HIGHWAY 'FARTY' TO 'FAREST' PARK
STIGMATIZATION OF A VOWEL MERGER IN ST. LOUIS

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Introduction

There is a vowel merger that occurs in much of the speech of the white middle-class in St Louis, Missouri This is perhaps most noticeable because it often occurs in the pronunciation of the two major highways in the area, Highway 40 and 44, as well as the largest park in the city, Forest Park, basically, many St Louisans have a tendency to merge an /ohr/ into an /ahr/ when it comes before /r/ [Please note, for the remainder of this thesis, the symbols used for this merger will be /ohr/ and /ahr/] In doing so, the names of the major highways in St Louis are often pronounced "Highway Farty" and "Highway Farty-Four" (or, often "Farty-Far") and the major city park where the 1904 World's Fair was held is pronounced "Farest Park" This vowel merger has become a source of humor in St Louis and has become highly stigmatized (Youmans 1993) This is often evident in jokes that are made about this aspect of St Louis speech on the radio, television, and even among St Louisans, themselves

Radio personalities often laugh at the pronunciation this merger causes Guy Phillips (personal communication, March 18, 1996), who often talks about this pronunciation during his morning show on Y-98 FM, says that "it is an endearing pattern of speech which seems to be indigenous to the St Louis area. It's fun to make fun of!" Another disc jockey and native St Louisan, John Ulett (personal communication, March 18, 1996), FM-KSHE-95, writes that "you can hear the media make fun of the local dialect because many members of the media come from outside the area they hear what we locals don't "

This aspect of St Louis speech is also mentioned in the newspapers Ellen Futterman, a former New Yorker and writer for the *St Louis Post Dispatch*, writes that it "absolutely unnerves [her] when a St Louisan says Highway 'Farty-far'" (February 1, 1988, p 1E) Richard Byrne, another St Louis transplant and a writer for *The Riverfront Times*, writes that although "[he has] lived in St Louis for five years now [he] will never call our two main thoroughfares Highway "Farty" and "Farty-Far"" (September 28-October 4, 1994, p 2) Native St Louis journalists, like Elaine Viets, a South St Louisan and a columnist for *The St Louis Post-Dispatch*, also mention this aspect of St Louis speech In the book entitled *St Louis Home on the river* (1995), that she co-wrote with Quinta Scott, she gives three hints on how to pass as a St Louisan, one of which is this aspect of St Louis speech Viets writes (Viets and Scott, 1995 12-13)

St Louisans speak a language similar to English Many outsiders are startled when they hear St Louisans say they're taking Highway "Farty" They don't understand In St Louis, "farty" is the number after 39 We also eat with "farks "

Radio personalities and newspaper columnists are not the only ones who laugh at this aspect of St Louis speech St Louisans, themselves, also poke fun at it *The Riverfront Times*, a popular, weekly newspaper in St Louis with a circulation of about 100,000, has done an annual "Best of St Louis" Readers Poll for the last eight years In this poll, categories are formed (for example, the "Best Restaurant in St Louis" and the "Best Local Celebrity") and St Louisans (of which usually 2,500 - 4,000 participate) must write in their choices for the "Best of" in St Louis When, in 1990 *The Riverfront Times* created a new category "Strangest Things About St Louisans," "their accents" was ranked fourth under this new category Thereafter, until 1995, the "weird pronunciation of Highway Farty and Farty-Far" consistently ranked fourth in the poll

It is evident that this dialect feature is a quite a well-known, well-talked about phenomenon in St Louis, Missouri Most St Louisans believe that it occurs only in South St Louis John Ulett (personal communication, March 18, 1996) says that "the AR substitute of OR seems to be area wide with a heavier concentration South " Elaine Viets also associates this speech pattern to that spoken in South St Louis and, in one of her columns, writes that "Southsiders speak another language 'warsh the fark in the zink'" (1989 4)

What is not evident, however, is how stigmatized this feature actually is Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the social stratification of the merger that is occurring between /ohr / and /ahr / in the English spoken by the white, middle-class in St Louis, Missouri As this is a preliminary study, only the white, middle class in South and West St Louis will be studied The basis for these limitations is the fact that the researcher is from the white, middle-class in Southwest St Louis and has greatest access to this segment of the population

Literature Review

One of the reasons that I chose to study the speech of St Louis, Missouri is because there have been so few linguistic studies actually done in this region As Thomas Murray, who has studied St Louis speech, states St Louis is "one pocket of virtually untouched wealth [that has] been ignored" (1986 1)

The only extensive linguistic study done thus far was by Thomas E Murray in his dissertation *The Language of St Louis, Missouri Variation in the Gateway City* (1986) In this study, Murray, a native of St. Louis, collected data from 240 informants, all St Louisans In one section of his study, "Phonology," Murray devotes one paragraph to the "pre-r /o/," as he terms it, and notes that it is often "homophonize[d by St Louisans in] words like *lord/lard, for/far, former/farmer,* and *born/barn* " Murray offers a set of tentative linguistic constraints on this pre-r/o/ but concludes by saying that more data and analysis is required to "confirm and/or refine them" (1986 25)

The Dictionary of American Regional English (1985) was also helpful for this study, but only with regards to where the /ohr/ is merging into an /ahr/ in the United States The "Guide to Pronunciation" in Volume I, by James W. Hartman, was useful in determining some places in the United States where the /ohr / and /ahr/ merge Unfortunately, since this is such an extensive study of the United States, there was not a lot of focus on Missouri and, more specifically, St Louis In fact, the interviews, which were done in 1970, consisted of only 39 informants from Missouri, of which only two were from St Louis (and they were both black, females) (Cassidy 1985 cxvii), and did not contribute much to this study with regards to what is happening in St Louis

Another source that proved useful to this study of the area around St Louis was the work of Timothy Frazer, Western Illinois University, who has done many studies on Midwestern English and, more specifically, the dialect features in Illinois and the surrounding areas Many of his articles were quite helpful in determining possible, if any, influences that Illinois speech has on St Louis There is one book edited by Frazer, *Heartland English Variation and Transition in the American Midwest* (1993) which includes a few articles, including one by Thomas Murray "The Language of St Louis, Missouri Dialect Mixture in the Urban Midwest," that mention the merger of /ohr / and /ahr/ (51) Unfortunately, Frazer has only studied the surrounding areas of St Louis and was actually unaware of this vowel merger and the stigma attached when I spoke with him (personal communication, January 29, 1996)

While there have been a few studies done on dialects in Missouri, most of them have focused on areas outside of the St Louis area. Rachel Faries, the University of Missouri, Columbia, wrote a dissertation on "A Word Geography of Missouri" (1967) but, as this is only a lexical study, was not very helpful in this study Donald Lance, also of the University of Missouri, has also extensively studied Missouri and, more specifically, the influence that German has on Missouri speech but focused on areas outside of St Louis

One professor from the University of Missouri, Columbia, Gilbert Youmans, has reported some interesting observations with regards to this merger He briefly mentions this vowel phenomenon with regards to the "stigma" that is attached and adds that the ' bemusement with the [ahr] pronunciation is unusual in that it is primarily at the expense of St Louis speech" (1993 129) Which is peculiar, he says, since "St Louis is generally considered a prestige dialect in Missouri, so the regional attitude toward the "farks" pronunciation is something of an anomaly" (personal communication, May 28, 1996)

The only other study that I found to be somewhat helpful was a Master's thesis written Robert L Johnson (1976) from the University of Missouri, Columbia. This thesis, entitled "A brief study of dialect in St Louis, Missouri," was done under the guidance of Donald Lance and focused on only 11 informants in four different locations in St Louis In this thesis he briefly notes the presence of the vowel merger but does not discuss it in great detail This study was good in that it offers further evidence that the merger was happening in 1976

One of the best sources of information came from the news media in St Louis This vowel merger was first mentioned in October 1976 in an article written by Donald Crinklaw

entitled "Ladue Lockjaw, or How I Learned to Love the St. Louis Language " Crinklaw consulted with Lance and Dr Marshall Durbin of Washington University to explain this merger which he terms "Ladue Lockjaw " Since that article, there have been many scattered accounts of this phenomenon As previously mentioned, *The Riverfront Times* annual Readers Poll has listed this merger numerous times and *The St Louis Post-Dispatch* has also printed articles about this as well as a "Letter to the Editor" that mentions it.

Most important is the work of William Labov, which was crucial for this study Most helpful were Labov's techniques for participant observation that I adopted, such as asking directions that would elicit the variables for which I was studying, a technique which he mentions in his book entitled *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (1966) I also adapted and modified the "matched-guise" test [based on earlier work by Charles Osgood and Wallace Lambert] that Labov used in New York City and describes in *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (1972)

Labov (personal communication, February 26, 1996) mentioned that it was critical that I study the Northern Cities Shift and how it affects the speech of St Louis To study this shift, I attended his lecture "Why are American dialects diverging?" given at the University of Missouri, Columbia (April 25, 1996) In this lecture, Labov talked about the extensive telephone survey he is undertaking to study the varying dialects in the United States In this TELSUR, he noticed that there is a vowel shift occurring in northern industrial cities around the Great Lakes St Louis is not included in these cities, however, he did mention the /ohr/ - /ahr/ vowel merger that occurs in St Louis and said that this "well-known" merger was disappearing

In addition to literature, personal communication was also a key factor in obtaining information, as well as wonderful advice and encouragement, for this study I was fortunate to have had assistance from linguists William Labov, Thomas Murray, Gilbert Youmans, Donald M Lance, and Timothy Frazer Local St Louis "celebrities" were also extremely kind and helpful in giving me their thoughts on this matter Elaine Viets, Guy Phillips, John Ulett, William Stage, Bill McClelland, J C Corcoran, and Dan Duffy were extremely kind in responding to my letters via telephone or mail And, of course, the people of St Louis provided me with the richest source of information and help for which without them, there would be no study

Method

Techniques followed for this study were basically a modification of some techniques that Labov used in his study of New York City and Martha's Vineyard in *Sociolinguistic Patterns* In addition to participant observation and field work, Labov's work was critical in preparing the instrument for the matched-guise test as well as in the creation of the test As this is a preliminary study, I limited the area of study to south and west St Louis city and county which is predominantly white The reason why I limited the study to this area is because I am from an area in Southwest St Louis that is white, middle-class and, because most of the participants were

solicited via networking, I had greater access to the population in the South and West St Louis area. Also, this is the segment of the population where I knew that the merger was prevalent

Participants

Since this is a study on the dialect of St. Louis, all participants are from the St. Louis area and most have lived there their entire lives Because St Louis is such a large and diverse area, and because this is a preliminary study, the participants are whites in South and West St Louis city and county, which can be inferred from the map in Figure 1 on the next page This is also where the dialect features are purported to be produced

The first part of the study involved participant observation Since the study was limited to West and South St Louis, most of the participants for this part of the study reside and/or worked in this area and include both relatives, friends, neighbors, as well as employees and customers of local establishments I observed patrons and workers at such places as neighborhood bars, grocery stores, deli counters, hardware stores, gas stations, hair salons, movie theaters, restaurants, and department stores I also found that the funeral parlors, churches, and family gatherings were good places to observe speech, as well The best participants, however, were found during the weekday at Crestwood Mall, in Southwest St Louis, at the makeup and jewelry counters

Other participants in this part of the study include people on the television and radio By watching the news on KMOV-TV Channel 4 where Robin Smith and Larry Connors are the prime newscasters, I was able to see a different medium where this variable is produced In addition, newscasters are always interviewing local St Louisans who produce this merger St Louis radio was also a good source for finding this variable Most helpful were the local St Louisans who call in to talk on the talk shows and morning shows Radio commercials also provided a good source of material

Once I had completed the participant observation part of the study and determined that this merger still occurred, I began the "matched guise" test Participants for this part of the study fall into two different categories those used for the creation of the "matched-guise" instrument and those to whom the "matched-guise" test was administered These participants were solicited via networking (friends, relatives, neighbors, church members, co-workers) as well as through the St Louis Community College system Individuals were simply asked to participate with the understanding that there would be no monetary compensation and then asked to sign a consent form prior to the study that stated that they would remain anonymous. (The participants are, however, coded and are identified by state code, MO, followed by the last three digits of the zip code and, finally, the participant number within that zip code So, for example, the third participant in zip code 63119 would be identified as MO119-03)

The first step was the creation of the instrument Those who participated consisted of friends and relatives of the researcher and were solicited by asking if they would like to assist in the study Although there were 18 participants who were recorded for this part of the study (11

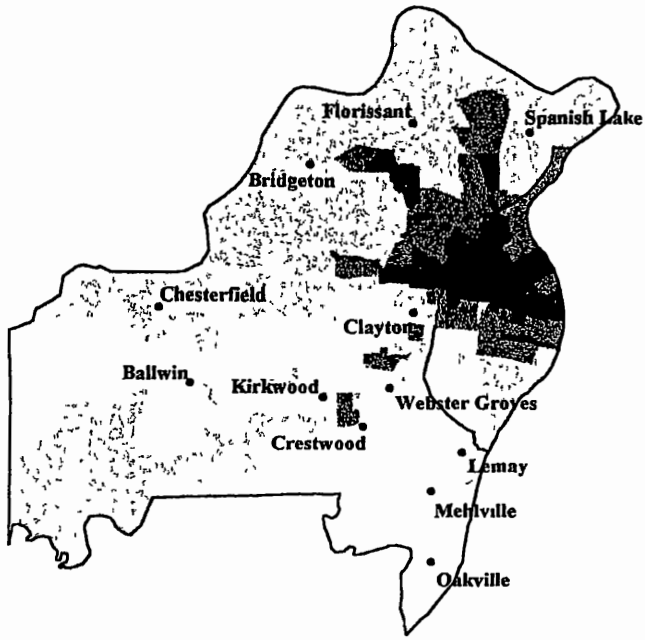

Figure 1 Race Distribution in the St Louis Area

women and 7 men), only 12 of the participants were used for the instrument The breakdown of the 12 participants, all white, middle-class, is as follows

- There are 6 men and 6 women
- Age of participants
  - 7 participants aged 18-39
  - 4 participants aged 40-59
  - 1 participant aged 60 and over
- All are residents of St Louis and had lived there for the majority of their lives
- Very few participants have traveled much outside of the St Louis area
- All, except one, grew up in South or West St Louis
- Education Levels
  - 3 participants have high school only (1 GED)
  - 3 participants have some college
  - 4 participants have earned either a B A or B S
  - 2 participants have earned a Master s Degree
- Occupations
  - 2 engineers
  - 2 students
  - 1 computer programmer/data base administrator
  - 1 secretary
  - 1 nurse
  - 1 draftsman
  - 1 auto mechanic
  - 1 childcare worker
  - 1 retired person
  - 1 driver/messenger

The next part of the study consisted of participants (hereafter referred to as "respondents") listening to the instrument that was created from the above process and rating the voices according to quality It was important that the respondents not know any of the participants whose voices were on the tape Once again, all respondents from this section were from South or West St Louis Breakdown of these 50 participants is as follows

- There are 15 men and 35 women
- Age of respondents
  - 26 respondents are 18-39
  - 13 respondents are 40-59
  - 11 respondents are 60 and over
- All are from South, West, or Southwest St Louis
- Highest Level of Education
  - 25 respondents high school only
  - 9 have some college
  - 10 respondents B A or B S degrees
  - 5 respondents M A or M B A degrees

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- Occupations

10 students
8 "retired" persons
5 childcare workers
3 cooks
3 teachers
3 homemakers
3 sales persons
2 customer service representatives
1 of each of the following marketing executive, computer specialist, letter carrier, minister, dentist, researcher, collections, recreation, secretary, receptionist, printer, business owner, and parts specialist

Instrument

The first part of the study required the use of Labovian techniques for participant observation (described in "Procedures" below) to determine where this merger was occurring, who was doing it, and in which words these vowels merged After the participant observation had been completed, an instrument was created that would be used to determine whether or not this /ohr/ - /ahr/ pronunciation feature was stigmatized The best way to determine this, according to Labov (1972), is through a "matched-guise" test In *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (1972 145-146), Labov states that the "matched-guise" test, developed by Lambert (1967),

> is the basic tool now widely utilized for the study of subjective reactions towards language The essential principle which emerges from Lambert s work is that there exists a uniform set of attitudes towards language which are shared by almost all members of the speech community, whether they use a stigmatized or a prestige form of the language These attitudes do not emerge in a systematic form if the subject is questioned directly about dialects, but if he makes two sets of personality judgments about the same speaker using two different forms of language, *and does not realize that it is the same speaker*, his subjective evaluations of language will emerge as the differences in the two ratings

The "matched-guise" test was used to determine the subjective reactions by St Louisans to the speech of other St Louisans

I adopted and modified Labov's matched-guise test for this study Because his study involved all female voices in the late 1960s and early 1970s and my study includes both genders in the 1990s, it was necessary to modify the occupations to make them more unisex and up-to-date The occupations used in this dialect study were TV Personality, Executive, Computer Sales/Helpline (with a footnote explaining that this is someone who answers questions about and solves problems with computers), Sales Clerk, Factory Worker/Auto Mechanic, and None of the Above In addition, a separate section, "Area of St Louis the Speaker is From," was included

with the choices North, South, and West The final "Voice Quality Form" to be used for the matched-guise test elicited basic information about the respondents combined with the lists of occupations and areas of St Louis to use in determining their ratings Respondents gave their responses while listening to a tape of 13 voices reading a paragraph [Appendix A] that had been created from the words listed for the participant observation [Appendix B] This paragraph was about different places in St. Louis that one could visit and included minimal and near-minimal pairs such as *for/far, former/farm, or/are*, as well as words in which the merger occurred such as *north, Forest, 40, orchestra,* and *performance Bought* and *ought* were also included in the paragraph to verify that St. Louisans only merge the /ohr/ into an /ahr/.

The individuals who provided the speech samples in this part of the study, after signing a consent form, were instructed that the researcher was doing a study of the dialect of St Louis and asked to read the paragraph in their normal speaking voice into a Sony TCD-5M Professional Portable Tape Recorder Unfortunately, even though the participants were asked to read the paragraph in a normal speaking voice, careful speech was elicited by many of the participants (i e , no vowel merger) Fortunately, however, this merger is so deeply engrained in many people that it is even produced in careful speech and I was able to record a few people who merge these vowels One of the participants was asked to read the paragraph twice, once in her normal speaking voice (/ohr/) and a second time producing the variable (/ahr/) for words such as *Forest, 40, former, performance*, and *orchestra*, this is the "matched-guise" voice of the instrument

Once all of the recordings had been collected, the research sample was created Because the paragraph was quite lengthy (75 seconds in length) and, with 18 voices, the instrument was over 20 minutes long, only part of the paragraph was used with only 13 voices to make the instrument shorter and more manageable The final segment of the paragraph used for the instrument was a total of 35 seconds, making the entire taped instrument 8 minutes in length The tape is set up in such a way that each voice is identified, for example, "Voice #1", a pause, the 35 second text is read and then there is a 5 second pause The final instrument had a wide variety of speakers young, old, educated Only half of the speakers produced the /ahr/ variable in the reading The "matched-guise" voice was placed as Voice #3 and Voice #12, Voice #3 being the normal speaking voice and Voice #12 being the one with the variable.

Procedures

Prior to creating and administering the "matched-guise" test, participant observation was done, which involved observing people in the St Louis area to determine where the vowel merger was being produced Beginning in a residential neighborhood, the study then moved to the public sector via personal visits and telephone calls

The observations began with people in a residential, white, middle-class neighborhood in Southwest St Louis County (Webster Groves), many of whom had been born in South St Louis city Because most of the participants were unaware of the study and because they knew the researcher, all speech observed was informal

After observing the residential neighborhood for a few weeks, the study was then moved to public places I visited a wide variety of public places throughout the St Louis area. Places visited include grocery stores (Schnucks, Dierbergs, and Shop-n-Save), hardware stores (Builder's Square, Essen Hardware), department stores (Target, K-Mart, Dillards, Famous Barr), restaurants, banks, gas stations, coffee shops, shopping malls (Crestwood Mall, the Galleria), and even local neighborhood bars (which proved to be an excellent source of information) The visits consisted of walking around the establishment and either listening to the patrons and employees conversing with one another or asking questions that would elicit the variable, for example, "How much is this?" and "Where is this?" and listening to the responses given Other places that proved to be beneficial in the gathering of information were family gatherings, including a funeral, wake, and church visits Another source was KMOV-TV Channel 4, a CBS affiliate in St. Louis, whose newscasters produce this variable during their broadcasts One last method that I developed involved telephoning restaurants and shops to ask for directions, as well as movie theaters to listen to the recordings of the times, which proved to be relatively unsuccessful, due to directions and information being given in careful speech (i e , no variable production)

As previously stated, respondents were selected on a networking type basis and asked to participate in a dialect study of St Louis The test was administered to groups of 6-10 as well as individually The respondents were told that the researcher was doing a dialect of study of St Louis and then asked to read and sign a consent form giving permission to use their data in the study They were told that they would remain anonymous and if, for any reason, they decided they did not want to participate in the study, they could withdraw at anytime Once they had completed the consent form, they were given the "Voice Quality Form" and asked to complete the top part of the form (basic information) After the form was completed, the "matched-guise" test was administered

Although instructions were printed on the form as to how to take the test, verbal instructions were given for clarification The respondents were told that they would be listening to a tape of 13 voices, all reading the exact same passage They were to listen very carefully, as though they were a personnel director in charge of hiring the voice for one of the positions listed They were to rank the highest occupation that the speaker could hold based *only* on voice quality (a term not defined to the participants) They were told to only check one occupation for each voice After they had checked the occupation, they were then told that they should check the "Area of St Louis" that they thought the speaker was from North, South, or West

With the exception of one group (of older women, one of whom was blind), the tape was played continuously, from beginning to end, without pausing or stopping This was done to force the respondents to go with their initial immediate subjective reaction to each voice, without giving them time to analyze and think The respondents only listened to the tape once, it was not rewound or replayed

After the last voice had been played, the recorder was turned off and the informal interview began After gaining permission to record the interview, respondents were asked for their comments about the study and then asked to comment on what they thought about the

speech of St. Louis and if there was a "special dialect" spoken They were also asked if they thought that St Louisans spoke differently than people in other parts of the United States and, if so, what special features were there There was not a set of formal interview questions just general questions about the way people in St Louis spoke and, if there was a special way, where it occurred, and who did it When the /ahr/ pronunciation was mentioned, the interview immediately turned to questions about the variable where was it produced, who produced it, what did they think of it, did they produce it, why or why not The respondents were finally asked to make any last statements and thoughts about the study and the dialect of St Louis Respondents were then thanked for their time and the session was over

Although results were calculated periodically throughout the entire study, the final calculations were done once all 50 of the tests had been administered and collected In order to calculate the final ratings (average), numeric values were assigned to each occupation TV Personality (5), Executive (4), Computer Help/Sales (3), Sales (2), Auto mechanic/Factory worker (1), and None of the Above (0) [Please note None of the above was, at first, given a rating of (0) however, this proved to be a mistake for many reasons, the main reason being that "None of the Above" does not necessarily reflect that the respondent thought that the voice rated lower than an "Auto Mechanic/Factory Worker " This error was not caught until half of the test had been administered and, for the second half, was not given as an option (this did not affect the first set of tests, but did affect the total number of respondents) "None of the Above" responses were just not counted nor included in the final results] Since a numeric value was given for each occupation, totals were calculated by adding up the number of checks by each occupation and then multiplying them by the numeric value assigned to that occupation The numeric values were then totaled for each occupation until a final score was received The average was obtained by dividing the final score the number of respondents for that voice [50 respondents minus number of "None of the Above" responses]

So, for example, if a voice received the following results

TV Personality (5)	10 checks	10X5	=	50
Executive (4)	15 checks	15X4	=	60
Computer Sales/Help(3)	10 checks	10X3	=	30
Sales (2)	5 checks	5X2	=	10
Auto Mechanic/Factory Worker (1)	5 checks	5X1	=	5
None of the Above (0)	5 checks	5X0	=	0
		Total	=	155
		Avg	=	3 44

(The average score is the total, 155, divided by the total number of respondents, 45 [which is 50 minus the "None of the Above" responses, 5])

After the numeric values of the occupations had been calculated, the "Area of St Louis" numbers were then determined Responses were tallied and then counted for each voice until the totals were ascertained The "Area of St Louis" receiving the largest number of responses was then used to categorize where the voice was associated as being from So, for example, if 20

respondents marked "South", 15 marked "North", and 5 marked "West", then the voice would be most associated as being from the South

Results

Participant Observation

The initial stages of this study consisted of participant observation to determine where this merger was occurring, geographically, socially, and linguistically. The results of the participant observation indicate that this merger occurs mainly among, but is not limited to, St Louisans over the age of 30 (although some younger St Louisans do also merge the vowels) and occurs in, but is not limited to, South St Louis City and County and Southwest St Louis County (but it does still occur among the middle-aged to older populations in the West and North) Insofar as linguistic environments are concerned, I concur with those defined by Thomas Murray the /ahr/ never occurs when followed by a silent-*e*, in front of a *t* in the same stressed syllable, and when followed by a silent *ps*

These observations were further supported by the interviews with the participants and respondents In the interviews, many respondents said that this /ahr/ pronunciation was something that occurred in South St Louis and is associated with less educated, less mobile people Many of those in their late 20s/early 30s indicated that they, themselves, make a conscious effort not to produce this variable because they don't want to sound like a "hoosier" (the most derogatory term in St Louis)

After gaining the initial reactions of the respondents to the merger, calculations were made that verified and supported what many of those interviewed thought (and what I observed) that the vowel merger was predominant among the over-30 members of the white middle class in South and Southwest St Louis From the matched-guise test I found that the vowel merger is, indeed, a stigmatized feature in the dialect of St Louis and is most associated with South St Louis

"Matched-Guise" Test

The calculations from the 50 "matched-guise" tests are shown in Table 1 (the shaded areas indicate the "matched-guise" speaker)

Table 1
Response totals from the 50 respondents

Voice Number	Total/Responses	Rating (Average)	Area
Voice #1	87 [41]	2 12	South
Voice #2	91 [48]	1 90	South

Voice #3 -- /ohr/	165 [47]	3 51	West
Voice #4	185 [48]	3 85	West
Voice #5	65 [33]	1 97	South
Voice #6	152 [45]	3 38	West
Voice #7	134 [44]	3 05	South
Voice #8	173 [48]	3 60	West
Voice #9	148 [43]	3 44	West
Voice #10	66 [44]	1 50	South
Voice #11	123 [42]	2 93	West
Voice #12 -- /ahr/	134 [41]	3 27	South/West
Voice #13	104 [43]	2 42	South

This table shows the rating (average score) for each voice and the area of St Louis that most respondents associated the voice with By rearranging the data in Table 1, descending order, according to the "Average" score (or "rating") that each voice received, the data is more easily understood and the stigmatization of the dialect becomes much clearer

Table 2

Voice Quality vs Area of St Louis (from highest to lowest)

Quality of Voice	South/West STL
1) 3 85 -- Voice #4 -- /ahr/	West
2) 3 60 -- Voice #8 -- /ohr/	West
3) 3 51 -- Voice #3 -- /ohr/	West
4) 3 44 -- Voice #9 -- /ohr/	West
5) 3 38 -- Voice #6 -- /ahr/	West
6) 3 27 -- Voice # 12 -- /ahr/	West/South
7) 3 05 -- Voice #7 -- /ahr/	South
8) 2 93 -- Voice # 11 -- /ohr/	West
9) 2 42 -- Voice # 13 -- /ahr/	South
10) 2 12 -- Voice # 1 -- /ohr/	South
11) 1 97 -- Voice # 5 -- /ahr /	South
12) 1 90 -- Voice # 2 -- /ohr/	South
13) 1 50 -- Voice # 10 -- /ahr/	South

As the data in Table 2 shows, the five highest rated speakers were all associated with being from West St Louis and the five lowest rated speakers are all associated with being from South St Louis This data indicates that more prestigious speech is associated with West St Louis and that less prestigious speech is associated with South St Louis

The differences in attitudes toward this variable in speech can best be seen in the results of the matched-guise speaker The "matched-guise" voice with the /ohr/ pronunciation ranked third highest among the voice quality survey, with a score of 3 51 whereas the same speaker, only

altering her speech by the /ahr/ variable, ranked sixth with a score of 3 27, this is a difference of 0 24 This is especially of interest in that these are scores for the same person reading the same paragraph the same way only altering her speech by the variable being studied /ahr/ - /ohr/ Clearly, then, this helps to support the finding that the /ahr/ pronunciation is stigmatized

One interesting thing to note, however, is the inconsistency with the variable production vs rating In other words, those who spoke with an /ahr/ variable did not necessarily rank lower than those who spoke with the /ohr/ variable There are, obviously, other factors involved when determining voice quality For example, the highest rated speaker, Voice #4, merges the / ohr / - / ahr / in his speech, however, because of his broadcast-like quality voice, he ranked highest in the study Likewise, Voice #1 and #2, both of whom spoke with the /ohr/ pronunciation, received some of the lowest ratings in the study Clearly, then, there are other factors that come into play when talking of voice quality and would require further study This study, however, only focuses on the /ahr/ - /ohr/ variable

The most interesting part of the data, however, is the stigma attached to poor quality speech The highest educated participant in this study (Voice#10), who has a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering, was rated the lowest in voice quality As shown in Table 2 above, regardless of the way the speaker pronounced the words, those speakers with the lowest voice quality rating were all associated with South St Louis, whereas those speakers with the highest ratings were all associated with West St Louis, a more prestigious, upwardly mobile community. This is, in my opinion, the most interesting part of the entire study This can best be seen when Table 1 is graphed (Figure 2)

As shown in Figure 2 on the next page, the lowest points on the graph are all associated with South St Louis, whereas the highest ratings are all associated with West St Louis The highest rated speaker among those voices associated strictly with South St Louis is 3 05 whereas the highest rated voice associated strictly with West St Louis is 3 85, a difference of 0 80 Likewise, the lowest rated speaker associated with South St Louis was 1 50, and the lowest rated speaker associated with West St Louis was 2 93, a difference of one and one half occupation levels

Another interesting aspect of the study worth mentioning is the averages of the ratings given for West and South The average of the six voices associated with the West is 3 45 while the average of the six voices associated with the South is 2 16, a difference of 1 29 From this data, the South and the West are separated by one and one third occupation levels It is clear, then, that "better" voice quality is associated with West St Louis and that those people are thought to have better jobs It is also clear that the "lesser" quality voice is associated with the South, which is thought to be more "blue collar"

These findings actually parallel the situation in St Louis By looking at a map of the population of St Louis with advanced degrees (see Figure 3 on the next page), one can see that the most educated people (Master's degree or higher) in the St Louis area live in the western part of the area whereas the less educated people tend to live North and South St Louis And, as education level usually parallels income level, the more affluent St Louisans tend to live in the

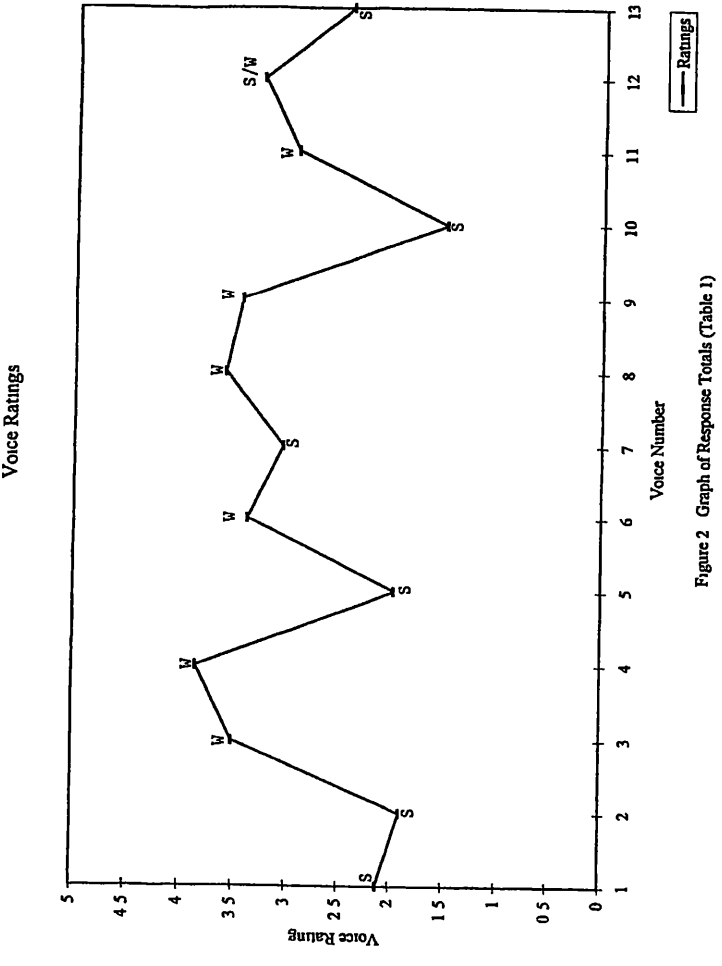

Figure 2 Graph of Response Totals (Table 1)

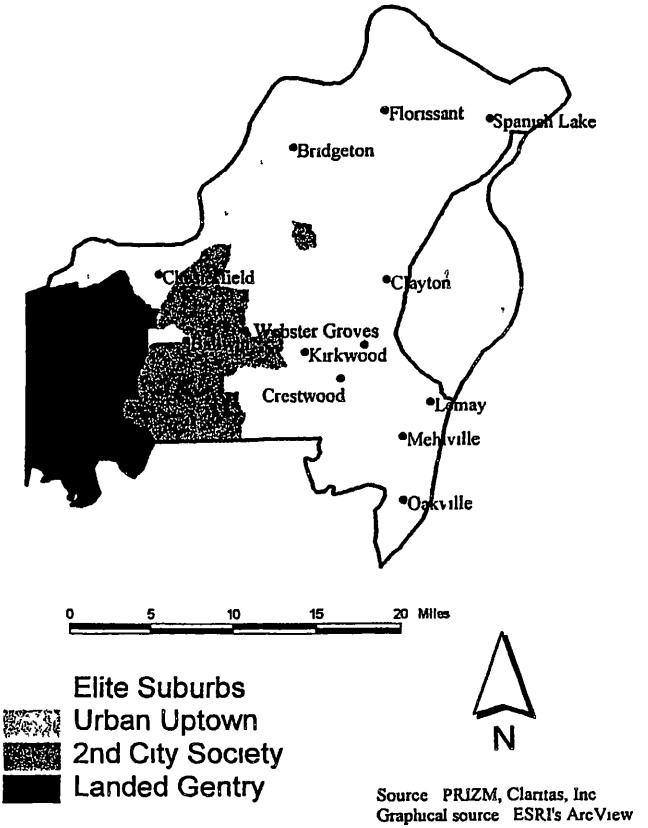

Figure 4 Most Affluent Population of St Louis

western part of the area whereas the less affluent people tend to live in the northern and southern parts of the area Figure 4 on the next page shows a breakdown of the most affluent population of St Louis where "Elite Suburbs" is the most affluent, "Urban Uptown" the second most affluent, "2nd City Society" the third most affluent and "Landed Gentry the fourth most affluent

As stated previously, the data supports the original hypothesis, which is that the /ohr/ - /ahr/ merger is stigmatized in St Louis and is most associated with South St Louis, which is considered less prestigious than West St Louis

Discussion

The results of this study support my original hypothesis which is that this vowel merger is stigmatized and is associated with South St Louis

The implications of this study are great Many St Louisans, (MO108-03, MO121-01, and myself), have made a conscious effort to alter our speech because of the perceived stigma attached to this pattern of speech As many younger St Louisans are altering their speech in such a way, it would indicate that the merger will soon die out This supports the findings of William Labov (lecture at UM-C, April 25, 1996 and personal communication, February 26, 1996) who found in his extensive TELSUR that the merger is, in fact, dying out I, too, found this to be the case in my observations of parents, who produced the merger, and their interactions with their children, who did not produce the merger In fact during one interview, one parent, MO119-16, soon discovered that her 22-year old son did not produce the merger She asked him questions like "What is the name of the thing you eat with?" to which he responded "a fork" and "What is the name of the animal that runs around the track?" to which he replied "a horse " This is also the case in my neighborhood where three sets of parents observed (in their 50s) produce this merger and their children (six, in their 20s) do not It would seem, then, that the younger generation has somehow picked up on the stigma attached to this merger and have unconsciously chosen not to produce it Or, perhaps as avid radio listeners, have picked up on the fact that the DJs in St Louis make fun of this aspect of St Louis speech and have chosen not to use this Of course, this would require an additional study of parent vs child speech as well as the part the media plays in our speech

Another implication of this study is with regards to St Louisans and their perception of other St Louisans From the data given in the "Results" section of this paper, poor speech is associated with lower occupations and these lower occupations are associated with South St Louis and, the inverse could be true, South St Louis is associated with poor speech and poor occupations These perceptions are interesting to note in that St Louisans may categorize someone as "less educated" based on speech alone These perceptions are often wrong For example, the lowest ranked speaker in the survey (Voice #10) was also the highest educated speaker with the highest paid occupation in the survey This, in my opinion, is one of the most interesting aspects of the entire survey It also shows that speech and voice quality play a large role in our perceptions of others

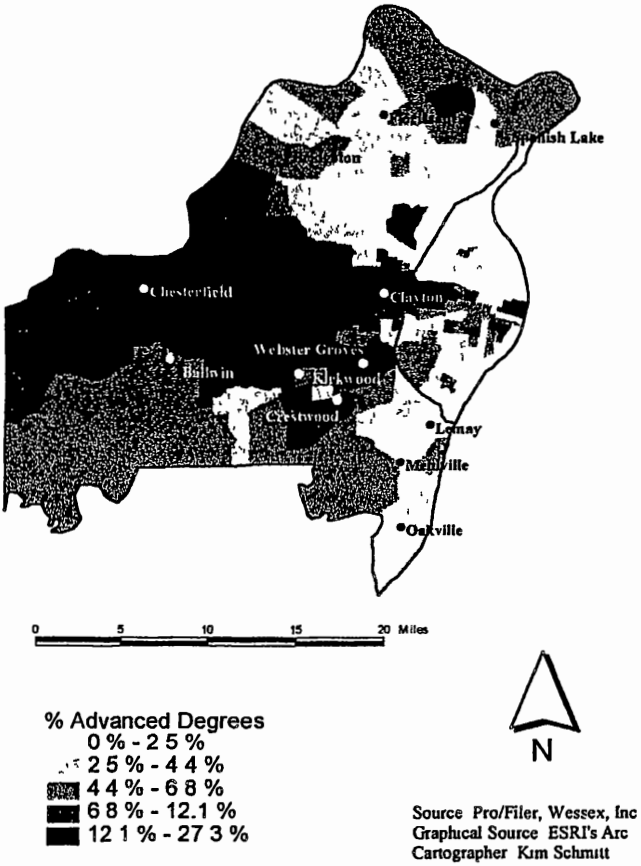

Figure 3. Population of St Louis with Advanced Degrees

In addition to information gained from the matched-guise test, I also received a lot of information from the interviews that I had with the participants Many of the participants had some very funny /ahr/ stories to tell More importantly, however, was their attitude toward this pronunciation All of the respondents who spoke of this merger associated it with South St Louis Many agreed that it happened in other areas of St Louis but emphasized that it was most associated with South St Louis They also had the impression that the type of person who used this pronunciation was a "hoosier " Most cited was the fact that people who used this variable were from South St Louis, were not very well-traveled (i e , not out of the St Louis area), were not very well-educated, and were "hoosiers " It is clear, with such an association, why many St Louisans choose to alter their speech and not produce this variable (and not to sound like a "hoosier")

What is funny, however, is that even though this speech pattern is associated with only occurring in the lower, less educated, less traveled class of people in South St Louis, it also occurs (although to a lesser degree), in the more prestigious West County communities in St. Louis Ladue, Clayton, Kirkwood, and Webster Groves As previously mentioned, the only other person to do an extensive linguistic study of St Louis was Thomas Murray In his study he found that the /ahr/ occurred "more frequently as contextual formality and the social class of the speaker decrease" (Murray 1986 25) In other words, while Murray did find members of the upper class who produced this variable (although not as many as in the middle and lower classes), he found that among all social classes the use of the variable decreased with regards to the formality of the speech situation This is interesting in that the merger is not associated with the upper-class in St Louis however it is often used among them

Further proof of this usage is in an article written by Donald Crinklaw in 1976 In this article, Crinklaw talks about the speech in St. Louis or, more specifically, in Ladue (the wealthiest area in St Louis) He talks about "the man from Oklahoma is sure he's come east because the people in St Louis eat with *fahrks* " (1976 59) He continues on by referring to this speech as

> Ladue Lockjaw This is that highway *fahrty*, eat-with-a-*fahrk*-business It baffles outsiders -- as well as some insiders -- because that honk in the middle of *fahrk* sounds a little like the vowel in the middle of the half-southern *quahter* But it is definitely not southern Rather it is part of an emerging pattern that *turns New York* into *New Yahrk* it got nicknamed "lockjaw" because you don't have to open your mouth as far -- try it -- to say *New Yahrk* as you do to say *New York* The "Ladue" tag means that, like nearly everything else, it has to do with money (1976 60-61)

It would seem, then, that in the 1970s this was actually a somewhat prestigious form of pronunciation It is interesting to note how, from 1976 to Murray's study in 1986, the pronunciation pattern became less and less used among the upper class and now, in my study in 1996, has virtually died out What was once associated with the affluent upper-class in Ladue (West St Louis) is now associated with the less affluent, lower-class in South St. Louis

While I am pleased with the results of the study, there are several things that I would do differently if I were to conduct another study of this type Most importantly is the number of "matched-guise" speakers I would use in the study Were I to do this study again, I would certainly use at least three more "matched-guise" speakers another female and two males Because I only used one "matched-guise" speaker, I did not have a lot of data to compare and statistics to generate More "matched-guise" speakers would also lessen the chance for error I would have more data on the "matched-guise" speakers and a better understanding if this stigma was only related to women's voices or if it extended to men, or if the results were consistent for all of the voices I only have one speaker and nothing else to compare it with so I am at a loss as to the actual perception of this one speaker

Another thing that I would do differently is to administer the tests to a greater population of the St Louis area. Originally, I had plans to administer 50 additional tests throughout the area via the community college system Unfortunately, due to legalities and red tape with the Human Subjects Committee of the St Louis Community College (SLCC) system, I was unable to administer the tests before the end of their semester

The future research possibilities are endless I would be interested in making this study more extensive, using more participants, visiting more areas, collecting data from more social classes and ethnic groups I would like to study, as suggested by Labov (personal communication, February 26, 1996) what influence Kansas City and Chicago have on the speech in St Louis On a more local level, I would also be interested in studying families, like those that I encountered, in which the parents use the /ahr/ pronunciation and the children use the /ohr/ form Further, it would be interesting to find the division line (i e , age group) between the groups that have made a conscious effort to alter their speech and those who have unconsciously altered it on their own I would also like to speak with more middle-aged to older, upper-class St Louisans who reside in Ladue and the surrounding areas to see if the produce the /ahr/ variable in their speech Likewise, I would have liked to have had more time to visit more younger South St Louisans to see if they are using the variable The possibilities for linguistic research in St Louis are infinite and should not be ignored

In conclusion, I found this study to be extremely successful Prior to the study, I had a distinct disdain for the /ahr/ pronunciation and made every effort not to produce it Throughout the study I heard repeatedly how funny the pronunciation was and to what great lengths many St Louisans, myself included, went to avoid this pronunciation so that they would not sound like a "hoosier " But as this study comes to a close, I discovered one interesting and surprising thing I have learned to love this unique feature of St Louis speech and am deeply saddened by its certain death

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Appendix A
Paragraph for the Instrument

There are many things for the St Louis visitor to see and do -- the majority of which are not located too far from downtown In the heart of downtown you can find the Old Courthouse, the Old Cathedral, the Bowling Hall of Fame, and, the most famous tourist site, the St Louis Arch North of the arch is Laclede s Landing where you can take a romantic horse and buggy ride along the riverfront To the south of the Arch is the Anheuser-Busch brewery (home to the w0orld famous Clydesdales and old fashioned beer cart [which can also be seen at Grant's Farm]) Perhaps the best sites, however, are located along Highway 40 -- which takes you past Union Station (where great souvenirs can be bought) and on into the "cultural district" -- where, if you like the orchestra, you can visit Powell Symphony Hall Or, if you prefer live theatre, there are many wonderful performances at the Fox However, the best site where you ought to go is Forest Park Forest Park, the former site of the 1904 World s Fair, offers a wealth of free entertainment*_ the St Louis Art Museum, the Science Center, the Missouri Historical Museum, and the St Louis Zoo Of course, these are just a few of the many things for the St Louis visitor to see and do

Minimal Pairs (*ohr/ahr* contrast)		/ohr/	/ahr/	/ /
for	far	north	are	bought
court	cart	horse	Arch	ought
former	farm	performance	heart	offers
or	are	orchestra	Art	
		historical	Park	
		majority		
		40		
		Forest		
		course		

* Underlined text is the portion of the paragraph used for the final "matched-guise" tape

Appendix B
Participant Observation -- Word List

Minimal Pairs.

born/barn	pork/park	lord/lard	for/far	order/ardor	torte/tart*
former/farmer	form/farm	forty/farty	stork/stark		

Word List (listed in the order they were heard)

orchestra	ornament	pork	warm	organ	short
cork	shortbread	Florida	Oregon	foreign	majority
authority	New York	corn	popcorn	morning	corporation
Norma	Norm	normal	fork	Florence	pork skins
forty	horse	forward	horseback	horrible	warped
horny	porno	morsels	corner	Orlando	orange
Borneo	corned beef	formula	shorts	war	North
mortgage	hors d'oeuvre	hormone	formal	formalizing	award
performance	stork	historical	rhetorical	sorry	torque
auditorium	Florissant	Ford	priority	floral	warrior
coroner	cornea	warranty	warden	seniority	orthodox
orthodontist	Corvette	Forest Park	forest	dorms	torch

* violates one of Murray's linguistic contraints