Language Variation and Change in the American Midland

Varieties of English Around the World

General Series

Volume G36

Language Variation and Change in the American Midland:
A New Look at 'Heartland' English
Edited by Thomas E. Murray and Beth Lee Simon

Language Variation and Change in the American Midland

A New Look at 'Heartland' English

Edited by

Thomas E. Murray

Kansas State University

Beth Lee Simon

Indiana University - Purdue University

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam/Philadelphia

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Language Variation and Change in the American Midland : A New Look at 'Heartland' English / edited by Thomas E. Murray and Beth Lee Simon.
p. cm. (Varieties of English Around the World, ISSN 0172–7362 ; v. G36)
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
1. English language--Variation--Middle West. 2. English language--Dialects--Middle West. 3. English language--Middle West. 4. Middle West--Languages. I. Murray, Thomas E. (Thomas Edward), 1956- II. Simon, Beth Lee. III. Varieties of English around the world. General series ; 36.

PE2932.L36 2006
427'.977--dc22 2005053635
ISBN 90 272 4896 6 (Hb; alk. paper)

John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

"The country I come from is called The Midwest"

Bob Dylan

For Timothy Frazer

Table of contents

Introducing the Midland

What is it, where is it, how do we know?

Beth Simon
Indiana University Purdue University – Fort Wayne

The Midland: What is it?

Region matters. Political historians Ayers and Onuf (1996) claim that

> [r]egions with distinctive climates, geographies, cultures, and histories … provide the framework for understanding who we are, what has happened to us, and what we can look forward to. … Thinking ourselves across space, we think ourselves backward in time … American geography thus recapitulates American history; history is immanent in the distinctive character and culture of the nation's diverse regions. This dialectic of space and time, mobility and nostalgia, has shaped our understanding of the role of regions in American history. (1)

The sense, feeling, perception, salient notion that the continental United States has had, at each stage of its history, identifiable regions, and specifically, an identifiable sociocultural and linguistic *middle* region, has been a formative and continuously influential aspect of the American popular imagination. The idea originates in the colonial period of North American settlement and inland migration, where a "three-way territorial differentiation … New England, the Middle Colonies, and the South" developed. Webster, who finds "distinctive" pronunciation and lexical patterns for each of the three areas, describes the "middle" as "tinctured by a variety of Irish, Scots, and German dialects" (Montgomery 2004:310). While contemporary public discourse regarding U.S. regionality is often articulated as a North – South split, Preston (1993a) found that nonspecialist listeners categorize Americans into three, not two, dialect regions. Preston himself (2003) suggests differentiating a "dialectology of the ear" from a "dialectology of the mouth." The former yields the enduring bipartate North/South. The latter, though, reveals a four-layer dialect stack: Upper North, Lower North, "skinny Midland just south of the" Northern Cities Shift South, Upper South, and South ("deep and coastal") (250–251).

Indeed, one of the most intriguing, repeated outcomes of Preston-inspired perceptual studies is the persistence of the psycho-social sense that the U.S. has a middle region with specific (albeit differing) states in that middle. This middle is almost unanimously labeled *Midwest* – a compound with one lexically rich morpheme, *mid*, and one lexically empty, *west*. Yet, unlike the more historically contested, idealized or commodified areas, the Midland has received relatively little scrutiny shaped by sophisticated theory, and in consequence, we are without an adequate range of ways for describing the Midland, and come up again and again against questions that we cannot answer. The fact is, there has been significantly less research, and in particular, less follow-up research, on Midland dialect (a point made independently by several contributors here) or Midland linguistic culture than, say, on the South or on such subregional Midland areas such as Pittsburgh or Appalachia. This volume, then, is, in that sense, a companion to Timothy Frazer's "*Heartland" English*, in that it addresses that lack.

The Midland: Where is it?

While the regional label *Midwest*, like *South* or *North* (identifying labels with unquestionable pedigrees) is meaningful to most of the U.S. population, I want to acknowledge at the outset that *Midland* as a regional identifier is a linguist's term, rarely used outside of scholarly dialect study, and even then, linguists themselves distinguish between Midland(s) dialect and a Midwest region. For some of those who participate in language discussion, *Midland* and *Midwest* (that vague yet definite middleness of the United States east of the Mississippi (or is it east of the Rockies?))[1] have, in terms of texts *of* and feelings *about* the region, coalesced. A review of postings to open-access electronic lists (archived at linguistlist.org/lists/get-lists.html) that include or encompass discussion of American English turns up three isolated uses of *Midland*, each of them technical. It does not occur in ordinary e-talk. Even on the American Dialect Society list (ADS-L), where discussion of dialect and region is a daily matter and participants are, for the most part either professionally employed in linguistic-related endeavors or avowed students of language use, *Midwest* is the label of choice.

Lee Pedersen (2001), in accounting for dialect development in American English, divides the language into "Northern (Maine and northern Pennsylvania to the Dakotas), Midland (Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley to the Upper Midwest), Southern (the South Atlantic and Gulf States to Texas), and Western (the Mississippi Valley and the Midwest plains to the Pacific Coast)." He writes

> In their 19th-century westward expansion from St. Louis, the Western dialects preserved essentially Northern features as far as Idaho and Utah, while southern Colorado, upper Texas, New Mexico and Arizona retained Midland characteristics. Crisscrossing settlement patterns in this region thus resulted in a "convoluted" mix of Midland and predominantly Northern dialect features. Over time

> Northern features began to dominate to the point where Pacific Coast speech became virtually indistinguishable from that of general Midwest Northern dialect as exists in, say, Chicago. (281–289)

The Midland: How do we know?

Where the Midland is depends on who is identifying it and how they do so. It is, as Ayers and Onuf suggest, important to "critically examine the language with which Americans talk about regions" (1996:3). In a recent online discussion on the use of *regional*, Arnold Zwicky noted that "there are ordinary-language usages … and also technical/administrative ones, and they aren't necessarily the same"[2] (ADS-L 2004).

Language about region affects the notion of region. Just as ethnographers can be said to write culture, dialectologists and sociolinguists may be said to write dialects (Johnstone 2002).

This volume, in its depth, breadth and sophistication, examines language patterning in American English through the lens of *regionality*. At the same time, it foregrounds *region* as a variable, one that "is really infinitely complex" (Preisler 1998, 2:2). The scrutiny given Midland dialect here raises fundamental issues regarding the basic notion of *dialect* and, consequently, how we theorize patterns of language variation.

Collected in this volume are sixteen new, original essays, each of which discusses an issue of importance in the accounting for language variation in the geolinguistic Midland of the United States. Each represents the latest "empirical work on language … in its social context" (Trudgill 1983:8); each is a study on dialect in, as Trudgill puts it, "its widest sense … together with … [its] development, diffusion and evaluation" (1983:1). The result, I believe, is greater than the sum of its parts. The contributors represent an impressive range of subfields, which in itself suggests the possibilities that open from explicit interleaving of frames, and they use the methodologies of those subfields as ways of describing, analyzing, accounting and interpreting social isolation, contact, and interaction. Rather than presupposing essentialized social groups, contributors have conducted statistical, archival, ethnographic, or textual investigations producing robust data sets that lead to deep understanding of who Midland dialect users are and the ways in which they embody conditions specific to an American Midland. By incorporating such modern concerns as urbanization, immigration, economic survival and so on into the research design, these studies not only make more sophisticated the discussion of the Midland dialect, but also provide insight into the dynamics of language change and geosocial patterns.

These essays lead to a deeper, more substantive understanding of the underlying notion of *regionality*. By exploring language in the *Midland* as well as the language of the *Midwest*, they bring *regional*, *social*, *dialect*, *identity*, and *place* into a coherent constellation, and reaffirm the position of *regionality* at the heart of the study of language variation and change. Spurred by the burst of careful research and rigorous analyses of recent years, this collection represents an important move forward in the understand-

ing of language patterning in American English. Because of the wealth of data and the methodologies used to collect and analyze them, we hope this volume offers significant insights, affecting how scholars and students of language conceive of American dialects and how they conduct research on those dialects. Contributors, in their application of contemporary methodologies to dialect research, confirm that social identity is, in multivalent ways, grounded in regionality.

I want to acknowledge and thank those without whom this volume would not be possible. Indiana University Purdue University secretaries Kate Butler and Janine Moore, master's candidate Sara Conrad, and Continuing Lecturer, Dr. Leigh Westerfield, all of the Department of English and Linguistics, and especially Shirley Champion, of the School of Arts and Sciences, provided crucial assistance in organizing and formatting the manuscript and in preparing the reference pages. Thanks go to Edgar Schneider, series editor, for his meticulous reading of a draft of the manuscript, and to Kees Vaes of John Benjamins Publishing for his patience. Finally, I want to thank the contributors to this volume for their sustained commitment and enthusiasm. All errors and mistakes are my own.

Notes

1. The United States Geological Survey locates the actual geographic mid land, (identified as *The Midland*) in Kansas, near the geographic center of the contemporary conterminous U.S. (www.kars.ukans.edu/projects/visualization/KansasStudyArea.shtml).
Certainly, though, for many, the psycho-social heart of the U.S. is east of Kansas.

2. Posting to the ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU, 2/29/2004 8:23:15 PM: "Re: live by the dictionary or submit!"

What is dialect?

Revisiting the Midland

Thomas E. Murray* and Beth Lee Simon
Kansas State University / Indiana University Purdue University

The identification of a distinct *Midland* dialect of American English has been contested since the first use of the term (Primer 1890; Hempl 1896). While individuals questioned the existence of such a variety, Kurath's hypothesized Midland (1949), based on relatively few isoglosses, was generally accepted until Carver (1987), using 800 diagnostic lexical items, declared the Midland "nonexistent," redefining the major U.S. dialect boundary as a North – South divide, with a Lower North – Upper South covering much of the same geographic area as Kurath's Midland. Since then, much of the discussion about existence of a Midland has focused on selection, quantity and type of features, and on methods of analysis and mapping. In this chapter, we review the ongoing controversy about the Midland, a controversy which goes to the heart of dialect study. Until recently, most research on the Midland has been confined largely to the collection and analysis of phonological and lexical features. We propose giving attention to grammar because grammar has stability across generations and, for its users, has linguistic and social transparency. Based on data gathered from existing and forthcoming linguistic atlases, dialect dictionaries, and material collected from our own linguistic surveys, we offer an initial core set of 17 grammatical items that appear to define a Midland variety of American English.

Introduction

In his brief essay, "The Reliability of Dialect Boundaries" (2000), Lawrence M. Davis expresses "profound disappointment" (257) that so few scholars have addressed the question of whether the Midland dialect actually exists, particularly in the light of recent descriptive and theoretical research suggesting that the conventional notion of a speech region clearly delineated from those in New England, the Inland North, and the South – or the conventional method of mapping of dialects in general – is flawed (on the first point, see Bailey 1968; Carver 1987; Davis & Houck 1992, 1995; Davis, Houck, & Upton 1997; Davis, Houck, & Horvath 1999; on the second, see Kretzschmar 1992, 1996, 1998; and Kretzschmar & Schneider 1996). Indeed, Davis concludes that "with

the exception of Frazer (1994) and Johnson (1994), no one has really entered the conversation about the nature of dialect boundaries, either in theory or in regard to the existence of the Midland" (2000: 259). Therefore, we begin this volume by reviewing and expanding on the issues that contextualize or validate investigation of a *Midland* variety of American English, not only because these are the issues that ground the gathering and analyzing of the linguistic data, but also because these are the determinants of the kinds of data one gathers and the ways in which one analyzes. The questions regarding Midland dialect and linguistic culture foreground the fundamental, interesting and provocative questions underlying the study of language variation.

What we argue in this chapter (and by virtue of presenting this volume) is that Midland dialect does, in fact, exist. We do so first by reviewing the Midland discussion up to the present, then by considering consider items labeled *Midland* by the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE*),[1] and finally by proposing an initial set of grammatical items, a number of which have not yet been adequately investigated in this context, that appear to form a core of Midland grammar.

Background of the Midland controversy

Primer (1890) and Hempl (1896) appear to have been the first to use *Midland* as a label for a dialect or dialect area in the United States.[2] Somewhat ironically, perhaps, the varying conclusions attached to those early usages set the stage for the controversy that was to develop in the second half of the twentieth century. Primer, adducing no data beyond the great dialectal homogeneity that he had evidently heard in his travels, decided that "the differences in the different sections of the country are not so great that we can properly speak of a New England dialect, a southern dialect, a midland dialect" (57–58). Hempl, on the other hand, referring to his extensive survey of the pronunciation of /s/ and /z/ in *grease* and *greasy*, believed strongly in a Midland that "separat[ed] the North from the South and extend[ed] from the Atlantic to the Mississippi" (438).

It was Hans Kurath who was instrumental in developing the concept of the Midland further; he used *Midland* descriptively for the first time in his *Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (1949), still widely held as a benchmark in American dialectology. There, on the basis of evidence culled from the field records of the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (*LANE*) and the *Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* (*LAMSAS*) (see Kretzschmar et al. 1993), he posited three major speech areas – Northern, Southern, and Midland – mapping the latter for the first time (1949, Fig. 3, reproduced here as Fig. 1) and subdividing it generally into the North Midland, South Midland, and West Midland (28–37). It is important to realize that Kurath's evidence for the Midland amounted to just 11 isoglosses, nine lexical and two grammatical (28; six more isoglosses, five lexical and one grammatical, defined "[t]he Midland without Delaware Bay"), and that his conclusions were cautious, even tentative.

Part of that caution may have stemmed from Kurath's awareness that his Midland was defined very differently from his North and South. As Montgomery (2004:313) points out

> [Kurath's] evidence was unusual, in that some items were shared by the North and Midland but not found in the South, others shared by the Midland and South but not found in the North. Such items helped Kurath sketch the Midland's boundaries but meant the region was defined partially by default and lacked the internal coherence of the North and the South. [As for the North Midland and South Midland regions,] each . . . shared many items with the North or the South, respectively, rather than with the other half of the Midland. Thus, Kurath's Midland was based on negative as well as positive evidence; it was where the South stopped being the South in some cases and the North stopped being the North in others.

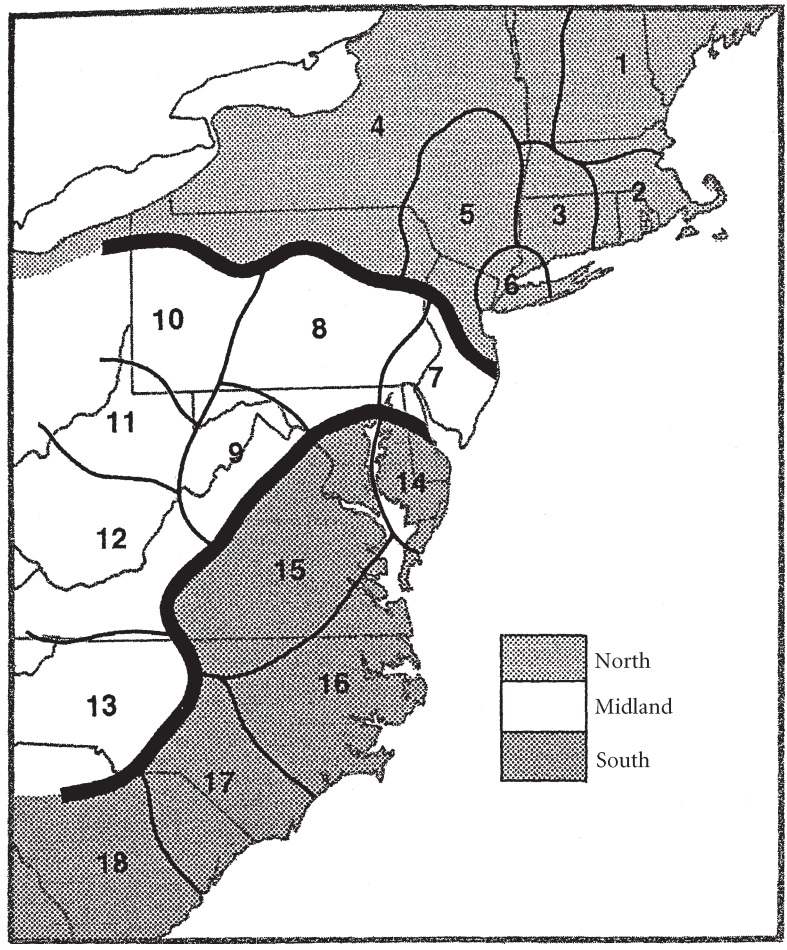

Figure 1. Kurath's dialect regions of the Eastern United States, in Carver (1987:13)

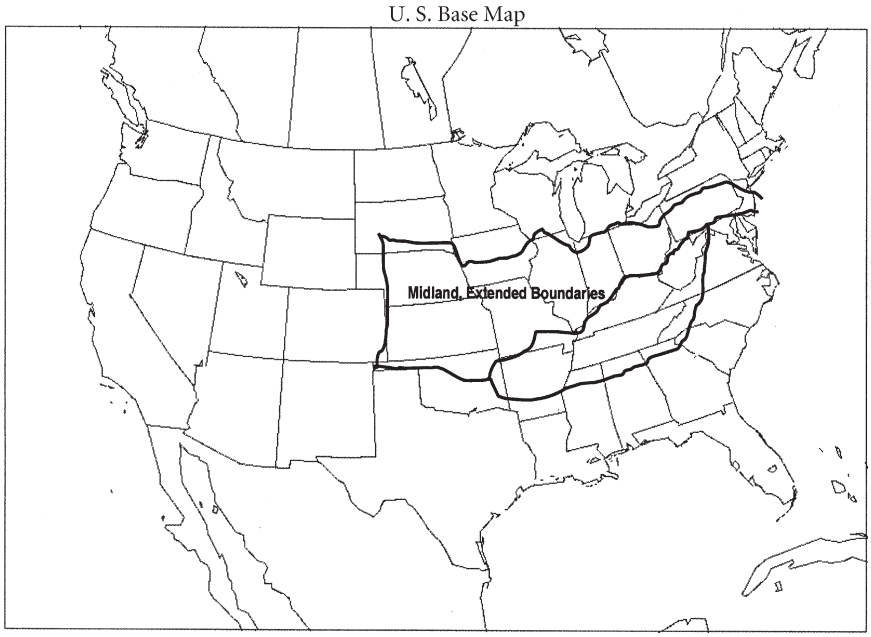

Figure 2. Kurath's Midland, extended boundaries

Kurath's concept of a Midland, particularly one cleanly divisible into a North Midland and a South Midland, was "more a hypothesis than an established fact" (Montgomery 2004:313), and he was well aware that more data were needed to substantiate that hypothesis.

Those data – which, significantly, were largely lexical and phonological – came in droves from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s from scholars such as Harold Allen, E. Bagby Atwood, Marvin Carmony, Robert Dakin, Alva Davis, James Hartman, Albert H. Marckwardt, Raven and Virginia McDavid, Lee Pederson, Roger Shuy, Gordon Wood, and of course Kurath himself (see Allen 1977 and Pederson 1977 for useful summaries). The Universities of Michigan and Minnesota, especially, became hotbeds of dialect study, and the northern boundary of Kurath's Midland was soon extended west from Pennsylvania through northern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, then northwest through Iowa and South Dakota. The southern boundary, which received less attention and took longer to map, was nevertheless finally drawn west from northern Georgia across Alabama and Mississippi, then southwest through Arkansas and Texas (see Fig. 2).

Kurath's Midland continued to be championed on nearly all fronts during this period, even receiving additional support from the work of cultural geographers such as Zelinsky (1951, 1973) and Glassie (1968). Yet some of the linguistic data did not fit the model very well, suggesting that it was perhaps overly simplistic and needed revising. Especially in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, for example, the Northern/Midland

boundary turned out to be a vexingly broad "transition area" of mixed usage, and the Southern/Midland boundary was marked by many lexical isoglosses that stretched deeply into the South. In all, it seems remarkable that the Kurathian Midland became cemented as firmly into the American dialectological paradigm as it did. Indeed, as Montgomery (2004:315) notes, its influence extended even beyond dialectology proper; it was, for example, adopted as received wisdom by Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* and the *DARE* "to identify the regional dimensions of many terms."

In 1968, Charles-James N. Bailey, who lived in the Midland, questioned why he should be unfamiliar with so many of the lexical items that Kurath and others had linked to the area. Indeed, Bailey charged that the Midland was little more than "an unsubstantiated artifact of word geography,"[3] also arguing, however, that the evidence did support the existence of the North Midland and South Midland as subdialects, but that they should more accurately be renamed Outer Northern and Outer Southern because they had more in common phonologically with the North and South, respectively (which Bailey renamed the Inner North and Inner South), than with the North Midland. Bailey's pronouncements, perhaps because they were intuitive and anecdotal, had little effect on how scholars interpreted data gathered over most of the following generation, however; the assumption, apparently, was that any truth in Bailey's observations could be accounted for by some of the lexical items in Kurath's database (which dated to 1933) having become archaic or obsolete. In any case, dialectologists generally continued to champion Kurath's Midland, now subdivided primarily into just the North Midland and South Midland, as the standard.

In 1987, Craig Carver brought the question of a Midland forward. Drawing heavily on Linguistic Atlas and other materials but citing as his primary evidence more than 800 diagnostic features from the lexical database amassed by *DARE*, Carver declared the Midland "nonexistent" (161; actually, he acknowledged a weak Midland lexicon based on 40 isoglosses, but said that it represented a "layer" rather than a dialect).[4] In Carver's view, the major dialect boundary in the United States is a "North-South linguistic divide" (94–97), the significance of which Kurath had vigorously denied (1949:vi; but see also Kurath & McDavid 1961, where such a divide is shown to be an important pronunciation boundary). Interestingly, the location of Carver's divide approximates Kurath's North Midland/South Midland boundary: from the Atlantic across the Delmarva Peninsula to just south of the Pennsylvania border, then west to the Ohio River, on to the Mississippi, and west again to Oklahoma before veering southwest. Carver (1987:248) then subdivides each of the resulting two regions into upper and lower halves, producing an Upper and Lower North and an Upper and Lower South (Map 8.1, reproduced here as Fig. 3).

Because their primary dialect boundaries are so similar, it may appear that the major difference between Kurath's and Carver's visions of speech regions in the United States is rhetorical rather than substantive – that Carver, in effect, merely relabeled Kurath's North and South Midland. Carver (181) is careful to explain that this is not the case, however:

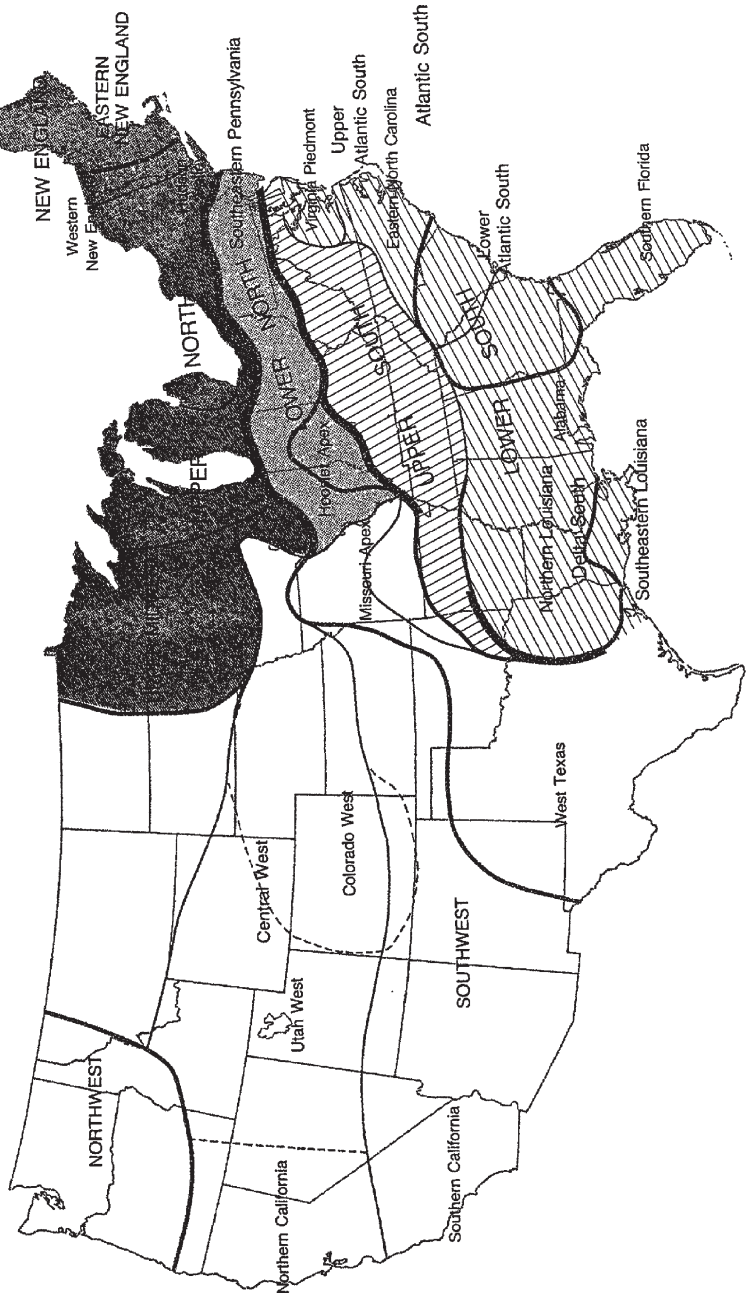

Figure 3. Carver's major dialect regions, in Carver (1987: 248)

> This difference in names – Upper South versus South Midland and Lower North versus North Midland – is an important one; more is at stake in this opposition than mere nomenclature. At issue is how to classify the major dialect regions, which is itself a problem in understanding how the dialects relate to each other and has numerous implications for the cultural and historical geography of the area.

Like Bailey, Carver believes that many more similarities exist between Kurath's South and South Midland than between the South Midland and North Midland, and that the North and North Midland have more in common than the North Midland and South Midland – in short, that the two halves of the Kurathian Midland are more accurately conceived of as extensions of the North and South – and labeled them accordingly.

Carver's retooling of the Midland explains away some of the annoying irregularities associated with the Kurathian interpretation of data – for example, why so much of the Midland's lexicon and even more of its phonology are not unique to the area, but instead are North Midland/Northern or South Midland/Southern, and why so many Midland and South Midland isoglosses bundle west of the Appalachians (Frazer 1987b: 157). But a closer look at some of Carver's claims in the light of more recently-published data, and at his methods in general, have caused some to question the reliability of his conclusions.

Frazer (1996) notes, for example, that Carver cites as one of Kurath's drawbacks that he limited his analysis to Atlas field records from only the Atlantic states, which produced a "view of the country [that] was incomplete and could not reveal … that *till* in expressions of time ("It's quarter till nine") is used throughout the South" (Carver 1987: 180). Yet Carver's "throughout the South" characterization seems particularly liberal in light of data from the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* (*LAGS*; Pederson et al. 1986–1992). There *till* is classified as an example of the "Highlands/Piney Woods" pattern of distribution: it is well-established in the mountains of northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee, in the Piedmont and hill-and-valley regions of Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee, and in Arkansas, northern Louisiana, and the piney woods areas of southern Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and the Florida interior, but occurs only weakly in the coastal plains of Georgia and Alabama, and even more weakly along the Gulf Coast (Vol. 3, 156–157). All of this causes Frazer to wonder whether till might not fit into the dynamic picture painted by Gordon Wood (1963) of Midland forms intruding into the coastal South west of Georgia in a patchwork pattern, and to conclude, in any case, that Carver's description of *till* is inaccurate.

Kretzschmar (1996) offers no opinion as to the feasibility of a Midland per se, but calls into question the theoretical basis of Carver's (as well as Kurath's) conclusions. According to Kretzschmar, Carver's use of evidence in determining dialect boundaries does not improve over Kurath's: both use subjectively-determined quantities of data to fit their preconceived notions of dialects and dialectal differences by selecting a random number of isoglosses to form bundles where they believe those bundles should occur. He explains in some detail, using Carver's determination of the Lower South as an example (1996: 21):

> In order to draw [this] boundary . . . , Carver selected 61 vocabulary items that he thought might be associated with that region. He then plotted the number of features out of the 61 that were found at each of the DARE interview locations: the highest number found in any one community was 37 (or 61%). Carver drew the major boundary where communities had at least 17 features (28%) and a secondary boundary where communities had at least 10 features (16%). None of this is validatable except by recourse to judgment. It is a mystery why Carver selected these particular 61 features when DARE labeled 1,540 features as Southern in the first two volumes of the dictionary; of these, 316 came exclusively from the South. . . . Moreover, there is no guarantee that there is any overlap among the 17 features in the different communities near the border; the 17 items found in one community might be completely different from those found in [an adjoining community].

Then, a bit later, Kretzschmar notes that

> [w]e would not have to look far if we wanted to find a source for Carver's choice of locations for his boundaries in the Eastern states, although of course I would not want to imply conscious or intentional use of Kurath by Carver. Indeed, Carver took pains to differentiate his findings from Kurath's, notably with regard to the existence of a Midland dialect region. Still, where Kurath had settlement history as a strong potential influence on his judgment, Carver had Kurath. (1996: 22)

Kretzschmar concludes, however, by noting that while other methods of plotting dialect data on maps are faster, more efficient, more technologically sophisticated, more statistically reliable, and better able to present "new clarity of vision" (35; see also Kretzschmar 1992, 1999; and Kretzschmar & Schneider 1996) than Kurath's and Carver's, still these other methods do not afford contemporary dialectologists many new conclusions. In short, "[w]e see more but, in most things, not differently" (36).

The last – and, arguably, most radical – assault on Kurath's Midland has come from Lawrence M. Davis, Charles Houck, and their associates. Beginning in the late 1960s, Houck performed a series of statistical analyses on Harold Allen's Midland boundary in Iowa, and consistently concluded that the placement of the boundary or even the boundary itself did not withstand mathematical scrutiny (1967, 1969). Then, in 1992, he and Davis, using regression analysis and the coefficient of correlation, analyzed the distribution of 12 lexical items and four major phonological features in 11 communities lying along a generally north-south axis running from New York to South Carolina. They concluded that "the claim of the existence of the Midland dialect area as a distinct entity is tenuous indeed" (67), and instead proposed a "linear transition area" (67) between the North and the South.

Davis and Houck are quite clear on the point that they "are not engaging simply in an argument over terminology" (68):

> We do not support Bailey's (1968) notion of an "Inner" and "Outer" North and an "Inner" and "Outer" South. Nor do we find support for Carver's . . . "Upper South" and "Lower North." One could in fact argue that all Bailey and Carver

> identity. On the contrary, our data do not support naming the geographical area called "Midland" by Kurath as anything other than a transition area. . . .

Indeed, they are entirely reconceiving the Midland, effectively taking it off the map. For them, the region is actually "a large geographical area in which, as we move southward, the dialects become more Southern and, conversely, as we move northward, dialects become more Northern" (68).

Davis and Houck's analysis met with immediate resistance. Frazer (1994) charged that their sophisticated statistical methods obscured the fact that they had based their argument on data chosen from only 11 communities out of the hundreds in the database of the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States. Moreover, Frazer said (432)

> Davis and Houck's "north/south axis" . . . does not exactly run north to south, and it is not an axis. From Binghamton, New York, to Charleston, West Virginia, is a northeast-to-southwest direction. But in Charleston the line is broken, making a 90-degree turn to the southeast toward Roanoke and Fayetteville. After Fayetteville, the line makes a hard right turn west toward Columbia, then south to Charleston. Since it is not a straight line, it is not an axis. It zigs and zags, badly skewing the results of Davis and Houck's study.

And he argued that Davis and Houck's linear transition model fails to account for the great quantity of dialectal variation within the Midland (Frazer 1990, 1993b): important subareas such as eastern Pennsylvania and the tidewater/piedmont area of Virginia; speech islands like those encompassing Marietta, OH (Clark 1972) and St. Louis, MO (Frazer 1986, 1987a, 1993a; Murray 1993); speech communities that either "exhibit their own internal linguistic geography" (432; see Hartman 1966 and Frazer 1986) or have competing regional features existing side by side, which features can, in smaller communities, be mapped only "along social axes that depart from any sort of regional identity" (432; see Habick 1993); and the "ambiguously Midland" portion of the central United States, where North Midland and South Midland forms have ceased to compete and, in fact, often co-occur in semantically or pragmatically distinct senses or contexts (Lance 1977: 297, Map 5).

Ellen Johnson (1994), too, faulted Davis and Houck's analysis, arguing that if they had examined a different grouping of dialect features, they would have reached a different conclusion (420):

> The real problem with Davis and Houck's statistical analysis . . . is in the way they group the linguistic features together. Their method, also used in Carver (1987), obscures patterns followed by particular items. . . . The fact that different lexical and phonological items behave in different ways is not taken into account by using such a method. If a dialect is composed of a set of linguistic features used more frequently by its speakers than by others, we must first identify the features that characterize the dialect in question by an item-based analysis.

Then, using just such an analysis, she presented the results of her own quantitative study of the distribution in 11 communities (along her own north-south axis) of seven of the lexical items that Davis and Houck had used in their study, ultimately finding a statistically credible Midland identity for five of 12 variants that showed regional distribution according to the Kruskal-Wallis tests she administered, and a North/South (that is, non-Midland) identity for another.

Johnson further attested the existence of a Midland by drawing from her extensive analysis of lexical variation in the South (1996), in which "[r]egion (mountain, piedmont, coastal) proved to be the most important influence on speech" of the six nonlinguistic variables she considered:

> Since all the speakers were in the South, these findings show that there is indeed a division within that region, one that is different from the "less Southern/more Southern" configuration claimed by Davis and Houck. The results showed as many terms that were more frequent in the mountain (part of the Midland) area as there were terms more frequently used in the coastal (South) area. That is, the were not all attributable to linguistic features that are basically Southern being used to a lesser extent in the more northerly and inland areas, but also included Midland features that are less common in the coastal plain. (427)

In other words, Johnson believes the Midland dialect does exist, at least as distinct from Southern, though she prefers to call it – we presume only in the eastern third of the United States – "Appalachian" (428; she would also rename the South the "Deep South").

Davis and Houck attributed Frazer's and Johnson's criticism to "faulty assumptions about what constitutes a dialect area" (1995:372; see also Davis, Houck, & Upton 1997; and Davis, Houck, & Horvath 1999). They explained that whether researchers draw isoglosses to include the outer limits of the occurrence of forms, as was done traditionally (see Kurath et al. 1939–1943; Kurath & McDavid 1961; and Allen 1973–1976), or only some statistically reliable percentage of those forms, as others have advocated (Houck 1969; Pederson et al. 1986–1992; Kretzschmar 1992; Kretzschmar et al. 1993) and as Davis and Houck clearly prefer, such a decision will of course dramatically affect how those isoglosses bundle and, untimately, how the resulting dialects take shape. They also make the important point that "[r]egionalism is a linguistic reality, but the labeling of lexical items as Northern, Midland, or Southern just may be only a function of the history of linguistics and, like many terms in social science, may involve convention and a certain arbitrariness" (384).

If the Midland itself, and the term *Midland*, have existed so long that they too have become products of "convention and a certain arbitrariness," nevertheless they do still survive, and even thrive, in the scholarly literature. Kretzschmar (1999:282) says that William Labov, for example, "quite happily describes well-bounded dialect areas, including the American Midland," and Davis (2000:259) notes that Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) "presented the material on regional dialects as if the questions raised by Houck, me, and others on the very nature of dialect boundaries did

not even exist." All of which causes Davis (2000: 257) to conclude more generally that "scholars have basically chosen to ignore" those questions (257).

Perhaps what Davis says is true. Perhaps, on the other hand, scholars have merely decided, as Davis and Houck (1995: 378) have themselves regarding the North/North Midland boundary in Iowa, that "the various competing statistical methodologies have done little to resolve the issue … or to provide methods and terminology that more accurately describe dialect behavior." Or perhaps, like Frazer (1994: 433), those scholars are simply "reluctant to abandon the [admittedly problematic] term *Midland* … since it does describe an area which we need to consider separately from Northern and Southern."

Or, perhaps, scholars have been persuaded by the force of additional data, such as those produced most recently by Labov and his associates for the *Atlas of North American English* (*ANAE*; Labov, Ash, & Boberg forthcoming), that the Midland is, at least phonologically, a very real entity indeed. Granted, Labov's Midland is much smaller than the region that Kurath and his followers delineated, encompassing merely the eastern half of the traditionally-defined North Midland, extending Carver's Lower North as far west as central Nebraska and Kansas (see Fig. 4). And it is defined more by negative evidence than by positive – or, as Labov, Ash, and Boberg (forthcoming) put it, "the interstitial territory that remains after the North, the West and the South are defined," a "[residual] area that does not show the defining features of the North or the South," namely the Northern Cities Shift and the Southern Shift. Nevertheless, "[its] boundary with the North follows one of the deepest cleavages in the linguistic ecology of North America, the North/Midland line" (Labov, Ash, & Boberg forthcoming).

In any case, we agree with Davis (2000) on the point that, thus far anyway, criticism leveled against the Midland as a legitimate dialect area has had little effect on how dialectologists and sociolinguists generally conceive of the area. In brief, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the debate is still unresolved. The lack of resolution is, as we hope we've shown, partly due to a lack of defining what it is we are looking for, and partly to the ways or lack of ways for looking.

Defining the Midland

Whether the Midland has a distinctive phonology and lexicon, and whether that distinctiveness can withstand intense statistical scrutiny, is beyond the scope of this essay. What we will do is first look briefly at the totality of *DARE* data to see what support these provide for the Kurathian model, a model *DARE* presupposed. Then we turn to grammar, and offer a set of core items that, as a group, appear to establish a Midland variety.

The decision by the original editorial staff of *DARE* to use Kurath's divisions is revealing of how technical or scientific endeavor is shaped or influenced by belief and perception. *DARE* editors devoted several meetings to the discussion of regionality, especially to the identification and labeling of region. (Hall, personal e-mail com-

munication to Simon, 2004a). The tripartite division of North, Midland and South was "assumed," says Hall, now Chief Editor of *DARE*, "not just because FGC [Frederic G. Cassidy, the original Chief Editor] was a believer, but also because the terms were so widely understood and accepted that people wouldn't have to learn them from scratch." And now? Decades after the questionnaires were collected and responses organized, twenty years after publication of Volume I, now, at work on the fifth and final volume of the original project, Hall says that the *DARE* data do, "on the whole" support Kurath's model (2004a).

To look for overarching isoglossic support for a Midland regional dialect, we used the indices of *DARE* Volumes I and II (1993), III (von Schneidermesser 1999) and IV (Hall, personal e-mail to Simon, 2004b). Table 1 shows the numbers for items labeled as *Midland* in *DARE*.

The indices show only nine items labeled *Midland* "alone," that is, without any other qualifier. Nine is not a robust set, but when we allow for what we know to be the case, that is, that dialect boundaries are neither ontological nor impermeable, and that dialects reflect and embody contact, then substantially more Midland items emerge. One hundred and forty-one items are relatively concentrated ("especially" or "chiefly," or "widespread but chiefly" or "widespread but especially") in a Midland. Furthermore, 102 items are identified as *Midland* and another region (e.g. *South, Midland*). Finally, another 377 items can be identified with, that is, found in use, in the Midland. A total of 629 items in *DARE* are used in Kurath's Midland dialect area.

Table 1. Items labeled *Midland* in *DARE*, Volumes I–IV

		Midland
1.	Alone	9
2.	With a frequency qualifier (e.g., *especially, chiefly*)	105
3.	With another regional label (e.g., *South, North*)	102
4.	With another regional label and a frequency modifier (e.g., *chiefly South, Midland*, *esp. South Midland*)	377
5.	With "widespread but chiefly (or) but especially"	36
6.	With "widespread but less frequently"	19

Table 2. Items labeled *South* or *Midland* in *DARE*, Volumes I–IV

		South	**Midland**
1.	Alone	135	9
2.	With a frequency qualifier (e.g., *especially, chiefly*)	421	105
3.	With another regional label (e.g., *North*, *Great Lakes*)	519	102
4.	With another regional label and a frequency modifier (e.g., *chiefly South, Midland*, *esp. South Midland*)	3771	377
5.	With "widespread but chiefly (or) but especially"	105	36
6.	With "widespread but less frequently"	106	19

Regionality presupposes contrast. Here in Table 2 are all the *DARE* items from Volumes I–IV labeled *Midland* contrasted with those labeled *South.*

In every category, the sheer number of items identified as *South* greatly exceeds those labeled *Midland*, but what exactly does this demonstrate? Above, we reviewed the various arguments regarding selection or quantification of dialect items. Here we want to note that in a source like *DARE*, number count alone obscures questions about collection methodology as well as questions regarding saliency, frequency, style, interaction, contexts of use, and type of use, natural, self-reported, attributed, and so on. What is perhaps remarkable is just how robust the *DARE* Midland data are given how uncommodified the Midland is. (*DARE* has far fewer items reported as *Midland* by nonMidland sources than items reported as *South* by nonSouth sources.)

Midland grammar

We now turn our attention to Midland grammar – largely affixation, function words, pronominal usage, verbal ellipsis, and distinctive syntactic patterns – in short, to aspects of language which have too often been overlooked in the controversy (and, to a certain extent, in dialect study overall). Certainly it is true that, as Montgomery (2004:316) points out, "[l]ittle data for [these variables] is available from linguistic atlas surveys, … and not much more from dictionaries of any kind until recently," perhaps because, unlike many lexical and phonological items, such grammatical variables do not often affect comprehension, and may not even be noticed by speakers or, indeed, by investigators (cf. the similar comments of Frederic Cassidy, quoted in Hall, Doane, & Ringler 1992:xxvi).

Yet the sort of grammar discussed here itself especially well to a determination of dialect boundaries, for it is more stable across generations, with less tendency to erode or diffuse geographically, than either lexical or phonological features. This is true not least because the linguistic transparency mentioned just above is often sociolinguistic as well. In other words, most of these items, while perhaps recognized as one possibility, are generally not stigmatized (at least in the areas in which they are used). Furthermore, because they stratify neither socially nor stylistically, they are less susceptible to correction by the well-intentioned gatekeepers of standard or educated American English. In fact, the items in this set are often perceived as having no variants by the people who use them, who are just as often surprised when told that certain aspects of their language are elsewhere considered regional or nonstandard. The predictable result of such transparency is that the item's use is unmonitored, or at least is not as heavily monitored as the use of lexical and phonological and other sorts of grammatical items may be (such as, in the latter case, *a*-prefixing, completive *done*, multiple negation, verb forms like *clum* and *throwed*, and so forth; see Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998:331–344). Moreover, these are the types of grammar "usually based on rules unconsciously acquired" (Montgomery 2004:316).

In selecting specific features, we tried as much as possible to avoid the subjective pitfalls of Kurath (1949) and Carver (1987) (criticized by Kretzschmar 1996:21, 22). As a place to begin, however, we did investigate those features which our own or others' work had led us to believe would have a Midland distribution, and we did ultimately decide which features to discuss here based on how the attestations for each of them mapped. We believe the criteria set forth in the *ANAE* to be particularly compelling (Labov, Ash, & Boberg forthcoming):

> The most important characteristic of a candidate feature for dividing an area into dialectal regions is that it should [be] geographically continuous and uniform, so that (a) every community within a continuous region would be marked by such a feature, and (b) none of the speech communities outside this region would show it. It is not difficult to see that criterion (b) is the more important. … The traditional definition of an isogloss as the outer limit of a regional feature is consistent with the emphasis on [this criterion].

The first of these standards defines the homogeneity of a dialect area by measuring the proportion of speakers in the area who use a given feature relative to those speakers in the area who do not; the second determines the concentration of the isogloss by measuring the proportion of speakers in the area who use a given feature relative to the total number of speakers, inside and outside the area, who use it (Labov, Ash, & Boberg forthcoming).

We want to be clear, in any event, that not every resident of the Midland uses, either categorically or variably, all the features we discuss (cf. Saussure [1916] 1966 and Houck 1969), or that they accept them as grammatical or, in fact, that they are even familiar with them. Certainly it is possible for speakers to use different combinations of features and still speak the same dialect, to a greater or lesser degree, just as speakers can use different combinations of words and still speak the same langauge. The dual point, rather, is that (a) more Midland speakers use more features of the Midland dialect more often than they use the features of another dialect, and (b) more Midland speakers use more features of the Midland dialect more often than do speakers outside the Midland area. As Kretzschmar (1996:26) puts it, "differential areal frequency is a property of every linguistic feature, and … every feature [has] its own particular quantitative characteristics with respect to the area in which it is in use."

On the other hand, we will continue using *Midland dialect* to name an entity that the grammatical items we discuss below help to comprise. We do so not presumptively, but based on how those items pattern areally. On this point our conclusions may differ from Kretzschmar's (1996:26), but we believe there is little danger in naming an aggregate of linguistic features as long as metonymic rhetoric does not cloud the facts. We intend that the grammatical items named here to characterize Midland dialect, but that in doing so they also serve as one valuable means – along with others involving diverse traits of human behavior, culture, and folklife (such as religion, architecture, agriculture, political orientation, and the like; see Zelinsky 1973), as well as onomastics (see, e.g., Frazer 1995) and perhaps toponymy – of characterizing the region.

We have identified 17 grammatical items which we say are *Midland*. These come from analyzing the data from the following five discrete groups of sources:

1. Published regional Linguistic Atlas projects: *LANE* (1939–1943); *LAMSAS* (1998); *LAGS* (1986–1992); *LANCS* (*Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States*) (Marckwardt & Kretzschmar 1978–); and *LAUM* (1973–1976).
2. *DARE* (Cassidy 1985; Cassidy & Hall 1991, 1996; Hall 2002, and the unpublished corpus referred to as *DARE Files*).
3. *ANAE* (Labov, Ash, & Boberg forthcoming; the *ANAE* investigated several syntactic and lexical variables to provide points of dialectal comparison for the extensive phonological data also being collected).
4. *The English Dialect Dictionary* (*EDD*) (Wright 1898–1905); *The Scottish National Dictionary* (*SND*) (Grant 1931–1975); *The Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English* (Montgomery & Hall 2004).
5. Our own surveys, the specific methodological details of which can be found, for example, in Murray (1993b, 1998); Murray, Frazer, and Simon (1996); Murray and Simon (1999, 2002); and Simon and Murray (1999): between 1984 and 2004, with help from numerous colleagues and students, we contacted approximately 12,000 informants from throughout the United States – largely Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan – in person, by telephone or U.S. mail, or by posting queries on language- or culture-oriented electronic bulletin boards.

From these data, the following 17 grammatical variables emerge as those which can be used legitimately to define and validate a Midland variety of American English. We list them individually, but, as will become clear, they are not 17 disparate items. Several items group to suggest underlying syntactic – semantic – pragmatic unity; this is true of the "all the" phrases (items 1, 2, and 3), and the elliptical constructions (items 6, 8, 11 and 15). The following are 17 grammatical variables diagnostic of a Midland:

1. *all the* + [adjective/adverb of positive degree] (e.g., *That's all the fast it can fly*; *That's all the far she can throw it*);
2. *all the* + [adjective/adverb of comparative or superlative degree] (e.g., *That's all the faster he can run*; *That's all the farther I've read; the furtherest*);
3. *all the* + [singular count noun] or *one* 'the only' (e.g., *That's all the coat he has*; *Is this all the one you have?*);
4. positive *anymore* (e.g., *We always use coupons anymore when we shop*);
5. the past form of *dive*;
6. *like* + [past participle] (e.g., *The baby likes cuddled*);
7. multiple modals;
8. *need* + [past participle] (e.g., *The car needs washed*);
9. *quarter till* [the hour];
10. *sick* [preposition] *the stomach* (as in *sick at/on/to the stomach*);
11. *want* + [past participle] (e.g., *The cat wants fed*);

12. [interrogative pronoun] + *all* (e.g., *What all were you expecting to see today?*);
13. *wait on* 'wait for' (e.g., *We're waiting on a bus that's 10 minutes late*);
14. *wakened* (as the past participle of *wake*);
15. *want* + [preposition] (e.g., *The dog wants out*; *I want off at the next stop*)
16. *whenever* 'at the time that; as soon as' (e.g., *Whenever I first heard the news, I about fell over*);
17. *you'ns* (as a second person plural personal pronoun).

We do not claim this list to be exhaustive. Rather, our review of available materials suggests that these form a core of items, many of them established as part of settlement. It is important to realize, too, that some of these items define the Midland not as isoglosses that enclose just the Midland; indeed, many of the variables actually map as North Midland/North or South Midland/South. What we are arguing is that these constitute a Midland grammar in the way that Kurath first pointed out more than 50 years ago, that is, based on this particular combination of features found in this area, rather than features found there exclusively.

Several of these variables (e.g. *need* (or) *want* (or) *like* + *past participle* (Murray, Frazer, & Simon 1996; Murray & Simon 1999, 2002), *positive anymore* (1993, 2004) have been discussed exhaustively and mapped elsewhere. (For item 12, [interrogative pronoun] + *all*, there is evidence to justify inclusion on this list, but we reserve discussion for a later time.) Below, we offer discussion and, when possible, present maps.[5]

1. *all the far*;
2. *all the farther, further*
3. *all the* + [singular count noun]

Initially documented in *LANE* Map 49, including one instance of the superlative "all the fartherest," *LAUM* then shows *all the farther* (or *further, fartherest*) throughout the Upper Midwest except for Nebraska, and particularly strong in the Midland state of Iowa. All three instances with *fartherest* were Iowa speakers.

Most sources deal with items 1 and 2, the base, comparative and superlative phrases (e.g. *all the far, farther, farthest, fartherest, further, furthest*) together. *DARE,* however, notes regional variation between the first in the base form and second, the comparative form. The result is that base form phrases (*all the far, fast or high*) map as chiefly South, South Midland, while the comparative is resoundingly Inland North, North Midland. The prompt in the *DARE* questionnaire (Question LL34, When a road is blocked: "this is all ___ we can go") constrains likely responses to phrases beginning with "all" that include distance adjectives. Of responses based on forms of *far,* education appears significant. Of all informants responding to Question LL34, 34% were "college educated," that is, had at least two years of college; of those giving "all (the) far," 19% were college educated. In contrast, 49% of those giving "all (the) farther" were college educated together with "all (the) further" at 40% college educated.[6] Although Atwood's (1962) Texas data were limited to older, rural speakers, neither he

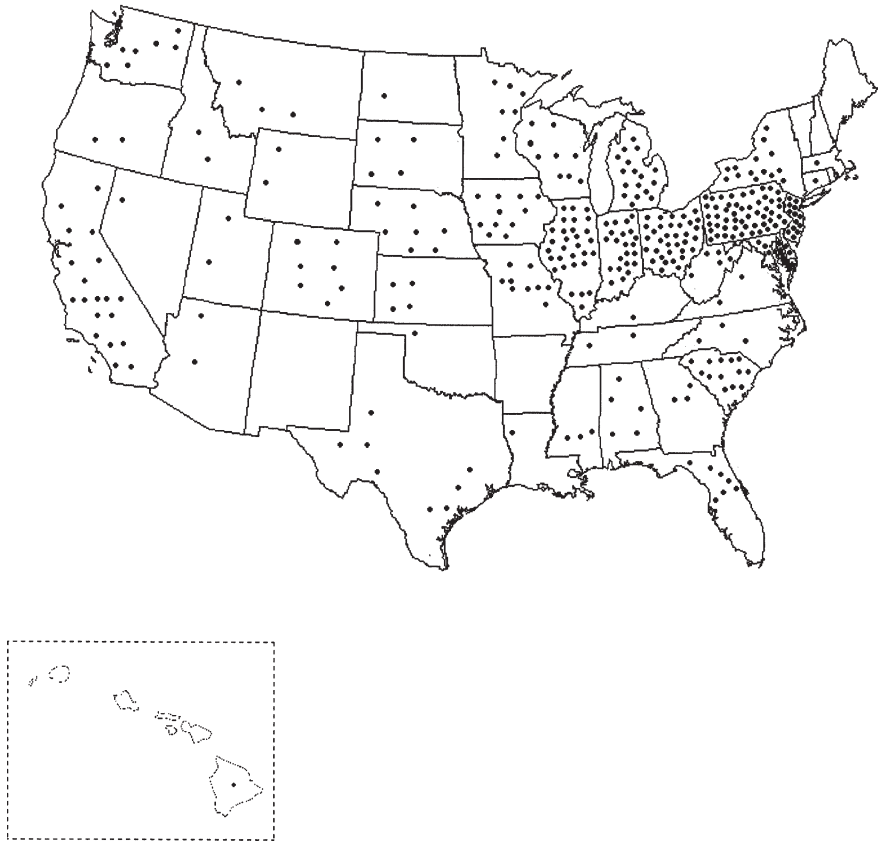

Figure 4. Map of *all the farther and variants* (based on responses to *DARE* Question LL34)

nor Tarpley (concentrating exclusively on northeast Texas) report this, which perhaps confirms the later absence of Texas responses in *LAGS.* Five of the ten *LAGS* responses cluster in central Georgia. (Neither Dakin in the Ohio River Valley nor Davis in the Great Lakes report occurrences.)

EDD includes a cite from the *SND Supplement,* and puts *all* + [singular noun] meaning "every," in the northern counties and in Scots English. In the U.S., there are a few isolated instances reported, but the construction groups with items 1 and 2 as expressions of totality, utmost inclusiveness, or greatest degree.

4. positive *anymore*

Discussed initially at length by Murray in Frazer's (1993) volume, here we want to note that positive *anymore,* together with the elliptical *need/want/like* + past participle constructions, is a particularly strong and transparent (i.e., unremarkable to those who use it) Midland item, the range of use for which has spread south (see Ash this volume) and west (Murray 2004).

5. *dive,* past form

Both *dove* and *dived* are in the Midland. What these two demonstrate is both the validity of a distinct Midland region, and the complexities which justify conceiving of it as a Midlands. The *dove* variant, which predominates in areas in and contiguous with the Upper Midwest, is an inheritance of western movement from the northern tier (see *LANE* Map 580; see also Atwood 1953, which shows *dove* and *dived* equal in northern, central and eastern Pennsylvania and northern Ohio). In the Upper Midwest, *dove* predominates two to one. Allen, in his consideration of grammar (Volume 2) notes that "[d]espite the school textbook injunction against the use of *dove* in the first part of the century, the relative proportions of the two forms are not different. Both the educated and the uneducated speakers have approximately one-third *dived* and two-thirds *dove*." He attributes the preponderance of "analogical English dialectal" *dove* over that of "the historical dived" to a widespread change in acceptance of the former (1975,

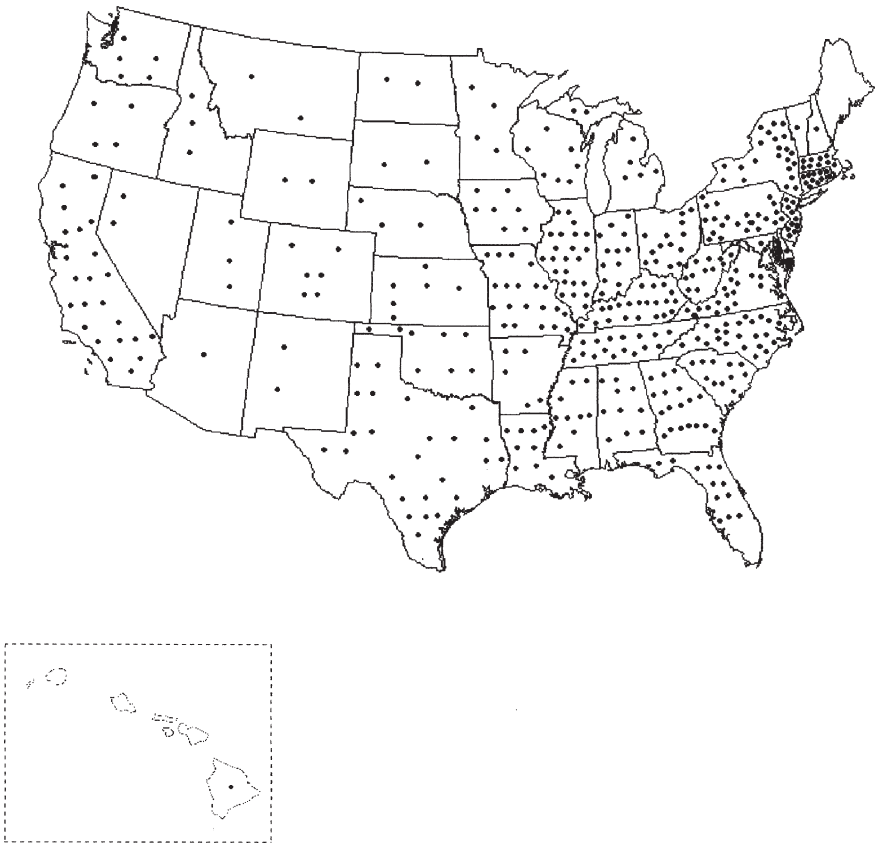

Figure 5a. Map of *dived* (*in*) (based on responses to *DARE* Question OO25b)

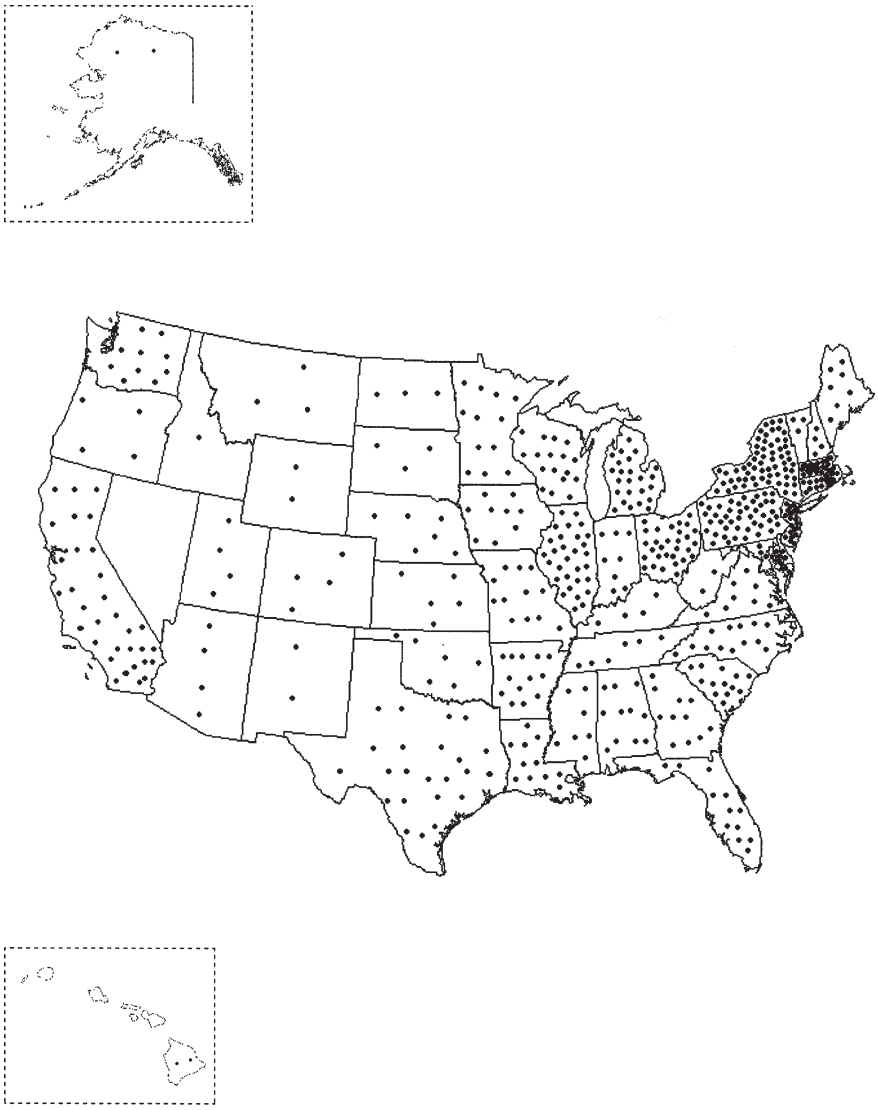

Figure 5b. Map of *dove* (*in or off*) (based on responses to *DARE* Question OO25b)

2:12). Past tense *dived* is an inheritance from South Midland Pennsylvania and Ohio settlement.

Of the *DARE* informants responding to Question OO25b (the *DARE* Questionnaire section OO was designed to produce verb forms), the 559 *dove* responses were "widespread but less freq[uent]" in the South Midland. The 448 *dived* (and *12 div*) responses were "widespread, but less freq[uent]" in the North and North Midland. Similarly, Question OO25a, which produced past participle forms of *dive* showed the

same regional variation: the 595 *dived* (or *div*, *dive*) responses were widespread, but less frequent North, North Midland; the 436 *dove* responses were widespread but less frequent South Midland.

LAGS data shows a continued lower frequency of *dove* in the South, South Midland. Throughout the *LAGS* area, *dived* is the unmarked first choice. The situation with *dove* is more complicated. As with *dived*, it was reported throughout Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and central, west and north Tennessee. In some areas, especially, Alabama, Louisiana and central and south Georgia, participants indicated uncertainty of *dove's* social status, attributing it to "old people" or "Black speech," or expressing familiarity with it but no personal use.

6. *like* + [past participle]
8. *need* + [past participle]
15. *want* + [past participle]

Murray, Frazer and Simon (1996), and Murray and Simon (1999, 2002), have shown these to be defining of a Midland, not only because of geographic range of use, but as much so because of acceptability. Among users within the Kurathian Midland, these are transparent, while outside the region, they elicit surprise and rejection. The first, *like*, has not only the smallest range of use but the least acceptability of the three even within the Midland. *DARE* (1996) finds *need* + past participle "chiefly" *Midland*, with

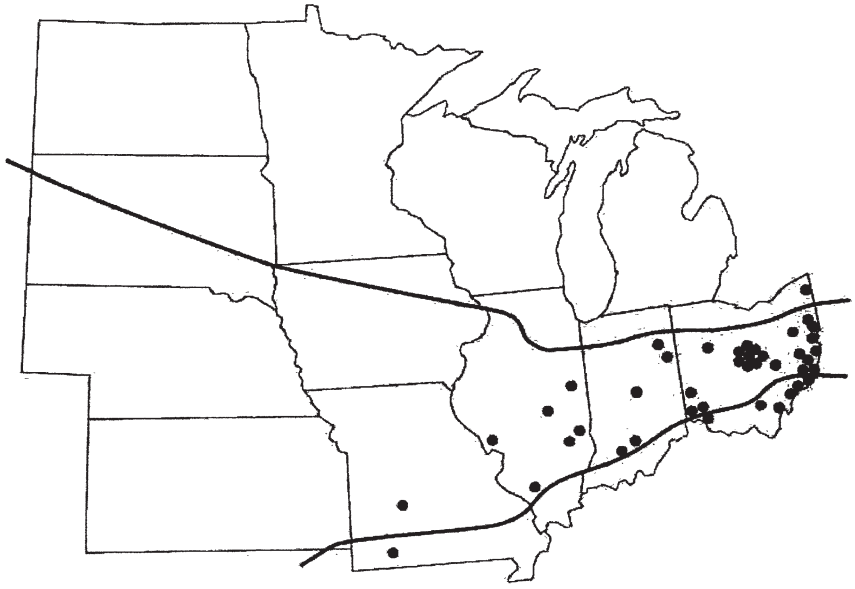

Figure 6a. Map of *like* + past participle – all positive attestations (Murray & Simon 2002)

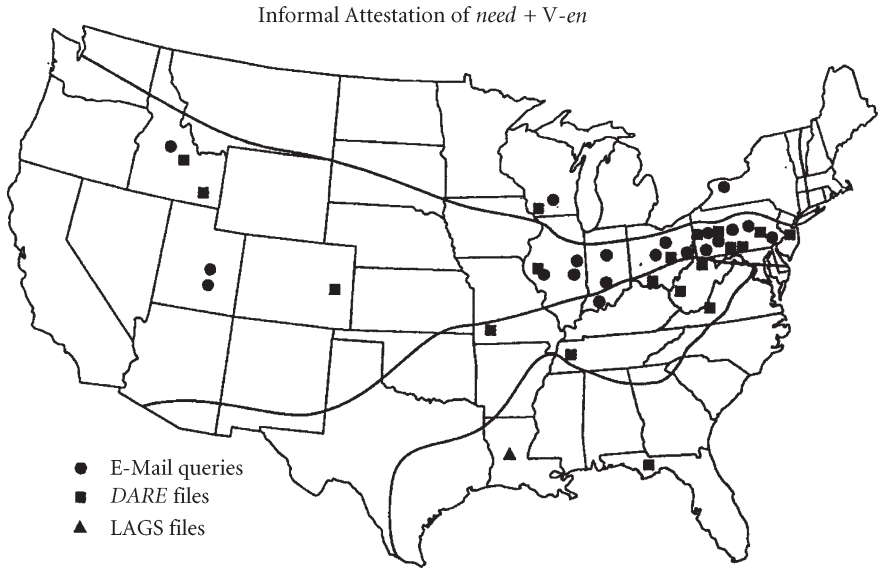

Figure 6b. Map of *need* + past participle (Murray, Frazer, & Simon 1996)

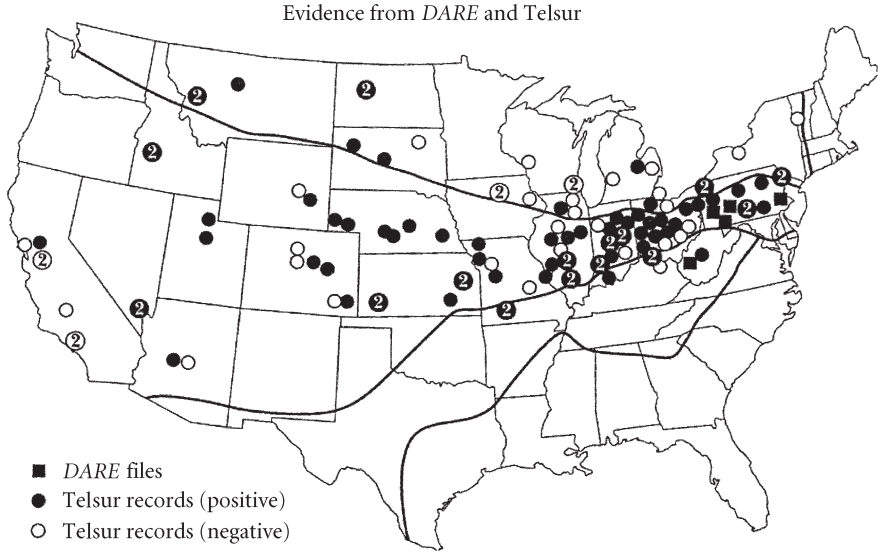

Figure 6c. Map of *want* + past participle (Murray & Simon 1999)

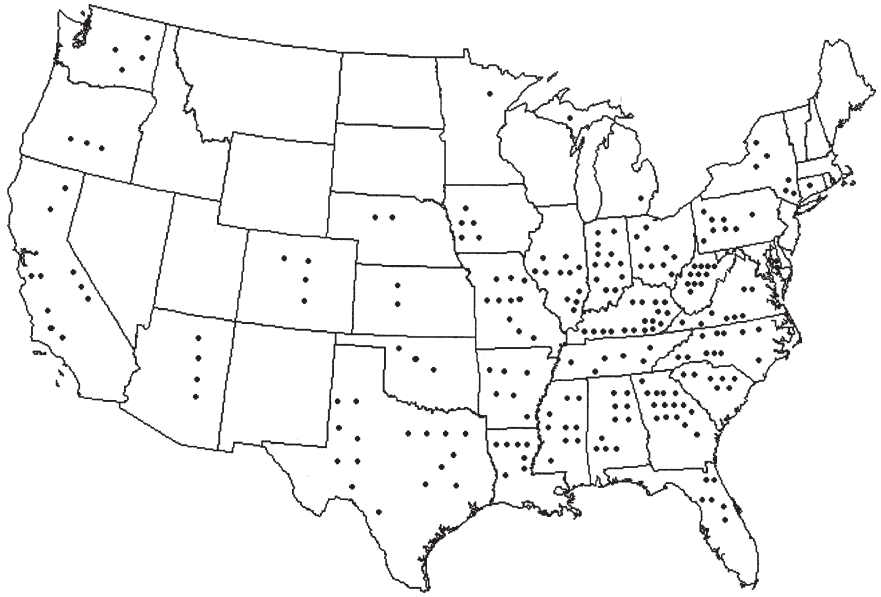

Figure 7. Map of *quarter till and variants* (based on responses to *DARE* Question A6)

good attestation especially as *South Midland*. While we've described the settlement history and the syntactic and semantic constraints elsewhere, here we want simply to note how these locate a Midland, and, conversely, that without a Midland that has continued through time (i.e., not just Midland settlement areas), one can't account for them.

7. *multiple modals*

The *EDD* records multiple modal and multiple auxiliaries with *can* or *could* as the first element. Kurath puts *might could* use in the South and South Midland and among the Pennsylvania German speakers of south central and Kentucky. *LAUM* records seven occurrences of *might could*, four in North Dakota, two in Iowa, and one each in Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. Predictably, *LANE* records no use. *DARE* shows multiple modals or multiple auxiliaries with *may* or *might* as the first element as chiefly South, South Midland. Multiple modals with *may* are particularly strong as South Midland/South, as the grammar section of the *DARE may* verb entry demonstrates.

9. *quarter till* (before the hour)

Along with *need/want/like* + past participle, *quarter till* is another a strong Midland item which appears to be originally a Scots-Irish inheritance. It is a strong Midland item, recorded in the Appalachians of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, in West Virginia and western Virginia (and scattered through Pennsylvania and South Carolina). Kurath labels it *Midland*, *LAUM* records it in southern Iowa and sparsely in