

The U.P. Dialect:

Unique linguistic features and their influences

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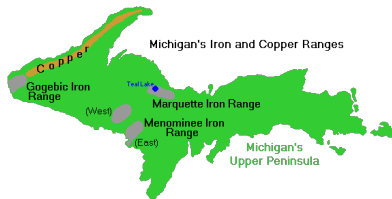
(Slides available at www.gvsu.edu/csd/)

September 27th, 2017

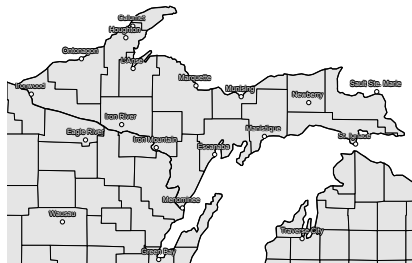
Road Map of the Presentation

1. Introduction
2. Historical Background
3. Ethnic-heritage Influenced UP English
4. Conclusions
5. Q&A

Immigration history and significance:



- Heavy immigration from the mid-1800s until the mid-1900s
- Mining Communities included:
 - Keweenaw Range
 - Gogebic Range
 - Marquette Iron Range



- The position in the Upper Midwest:
 - Rural-based communities
 - Not any large cities nearby (i.e., urban centers with $\geq 50,000$ in population)

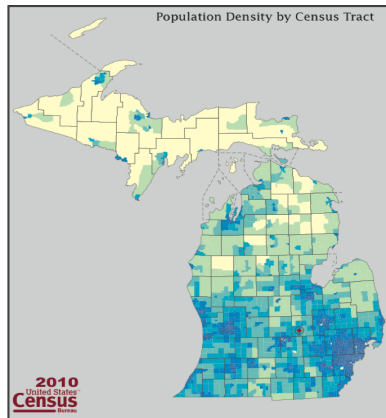
Immigration history and significance:

- Prior to 1870s:
 - Rustic wilderness until the discover of valuable natural resources in 1840s
 - European/western development was slow at first
 - Many of the communities across the county comprised of 70% foreign-born
 - Predominately Irish-, German-, or Canadian-born
- 1880s through 1910s:
 - Mining industry and population increased
 - Finnish and Italian immigrants arrived in large numbers
 - Maintained language and cultural practices longer than other ethnic-heritage group

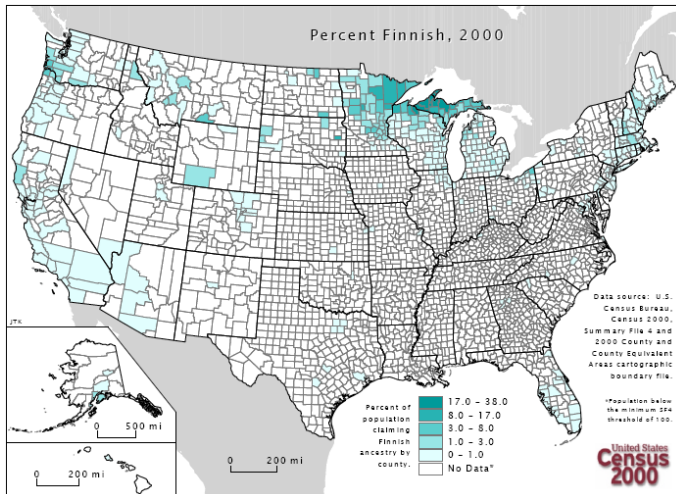


Marquette county and Michigan's population:

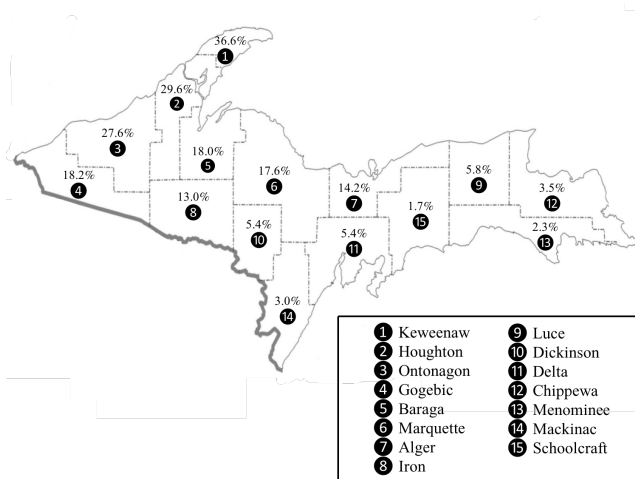
- Today:
 - UP Population:
 - $\approx 300,000$
 - 29% MI's land area, but only holds 3% of its population
 - Marquette County:
 - $\approx 67,000$
 - Predominately monolingual (i.e., few younger-aged bilinguals)



Concentration of Finnish-Americans (US Census, 2000):



Finnish Ancestry in UP (US Census, 2011-15)



2011-2015, People Reporting Ancestry (B04006)

Vibrancy of Finnish-American culture:

- Heikki Lunta Winterfest
 - Annual winter festival in Negaunee, MI (since 1995)
- Heikinpäivä (Henrik's name day)
 - Annual winter festival in Houghton, MI (since 1999)

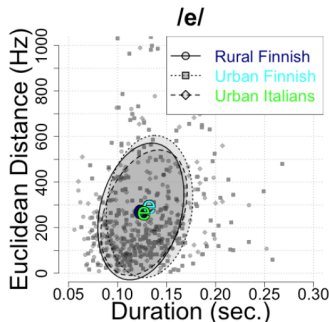
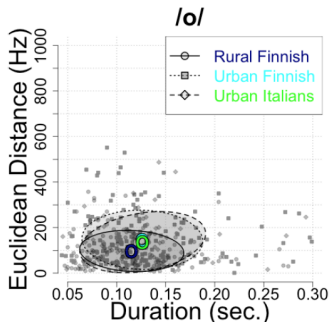


Monophthongal [ow] (e.g., 'boat', 'toast', 'Houghton')



Monophthongal [ow]

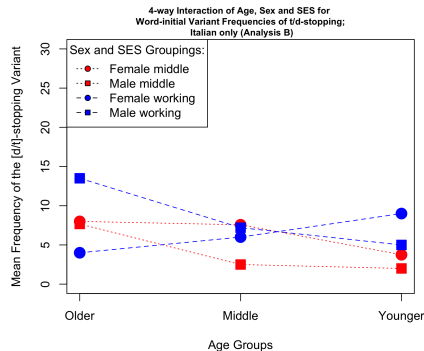
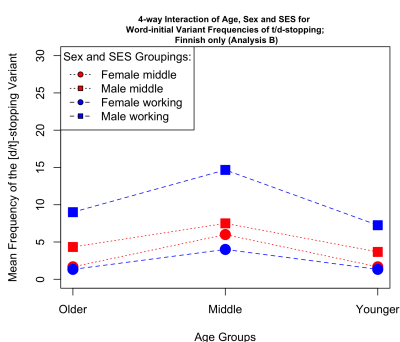
- The vowel in *boat*, [oʊ], produced more like [bo:t].
 - Most extreme for rural Finns, in comparison to more urban Finnish- or Italian-Americans in the same community (Marquette County).
 - Both Finnish and Italian have [o] but not [oʊ] sound.
- However, the vowel in *bait*, [eɪ], patterns closer to American English.



Interdentals (th) vs. (t)/(d)-stopping



Interdentals (th) vs. (t)/(d)-stopping



- (t)/(d)-stopping involves a phonological process whereby the (th) sound is produced something more akin to (t) or (d).
- Most frequently produced among working-class men, particularly among the Finnish-heritage UP English speakers.

Interdentals (th) vs. (t)/(d)-stopping

YOOPER CREATION STORY

IN DA BEGINNING DERE WAS NUTTIN.

ON DA 1ST DAY GOD CREATED DA UPPER PENINSULA.



ON DA 2ND DAY HE CREATED DA PARTRIDGE,
DA DEER, DA BEAR, DA FISH, AND DA DUCKS.



ON DA 3RD DAY HE SAID, "LET DERE
BE YOOPERS TO ROAM DA UPPER PENINSULA."

ON DA 4TH DAY HE CREATED DA UDDER
WORLD DOWN BELOW.



ON DA 5TH DAY HE SAID, "LET DERE BE TROLLS
TO LIVE IN DA WORLD DOWN BELOW."



ON DA 6TH DAY HE CREATED DA BRIDGE SO DA
TROLLS WOULD HAVE A WAY TO GET TO HEAVEN.



GOD SAID IT WAS GOOD AND..
ON DA 7TH DAY HE WENT HUNTIN.



- Typically, word-initial (th) are particularly susceptible to this sound change.
- Speakers are not simply being "lazy," but are being influenced by the Finnish and Italian languages.
 - The (th) sound does not exist in either language.
- Over time, and even through generations, this feature has become a linguistic marker of the "Yoooper" identity.
 - Particularly among working-class men.

Other note worthy features:

- The sounds (p), (t) and (k) within a word can sometimes be produced with longer durations (i.e., gemination).

Ex:

“ripple” → *rip-ple*

“ripen” → *ri-pen*

“little” → *lit-tle*

“liter” → *li-ter*

“bicker” → *bic-ker*

“biker” → *bi-ker*

- What could be causing this?
 - Finnish has “strong” and “weak” consonants, while English only has weak consonants.
 - (pp), (tt) and (kk) are strong consonants, compared to (p), (t), and (k)
- Further research required to investigate this feature in UP English.
- First syllable of a word is stressed. (e.g., *CALumet*, *BARaga*)
 - Finnish always stresses the first syllable of a word (Remlinger, 2007, 75)

Words, words, words...

- Many words have come into UP English due to the cultural impact and prominence of this ethnic-immigrant group.
- Some particularly salient ones include:



- Loan words can act as shibboleths separating insiders from outsiders.

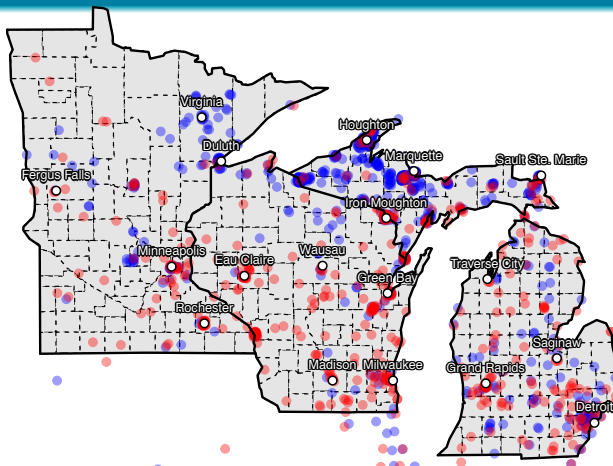
The pronunciation of ‘sauna’:

- As a shibboleth, the term is used in certain northern areas of the Upper Midwest to mark ‘insider’/‘outside’ distinctions (i.e., the Finnish variant, [sav.nə], seen as indexing Finnish-ness).
 - Now being commodified in advertisements (Remlinger, 2017, 107).



- Furthermore, Remlinger suggests that Finnish pronunciation of “sauna” is primarily restricted to western areas of Michigan's UP.
 - However, it may be extending beyond “Finnish” local identity to index the more regional identity of “Yooper” (Remlinger, 2017, 48-47,107).

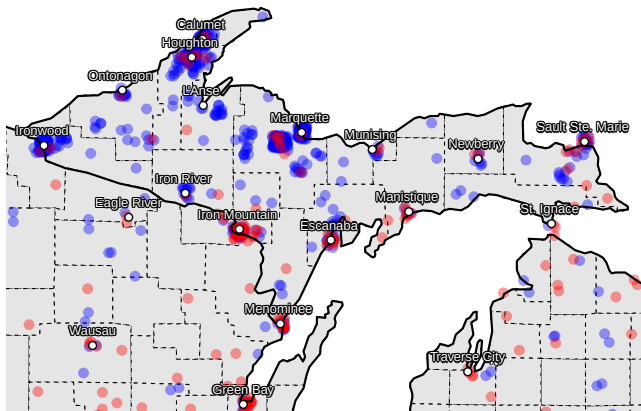
How is 'sauna' pronounced in the Upper Midwest?



Geo-spatial distribution of 'sauna' in the Upper Midwest

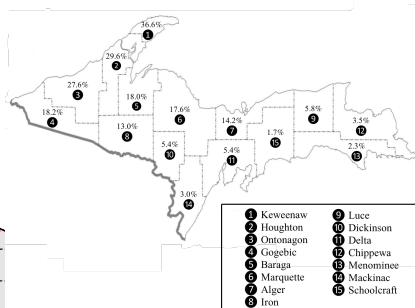
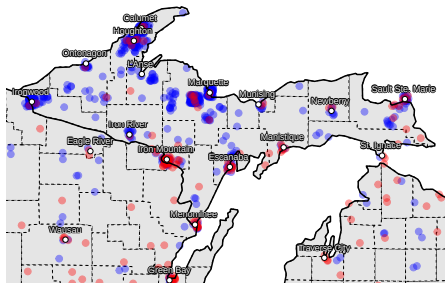
(n=2,200; blue=Finnish pronunciation and red=American English variant; based on hometown)

A closer look at pronunciation of 'sauna' in Michigan's UP



Geo-spatial distribution of 'sauna' in Michigan's Upper Peninsula
 (n=2,200; blue=Finnish pronunciation and red=American English variant; based on hometown)

Main observations:



- Finnish variant preferred in north-central/western areas.
- Anglicized variant preferred in south-central/eastern areas.

- Highest concentrations of Finns correlate with strong preference for Finnish variant.
- Anglicized variant areas exist.

Language regard

- Anglicized and Finnish variant exhibit differences in language regard.

Anglicized variant:

- Feels moderately strong about how it should be pronounced.
- However, not strong enough to justify correcting others.
- Connected to “UP-ness”, though tie to identity is weak.

Finnish variant:

- Pronunciation is extremely important to identity.
- Willing to correct individuals and groups of individuals.
- Tied to “Finnish-ness” but also connected to “UP-ness”.

Prepositional Omission (e.g., “We go Green Bay”)



Prepositional Omission

- English is regarded as a prepositional language.

Ex: *I went **to** the store.*

- Finnish, however, is a postpositional language.

Ex: *Mina menin kauppa**an***

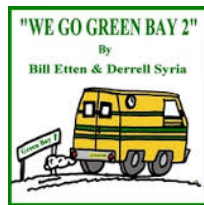
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- In UP English, optional prepositional omission is permitted in certain situations.

Ex: *I went (to) store to get groceries.*

Toivo went (to) Walmart this weekend.

Matti need to go (to) work everyday.

- Restricted to locative “to” and to general motions verbs.
- Present tense form of “go” is highly stigmatized.



What we know so far...

- Michigan's Upper Peninsula has been uniquely influenced by Finnish and other cultures and languages over the past century.
- While predominately now a monolingual English speaking community, speakers of UP English exhibit certain features that can be directly linked to non-English first-language influences (i.e., past down generation to generation).
 - Other ethnic-heritage populations have also had their own part to play in the development and propagation of UP English; though, arguably, none had the same degree of impact as Finnish.

- # YOOPER TALK
- DIALECT AS IDENTITY IN MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA
-
- KATHRYN A. REMLINGER

Q & A

Questions?

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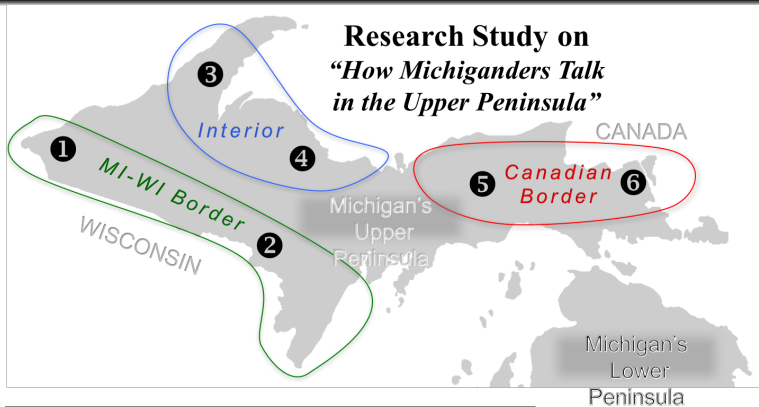
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Volunteering Participants for Study MUST:

- Be a native English speaker
- Be a long-standing UP residents of one of the specific research sites and/or surrounding areas.
 - Only spent less than 5 years away from area
- Have HS diploma and no more than a 4-year degree
- Have no history of speech or hearing disorder

Research Sites:

- ❶ Ironwood
- ❷ Iron Mountain
- ❸ Houghton
- ❹ Marquette
- ❺ Newberry
- ❻ Sault St. Marie