

24.901 North American Dialects

1. Atlas of NA Engl (Labov et al 2005, Mouton)

- Towns over 50K pop (68% of N.A.)
- Telephone survey: name, age, occupation, location, national ancestry
- Two speakers per locus point; c. 800 total
- Key words and free conversation
- Excludes AA and Latino speakers who have special dialect features that are differentiated by different geographical parameters
- Focus on stressed vowels; traditional transcription based on American Structuralist phonemicization and keywords

	SHORT		LONG					
			upgliding				"ingliding"	
			Vy		Vw		Vh	
nucleus	front	back	front	back	front	back	unrnd	round
high	<b>i</b>	<b>u</b>	<b>iy</b>		<b>iw</b>	<b>uw</b>		
mid	<b>e</b>	□□	<b>ey</b>	<b>oy</b>		<b>ow</b>		<b>oh</b>
low	<b>æ</b>	<b>o</b>		<b>ay</b>		<b>aw</b>	<b>ah</b>	

	SHORT		LONG					
			upgliding				"ingliding"	
			Vy		Vw		Vh	
nucleus	front	back	front	back	front	back	unrnd	round
high	<b>bit</b>	<b>put</b>	<b>beat</b>		<b>suit</b>	<b>boot</b>		
mid	<b>bet</b>	□□□□	<b>bait</b>	<b>boy</b>		<b>boat</b>		<b>bought</b>
low	<b>bat</b>	<b>cot</b>		<b>bite</b>		<b>bout</b>	<b>balm</b>	

2. rhotic vs. nonrhotic

- r-vocalization develops in 18th century England;
- prestige variant for 19th and early 20th century American English on Eastern seacoast
- rhotic restoration after WWII; change from above
- vocalization retained as consistent rule in Boston, NYC, and scattered areas of south (Durham NC, Columbia SC, New Orleans) map. 7.1

3. Mergers

- mergers expand at expense of distinctions (Herzog)
- hypercorrections

i. /hw/ and /w/ merger: *whale* vs. *wail* (map 8.1)

- starts in 13th c.; noted for London in 1791
- distinction was alive in N.A. in most areas except Eastern seaboard
- now generally lost except for some speakers in the South

ii. /ohr/ vs. / hr/

- *hoarse, four, mourning* vs. *horse, forty, morning*
- preserved in Eastern Mass, Maine; SC; Talahassee - Dallas

iii. /iw/ vs/ /uw/ (map 8.3)

- loss of glide after coronals in NA
- some speakers still distinguish *dew, lute* vs. *do, loot* (North Carolina), Talahassee - Jackson

iv. *Mary* /ey/ vs. *merry* /e/ vs. *marry* /æ/ map 8.4

- three-way distinction maintained in NYC, Phil, Trenton NJ
- *Mary* and *merry* merge while *marry* distinct in scattered areas of South and East
- distinction lost elsewhere

v. Merger of /i/ and /e/ before nasals: *pin* and *pen* map 9.5 South

## Mergers in Progress

Low-back merger of /o/ and /oh/ (map 9.1)

- *hot, sock, Don, dollar* vs. *caught, talk, dawn, caller*
- merger in West, Western Penn and Canada; maintained in South, Midwest, East

## 5. Vowel Chain Shifts

Chain Shifts (Martinet 1951)

- vowels dispersed over acoustic space to maintain a margin of comfort
- drag chain: vowel shifts to occupy a space vacated by a prior movement: fronting of [u] results in raising of [o]
- push chain: vowel x encroaches on space of y, which then moves to maintain contrast
- English short vowels are stable through history while long vowels are not (cf. Great Vowel Shift; divine \*i:>[aj], serene \*e:>[ij], profane \*æ:>[ej] vs. divinity [i], serenity [e], profanity [æ])
- generalizations on recurrent changes in the English vowel system: peripheral vowels raise, lax vowels and the nuclei of diphthongs centralize and lower
- Inland North Area around Great lakes was basis for Kenyon & Knott's (1953) *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*
- Broadcasting standard for mid 20th century
- most unmarked for General American speech
- Since then a large warping of the vowel space has occurred that has classic properties of a chain shift, termed Northern Cities Shift (NCS)
- First step: raising of [æ] (recall James Adamo of Detroit) (F1 < 700 Hz) (map 14.4)

- Second step: fronting of merged [o, ah] to fill void: *lockes* sounds like *lax* (F2 > 1450 Hz) map 14.5
- Third step: lowering and fronting of [oh/] (also found more widely) to fill void
- Fourth and fifth (Eckert): e > [ɪ], [ɪ] > o (14.8)

## 6. Southern Speech

### older features

- Preservation of contrasts lost elsewhere: *whale* ≠ *wail*; *dew* ≠ *do*
- Front glide /yu/ in *dew*, *tune*, *Tuesday*
- Fronting of back vowel in Vw diphthong: *too*, *road*, *mountain*
- Loss of contrast of *pin* and *pen*; *him* and *hem*
- simplification of /ay/ diphthong finally and before voiced cons: *high*, *side*, *time*
- drawl: breaking of /æ/ esp before nasals: *pants* [a-y-schwa]

### newer features

- /ay/ glide deletion generalized to all contexts in Central Texas and Inland South
- reversal of /ey/ and /e/ so that nucleus of *bait* is lower and more central than *bet* which becomes higher and fronter [macon georgia]

## 7. lexical differences

### i. general term for carbonated beverage

- *tonic* Eastern Mass
- *coke* South
- *pop* Midwest, upper West
- *soda* (lower West: Nev, Az, CA)

### ii. *roof*

- shortened /u/: North Midwest to West: Columbus Oh Kansas City, Denver, Seattle, Central CA

### iii. positive anymore (*it's hard to find a job anymore*), needs+PPtcl (*The car needs washed*)

- Scotts Irish origin
- Upland South and Midland (map 21.3, 21.4)

## 8. general points

- no significant effect of ethnicity; Telsur subjects origin (German, English, Scotts-Irish, Irish, Italian, Scandinavian, French, Polish)
- African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
  - Uniform dialect with minimal regional variation
  - Stands apart from vowel shifts found in the atlas, esp in Northern Cities

## 9. North-Midland boundary

- Sharpest division in North American English dialectology
- Rapid spread of NCS in 30-40 years; extends east-west not north-south: Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee
- Cities below line (Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati, Indianapolis) do not participate and differ from one another as well
- Boundary has remained stable for a century; sound change originated in Western NY

- Divides Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania into northern and southern (downstate) regions
  - Carver (1987) shows lexical isogloss for rural and agricultural terms (10.2)
  - Correlates with different settlement histories (10.4)
    - New England (Pilgrim-Puritan)/Yankee  
whole parishes move as group; settle in towns; house located by roadside;  
stable: sustained contact
    - Midland/Upland Southerners  
movement of individual families; structure of rural neighborhoods based on  
kinship; house located by creek or spring in isolated areas; frequently move:  
intermittent contact
10. Yankee vs. Upland Southerners: clash of attitudes, self perceptions and stereotypes:  
Yankees: self-improvement, impose moral views on whole society; antislavery;  
busybody and meddling  
Southerners: lean, lank, lazy
11. political cultures (Elazar 1972) [10.8]
- Moralistic: government should help people achieve good lives; government service is public service; community can intervene in private affairs if it serves communal goals
  - Individualistic: politics is a business, dominated by parties; government should not interfere in individual's lives
  - Traditional: hierarchical view of society; government is province of elites; preference to maintain status quo
12. strong correlation between county-by-county voting for 2004 Presidential race and the Midland-Inland Northern boundary
13. conclusion: "as long as these ideological differences persist, speakers may be more likely to align their productions towards those around them who share their own identity and word-view"

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"Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change." Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. ISBN: 9783110167467.

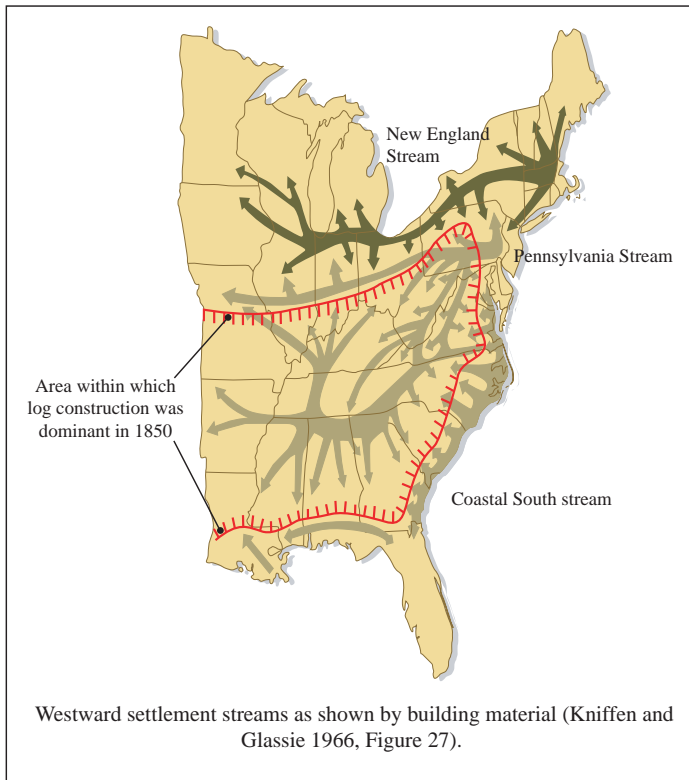


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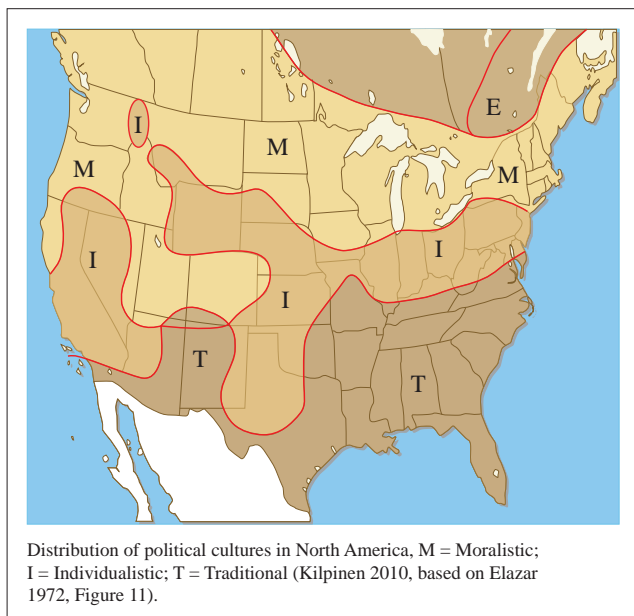


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