever heard of a yinzer?
Brianne 2 Um-hum
Maeve 3 What's a yinzer?
Brianne 4 ((inhales)) Like a racist White Pittsburgher.
Maeve 5 Okay
Brianne 6 That's what I you know
Maeve 7 That's what you think of?
Brianne 8 Yeah a i-i- ill informed kind of not very sophisticated in their analysis of stuff
9 And more White than other folks.
Maeve 10 Okay so there aren't
11 You wouldn't consider any African Americans yinzers
Brianne 12 Ah not
13 Yeah if you say yinzers that's not who comes to my mind
This excerpt illustrates the strong ideological connection between Yinzers, Whites and racism. While the ‘racist’ component may not always be explicitly stated, the ‘Whiteness’ of the terms yinz and Yinzer is always present. The term Yinzer began to circulate more widely in Pittsburgh in the 1990s (Johnstone et al., 2006), and as such, is not always recognizable to speakers—White and African American included. When asked about the term Yinzer in interviews, for example, some African Americans appear not to recognize it, but respond to the term yinz instead. We find this in another segment from an interview with Albert.

Excerpt 7.

Maeve 1 Have you ever heard of a yinzer?
Albert 2 I told you yeah
3 We didn’t hear that much
4 After after the uh Whiteys left the Hill you didn’t hear that stuff no more here
Maeve 5 You didn’t hear that anymore
Albert 6 No
Maeve 7 Do you hear it anytime now?
Albert 8 Where? Not in my neighbor-
9 I live over on the Northside in Northview Heights
10 We got the same thing
11 a Black enclave
12 Ain’t no (laughs)
Maeve 13 No yinz up there
Albert 14 No
15 No White boys come through except the mailman

An additional theme that emerges from this piece of discourse is the fact that Albert gained awareness of Pittsburghese when he was young because of the ethnic make-up of the neighborhood. As he says, once Whites moved, the features were gone from the neighborhood as well, reinforcing the ideological link between Whiteness and Pittsburghese. The presence of Whites in the neighborhood meant the presence of Pittsburghese; now that Whites no longer inhabit these “Black enclaves”, the speech patterns so closely associated with them are absent as well.

The contrast Albert draws between the “Black enclaves” of the Hill District and the Northside and the use of local speech features in other areas, by other (non-African American) residents, is also expressed by much younger speakers, indicating that the semiotic link is common throughout the African American community. Because the Hill District is now almost exclusively African American, younger speakers often do not become aware of such features until they enter high school, at which time they are in daily contact with White Pittsburghers for the first time in their lives. In such cases, we see evidence of enregistration ‘in action’: speakers become aware of other ways of speaking, and these other ways of speaking become linked to particular social identities and imbued with specific cultural values. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Daneen, 18 years old at the time of her interview.

Excerpt 8.

Maeve 1 What about a Yinzer?
2 Have you ever heard of someone called a Yinzer?
Daneen 3 I ain’t
4 No
5 A Yinzer, yinz
6 I’m sorry but no
7 The Black Pittsburghese do not say yinz
8 We say y’all or you (laughs)
9 We don’t say yinz (affects a White voice)
10 I don’t look like no Chinese money (laughs)
11 Call me yinz
12 Yinzers
13 Yinz guys
14 What is yinz guys like (scoffs)
Maeve 15 So Black people don’t say yinz
Daneen 16 No uh-huh
Maeve 17 You don’t hear people on the Hill say that
Daneen 18 Uh-huh
I’d be like what the?
What the hell? (high pitch)
((laughs))
I’d be looking confused like hmm ((laughs))
Where did you hear, where do you hear people using yinz
For real
when I went to Brashear
Um-hum
Cause like the only two schools I went to was Weil and Milliones
And them was
They was all Black schools
As soon as I went to Brashear like you know it was a lot of White people and [hey]
Hey yinz guys come over here ((affects a White voice))
Okay alright, I’m just take it like that
The teachers said that
or the students or every
all the White people?
Um-hum yes
All of them
Um-hum
Alright
You could be the janitor you say it

Having grown up in the Hill District, and having gone to school and interacting only or primarily with other African Americans, different ways of speaking were not immediately available to Daneen until she began high school and was brought into close contact with Whites. The Hill District’s neighborhood high school was closed in 1976 as part of school integration efforts. These local features then became available for metalinguistic talk, and linked with specific social identities. As Johnstone (e.g., Johnstone et al., 2006) has discussed, the increased social and geographic mobility of White Pittsburghers was also the impetus for shifting indexicalities and eventual enregisterment of Pittsburghese in the White community. In this way as well, the enregisterment of Pittsburghese has taken the same track in the two communities but with very different endpoints as a result.

The excerpt from Daneen also reveals that social class is not a significant part of the social meanings of the dialect for many African Americans. The predominantly White area from which students come to the high school Daneen is discussing is a lower middle-class neighborhood, rather than a working-class one, and thus does not have the blue-collar image that Pittsburghese is often associated with. As discussed above, Johnstone et al. (2006) argue that once Pittsburghese became linked with place, it became de-linked from social class; however, there does remain an image of Pittsburghese as being rooted in blue-collar ways of life, as evidenced in, for example, Jim Krenn’s radio skits or representations of “Yinzers” as drinking beer, watching sporting events in bars, etc. The combination of race and place trumps social class for African Americans—all Whites are seen as speaking this way: janitor, students, and teachers alike. Interestingly, Daneen focuses on the janitor as the hypothetical unexpected producer of this speech feature, further illustrating that the social class associations with Pittsburghese that may be shared among White speakers are not present for African Americans. In other words, whereas the unexpected user of ‘yinz’ in a White Pittsburgher’s description may have been the teachers or the principal, reflecting the social class indices that may still surface with respect to the register, this working-class connection is not present for Daneen, suggesting that the social class differences among Whites, at least with respect to the use of Pittsburghese, are not in operation in the African American community.

Another example of African American speakers becoming aware of White local ways of speaking, in these events of baptismal essentialization (Silverstein, 2003), which are the moments when “indexicality in variation begins” (Kiesling, 2009) comes from Maurice, a 14-year-old African American male. The interview was conducted during the summer that followed Maurice’s first year of high school, in a school which, similarly to Daneen’s experience, was one which drew from different neighborhoods, including some predominantly White areas, contrasting with his schools during the elementary and middle years, which were primarily, if not exclusively, African American. He responds here to my question about whether or not he thinks Whites and African Americans in Pittsburgh talk differently from one another.

Excerpt 9.

You ever hear the word [sIrA:n] like from Italians?
No

(continued on next page)
Like the responses of Albert and Daneen, Maurice once again illustrates this strong semiotic connection between Pittsburghese, Whiteness and localness. While Maurice’s response of ‘Italians’ and ‘brunettes’ is not entirely clear, it seems that Maurice is associating monophthongal /aw/ with some groups of White speakers, but not all, though he is unsure how to classify them. Indeed, this is insightful on his part, since not all White Pittsburghers exhibit monophthongal /aw/, as it varies with respect to gender, social class and age (Johnstone et al., 2004; Johnstone et al., 2002; Kiesling and Wisnosky, 2003). What is clear from his answer is that what he does not mean is African Americans.7

The experiences like those of Maurice and Daneen as they entered high school and came into close and prolonged contact with Whites for the first time, contribute to the sustained ideological linkages between Pittsburghese and Whites within the African American community. The movement of African American students out of their neighborhoods for high school brings features of Pittsburghese into the awareness of African Americans, provides an opportunity to link them with social meaning, and makes them available for metalinguistic talk, (re)creating, reproducing and reinforcing the ideological connections between Pittsburghese and White locals. The relationship that African Americans have with the White community at large are then attached to these ways of speaking and to those perceived as speakers of Pittsburghese. Both Maurice and Daneen, for example, also expressed the perceptions during their interviews that their White teachers are racist. Such “ideological schemes” (Johnstone, 2009) serve to reproduce ideas about Whites and local speech. In other words, high school students enter a new milieu in which they are exposed to Whites, who may behave in ways that are oppressive. There may already be an awareness for these young African Americans of the community perception that Whites, especially in Pittsburgh, are racist. At the same time, these Whites speak in new ways that people like Daneen and Maurice have not been exposed to much before, having always lived in the “Black enclave” of the Hill District. Thus, these ways of speaking become not only correlated with particular social characteristics (e.g., White, local), but also become available to do higher order indexical work, embodying the cultural values already in place within the African American community. There is already an idea about what White Pittsburghers are; now there is an idea about how they talk as well, and these two notions become essentially and inextricably linked.

7. Conclusion

To summarize, the metapragmatic and metadiscursive practices surrounding local speech in Pittsburgh have allowed for high levels of language awareness among residents of the city. The process of enregisterment demonstrates the ways in which Pittsburghese itself became a recognizable, socially meaningful dialect, and also how this dialect and these same practices take on very different meanings in the same region for African Americans. As work on regional varieties of African American English continues to grow in variationist sociolinguistics, scholars must engage with not only the patterns of speech of Whites and African Americans, but also the ideas about these speech patterns within both communities, and the ideological connections between ways of speaking and social personae. It is only in this way that we will come to understand what a local dialect is (and is not; see Remlinger, 2009), how local identity is defined through language, and how ideas about ways of speaking can include and exclude groups of people based on the cultural values indexed by these dialect forms.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Trista Pennington, who conducted a portion of the interviews presented here, as well as all those residents of the Hill District who shared their time and experiences. I also thank Scott Kiesling and Barbara Johnstone for feedback on earlier versions of this paper. I am grateful as well to two anonymous reviewers, whose comments helped to strengthen the argument. Support for this work in part comes from The National Science Foundation (BCS-0745455, BCS-0417684 & BCS-0417657).

7 Unfortunately, I did not ask Maurice to specify what he meant by “brunettes”, and so I cannot be sure that my interpretation was his intention. However, it seems that Maurice’s listing of two groups, “Italians” and “brunettes” in response to a question about how White people talk suggests that he is using these terms to refer to categories of Whites.
References
Evans, G., 1943. Here is a Job for Postwar Pittsburgh: Transforming the Hill District. Greater Pittsburgh July-August.