THE PRONUNCIATION OF *MISSOURI*: VARIATION AND CHANGE IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

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WHY DO SOME PEOPLE say Missour-ee and others say Missour-uh? Which one is "correct"? The spellings in early documents and comments made in print since the late 1600s indicate the existence of considerable variation in the pronunciations of all three vowels and the medial consonant in the word *Missouri*. An individual may attempt to account for a particular pronunciation on the basis of spelling or on "how the Indians said the word." In answering the opening questions, this article will take a brief look at "what the Indians said" to early explorers and how nineteenth-century Missouri Indians said the word and then examine evidence from several sources, the most important being the Linguistic Atlas Projects.

We know that the Siouan tribe living near the Missouri River did not use the word *Missouri* before they had borrowed it from the French voyageurs, because a neighboring tribe from a different language family is the source of the name. When Jacques Marquette (1637–75) and Louis Jolliet (1645–1700) were exploring the Mississippi Valley in 1673, they visited the Peorias (a group within the Illinois branch of the Algonquian Indians) near the mouth of the Des Moines River and asked them "to give us all the information that they had about the sea [*Bassin de la Floride*, i.e., Gulf of Mexico] and about the nations through whom we must pass to reach it" (Marquette 2001, 23). They stayed with the Peorias from 25 June until the end of the month (21, 30). On their voyage, Marquette and Jolliet collected information from a variety of sources, and Marquette made a map of their journey after he had returned to Green Bay following the end of the voyage (Tucker 1942, plate V). Figure 1 reproduces a portion of Marquette's map from a facsimile of the original published as a fold-out appendix in Shea (1852). Marquette drew teepees, each representing approximately 100 inhabitants, to depict Indian villages, commenting that the Peoria village "consists of fully 300 cabins" (2001, 24).

Marquette placed the Missouri Indians southwest of the Peorias on the west side of a tributary of the Mississippi River. He used the names *Ymessourit*

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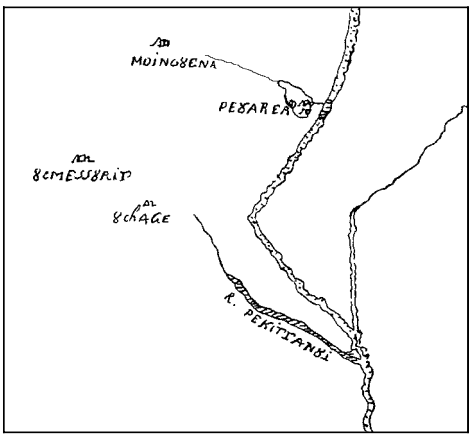
FIGURE 1
Location of Missouri Indians on Marquette's 1673 Map



NOTE: The symbol ȣ represented [u] or [w], depending on the phonological environment, in sixteenth-century French orthography.

for the people and *R. Pekittanȣi* for the tributary. Marquette was still using a symbol for /u/ and /w/ that Pierre La Ramée had introduced into French orthography as part of an unsuccessful attempt at spelling reform a century earlier (Rickard 1968, 46–47). The symbol was an ȣ, with two hornlike protrusions at the top, as shown in figure 1, often transliterated as *ou*.

In the Illinois language, the term that Marquette wrote as *Ȣemessȣrit* means 'one who has a canoe'. It is often assumed that the Illinois used this term because the Siouan tribes living along the rapidly flowing Missouri River used big canoes carved from logs, whereas the Peorias used smaller birch-bark canoes (cf. Lance 1999 and sources cited therein). The Algonquianist Michael McCafferty (pers. com., 2002) at Indiana University points out, however, that the Illinois used dugout canoes similar to those of the Siouan tribes after migrating to the Illinois and Mississippi River area. Though the *missour-* part of the word *Missouri* consists of deep-structure lexical roots that may be translated as 'big' + 'watercraft', this Illinois composite (always accompanied by a suffix) simply refers to a canoe as opposed to smaller watercraft. The name given for the river (*Pekittanȣi*) was an Illinois term meaning 'muddy water' (literally, 'it mud-flows').

Early explorers in the Mississippi Valley used a variety of spellings of the Algonquian name for the Missouri Indians, the earliest of which are as follows (Hodge 1907; Harrington 1951):

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1673	Marquette-Jolliet	ɣemessɤrit
1681	Thévenot	ɣmissouri
1684	Tonty-La Salle	Emissourita
1687	Tonty	Missourita
1687	Tonty	Missouris
1693	St. Cosme	Missouris
1697	Hennepin	Massorites
1697	Hennepin	Messorite(s)

Though the suffixes *-ite* and *-ita*, and perhaps Marquette's *-it*, may look suspiciously Latinate, they are Algonquian grammatical markers. According to McCafferty (pers. com., 2002), the root of *ɣemessɤrit* is a composite consisting of /mihs/ 'big' and /u:r/ 'watercraft', and the spoken form would have ended with /i/, indicating an inanimate noun, thus /mi'hsu:ri/. Jesuits working with the Illinois language typically wrote <ss> for Illinois /hs/. Hennepin's spelling with *-o-* in the second syllable also is accurate. The underlying Algonquian phoneme in this syllable, /u:/, varies between mid and high tongue positions (i.e., [o] ~ [u]), though with the death of the last native speaker in the 1960s, we are left with only fragmentary information about the phonological conditions associated with the [o] ~ [u] variation. The *ɣe-* prefix is an Illinois morpheme indicating 'one who possesses X', and this prefix occurs in expressions with the participial suffix /ita/, as we see in Marquette's *-it* and Tonty's *-ita*. Since this final /a/ tended to be voiceless in final position after a voiceless consonant, Marquette obviously did not hear it. McCafferty (2003) cites, as a parallel lexical form, the Indiana hydronym Lake Wawasee, an English rendering of Miami /'waawiya'sita/ 'one who is round', a participle used as a personal name. Thus, the ethnonyms above reveal that some of the explorers who recorded them—notably Marquette and Tonty—were quite familiar with the lexico-syntax of the Illinois dialects and provided trustworthy records of "how the Indians said these words." For etymological information on the other three tribal names in figure 1, see Costa (2000).

History records that many contemporary ethnonyms were coined not by the people to whom they refer but by their neighbors. In time, the Missouri Indians, through verbal intercourse with the French, adopted the Illinois neighbors' name as a means of self-reference. Truman W. Dailey (1898–1996), elder of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe in Oklahoma—who was half Missouri, a quarter Oto, and a quarter "Ioway"—served as a primary informant for a project on endangered languages directed by Louanna Furbee at the University of Missouri from 1988 to 1994. When I asked him about the spelling and pronunciation of the tribal name, he said that his

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father "always said [mɪˌzʊrɪˈeɪ]" (Dailey, interviews by author, Columbia, Mo., and Red Rock, Okla., 1992, 1994, 1997, 1998). This pronunciation very likely developed as an Oto and/or English rendering of the French ethnonym *Missouriais*, parallel to *Fran ais*.

We now know "how the Indians said the word," but this knowledge offers no means of answering our opening questions. We now turn to what we know about how Euro-Americans said the word when they were interviewed by field-workers for the Linguistic Atlas of the United States. Dialect scholars have found the schwa pronunciation in 15 other words with final unstressed syllables spelled with *-i* or *-y*: *Naomi*, *Cincinnati*, *Miami*, *Ypsilanti*, *Potosi* (Mo.), *Okoboji* (Iowa), *Lamoni* (Iowa), *Mississippi*, *spaghetti*, *macaroni*, *ravioli*, *gladioli*, *prairie*, *Dorothy*, and *doily* (Read 1933, 32–33; Pace 1960, 175–76, 183–84). To their list we might add *Hawa-yuh* and *Corpus Chrischa* (Tex.).

The pronunciation information on *Missouri* in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE* 1985–), representing 1,002 locations, with speakers born between the 1880s and the 1950s, is as follows:

Usu |mɪˈzʊri, mə-, -ˈuri, -ˈzʊrɪ| also freq |mɪˈzʊrə|

A note in the "Guide to Pronunciation" in *DARE* (1: liii) claims:

Missouri, *Cincinnati*, etc. Both /i/ and /ə/ occur in these place names, with widely mixed usage. In general, natives of these places tend to have /ə/, while outsiders tend to use spelling-pronunciations with /i/.

The various strands of evidence considered in this article challenge the accuracy of the pronunciation editor's claims about the nature of the final vowel in *Missouri*. The complications involved in the chronological and regional distributions of this feature show the *DARE* statement to be great oversimplification.

Table 1 is a tabulation of variant pronunciations of the final vowel in the word *Missouri* as recorded by field-workers in interviews for the Linguistic Atlas Projects, including only the informants born before 1930 (total $N = 2{,}169$).[1] One of the striking results of this tabulation is the prevalence of the schwa form, which is by far the most common variant, accounting for nearly 48% of the total. This is a considerably higher incidence than one would expect from present-day pronunciations, particularly in Northern states. Regarding the variants with high vowels, interesting questions arise from the low frequency of /i/ and /ɪ/ and the high frequency of "barred *i*," [ɨ]. The remainder of this article will consist of brief explanations of possible historical sources of the schwa pronunciation, followed by detailed analyses of the data reported in table 1 and in other sources.

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TABLE 1
Variant Pronunciations of the Final Vowel in *Missouri*: Data from Linguistic Atlases (speakers born 1830–1930)

Vowel	*LANE*	*LAMSAS*	*LAGS*	*LANCS*	*LAUM*	*LAPNW*	*Total*
[i]	13	25	14		72	24	148
[ɪ]	62	23	290	7			382
[i̞]	138	411		10		8	567
[ɛ]	5						5
[ə]	185	529	218	19	69	13	1,033
[ɐ]	7						7
[əɪ]	3						3
[o]		1					1
(none)	3	5	15				23
TOTAL	416	994	537	36	141	45	2,169

There are two possible linguistic explanations for the development of the schwa pronunciation of the final syllable of *Missouri*—from historical "short *i*" and from historical "long *i*." The case for "short *i*" origin rests on a general tendency observed in the nineteenth century to retract and lower an unstressed syllable spelled with *i*, resulting in a schwa rather than a "short *i*." Grandgent (1894, 321–22) suggested that the final schwa sound in *Missouri* derives from this tendency, which he associated with Irish English:

> The Irish generally substitute ə for ĭ [in unstressed syllables, e.g., *courage*, *ditches*]; this substitution is a peculiarity, also, of a very large proportion of the cultivated American inhabitants of Philadelphia, New York City, and some parts of the South and West.*
>
> * A familiar instance is the Western pronunciation Mizûrə for *Missouri*.

The other phonological explanation for the final schwa sound is that, when Americans first saw the word in print, they interpreted the final spelled *-i* as a "long *i*," and then as the syllable weakened in stress, the vowel was reduced to a schwa (Pace 1960, 184–87). Early English-speaking Americans with a few years of education would have had some familiarity with schoolbook rules for pronouncing words of Latin or Greek origin with final *-i*, such as names in the Bible (e.g., *Philippi*). The schoolbook rules call for [aɪ], not /ɪ/ or /i/, as in *alumni*, *alibi*, *rabbi*, or *Magi*. The map displaying variants of *Missouri* in the Linguistic Atlas of New England (LANE) includes two individuals in northeastern Massachusetts and one in southeast-

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ern New Hampshire who said the word with diphthongs that may have been instances of a "long *i*" pronunciation (Kurath, Hanley, et al. 1939, 190, 216; Kurath, Hansen, et al. 1939, 1: map 17).

mɪsɨᵛzsʊ^ʷreɪ	[informant 316.1; male, 79, farmer, 2 years academy; Deerfield, Rickingham Co., N.H.]
məᵛzo^ɚrə̆ʲ	[informant 200.1; male, 44, farmer, landscape gardener, school until 12; Rockport, Essex Co., Mass.]
mɨᵛzʊ^ərĕj	[informant 196.1; male, 89, shoemaker, road commissioner, school until 14; Rowley, Essex Co., Mass.]

The onsets in these three diphthongs are credible developments in the phonology of conservative speakers whose "long *i*" represents an intermediate stage in the development of the Middle English /i/ to [ɪi] and eventually to [aɪ]—that is, [məˈzʊˌrəɪ]. Subsequently (according to this hypothesis), the [əɪ] developed into [ə] with further reduction in stress on the final syllable. Only three examples of the "long *i*" in a total of over 2,000 records can hardly be offered as proof of anything, but because of the potential connection to other words spelled with final *-i*, they should not be ignored.

If the schwa pronunciation developed through leveling of unstressed syllables, whether from "short *i*" or "long *i*," one would also expect to find instances of loss of the schwa, leaving two syllables: [məˈzʊr]. This pronunciation does indeed exist. I have heard it numerous times from native Missourians, usually of rural origin, born before 1940, and we see in table 1 that it was recorded three times (all males) in LANE, spoken by a mechanic in northeastern central Maine, a lumberman in southeastern New Hampshire, and a gardener in western Connecticut. Five speakers in the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS) files, four of them with limited education, pronounced the word as two syllables. The 15 individuals from the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS) files counted for table 1 as using the two-syllable pronunciation were born between 1890 and 1925 and were considered to have folk (10) or common (5) speech.

Some have argued that the schwa pronunciation resulted from hypercorrection as rustic speakers were aware that words like *sody* and *Marthy* should be pronounced with a schwa, and in their attempt to correct these rusticisms they also inappropriately changed legitimate final *-y* pronunciations to schwa (e.g., Cohen 1992; also see Lance 1993 for a rebuttal). Though many scholars have proposed this explanation, no one has provided empirical evidence of either actual usage or sociolinguistic tendencies to support such a claim.

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The schwa pronunciation is popularly thought to be of Southern origin, but this perception is not supported by data from linguistic atlas surveys. We see in figures 2 and 3 that a century ago the schwa pronunciation was a feature of the speech of Western New England and the Middle Atlantic States. Figure 2 displays occurrences (in percentages) of the schwa pronunciation versus a high vowel in the final syllable of *Missouri* in each state from Maine to Georgia (based on the relevant sources from table 1). In figure 2 and the subsequent discussion, "high vowel" refers to phones that field-workers and editors transcribed with [i], [ɪ], or [ɨ], often with diacritics for raising, fronting, and so on. The distribution in figure 2 is particularly surprising for those who assume the schwa pronunciation to be of Southern origin. We see majority use of the schwa in the Northern states of Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and majority use of a high vowel in the Southern states of South Carolina and Georgia.

FIGURE 2
Distribution of Schwa and High Vowels in *Missouri* in the Atlantic States

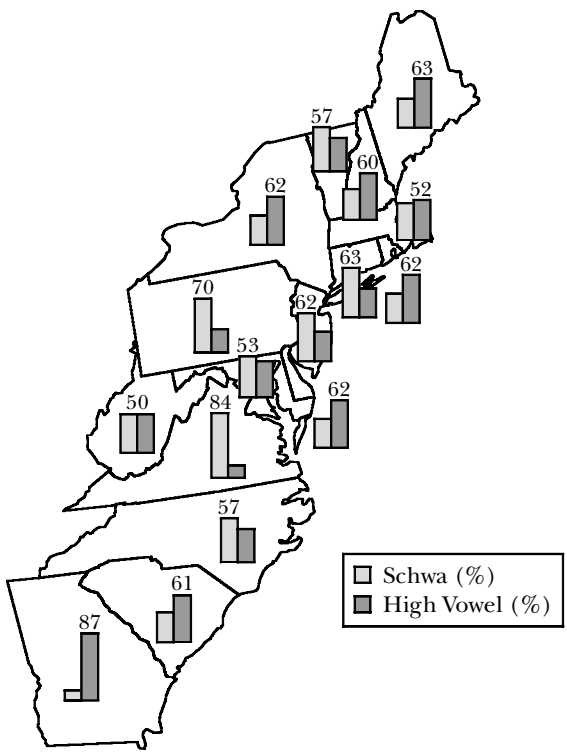

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Figure 3 is based on map 150 from Kurath and McDavid (1961). I have superimposed the dialectal divisions in the eastern states (the network of lines with numbers 1–18) as determined by Kurath's analysis of folk vocabulary in LANE and LAMSAS (see map 3 in Kurath 1949). The circles and dots in figure 3 display data from individual speakers, with larger circles and dots representing exclusive use in an area. I have added shading to indicate predominance of the schwa pronunciation in western New England, in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and in the portions of Virginia and North Carolina between plantation settlement areas and the Appalachian Mountains.

The interviewing for LANE was conducted in 1931–33, with informants born between 1833 and 1912, representing four generations. Interviewing for LAMSAS began in 1933 and continued until the death of the principal field-worker, Guy Loman, in 1941 (842 interviews). Raven I. McDavid, Jr., and several colleagues resumed interviewing in 1945 and continued until 1949 (283 interviews), and McDavid directed 63 additional interviews from 1965 to 1974. The LAMSAS informants were born between 1841 and 1948 and represent four generations slightly later than those in LANE. Table 1 and figure 2 display data from all LAMSAS informants except the two born after 1930. Thus, the pronunciations in figures 2 and 3 represent American English from the second quarter of the nineteenth century into the first third of the twentieth century.

If Grandgent (1894) was accurate in attributing the schwa pronunciation of unstressed syllables to Irish Americans, perhaps some information on settlement patterns will help explain the distribution we see in figure 3. Figure 4, adapted from Fischer (1989), shows areas in Great Britain from which four regional cultures were transferred to the colonies. The earliest Puritan settlers in eastern Massachusetts came from East Anglia in the 1620s and 1630s but were soon joined by Puritans from the southwest in the 1640s, the latter spreading from the Bay Colony south to Nantucket, west to Connecticut, and north to Maine (34). In the 1650s, following the Revolution in 1649, Royalist families, many of whom became rich during the Civil War, would not have been welcome in Puritan New England and thus joined others who had settled along both shores of Chesapeake Bay in the late 1640s. Two-thirds of the upper class emigrants were from the area from Kent to Devon and north to Warwickshire and from northeastern counties (219, 238). Servants who were brought to Virginia by Royalists came from London and Bristol and surrounding areas, including southern Wales (237).

When Quakers began coming to the colonies in small numbers in the 1650s, they were not welcome in either New England or Virginia, but many

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FIGURE 3
Final Vowel of *Missouri* in the Eastern United States

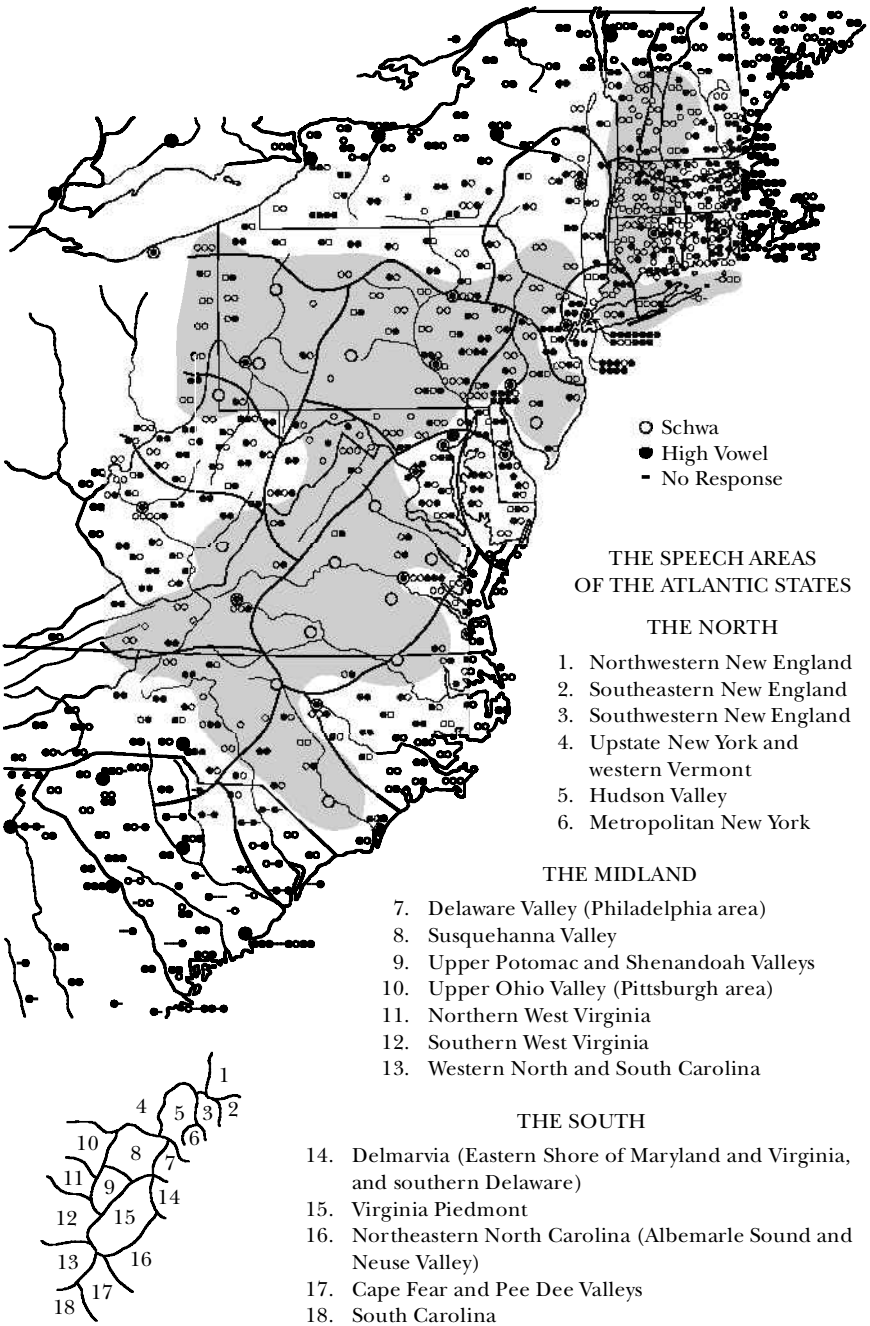

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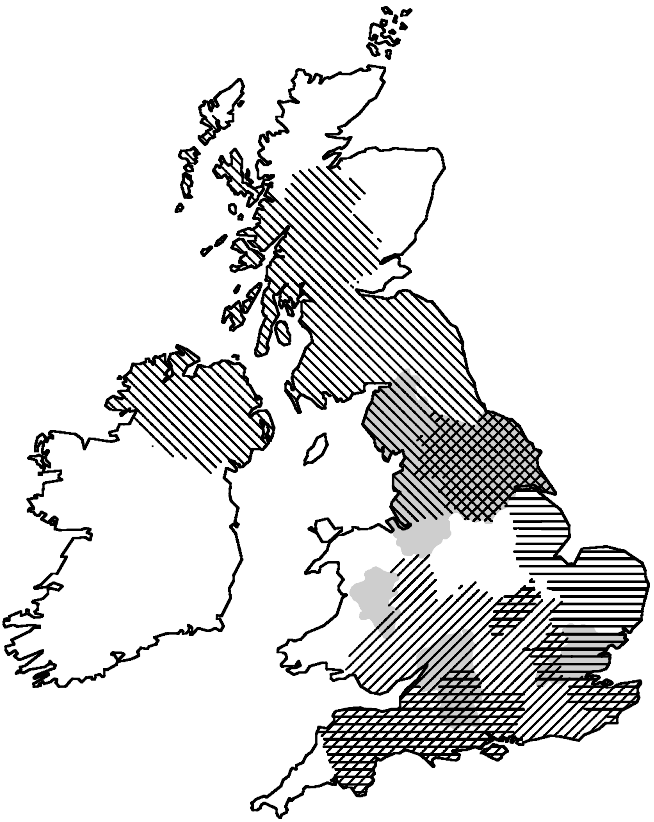
FIGURE 4
Regional Sources of Emigration from Great Britain to the Colonies
(adapted from Fischer 1989)



1620s–40s. Puritans to Massachusetts Bay: Mass., R.I., Conn., Maine

1640s–60s. Royalists and Indentured Servants to Chesapeake Bay: Va., Md.

1640s–1750s. Quakers to Delaware Valley: w. N.J., e. Pa.

1680s–1770s. Protestants from n. England, Scotland, n. Ireland to w. New England and, especially, "back parts" of Pennsylvania, Valley of Virginia, Upland Carolinas: Pa., Va., N.C., S.C.

felt safe settling in Rhode Island (Hansen 1940, 35). As Quakers emigrated in larger numbers in the 1670s, they settled along the Delaware Valley in eastern Pennsylvania, western New Jersey, and northern Delaware. The Quaker immigrants came mostly from the northern midlands of England, but many also came from the southwestern midlands, Wales, and the London area (Fischer 1989, 440). One should bear in mind that they

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represented a population fully two generations later than the earliest settlers in New England. Thus, generational as well as geographic and social factors contributed to differences in the early American dialects in New England and in the Middle Atlantic States.

By the 1680s, New England was making little effort to increase its inhabitants (Hansen 1940, 36). Most of the productive farm lands and fishing areas were already populated, so new immigrants settled in western New England. Kurath (1928, 18) suggested that many of these immigrants were Scotch-Irish, though this view has been challenged (see discussion in Boberg 2001, 9–10). According to Fischer (1989, 606–9), immigration from northern parts of the British Isles increased dramatically after 1715, with at least 275,000 arriving from Northern Ireland, the western Scottish Lowlands, and northern England by 1775; other estimates are as high as 400,000. As these new immigrants came into Pennsylvania, the Quakers, well established in the Philadelphia area, encouraged them to settle in the "back parts" of the colony, and from there they "drifted south and west along the mountains of Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas." By the time of the first national census in 1790, Scottish and Irish surnames constituted over 30% of the population in the states from Pennsylvania to South Carolina (633–34).

After the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, wealthy English emigrants settled in the lowlands in the Carolinas and soon were followed by Scots and Quakers. Both plantation owners and small farmers, as well as numerous slaves, immigrated from Barbados. As early as 1660, French Huguenots began settling in all the colonies from Massachusetts to South Carolina, and by 1710 German Protestants began coming from the Palatine. Between 1720 and 1740 other German Protestant groups immigrated to frontier areas from New York State to Georgia (Hansen 1940, 49–50).

As we can see from the preceding discussion, for several generations prior to the American Revolution, in all parts of the colonies except eastern New England, the language of longtime residents and later immigrants consisted of a mix of British dialects and English as a second language. Also, after the American and French Revolutions, immigrants came from all parts of the British Isles rather than primarily from one area. It is not surprising, therefore, that Kurath (1928) found only one feature of regional dialect to have been exported successfully from England to the United States—"*r*-lessness" in areas of eastern New England and the Plantation South that were originally settled by emigrants from southeastern England, where this feature was common. In a later article, Kurath (1964) further suggested that continued contact between Americans in both North-

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ern and Southern port areas and speakers of southeastern British dialects may have played a role in the persistence of this feature in coastal settlement areas, in contrast to the more rapidly growing inland parts of the colonies, where postvocalic [r] was maintained. In one of his attempts to find other correlations, Kurath commented, "To trace specific regional variants of AE to particular British sources will remain hazardous until we are better informed about the English dialects" (270).

In spite of Kurath's reservations, the shading in figure 4 and Grandgent's observation about the phonology of Irish Americans encourage us to examine how distributions in figure 2 fared as the American population spread westward in the Northern, Midland, and Southern regions of the country. Figure 5, from Lance (1994, 352–53), was designed specifically to examine such questions. It is based on research reported from seven regional studies that were designed as continuations of the Linguistic Atlas Projects begun in the early 1930s. The discussion that follows will make references to the numbered and lettered divisions in figures 3 and 5.

Though figure 5 may suggest that dialectologists have analyzed data from the Atlantic coast into the American Great Plains, data collected in the Old Northwest (Ohio, Ind., Ill., Mich., Wisc.) and in the "border states" of Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma are available only in articles, monographs, and dissertations. Researchers interested in the data from the Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States (LANCS) must consult the original field records on microfilm. When more of these data have been analyzed, dialectologists will have a better sense of the manner in which dialect items in areas 3–5 and 7–11 in the Atlantic States divisions spread into the Old Northwest and the Great Lakes States. In figure 3 we see a continuation of the use of the schwa from Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia into Ohio, suggesting that this feature should be classified as North Midland. Areas 4 and 5, in which a high vowel predominates in figure 3 (62% in N.Y.), supplied much of the emigration into the Inland North dialect areas from the Great Lakes to Washington State. Marckwardt (1957) and Allen (1964) used bundles of selected isoglosses to posit the boundary (A–B/C in fig. 5) between the Inland North and North Midland dialect areas. Unfortunately, LANCS data from the Inland North were not examined for the present study. Still, in table 1 we see that 51% of the Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest (LAUM) informants and 71% of the Linguistic Atlas of the Pacific Northwest (LAPNW) informants, born between 1867 and 1930, used a high vowel. These findings suggest a westward continuation of upstate and western New York usage across the Great Lakes region, the Northern Plains, and the Pacific Northwest.

Allen's (1964) analysis of LAUM data is reflected in figure 6 and indicates majority use of a high vowel in Minnesota, North Dakota, and

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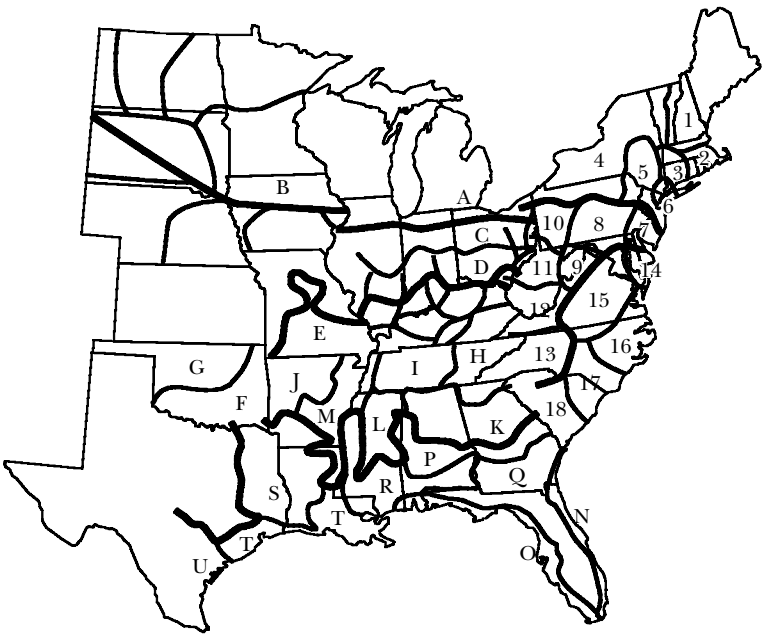
FIGURE 5
Dialect Divisions from Seven Atlas Studies
(Lance 1994, 352–53)



1–18. Kurath (1949, fig. 3)
1. Northwestern New England
2. Southeastern New England
3. Southwestern New England
4. Upstate New York and western Vermont
5. Hudson Valley
6. Metropolitan New York
7. Delaware Valley (Philadelphia area)
8. Susquehanna Valley
9. Upper Potomac and Shenandoah Valleys
10. Upper Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh area)
11. Northern West Virginia
12. Southern West Virginia
13. Western North and South Carolina
14. Delmarvia (Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, and southern Delaware)
15. Virginia Piedmont
16. Northeastern North Carolina (Albemarle Sound and Neuse Valley)
17. Cape Fear and Pee Dee Valleys
18. South Carolina

A. Marckwardt (1957, maps 2 and 3)
B. Allen (1964, 92, map 6.1)
C and D. Dakin (1966, 3: 104, fig. 174)
E. Faries and Lance (1993, 253)
F and G. Wood (1971, 358, map 83)
- F. Mid Southern
- G. Plains Southern

H–U. Pederson et al. (1988–92, 7: ix–xv)
Interior Southern
- H. Eastern Highlands
- I. Nashville Basin
- J. Western Highlands
- K. Piedmont
- L. Central Plains
- M. Upper Delta

Coastal Southern
- N. Atlantic Coast
- O. Gulf Coast
- P. Coastal Black Belt
- Q. Eastern Piney Woods
- R. Central Piney Woods
- S. Western Piney Woods
- T. Lower Delta
- U. Lower Western Plains

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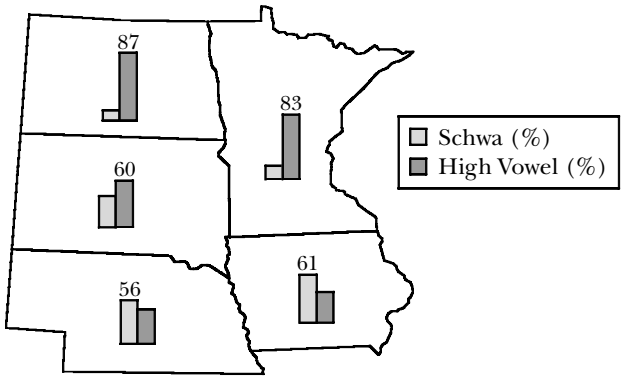
FIGURE 6
Distribution of Schwa and High Vowels in *Missouri* in the Upper Midwest



northern South Dakota, with majority use of the schwa in Iowa, Nebraska, and southern South Dakota. The latter are North Midland areas, a continuation of area C in figure 5. Data from LAUM represent speakers who were born between 1859 and 1912, roughly the same generations as the LAMSAS informants. The frequency of the use of [ə] was about evenly divided between males and females and among all levels of education (Allen 1958; Allen 1973–76, 3: 292). Allen makes only a binary distinction in the vowels used in the final syllable of *Missouri*, transcribing them as [i] and [ə], and does not discuss alternate pronunciations with lax [ɪ] or the high central variant [ɨ].

Figure 3 shows majority use of the schwa in *Missouri* in area 15, in the Virginia Piedmont, in eastern portions of South Midland areas 12 and 13, and in the Yadkin watershed of area 17. Though one might be tempted to classify the distribution of this particular feature as a combination of the Southern and Midland divisions established by Kurath (1949), it is too limited in its distribution in Midland and Southern areas to warrant a definitive regional label on the basis of data discussed so far. Mapping its distribution yields a map not even slightly similar to any of the 161 maps of regional items in Kurath (1949) or the other 176 regional maps in Kurath and McDavid (1961). Even though this particular pattern is difficult to classify dialectally, it reflects early settlement as described by Pederson (1983, 9–13). A treaty with the Cherokees in 1763 halted settlement south of the Kanawha River and west of the New River and along the divide of the Blue Ridge Mountains forming the boundary between North Carolina and Tennessee (fig. 7). This barrier forced settlers to turn east rather than continuing to the southwest along the Great Valley into Tennessee. Prior to

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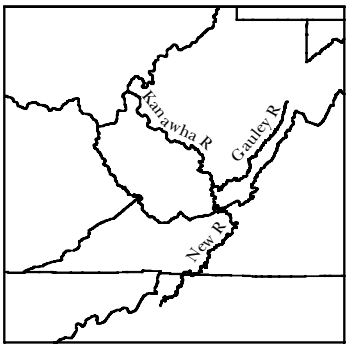
FIGURE 7
Rivers in Virginia and West Virginia



1763, earlier settlers had discovered the Cumberland Gap between Tennessee and Kentucky at the western tip of Virginia and begun migrating into Kentucky. Within a few years after the treaty was signed, however, migration into eastern Tennessee was well under way. According to Fischer (1989, 606–8), "Two-thirds of [the] traffic [from North Britain] was concentrated in the decade from 1765 to 1775." By taking a cue from Grandgent (1894), one might speculate that the incidence of the schwa in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina is a reflex of Scotch-Irish immigration into this area.

Data in LAGS have enabled dialectologists to examine variation in southern settlement areas of the United States to the west and south of the area covered by LAMSAS. Figure 8, derived from LAGS files (downloadable from http://hyde.park.uga.edu/lags), displays data representing the LAGS informants born between 1875 and 1930, a generation later than the LAUM informants. (Data from those born after 1930 will be included in later discussions.) Interviews for LAGS were conducted in the 1970s, after the South had become less rural than it was at the time of the LAMSAS interviews. We see in figure 8 majority use of the schwa only in Tennessee, Mississippi, and northern Texas, which may in part reflect the migrations through western Virginia mentioned above. Lower Alabama, western Louisiana, and Arkansas may be similarly classified. Pederson (1983, 13–14) points out that the Cumberland Mountains delayed the settlement of middle Tennessee. The area did not establish a stable economic base until after Union veterans settled there and coalfields were opened in the latter nineteenth century. Thus, we see differences, though minor, in the speech of the three parts of Tennessee. The piedmont areas of Georgia and

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Alabama in figure 8 appear to be extensions of the South Carolina Piedmont in figure 3. The lower incidence of the schwa in Florida may reflect settlement from Georgia, but may as easily be attributed to a more mixed population, as is the case of areas along the Gulf Coast and in south Texas.

As a summary of the findings discussed so far, figure 9 displays areas where dialectologists have found prominent (at least 48%) use of the schwa in the last syllable of *Missouri* in atlas studies from which data were available to the author. We see that this particular pronunciation should be classified as Midland and Western New England for Americans born before 1930. (The lack of shading in Ohio indicates a lack of data rather than the use of a high vowel.) My hunch is that data from LANCS interviews and data collected in Missouri by Udell, in Kansas by Cook and Engler, and in Oklahoma by Van Riper would complete the Midland shading in figure 9—but only for speakers born before 1930. It is interesting that the incidence of the schwa is higher in North Midland areas than in South Midland areas in figures 3 and 8, but neither historical nor linguistic sources used in this study offer an explanation for this distribution.

If Grandgent was on the right track in associating this schwa with the portion of "accent" associated with unstressed vowels, it seems reasonable to assume that the ubiquitous "Scotch-Irish," who are mentioned so often in studies of American dialectology, played some part in establishing and spreading this feature of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American English. It is also interesting, though probably only coincidental, that the

FIGURE 8
Distribution of Schwa and High Vowels in *Missouri* in the Gulf States

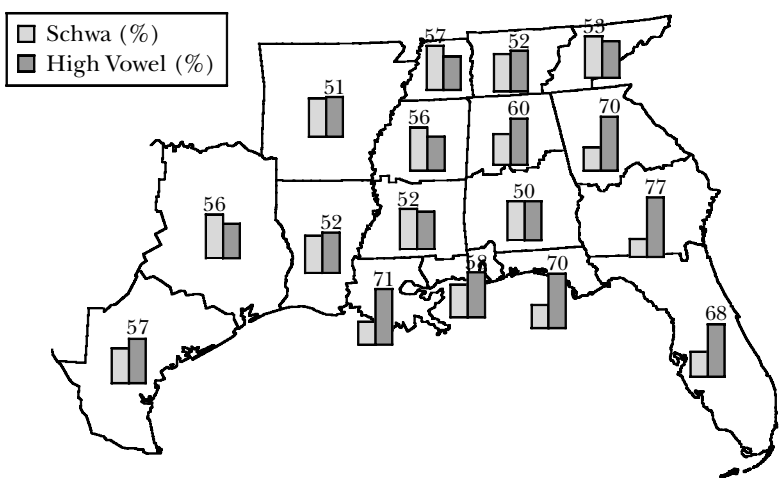

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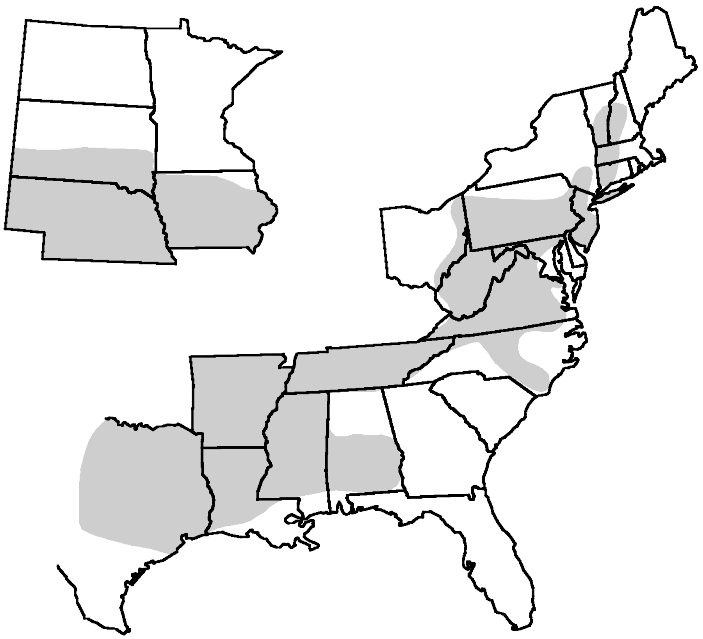
FIGURE 9
Locations of Prominent Use of Schwa in *Missouri* in Atlas Studies



shaded areas in figure 9 are also "*r*-full" as opposed to "*r*-less." The Inland North area from New York State through North Dakota is both "*r*-full" and "schwa-less." My claim of Midlandness for this feature should not be taken as a refutation of the claims made by Davis and Houck (1992) in their insightful article "Is There a Midland Dialect Area?—Again." Their main conclusion was that, rather than being a "dialect area," Midland is a transition area between the dialectal North and the dialectal South, such that "as we move southward, the dialects become more Southern and, conversely, as we move more northward, dialects become more Northern" (68).

Using recordings of native speakers, Preston (1997) found that residents of Michigan and Indiana had little difficulty in arranging ten dialect speakers in a north-to-south line from northern Michigan to southern Alabama. Frazer (1997), also using recordings by native speakers, found Southern-sounding speech farther north in the LANCS area than the line between Carver's "Lower North" and "Upper South" dialect areas (1987, 248). Preston's (1997) figures 29 and 30 show that Indiana respondents distinguished major boundaries below areas A and C and a minor bound-

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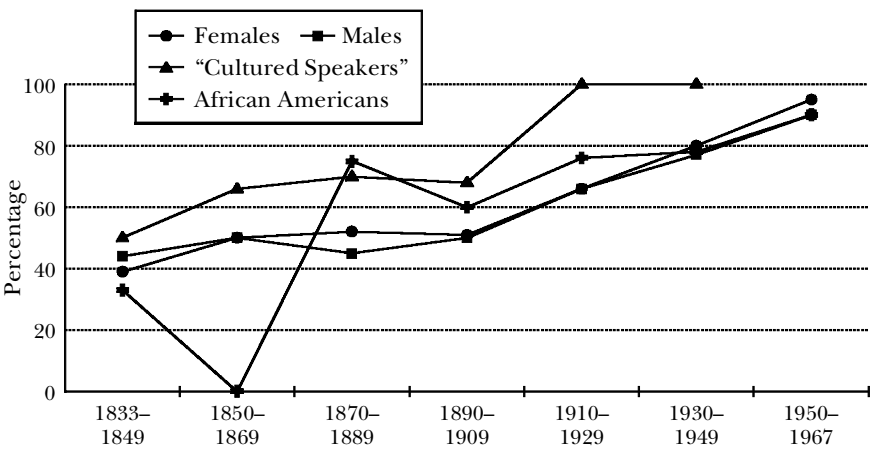
ary below area D in figure 5, whereas Michigan respondents distinguished a major boundary below area D and a minor boundary at the Tennessee-Kentucky line. Thus, the Indianans made distinctions within the Midland area (A, C, D in figure 5), and Michiganders made distinctions between North and South Midland and between South Midland and Southern (A + C, D + KY, H in figure 5). It is possible that Kurath and others were familiar with regional phonological variations such as the final vowel in *Missouri* and that such knowledge is what led them to the tripartite division of the eastern United States rather than, as Davis and Houck (1992, 68) speculate, their "expectations about what they would find south and west of New England."

The preceding discussion has given some attention to variation across geographic areas but not across time divisions. Figure 10 shows the proportional distribution of the schwa and high vowel pronunciations of all interviews in LANE, LAMSAS, LANCS, LAUM, and LAGS, including those born after 1930. The time divisions for figure 10 were chosen to determine whether major changes in American history had an effect on this particular pronunciation item. For much of the nineteenth century, the United States was an agrarian nation that was still expanding westward (1833–49). After midcentury, rapidly expanding industry affected the daily lives of urban Americans (1850–69). Society in the South changed substantially after the Civil War (1870–89), and industrialization continued as railroads enhanced movement around the country and factories lured more and more people into urban areas (1890–1909).

FIGURE 10
Increasing Use of a High Vowel in *Missouri*



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We see that there was relatively little change in the incidence of these vowels from the second quarter of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the automobile, telephone, and other conveniences began to enhance communication (1910–29). A substantial rise in the use of the high vowel began during the generation of the automobile, World War I, and the "Roaring Twenties." As the old adage says, "How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?" The Great Depression and droughts in the 1930s drove many rural people off the farms in the central part of the country, leading to large-scale migration to industrial cities and to the West. Rural post offices closed, and schools were consolidated to provide better education for all children. More widespread education seems to have led to an increase in the spelling pronunciation of the final vowel in *Missouri* at the expense of folk speech. Then World War II and defense industries made the country even more of a single community (1930–49). After World War II, continuing urbanization, integration, and increased attention to the rights of minority groups seem to have led to even more dilution of this item of folk speech (1950–67).

Through the seven time periods, the females' frequency of use of a high vowel was the same as or higher than the males' in six time periods, but the overall differences are not great. For "cultured speakers," the percentage of use of the high vowel from 1833 through 1909 was 72%, which is ten percentage points higher than that of the rest of the sample, and after 1910 we see no instances of cultured speakers using the schwa. During the three time periods from 1870 to 1929, African Americans' usage is similar to that of cultured white speakers. Only two of the ten cultured African Americans used the schwa. These sociolinguistic variations may be interpreted as enhancing the hypothesis suggested by the geographic distribution of schwa and Grandgent's comments about Irish Americans. Specifically, the speech of the Scotch-Irish and their descendants, many of whom were poor and less well educated than other socioethnic groups, very likely was not influenced by spelling pronunciations until after they "melted" into the general culture of North America.

We now turn to a discussion of data collected by less formal means than the Linguistic Atlas Projects. In 1976 a journalist from Kansas City and one from St. Louis conducted a survey for the *Midwest Motorist*, the magazine of the Midwest Division of Automobile Association of America (AAA) (Vaughan and Quigley 1976a, 1976b). Quigley (1989) repeated the survey in 1988 to determine whether changes had occurred in the intervening 12 years—in honor of the memory of his schwa-using journalist-colleague from Kansas City, who was no longer around to engage in the friendly banter that

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TABLE 2
Regional Distribution of Final Vowels in *Missouri* in AAA Surveys

	Schwa	*High Vowel*
1976 Survey		
Year of Birth		
< 1931	736 44%	927 56%
1931–55	226 38%	371 62%
> 1955	12 11%	98 89%
1988 Survey		
Year of Birth		
< 1943	41%	59%
1943–67	21%	79%
> 1967	11%	89%

frequently fills voids in conversations between residents of Missouri's two largest metropolitan areas. Table 2 displays the age-graded distribution of data in the two studies. The authors tabulated the data on the basis of the age of the respondents (> 45, 21–45, < 21), and these divisions have been converted to year-of-birth groupings here. The 1976 report included the raw numbers, but Quigley's 1989 article reported only percentages. The general pattern illustrated by these surveys conforms to that suggested by the atlas data in figure 10: a steady decrease in the use of the schwa pronunciation (or, conversely, an increase in the use of the high vowel) throughout the twentieth century.

The two AAA reports included maps showing the distribution of vowel use by zip code areas. The data from the two surveys have been combined and simplified for the presentation in figure 11, which shows that majority use of the schwa was found in northwestern Missouri including Kansas City. Breaking down this general picture, we note that in the intervening dozen years, the percentage of reported schwa usage in the Kansas City area dropped from 58% to 46% and in neighboring areas of northwestern Missouri from 62% to 58%. Furthermore, 75% of the AAA members in nearby Kansas used the schwa in both polls, whereas nearby residents in Illinois and Arkansas preferred a high vowel. Since the respondents to the *Midwest Motorist* surveys not only owned cars but also belonged to a travel club, these data do not represent a cross-section of the population. An atlas type of survey of this region would probably have yielded different statistical results, but with similar regional tendencies.

Faries and Lance (1993) reported on research from a checklist survey of lexical data in a dissertation study of Missourians born between 1865

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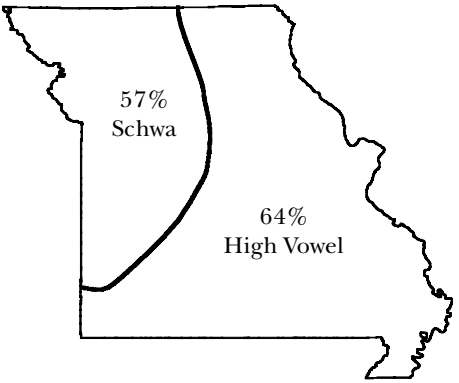
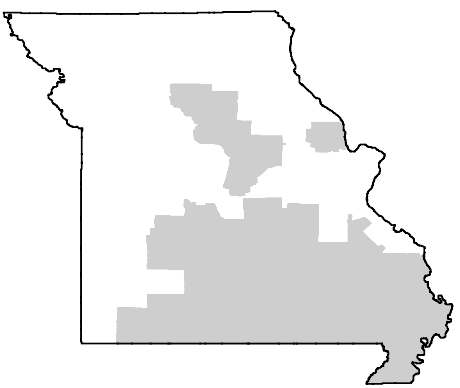
FIGURE 11
Incidence of Schwa in *Missouri* in AAA Surveys, 1976, 1988



and 1900 (Faries 1967). Figure 12 shows the areas where dialect items classified by Kurath (1949) as having Southern or South Midland distributions outnumber Northern and North Midland items in Missouri. The surveys used in Faries (1967) were conducted from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, when Missouri was a more rural state than it is now. The population of the state rose from 3,954,653 in 1950 to 5,117,073 in 1990 (Missouri 1999) as the number of counties with more than 75% of their areas in farm land fell from 86 (75%) to 46 (40%) (University of Missouri–Columbia 2002).

FIGURE 12
Distribution of Southern and South Midland Lexical Data in Missouri
(Faries and Lance 1993)



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The earliest European settlers in Missouri were French-speaking Canadians, who entered the lead-mining area of eastern Missouri south of present-day St. Louis by the early 1700s. French-speaking hunters and trappers also plied the tributaries of the Mississippi River throughout the eighteenth century. Realizing that France was about to lose its North American holdings in the French and Indian War, the French king ceded the area west of the Mississippi to Spain in 1762. In the 1790s the Spanish governor began allowing Americans to settle west of the Mississippi, and then in 1800 the Spanish king ceded the territory back to France.

By 1803, half of the non-Indian population along the Mississippi River in St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve Counties were Americans (Schroeder 2002, 12, 14–16). The earliest American settlers in Missouri, including Daniel Boone (father from Devonshire; Daniel, Pa. > N.C. > Ky. > Mo.) and Moses Austin (Conn. > Pa. > Va. > Mo. > Tex.), came from or through Virginia and Kentucky when the Louisiana Territory was under Spanish rule (1763–1800). After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804–6 and after American ownership of the region was clarified by the War of 1812, settlers came into Missouri in large numbers, primarily settling close to major rivers. As the historian William E. Foley (1989, 238) has observed, "The newcomers were a cross section of humanity, predominantly from lowland regions in the upper South, especially the Tidewater and Piedmont areas of Virginia and the Carolinas, the Kentucky Bluegrass region, and the Nashville Basin."

As Lance and Faries (1997, 369–75) point out, most of Missouri had a largely Southern population in its first few decades. Early immigrants did not come from the Old Northwest states because they too were being settled at the same time. The shaded area in the middle of the state in figure 12, known as Little Dixie, was settled in the 1820s by Southerners from Virginia and Kentucky. The areas in the central part of eastern Missouri along the Mississippi River and along the Missouri River to Little Dixie were settled by French before the Americans arrived and by Germans in the 1830s to 1850s. South Midlanders from Tennessee settled in the Ozarks after midcentury, and second-generation Midwesterners began moving into other parts of the state. After the Civil War, Union soldiers who had seen the prairies and rich bottomlands of northern and western Missouri began to fill the countryside, casting a layer of North Midland dialect features over the Southern base. The North Midland migration into northwestern Missouri and eastern Kansas is reflected in the findings of the AAA survey shown in figure 12 and in my student data from the counties in northern and western Missouri in table 3.

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TABLE 3
Distribution of Final Vowels in Student Questionnaires

	< 1945		*1945–59*		*1960–66*		*1967–75*	
	ə	i	ə	i	ə	i	ə	i
Northwest	7	3	10	4	10	9	2	15
Kansas City	0	1	2	7	9	36	4	57
Southwest	10	7	4	10	5	18	1	21
Central	8	9	15	16	13	39	4	60
Northeast	3	6	6	17	8	21	3	5
St. Louis	6	5	8	54	10	86	2	115
Southeast	6	4	4	13	4	17	2	17
Total	40	35	49	121	59	226	18	290
% Schwa	53%		29%		20%		6%	

From 1969 until 1994, I collected dialect data at the University of Missouri–Columbia by means of student questionnaires, and I have tabulated the data on the pronunciation of *Missouri*. For one survey, students administered a lengthy questionnaire to family members, thus providing data representing more than one generation, but most of the data on *Missouri* are from short questionnaires that students administered to at least ten males and ten females, usually other students. The questionnaire asked whether the respondent said "Missour-ee" or "Missour-uh" and why people tend to say each one. The form also solicited year of birth and enough personal data to eliminate non-Missourians from the tabulations. In table 3, the first two pairs of columns are from the longer questionnaire and include only individuals whose families had lived in the same area for three generations, and the other columns are from the short student questionnaires administered in 1985, 1992, and 1994. For the generation of Missourians born after World War II, the only area of the state with a majority pronunciation of [ə] is the Northwest, the same area of strength shown in the AAA surveys. Table 3 shows that the use of [i] has almost completely replaced [ə] among Missourians born during the 1960s, even in earlier strongholds of the nineteenth-century pronunciation.

To what may the drastic loss of the incidence of the schwa pronunciation after World War II be attributed? Young people often show irritation when asked why anyone would use the schwa pronunciation for the final spelled *-i*. Though the /i/ is now almost universal in the speech of young people in words like *Missouri*, it is clear from Linguistic Atlas interviews that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the common pronunciation of the final vowel spelled with *-i* or *-y* was /ɪ/, often centralized in

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syllables with weakened stress (i.e., [ɨ]). In preparing their AAA surveys, Vaughan and Quigley assumed that the final vowel was "long *e*" rather than "short *i*," that is, "Missour-ee," but one of the respondents said, "I think both of these jokers are wrong. The proper pronunciation is a short *i*, as in *bit*, *bitter*, *bivouac*, etc." (Vaughan and Quigley 1976b, 12). Table 1 indicates that field-workers recorded relatively few high front tense vowels for LANE, LAMSAS, and LAGS, but all of the LAUM high vowels and 75% of the LAPNW high vowels were transcribed as tense vowels. Allen (1973–76) mentions that centralized lower high front vowels occur occasionally in the Upper Midwest in the stressed syllable of *sister* and the unstressed syllable of *waited* and *horses*, but he makes no mention of this vowel in the last syllable of *Missouri*. Since many of his informants' parents were born in Scandinavia, some of them immigrating as children themselves, it is possible that Scandinavian phonology influenced their pronunciation, but the LAPNW data argue for this tense vowel being a more general feature of Inland North dialects in the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Early dictionaries listed only the [ɪ] pronunciation. Not until the third edition in 1971 did the Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionaries list /i/ as an alternate pronunciation: "\mə-ˈzu-rə, -zür-, -rē, -ri\." Before the 1960s there were relatively few words in English that were spelled with a final *-i*, and personal names with a final high front vowel sound were generally spelled with *-y* or *-ie*. Now we have added words like *bikini*, *maxi*, and *mini*, and female names with final *-i* abound—*Suzi*, *Toni*, *Patti*, *Judi*.

The change discussed here is not just a decrease in frequency of pronunciations like *Missoura*, *Cincinnata*, and *Miama*. Our spelling practices, our lexicon, and our perceptions of spelled forms have changed. Walker's *Rhyming Dictionary* (1924, 1983)—actually a listing of words, with brief definitions, alphabetized from the end of the word rather than from the beginning (from *A* and *Baa* to *Fuzz*)—documents the fact that final spelled *-i* dramatically increased during the twentieth century. Walker (1732–1807) published his first dictionary in 1775, and it has undergone numerous revisions and expansions since then. In an undated editor's preface, probably for the 1936 edition, Lawrence Dawson states that he had expanded an earlier edition from 20,000 words to 34,000. Of these 34,000 words on 540 pages, 144 end with the letter *-i*, including many borrowed words with specialized references, such as *obi* 'a Japanese colored sash' and *a priori* 'from cause to effect, deductively'. The only ones that seemed to be "everyday" words for me were *alibi*, *alumni*, *broccoli*, *confetti*, *hi*, *I*, *khaki*, *macaroni*, *rabbi*, *ski*, *spaghetti*, and *taxi*. A supplement prepared for the 1983 edition by Michael B. Freeman, in a mere 32 pages, lists 174 words ending with *i*, with somewhat common words being *bikini*, *daiquiri*, *kabuki*, *Nazi*,

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origami, *ravioli*, *safari*, *sari*, *semi*, *scampi*, *sukiyaki*, *swami*, *tsunami*, and *zucchini*. These two lists testify not only to the increase in final spelled *-i* but also to the internationalization of American culture and the American lexicon. Also noteworthy is that the only words listed here that end with the "long *i*" sound have been in everyday language the longest (*alumni*, *hi*, *I*, *rabbi*).

Since World War II, not only has a high vowel replaced the schwa, but that high vowel has morphed itself into a high front tense vowel. One might attribute Minnesotans' tense vowel to Scandinavian influence, but ALL of my students used the tense vowel, and they and most of their parents were monolingual speakers of American English. Some want to credit the media for promoting one pronunciation or the other, but comments made in the AAA survey and in my classroom surveys were negative more often than supportive of pronunciations by public figures. Others want to credit teachers for the shift from the folk pronunciation to the spelling pronunciation, but why would the massive shift have taken place in the laid-back instructional atmosphere of the latter twentieth century and not in the nineteenth century, when instruction was much more heavily regulated?

Young people who don't like the schwa pronunciation are very caustic in their comments, and one student even said it is "unnatural," unknowingly but fortuitously choosing a term that is meaningful to linguists. The schwa and front and central variants of the lax /ɪ/ might be considered a natural set of phones for unstressed syllables, but lax /ə/ and tense /i/ in present-day American English would not be a natural set. This change in the final high front unstressed vowel has developed alongside other changes, such as widespread merging of /ɑ/ and /ɔ/, raising of /æ/, loss of initial /h/ before /w/ and /j/, centering and unrounding of back vowels, and others. I am not proposing that this tensing of final /ɪ/ is directly related to any other specific phonological or phonetic changes discussed by other linguists, because I have not investigated possible relationships between this item and other changes. Labov (1972) (as well as other linguists) has pointed out that phonological changes are systemic, not just systematic, so I am throwing another item into the phonology hopper rather than claiming to have solved a puzzle. What starts these changes? Labov, who has closely examined a great many twentieth-century vowel changes, comments that he does not have "an answer to the riddle of actuation" (1980, 263).

At this point in my quest, I must admit that I have some partial answers to the first opening question ("Why do some people say Missour-ee and others say Missour-uh?), and I know the answer to the second question ("Which one is 'right'?"): Both! Well, actually, all four are "correct"—[məzʊrɪ], [məzʊrə], [məzʊr], [məzʊri]. At least, all four can be explained within the parameters of the development of American English dialects.

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With reference to the Irish provenance of the schwa pronunciation of vowels in weakly stressed syllables, and thus *Missoura*, I must point out and underscore that I have merely presented some circumstantial evidence—NOT PROOF3—that Scotch-Irish immigrants in western New England and in the Midland dialect areas of the Colonies introduced this feature to American English. Further research may "prove me wrong," but I suspect that spellings in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents will support my hypothesis.

Other details that could be added to this discussion of the pronunciation of *Missouri* have not attracted as much public or professional attention as the final vowel. I close by proposing three other vowel puzzles and an interesting variation in the medial consonant: (1) There may be a slight (vowel harmony) correlation between the quality of the first and final vowels in some regions. (2) In the LANE records, the second vowel manifests the interesting variants /u/ ~ /ʊ/ ~ /o/. (3) Present-day young people who pronounce *sure* like *shirr* have the *shirr* vowel in the second syllable of *Missouri*. (4) The medial consonant is occasionally pronounced as the /s/ of *missive* rather than the usual /z/ of *misery*; this variation was frequent in the LANE records, with almost 40% of the speakers using a voiceless fricative.

NOTES

Donald M. Lance passed away on 22 October 2002. He had been writing about the pronunciation of *Missouri* for almost two decades (Lance 1985) and had made completing this article for *American Speech* one of the goals of his retirement years. He submitted the manuscript in August 2002 and was notified of its acceptance on 7 October. He went to work right away to prepare the final version and e-mailed the editor about how pleased he was with the helpful comments of the two *American Speech* referees. The version that appears here was prepared by Matthew Gordon of the University of Missouri from Lance's computer files and printouts. Lance had not yet drafted a note of acknowledgments, but he likely would have thanked Michael McCafferty for his generous assistance in sorting out the Algonquian facts. Special thanks go to his longtime friend Becky Schroeder and to his niece Jo Ann Stevenson for retrieving his computer files and papers and to Matthew Gordon for preparing the article for publication. *Ed.*

1. The data in table 1 and in the discussion are based on the following sources. For the New England states, the transcriptions come from map 17 in the Linguistic Atlas of New England (LANE; Kurath, Hanley, et al. 1939) and biographical information on the informants is taken from Kurath, Hansen, et al. (1939). Professor Kretzschmar of the University of Georgia provided me with electronic copies of pronunciation data for the Linguistic Atlas of the

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Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS) and the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS) as he was preparing materials for the Web site on Linguistic Atlas Projects (http://hyde.park.uga.edu). Data on the informants and geography in LAMSAS are from Kurath and McDavid (1961), McDavid and O'Cain (1980a, 1980b), and Kretzschmar et al. (1994), and data on the informants and geography in the southern states are from Pederson et al. (1988–92). Data for the Upper Midwest are from Allen (1958, 1973–76). David Carlson (pers. com., 1997) at Springfield College in Massachusetts, the current director of the Linguistic Atlas of the Pacific Northwest (LAPNW), sent me informant data and a tabulation of pronunciations collected in the Pacific Northwest, with 42 informants from Washington, 7 from Idaho, 2 from Oregon, and 1 from Montana. For the Linguistic Atlas of the North-Central States (LANCS), I used a limited number of field records representing 16 locations in Ohio, which Professor Terry L. Irons (pers. com., 1997) of Morehead State University was kind enough to send me.

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