CHANGING REALIZATIONS OF A IN (a)tion IN RELATION TO THE FRONT A–BACK A OPPOSITION IN QUEBEC FRENCH

WILLIAM KEMP AND MALCAH YAEGER-DROR

The three sounds which most distinguish the Canadian French pronunciation are those of the diphthongue oi, the syllable ais, and the letter a, which are sounded respectively oué, a, and aw [i.e., [we], [ae], [ɔ]]... yet [these] sounds [are] not those of a corrupted speech, but of one that has outlived the changes of many centuries. (Roy, 1877, p. 258)

In this chapter, we examine over a 100-year period the linguistic and social aspects of the change from back to front A in the -(a)tion suffix in Quebec French (QF), a morphological unit that has roughly the same characteristics as in English.¹ We refer to it using variable notation: -(a)tion. The analysis of this change becomes all the more intriguing when compared with the evolution of the long-standing phonological opposition between front A and back A [i.e., (a) and (o)], which as can be seen from the quote has long been regarded as one of the most distinctive traits of QF.

¹ New Ways of Analyzing Sound Change
Given the fact that both front A and back A are retained as phonological units in QF, as in many conservative dialects of Continental French (see Santerre, 1974, 1981; Yaeger, 1979; Martinet and Walter, 1973; Lennig, 1978), we will begin by looking at the history of the two A's in French.

In QF, the situation is as follows: although the phonological distinction between the two A's is retained, there is in fact considerable lexical diffusion between them. For the most part, despite the fact that back A has been negatively stereotyped from a social standpoint, it has been accepting new members from the front A class. The variable under analysis here is one of the few cases in which the diffusion goes the other way. With the aim of following this change as it has developed, we have marshalled recorded data from a wide variety of sources. In the second section, we make use of contemporary, corpus-based data to gather basic information on the possible phonetic realizations of -(a)tional as well as on the social characteristics of speakers who tend to employ front or back A in this context. It turns out that back A is used in -(a)tional mainly by older speakers, in particular by older working-class (WC) males. One interesting point that our contemporary data underscore is the fact that, even though the shift to front A was initiated by the (upper) middle class (MC), that is, from "above the level of consciousness," there has been comparatively little resistance to this change even among the most linguistically conservative younger WC speakers.

Next, supplementing these data by more formal recordings from the 1940s in addition to comments by turn-of-the-century grammarians, we show that the /a/ realization was widely used in the not too distant past. Of special importance is the fact that as late as the early 1900s, back A was clearly considered to be the norm for correct speech. Thus, it becomes evident that the back A pronunciation does not represent a long-term nonstandard variant that has finally yielded to the standard variant, but rather that there has been a recent change in the norm on this point.

In the Section 5.4, we examine the length parameter and the complex relationship that exists between it and vowel color. In French phonology, when both back A and front A are retained, the former is traditionally long and the latter is short. Consequently, one of the most surprising results of this study is that for many speakers the fronted A of -(a)tional is still long or semilong. This may be the first well-documented case in which a vowel carries one of its features with it—in this case [+ length]—when it switches classes, thereby muddying the distinction between the two vowels.

After showing that we have reason to believe that the fronting of A in -(a)tional has proceeded more rapidly in Quebec than in France, we propose a two-step sociolinguistic explanation of this change. In Section 5.6, working from historiographic material, we argue that at a time when back A was still the norm the fronting of A in -(a)tional resulted from an overreaction to the
stereotyped [ɔ] realizations. In the last sections, we attempt to explain why it is that only -(a)tion words have fronted and why this change went to completion roughly during the period between 1940 and 1960. We claim that such words have come increasingly to be perceived as semilearned words, and that in the case of -(a)tion words, the new norm used by the middle class was accepted without resistance by WC speakers because, at a time of intense socioeconomic and also terminological modernization, not to follow suit came to be seen as a confession of backwardness.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that the loss of such a numerically important subgroup of the /a/ class has not undermined the stability of the back A–front A distinction, which in QF remains strong.

5.1. HISTORY OF BACK A IN FRENCH

Perhaps the most economic way to present the two-A phenomenon in French is to look at its historical development in the predominant northern dialect, of which QF must be considered an offshoot.2

Historically, the splitting off of back A from the front A class appears to have occurred within the period of Old French. Though there are no specific references to a timbre difference before the eighteenth century, Fouché (1958, p. 243ff) is able to justify the midfifteenth century as a cutoff point, by which time the change must have taken place. He also mentions some evidence from Norman that could be used to argue that back A was already present in the twelfth century (see also Bourciez and Bourciez 1971, Section 157).

There is general agreement that the distinction in timbre resulted from and was preceded by a difference in length. Under certain specific situations (see Fouché, 1958; Delattre, 1957, for examples), front A’s were lengthened and then backed. Take pâte ‘dough’ as an example. Originally in a precluster position (/past/), the /s/ dropped, leading to a compensatory lengthening of the front A (/paːt/, which was subsequently backed (/paːt/).

Less information is available on -ation, but in references going back to the sixteenth century, this A is referred to as being long (for instance, Le Gaygnard, 1585, p. 123, and other texts cited in Thurot, 1881–1883). As it is precisely this length distinction that was noted at the time in the case of other items which Fouché has shown involved back A, it is highly probable that the posteriorization of A in this context had occurred at least by the end of the sixteenth century. Given that the initial French settlements in Canada took place in the early seventeenth century, we may assume that back A in -ation was the prevalent form among the early colonists.

Straka (1981) underlines the fact that the /ə/ in -ation was inherited originally from the Latin and claims that its timbre and length in French were also
inherited (p. 215). Despite their being of different historical origins, we note that a following /s/ (or /z/) is also a context that has historically produced many back A items in French. According to the summary Delattre (1957) has made of Fouché's material, the situation is as follows with respect to a number of following /s/ contexts: (1) the past subjunctive forms -asse, asses, etc., which historically belong to the back A class, went over to front A in the eighteenth century (these forms are not used in QF); (2) in front of word-final /s/ (pronounced), only back As are to be found; (3) in words ending in -asse, some have front A and others have back A (for Continental French, Delattre calculates that back A occurs in roughly 25% of the items). There is one further /s/ context, not mentioned by Delattre, that favors /a/ and that is nonfinal -/se/, as in passer, classé, passager. We comment on this distinction between -ation and other pre-/s/ contexts later.

We conclude for the time being that it is not just -ation words that are historically back A items but that the presence of a following /s/ (in some cases perhaps a geminate /ss/) represents a phonological context which though variable appears historically to have been a context favoring back A.

We note also that some evidence exists suggesting that /a/ was traditionally pronounced with a timbre close to that of [ɔ] in colonial times since in some eighteenth-century documents a is transcribed o, for instance, quolinet for calinette (Juneau, 1972, pp. 51–52). This is almost certainly the form that Roy (1877) referred to as (aw) in our initial quote.

5.2. CONTEMPORARY DATA ON -(a)tion IN MONTREAL FRENCH

Analysis of contemporary data on Montreal French (MF) indicates that the opposition between etymological /a/ and etymological /a/ remains strong (see Santerre, 1974, 1981; Dumas, 1981), as we mentioned earlier. There is some lexical diffusion, but of the more than 50 representative interviews from the 1971 MF corpus (for a description, see Sankoff and Sankoff, 1973) that we have listened to in this regard, only one speaker speaker (No. 81) appears to take front A as his target in the case of etymological back A words. As with /æ/ vs (æh) in corrected New York City styles (see Labov, Yaeger, and Steiner, 1972), he cannot maintain the corrected target consistently (see Yaeger, 1979, p. 79).

Though the /a/ class appears to remain intact in all social and age groups in MF, there are a few exceptions, one of the most interesting of which involves the realization of front or back A in the -(a)tion suffix, the subject of this paper.
The 1971 MF data show that the opposition between /a/ and /ɑ/ is quite weak in this case. Variability here is such that we have found it necessary to note as a minimum one phonetic unit on either side of the principal phonetic target of the two phonemes, /a/ and /ɑ/. Table 5.1 gives the results for 52 interviews from the 1971 corpus. In our choice of speakers, we have generally concentrated on the opposing extremes of age and social groups. These figures show that overall front A, the current local and continental standard form, heavily predominates over back A in contemporary MF. Our problem is of course to make some sense out of such a wide variety of realizations.

Despite such a gamut of tokens, the realizations of most speakers tend to be either front or back, which include, on the one hand, [æ], [a:], [a], [a] and [ɑ:], [ɑ], [ɔ], [ɔ] on the other. There are, however, a few speakers whose tokens cover most of this span. Out of the 22 speakers showing five or more tokens, 3 show tokens involving four or more points on our front-back scale, as shown in Table 5.2.

The interview of speaker 10, a lively interview of a person of WC background who shows some care in her choice of variants, contains a predominance of back A tokens (10/12), whereas the younger WC speaker, No. 88,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.1</th>
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| NUMBER OF Tokens for Each of Six Phonetic Realizations of 
-ation Occurring in 52 Interviews from the 1971 MF Corpus |
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>æ/a,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ø/ɔ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRONT-BACK Spread for the A in -ation for Three Speakers from the 1971 MF Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WC, working class; MC, middle class. Dashed rule divides /a/ and /ɑ/.
who had just finished twelfth grade in night school, uses more front tokens (11/13). Despite the unusually large span of realizations, we will see that both of these speakers are on the whole fairly typical of their respective age groups, though No. 10 does use more back A tokens than her peers of the same sex.

More surprising is the behavior of speaker 81, a college dean whose interview is doubtless the most standard one in the 120-person corpus. Given both his output for other, previously studied variables and his self-report of linguistic insecurity, we would have predicted all front tokens in his case, whereas 19 of 32 tokens are back. Finally, we note that only one speaker employs tokens at the two extremes of the spectrum (No. 88). This situation is understandable because, as we will see, almost all of the most backed tokens occur in interviews of speakers over 55 years of age in 1971, whereas few older speakers appear to employ the [ae] realization.

Now, if we return to the data as a whole, it turns out that the strong predominance of front A's in our data tends to cover up more basic social and historical patterns. As old WC men tend to talk less and use fewer words of the -(a)tion class, their tokens are lost in the overall picture.

According to the 1971 MF data, despite the relatively low proportion of back A's overall, there is one group, that of older WC males, that made fairly consistent use of /a/ realizations in this context. Even in this age group, however, female speakers showed a tendency to use front A rather than back A, as can be seen in Table 5.3. In Table 5.4, we observe that the use of back A is rarely found in the next two generations. Already in the generation born between the wars, no male speaker with more than three tokens shows a majority of back A tokens. This, of course, only establishes a tendency; there are certainly individuals in this age group who maintain the back A pronun-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Born</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 'a' = [a], [ae], [a:], [a:], 'a' = [o], [o:], [o], [o].

**TABLE 5.3**
NUMBER OF (a) AND (o) IN -(a)tion FOR THE OLDEST GROUP OF WC SPEAKERS IN THE 1971 MF CORPUS

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### Older WC Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Older WC Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* 'a' = [a], [ae], [a:], [a:], 'a' = [o], [o:], [o], [o].
TABLE 5.4
NUMBER OF (a) AND (o) TOKENS IN -(a)tion FOR MIDDLE-AGED AND
YOUNG WC MALE SPEAKERS FROM THE 1971 MF CORPUS.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle-Aged WC Men</th>
<th>Young WC Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>1925</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ‘a’ and ‘o’ as in Table 5.3.

ciation, for instance, the interview of No. 51, a WC woman, born in 1930, contains only back A tokens (5). In the interviews of younger WC males, the use of back A is even less in evidence. Four interviews containing five or more tokens show no back A tokens. In all but one interview, a good majority of tokens are front A’s. In addition, we note a fronting tendency even within the back A class in -ation words. For instance, of the ten open O realizations of /a/ in this context (Table 5.1), only one occurs in the interview of a young speaker (No. 88).

Finally, in Table 5.5, we see that back A realizations also appear in the speech of the oldest group of MC speakers. To obtain a larger sample, we have added those speakers with similar social characteristics from a slightly later (1978) corpus limited to older Montreal area speakers, identified in Table 5.5 as “K.L.”6 Though variable and generally the minority form, it is noteworthy that the splitting off of the A in -(a)tion from the rest of the back A class is incomplete, even in the speech of some of the most educated and linguistically self-conscious members of the older middle class.7

Even in the case of the group of older WC males, the small number of tokens per individual might lead one to wonder whether the result is more chance than anything else. We can cite two pieces of evidence that indicate that back A is and was used consistently by older WC speakers in this context. In the previously mentioned 1978 corpus limited to Montreal area speakers over 65 years of age, there are two WC male speakers whose interviews show a fairly high number of (a) in -(a)tion: K.L., 24, a retired railroad worker born in 1910 (11[3] of all cases), and K.L., 50, a retired plumber
born in 1909 (4[α] and 3[α] of 7 cases). In fact, it was precisely on listening to these latter two speakers that we began to recognize -(a)tion as a potentially significant variable. Second, on a community basis, it is clear from ongoing work in the Côte-des-Neiges area of Montreal on the part of the first author that back A is still the normal form in -(a)tion for nonprofessional male speakers over 65 years of age.\(^8\)

Finally, the traditional pronunciation has been preserved in the well-known Biblical expression: to be known comme Barabas dans La Passion /kɔmbarabo>bāapasjɔ/ 'like Barrabas in The Passion.' This is usually the case even for younger speakers who normally do not use back A realizations in the case of -ation.\(^9\)

We should mention that there are linguistic contexts that favor the use of back A. Though it would be hard to establish rigorously, given the degree of social and age-based variation as well as the relative paucity of back A tokens, we should not fail to cite the following\(^10\): (1) The presence of a following /z/ (-/(o)zjɔ)/, as in occasion and invasion (there are perhaps a dozen such words in French). A following /z/ context is recognized as a vowel lengthening context, which at least for elder speakers may in turn favor posterior realizations (see Section 5.4). (2) Short, underivable words in -ation such as nation, ration, and station, appear to be less likely candidates for fronting than are polysyllabic -ation words, especially among older speakers. (3) Though we cannot examine all possible combinations of vowel harmonization here (see Yaeger, 1979, Ch. 7, for discussion of this phenomenon), there are a number of preceding vowel contexts that might favor the use of back A in -(a)tion. The most evident are those involving a back A in the preceding syllable, as in acclamation /aklam(o)zjɔ/ or déclaration /dəklar(o)zjɔ/. (4) Preceding r or r-clusters tend to shorten and back the following vowel: formation, célébration, administration, opération, and so on. In the case of younger speakers, it is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Older MC Men</th>
<th>Older MC Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KL 23</td>
<td>1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KL 60</td>
<td>1907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) and \(^α\) as in Table 5.3.
possible that the harmonizing effect may have a fronting effect on preceding back A's. An extreme example of this effect occurs in the interview of speaker 6, a young worker, who in one instance pronounced rotation as [rataʃo] (line 493). It appears, however, that age, social class, and sex are the dominant factors involved in this change.

Now that we have basic information on the change from back A to front A in -(a)tion, it is important to underline the fact that this change applies to the suffix -ation and not to the class of etymological back A's followed by /s/. Despite the fronting of the A in -(a)tion, the back A in words such as passager, passé, and cassé, remains stable. As we will mention in Section 5.7, we believe that this fact follows from the particular nature of words containing the -ation suffix.

So we have ample evidence that the A of -(a)tion has been fronted over the last few generations. Particularly significant is the fact that even in the case of WC males, the posterior realizations have declined almost to the vanishing point in little more than one generation. In addition, even the /a/ realizations themselves are more front in the interviews of younger male workers (some [o] and only one [a]) than for the oldest speakers. Finally, we must underscore the fact that, although the rest of the back A words appear to be backing and raising, even those younger WC speakers whose speech contains the greatest number of nonstandard features, such as speakers 2 and 96 (see Table 5.4), show no signs of retaining the traditional back A in this context. This shift appears then to have occurred virtually without resistance.

We cannot treat these points adequately until we know more about the history of this change. At first sight, this might appear to be a simple case of standardization [for a discussion see Kemp (1981 and references therein)] in which an old nonstandard form is finally put to route by the standard form. Closer study will reveal, however, that the social value of the back and front variants has itself changed over the past hundred years. Also, the nature of this fronting can only be fully grasped once we take into account the residual lengthening tendency that appears (Section 5.4). Our next step will be to reconstruct as best we can the behavior of generations of speakers slightly earlier than those to which our corpus data have given us access with respect to this same variable.

5.3. USE OF BACK A IN EARLIER GENERATIONS

Given the relative instability of this variable in our contemporary data, we have tried to obtain as much information as possible on earlier generations. We put off discussion of historiographic documentation until later
(Section 5.6). Here we present data on the pronunciation of -(a)tion in recordings of speakers born one or two generations earlier than the oldest informants in our contemporary data. This will permit us to extend the length of time for which we have recorded information and, as it turns out, to gain access to an earlier stage in the change under consideration. Since from roughly 1960, which marks the beginning of the so-called "Quiet Revolution," Quebec has undergone an intense phase of linguistic correction and moralizing, we have looked for material recorded before that data [see Labov (1981) on the advantages and limits of different types of data].

Our search has revealed two major sources:

1. The Archives de folklore at Laval University in Quebec City, which contains material recorded from the 1940s on (we have made use of folktales)
2. The Archives sonores de Radio-Canada in Montreal, which contains recordings of speeches, public events, programs, and other material going back to the late 1930s

But before putting them to use, because these recordings were made or preserved for historical and not sociolinguistic reasons, we must examine with care their context as well as the social position of their authors. This problem closely parallels those involved in the "reconstruction of language in its social context," to which Romaine has recently devoted a detailed analysis (Romaine 1982, Ch. 5). To begin with, though these documents do not give us data on a representative cross section of Quebec society, say, in 1900, they are potentially of real interest because they provide information on three major components of traditional Quebec society: the political "élite," the clergy, and the habitant, or farmer, who in many cases owned his own land.

These are in fact precisely the major social and political groups in early nineteenth-century (i.e., preindustrial) Quebec (see Paquet and Wallot, 1974, Part IV). The Radio-Canada archives provides information on the formal style of spoken QF used by members of the MC (or by individuals who had succeeded in attaining MC standing). We use recordings of a subgroup of individuals born between 1860 and 1890. As the Quebec population was 75% rural in 1891 and still 45% rural in 1921, it is not surprising to find that many of the political leaders were born outside of the major urban areas (see Appendix 5.1). But all of them went through the very selective system of collèges classiques and most attended university, an option open to very few before 1945. In the collèges, the program was standard throughout the province, and the general level of cultural instruction was high (see Galarneau, 1978, Ch. 7). So whatever the social or geographic origins of its members, this represents a group that was quite cohesive in terms of lifestyle, culture, and language. This is even the case with respect to profession, as the vast
majority of the older politicians of whom there are extant recordings were originally lawyers.

The Laval archives, on the other hand, give us access to the traditional speech of the habitants for roughly the same 1860 to 1890 period (in terms of birth date). When farm hands and artisans are included, this represents the most populous group in Quebec until the early twentieth century. The habitant generally received only a few years of elementary schooling, for which he expressed scant sympathy (Gérin, 1898, p. 109). Those regions that have produced the highest number of contributors, for instance of folktales, tend to be less urbanized and represent older settlements and more stable populations. As Chambers and Trudgill have noted (1980, p. 33), these are precisely the sort of speakers on whom classical dialectologists have based their work: speakers who are what they call NORMS, that is, nonmobile, older, rural, male speakers. Finally, we note that from the vantage point of standard French, the traditional speech of the storytellers is among most nonstandard to be found in Quebec [see La Follette (1969) for a description of many of the morphological particularities of traditional QF].

Lastly, though less abundant, the Radio-Canada archives also contain recordings of some of the most influential members of the clergy born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, the clergy is universally considered to be the only cultivated social group in Quebec. Generally of humble origins, gaining a certain position and culture through the Church-run education system, the clergy had strong links both with the people and with the governing classes (Paquet and Wallot, 1974, p. 549). Particularly powerful during the period from 1840 to 1960, it is noteworthy that the Church had complete control over education in Quebec until the early 1960s (see Eid, 1978; Magnuson, 1980).

Though these same sources contain few recordings of women or urban workers for this period, we wish to stress the fact that the groups for which we do possess recorded material represent the major forces of preindustrial Quebec, and even in the early twentieth century these three groups conserved important power bases.

Now that we have completed our brief sociohistorical reconstruction of nineteenth-century QF, we can proceed to analyze the historical documents we have located.

First, let us examine the recordings, in this case folktales, involving the use of traditional QF. We have chosen to analyze the speech of eight informants in the Laval folklore collection (as well as one woman from another collection). These subjects were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) oldest speakers possible; (2) most productive speakers in terms of total number of stories; (3) minimal number of speakers of both sexes; (4) speakers
from diverse geographic regions. As the data in Table 5.6 indicate, the realization of the A in -(a)tion in traditional QF is invariably /ɑ/. Of particular interest is the fact that the phonetic realization of /ɑ/ is consistently further back than [ə], i.e., [ɔ] or [ɔ]. For this group of speakers, we note no difference based on sex. Because as La Follette has noted (1969, p. 19), [ɔ] is generally slightly labialized, the phonetic difference between [ɔ] and [ɔ] is small. On the other hand, the phonetic difference between [ə] and [ə] (or [ɔ]) is quite apparent, involving increased backness, labialization, and, in the case of [ɔ], raising. In Section 5.6, we show that this realization has long been the subject of negative stereotyping.

Next we examine the speech of the oldest generation of politicians (born between 1860 and 1890) on which material is available in the Radio-Canada archives. We have analyzed the speeches of a subgroup of 10 orators, all of whom played key roles in Quebec or Canadian politics (or both) during the first half of the twentieth century. The results are given in Table 5.7 (biographical information is to be found in Appendix 5.1). We observe that all of these individuals employ back A in -(a)tion with a certain regularity. Five of them use /ɑ/ categorically; a majority (6/10) use it at rates of 70% or more; and all of the speakers employ /ɑ/ at rates of 25% to 30% or higher. The least that can be said is that there is no marked tendency to avoid /ɑ/ in this context among the political “élite,” even in their formal speaking style. There is a tendency to avoid the most posterior realizations of /ɑ/ (7/10 speakers), but there still are three speakers who do employ it.

The Radio-Canada archives contain material on only a few MC and upper MC women. They are born slightly later than the oldest men whose
### TABLE 5.7

**Phonetic Realizations and Percentage of /ɑ/ Tokens in -(a)tion in Formal Speeches of Ten of the Oldest Public Figures of Whom Voice Recordings Exist in the Radio-Canada Archives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Rec.</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>a₁</th>
<th>a₂</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>% /ɑ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. R. Dandurand</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. L. Gouin</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. H. Bourassa</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. E. Lapointe</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. L. Patenaude</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. T.-D. Bouchard</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. L. St-Laurent</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. G. Fauteux</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. L. Lafleche</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. M. Duplessis</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rec., date recorded. Information on place of birth, schooling, profession, and political career are given in Appendix 5.1.*

Speech is documented, and their speeches are in some cases very short and less elaborated than political speeches usually are. Table 5.8 presents linguistic and biographical information on the women whose speeches contain some words in -(a)tion. This small amount of data is certainly not sufficient to allow us to draw any firm conclusions, but it is possible that MC women born between 1860 and 1900 had already shifted toward front A in -(a)tion. Note, however, that there are some /ɑ/ in the best speech available for this generation of women, that of Mrs. David.

The other important group, the clergy, also shows a tendency to use front A in -(a)tion, though not to the exclusion of back A, as can be seen from the data in Table 5.9 concerning five clergymen born between 1875 and 1892. We recall that churchmen (and -women) generally represented the most cultivated and highly educated group in Quebec. At least at the top of the hierarchy, we observe a trend toward front A even among the oldest speakers. The behavior of the upper class women we just discussed may well be a reflection of this tendency. In the case of change from above, this represents the expected behavior for women [for Quebec, see Thibault (1983, p. 127)]. This trend was probably reinforced by the fact that women were generally more educated and more religious than their male counterparts. In addition, sisters played a major role as educators in primary and secondary schools [concerning the growth and social functions of religious orders in Quebec, in particular for women, see Denault (1975)]. In Section 5.6, we present evidence that this constitutes from the vantage point of standard French a hypercorrect form for this generation.
### TABLE 5.8

**Information and Data on -(a)tion for Three Upper Middle-Class Women Born between 1877 and 1896 (Radio-Canada Archives)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and biography</th>
<th>/a//a/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mrs. L. de Gaspé Beaubien (née Lacoste)</td>
<td>0/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born: Montreal, 1877</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: secondary, convent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father: judge, senate president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband: head of major investment firm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation: charity leader, founder of Sainte-Justin’s Hospital for children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date recorded: 1951</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mrs. A. David (née Nantel)</td>
<td>3/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born: St-Jérôme, 1888</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: secondary, convent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father: politician</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband: lawyer, politician, senator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation: radio, charity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date recorded: 1944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mrs. T. Casgrain (née Forget)</td>
<td>0/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born: Montreal, 1896</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: secondary, convent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father: business man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation: feminist, politician, senator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date recorded: 1949–1950</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5.9

**Biographical Information and Realizations of -(a)tion for Five Major Clergymen from the Radio-Canada Archives* |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Rec.</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>/a//a/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. L. Groulx</td>
<td>RM—1878</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Doc.</td>
<td>Canon</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. O. Maureault</td>
<td>RM—1888</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Doc.</td>
<td>Rector</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. J. Charbonneau</td>
<td>ONT—1892</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Doc.</td>
<td>Archbishop</td>
<td>0/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* M, Montreal; RM, Region of Montreal; ONT, Ontario; Rec., date recorded; Doc., doctorat; Lic., licence.

Now let us look at a selection of speeches recorded in or before 1960 by MC politicians born roughly in the first decade of the century. In Table 5.10, we furnish the pertinent biographical and linguistic information on seven male politicians from the Radio-Canada archives. The results speak for themselves. There are no /a/ realizations in the 84 -(a)tion tokens. Given these
TABLE 5.10
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND DATA ON SEVEN MC POLITICIANS FROM THE RADIO-CANADA ARCHIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Rec.</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>/a/ /a/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P. Gouin</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, politician</td>
<td>0/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: PM (Q)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(see Table 5.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Rinfret</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, deputy, minister (O)</td>
<td>0/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: judge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Sauvè</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, deputy, PM (Q)</td>
<td>0/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: journalist,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politician</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Fournier</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, judge, deputy, senator, mayor of Montreal</td>
<td>0/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: minister (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Lapointe</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, deputy, minister (O)</td>
<td>0/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: minister (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lieutenant-governor (Q)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Lesage</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer, deputy, PM (Q)</td>
<td>0/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Laurendeau</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Univ.</td>
<td>Journalist, politician, writer</td>
<td>0/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. father; Rec., date recorded; O. Ottawa; Q. Québec.

results, we must assume that a new norm for -(a)tion had recently been established for the élite. In formal speech, practiced orators of this generation made consistent use of the /a/ form in this context. But as the 1971 MF corpus indicates, members of the older MC, who belong roughly to the same generation, still used some /a/ in -(a)tion in fairly informal interview style (see “Older MC Men” in Table 5.5).

It is clear from Table 5.5 that urban WC male speakers born prior to the First World War maintained the traditional /a/ pronunciation. Though it is perfectly possible that WC women of this generation were abreast of the élite in this regard, the relative inconsistency of the data on this group (also given in Table 5.5), in addition to the fact that older MC men and women’s interviews also show some /a/, lead us to believe that older WC women may previously have used a higher percentage of /a/ in -(a)tion than our 1971 data indicate.

According to formal data from the 1940s and 1950s, it appears that by the 1920s younger male speakers of the élite had adopted the use of /a/ in -ation. It is worth noting that it is precisely from the mid-1920s on that the radio emerged as a new and powerful means of communication and, indirectly, of linguistic standardization (Proulx, 1979, pp. 24–31), though the degree to which the media influence actual speech is hard to evaluate.
We conclude then that with respect to vowel color, despite some phonetic variation, back A was the usual form used in -(a)tion in most social groups in the case of speakers born between 1860 and 1890, though there is evidence that front A occurred in MC speech, especially among women and the clergy. There is also evidence that MC speakers tended to avoid the [ə] realization of /a/ in this context, a form that we have seen was the regular one in traditional QF. On the other hand, even though, as will be seen in Section 5.6, back A remained the recognized norm in -(a)tion as late as the early twentieth century, in reality front A had become the norm for educated MC speakers born after 1900.

Before searching for possible causes of this change, we must examine a second parameter involved therein, that of vowel length.

5.4. VOWEL LENGTH AND ITS Interaction WITH VOWEL COLOR

Another parameter we must consider, which interacts with the /a/-/ə/ distinction, is vowel length. As we saw in Section 5.1, /a/ is supposed to derive historically from the class of lengthened /a/. In theory, this is reputed to have led to a correlation between vowel length and vowel color: /a/ is short; /ə/ is half-long or long. Thus, Delattre states (1957, p. 143) that “any [ə] followed by a consonant is longer than [a] followed by the same consonant.” And he gives clear expression to the basic proposition concerning the reintegration of /ə/ into the /a/ class: “when a back A becomes a front A again, it also loses its added length.” To what extent this has occurred in continental French remains to be seen.21

In the present instance, however, the data from QF oblige us to reject such a rigid correlation. It is true that in the most controlled and studied variety of French commonly heard in Quebec, that of Radio-Canada newscasts, the A in -ation is short and front (1 semilong token out of 69 in a series of recent newscasts), and that in traditional QF, both rural and urban, /a/ realizations are almost always long. But QF provides repeated counterexamples to the aforementioned correlation between vowel color and length.

First, we note that at least one of Quebec's most accomplished orators of the older generation, Bourassa (born in 1867), and occasionally Duplessis (born in 1890) make use of short /a/ (both [a] and [ə]) in -ation (Bourassa: 7/7 short tokens). Speaker 81 (Table 5.5) also uses short /a/ (10/14). Though only a small number of speakers appear to have used short forms, there is some historiographic material suggesting that short back A realizations were
highly valued. Rivard (1901) mentions that -ation words are "generally more or less long," which we take to mean that they were generally half-long or long. But the Bulletin du parler français du Canada for 1902 answers the question whether this A should be long or short by noting that "in Paris it tends to be short." A most revealing remark in this regard is provided by Dumais (1905), who states that in opposition to A's in stressed final syllables, which are long (as in pâte ‘dough’), "unaccentuated closed A [i.e., nonfinal back A] is almost always short," as in éducation, carotte, bâtiment (‘building’). Now, as we know that the back A in at least the first two of these words (those involving the penultimate syllable) was traditionally at least semilong in Quebec (see Yaeger, 1979, pp. 57, 112), we can deduce that Dumais was referring to how one should speak.

More important is the fact that a large number of front A's in -ation appearing in the 1971 MF corpus are long or semilong. Excluding /a/ tokens, we have coded the tokens of 13 speakers of varying ages and social categories whose interviews contained 5 or more front A tokens. The results, shown in Table 5.11, indicate that in the interview setting all but three speakers lengthened more than half of their /a/ in -ation beyond what could be expected for (a) in penultimate position. In addition, the interviews of one half of this group contain fully lengthened tokens at rates near or above 50%. The data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>11 (front only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30 (front only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8 (front only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N, number of tokens; WC, working class; MC, middle class.
for speakers 2 and 6 could be used to claim that WC speakers or males tend to use long front A in this context, but data on older subjects from the Radio-Canada archives (Table 5.12) indicate that lengthened /a/’s, even fully lengthened ones, are neither new nor restricted to WC speech. The behavior of upper MC Thérèse Casgrain in formal speeches dating from 1949 and 1950 (12 long tokens out of 22) shows clearly that lengthening of /a/ in this context had no negative connotations. Also, interviews of younger MC speakers of both sexes include long A’s at rates of around 50%.24

Of course, lengthening is partially induced by discourse phenomena such as stress and sentence or clause intonation patterns. But it should be noted that since the beginning of the century, phoneticians such as Passy and Rousselet have described the tendency in certain varieties of nonstandard continental French for the main stress to fall not on the final syllable, as in standard French, but on the penultimate syllable (see Straka, 1981, pp. 202–203). Needless to say, one of the major correlates of stress is added length. For Quebec, at the least, these data indicate that for current generations the movement to /a/ in -ation has not resulted in its becoming short, as Delattre’s aforementioned correlation would lead us to expect.

This means that we are confronted with a new or at least not commonly recognized combination of vowel color and length, that of a lengthened front A. Historical front A’s are both inherently and in reality short, whereas the fronted A in -(a)tion is often lengthened. Whether this lengthening should be attributed to its status as a historical back A or is more a matter of popular

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born</th>
<th>:</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. R. Dandurand</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. E. Lapointe</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. L. Patenaude</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. L. St-Laurent</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. G. Fauteux</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mrs. A. David</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. L. M. Gouin</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mrs. T. Casgrain</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. E. Rinfret</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. J. Lesage</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For biographical information, see Tables 5.7, 5.8, and 5.10, and Appendix 5.1. See also Note 25 below.
or informal French, or both, is a question we will have to leave open for the
time being.

One might suspect that the lengthening of /a/ in -ation would cause the A
to retreat toward back A, but we have no evidence of this. Nor does A appear
to be a "repressed" form among younger speakers in the sense that it might
appear in more informal sections of the interviews.

So our study of the A in -(a)tion has led us to the conclusion that vowel
length can be independent of vowel color in QF. Until now, all studies have
shown that in QF only certain vowels can be long and that these vowels are
long inherently (long par nature): e, ö, o, a. In addition, the mid to low vowels
can be long in certain given phonological positions. In this paper, for the first
time, we find evidence at least for one subset of the "inherently long" (a) class
that the length can be retained independently of vowel color when the vowel
is merged with the short front vowel. We cannot say at this time whether this
will turn out to be a characteristic of the -ation suffix or something of a more
general nature. We must reserve judgment until the entire A class has been
studied. Yet the fact that this variable lengthening is apparently independent
of concomitant shifts in vowel color that have taken place for this variable is
potentially of major interest for the analysis of QF phonology; however, a
discussion of this matter must be left for another forum.

Finally, we would like to be able to make a synthesis of the various
combinations of vowel color and vowel length we have observed in the
speech of four and a half generations of Quebeckers (i.e., whose dates of birth
run from 1860 to 1955). With this aim, we have located many of the speakers
on whom we have presented data in two-dimensional space according to the
relative backness and length of the A in -(a)tion. Each token has been as-
signed a value between 0 and 1 with respect to backness (B) and length (L).
For vowel color, we have distinguished five degrees: a/æ, 0; a-, .30; a-, .60;
a, .80; ò/a\, 1.0. For length, we have distinguished three degrees: short,
0; half-long, .5; long, 1.0. In this way, we can locate speakers precisely relative
to one another in a square whose corners represent the following ex-
reme combinations; bottom left—0 L, 0 B; upper right—1 L, 1 B; bottom
right—0 L, 1 B; upper left—1 L, 0 B. In Figure 5.1, taking at least five
speakers from the most significant age and social groups, we can observe
the diverse areas of length–timbre combinations that have been occupied.
It is striking that over the last century just about all of the available space
has been occupied by speakers of one age or social category or another.

There are, however, important generational differences. Lengthened back
A tokens (top right quarter) are to be found in traditional QF (Laval
archives), in the speech of roughly half of the oldest group of politicians
(Radio-Canada archives), and in the speech of older WC males (1971 MF


Figure 5.1 Combinations of backness (B) and length (L) in -ation for 30 speakers. Numbers represent speakers from the 1971 MF corpus (see Tables 5.2 to 5.4 and Note 25). Initials indicate speakers from the Radio-Canada Archives (see Tables 5.7 to 5.9): HB, H. Bourassa; TB, T.-D. Bouchard; TC, T. Casgrain (F); AD, Mrs. A. David; JD, J. Drapeau; MD, M. Duplessis; GF, G. Fauteux; LG, L. Gouin; MG, M. Gouin; EL, E. Lapointe; HL, H. Lapointe; JL, J. Lesage; JP, J.P. (see Section 5.8.2); LP, L. Patenaude; ER, E. Rinfret; LS, L. Saint-Laurent; RCA, Radio-Canada anchormen/women; LAVAL, speakers from Laval Folklore Archives (Table 5.6). The last two groups are in addition to the 30 individual speakers.

corpus). Lengthened front A tokens (upper left quarter) are used by a majority of younger speakers of all social classes (1971 MF corpus) and some older speakers (1971 MF corpus and Radio-Canada archives. The major pattern that this graph highlights is that of movement from back A to front A
accompanied by a small reduction in length. As can be seen, the number of speakers to be found in the bottom half of the graph is quite limited (less than 1 of 5). With the exception of speaker 13, all of these individuals (and institutions) give multiple signs of paying close attention to the way they speak. Most of these speakers use a majority of front A's (lower left quarter); only Henri Bourassa (born 1867) succeeds in maintaining a consistent use of short back A (lower right quarter).

Now that we have completed our description of the diverse realizations of -(a)tion in QF and their social and historical effects, we try in the final sections to account for the change we have observed as well as its relation to the evolution of the back A class in general. We must underline, however, that, although the A has fronted quite consistently, because of the conservative nature of the length factor, we cannot really say that a merger has occurred.

5.5. COMPARISON WITH CONTINENTAL FRENCH

Now that we have a good idea of how the pronunciation of -(a)tion has evolved over the last century in Quebec, we must examine, however briefly, its evolution in relation to that of the back A class in general. In order to establish what role if any standard CF may have had in Quebec, we present information on the recent history of the back A class in France.

With respect to QF, we have seen that the A in -(a)tion has fronted to /a/. But this is not representative of the back A class as a whole. Though there are other cases of items that have tended toward the front A class (for instance, carotte), the back A class has remained strong. Interestingly, the loss of one of the largest subgroups of the back A class (there are probably close to a thousand -(a)tion words in French) has not had a weakening effect on the class overall. There is even some evidence of lexical diffusion, with front A losing some words to the back A class (see also Santerre, 1981, p. 382). In addition, all available indications are that younger speakers of all social classes are backing and raising /a/ more consistently and more extremely than their elders did. So concerning vowel color, we see that the -ation suffix has split off from the rest of the back A class (though this is not the case with respect to length).

Now let us examine the status of back A in continental French, in particular in the dominant Northern dialect of France. The general opinion of French phoneticians, cited by Mettas (1975), is that there has been a marked decline in the use of back A, particularly since 1945. In this case we are fortunate to possess very detailed information in the form of Lennig's work based on a corpus of Parisian French interviews (1978). Concerning the two
A’s, Lennig (1978) concludes that, however small it may be, “the phonetic difference between etymological /a/ words and etymological /a/ words persists in most Parisian speech” (pp. 80–81).26

Because of its variable status, the -ation suffix was not one of the basic back A items selected by Lennig for analysis.27 We have, however, succeeded in gathering information on its pronunciation in continental French. To begin with, we have been able, with Lennig’s generous assistance, to listen to a few tapes of older speakers from his corpus. Of four interviews of older WC male speakers (born before 1920) two were consistent users of /a/ in this context. Though a few years younger, we would also put in this group the well-known trainer and sports commentator, Joe Mallejac, born and raised in the major WC arrondissement in Paris (the fourteenth) before emigrating to Quebec in 1969. He makes consistent use of /a/ in -a(t)ion even under formal media conditions. On a recent television program (1983), he used four of four [o:].28

In addition, we have evidence that back A was used in -a(t)ion by educated MC Parisians born in the last half of the nineteenth century. All the -ation words are listed as part of the /a/ class in the Dictionnaire phonétique published in 1930 by Barbeau and Rodhe. No ordinary dictionary, this work represents a lexically based phonological description of the speech of Alfred Barbeau, a Paris-born (1867) academic and phonetician.

Finally, recent evidence given in the Dictionnaire de la prononciation française dans son usage réel by Martinet and Walter (1973) show that back A still occurs in the speech of highly educated Frenchmen born between 1900 and 1950.29 Their phonetic notations are based on analysis of recordings of a list of sentences read by 17 different subjects. Taking 20 -ation tokens for each of the speakers (given under -ation), we find that in reading style 10 speakers used back A at rates of 10% to 25%, 4 speakers at rates of 30% to 50%, and three speakers at rates of 70% to 80%. The individual results are provided in Table 5.13. We note that three of the four speakers born after 1940 fall in the 10% to 25% category. Even though the back A may be less posterior in continental French and on the average shorter than in QF, these results remain highly significant.30

In opposition to QF, this change in the realization of -a(t)ion in continental French is typical of the fronting tendency that has been affecting the entire back A class. Though Lennig’s results must be considered decisive on this point, it is worth citing Martinet and Walter’s information on some other back A items. Let us take three etymological /a/ items that occur in the written code with a circumflex accent—bâton ‘stick’, pâte ‘dough’, and pâtisserie ‘pastry’31—and compare the number of speakers using back A with the number of those using it in the most productive back A contexts in -a(t)ion.
### TABLE 5.13

**Percentage of /a/ in -(a)tion and Social Characteristics for the 17 Subjects on Whom Martinet and Walter (1973) Based Their Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
<th>% /a/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post-Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post-Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Univ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Univ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Post-Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Post-Sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sec.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Speakers are arranged according to date of birth; 20 tokens per speaker in reading style. Speaker, their code; Place, place of birth or principal place of residence; P, Paris; O, elsewhere; Sec., secondary school.*

(accounting for roughly half of the 20 words examined, see preceding paragraph). Around 60% of the speakers used /a/ in *bâton, pâte, pâtisserie*, whereas around 40% used it in the most productive group of -(a)tion words. This parallelism also shows up elsewhere: those speakers who use less /a/ in -ation words also tend to use it less in other back a items.

Finally, we believe it is possible and defensible in this instance to compare our QF data with the available information on continental French. In our data, we have found that back A in -(a)tion is not consistently employed in any social group whose members were born after 1920 (see Table 5.4) nor is it frequent in the case of speakers born after 1900 (Tables 5.5 and 5.10). In contrast, according to Martinet and Walter’s results, in France /a/ was used at rates of at least 10% to 25% even by generally well-educated speakers born between 1900 and 1950 in reading style.

Though less significant, we note that recently some French dictionaries that include phonetic descriptions have begun to transcribe the A in -ation words as /a/ and not /a/. The *Dictionnaire du français contemporain* (Larousse,
1966) and *Lexis Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Larousse, 1975) list only */aːsʒə/ on the other hand, the important *Petit Robert* (1972) consistently notes */aːsʒɔ/, and in the new *Dictionnaire Hachette* (1980) both the */a/ and the */a/ form are to be found without apparent rhyme or reason, though the former is more frequent.

From this rapid survey of contemporary continental French dialects, as gleaned from dictionaries of varying degrees of phonetic sophistication, we get the impression that the footing of A in *(a)tion* has proceeded faster in Quebec than in France. As we have just seen, two of four recent dictionaries no longer accept back A in *(a)tion* words. Yet, according to the two phonetic dictionaries just cited (Barbeau and Rodhe, 1930; Martinet and Walter, 1973), not only older WC men use *(a)tion* but even upper MC speakers born since 1940 still use the older form 10% to 25% of the time in reading style. In fact, in this instance, contrary to our expectations, there may well be little or no difference between Lennig’s WC Parisian speakers and the upper MC speakers analyzed by Martinet and Walter.

This leads us to believe that the influence of continental French on the evolution of QF with regard to *(a)tion* has been less straightforward than one might have expected. So we will look for the major factors behind the splitting off of the *(a)tion* suffix from the back A class on the local scene. We will see that although a detailed knowledge of “correct” continental French may have led to criticism of the most posterior and raised realizations of */a/*, it appears to be unlikely that continental French served as the immediate model for the change to front A in *(a)tion* in QF.

5.6. OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATIONS (1840–1965)

In this section, we take a look at the historiographic material that exists concerning the pronunciation of */a/*, in particular in *(a)tion*.32 Though past observations certainly are less reliable than data, requiring in all cases close interpretation, we will see here that they often reveal important sociolinguistic evaluations. It turns out that */a/ was the recognized norm in *(a)tion* as late as the early twentieth century in Quebec. But a close examination of these and earlier, nineteenth-century sources reveals a growing tendency to distinguish [a] from the more posterior and/or raised realizations of */a/ ([ʌ], [ɔ]). Apparently, following at a distance certain trends in Parisian French, this led at the turn of the century to a relatively strong evaluative consensus in favor of the [a] realization of back A in all its contexts. The evaluative evidence suggests that the use of front A as a variant of */a/ in Quebec may have resulted from an overshooting of this new midback A target. Finally, we
have found a few indications that by the 1940s the [ɔ:] realization of -ation had become a recognized marker of WC speech in the metropolis.

The earliest reference to -(a)tion known to us appears in the Manuel des difficultés les plus communes de la langue française adapté au jeune âge et suivi d'un recueil de locutions vicieuses by abbé Thomas Maguire (born 1776), which was composed during the 1830s and published in Quebec City in 1841. It represents the first pedagogical handbook of French to be prepared and edited in Quebec. Its author, a graduate of the Séminaire de Québec in Quebec City and the retired director of the Séminaire de Saint-Hyacinthe, had also spent a year in France (1829) on an ecclesiastical mission. As indicated in the title, the Manuel contains adaptations of recent continental descriptions of French as well as critical comments on Canadian expressions and pronunciations that conflict with le bon usage in France (see Lapierre, 1981). Here are his comments on the word inflammation (p. 157):

Inflammation: refrain from pronouncing an - flâ - mà - tion, as the common people do. Say: in - flamme - mace - i - on.

The most evident non-standard feature here is the nasal vowel an [ɑ̃], which used to be quite common in QF, in place of the standard [ɛ̃]. On the other hand, it is not easy to interpret his use of the circumflex accent over the two A's.

But in an earlier passage, Maguire (1841) specifies quite clearly where the problem is with respect to back A (p. 101):

The sound of the vowel A ... is high-pitched in patte, natte, and low-pitched in hâte, pâte. It is clear that the low sound must be stronger, fuller than the high sound; but one must avoid pronouncing A as the English pronounce it in LAW, and the Germans in JA 'yes', i.e., with a horrendous opening of the mouth. The sweetness, the harmony of the French language is violated by such rough sounds.

We see here that back A is associated with the circumflex accent, of which we have two consecutive examples in inflammation, which accounts for the fact that Maguire singled out this one particular item. What seems especially to bother Maguire is not the fact that back A is used; it is rather a matter of the quality of the back A, the phonetic realization of /ɔ/ that occurs. The English example he gives is very informative as it points precisely to one of the phenomena that we have observed in our data: the raising of back A to [ɔ], which represents the same sound as occurs in the English word law [lɔː]. Thus, we can interpret Maguire's aforementioned alternative for inflammation as follows: 'Say [ɛflamosjɔ] and not [ɑfɔːmo:sjɔ].'

Further evidence to justify our use of the [ɔ] representation is provided by the French pronunciation handbook published by Dr. Meilleur (born
1796) in 1825. The bilingual graduate of the Collège de Montréal and of Middlebury College cites under the heading “long vowels” the English word *hall* [hɔ:l] as the equivalent of *a*. Even in the enlarged second edition, he still gives only the [ɔ] pronunciation for *a* (Meilleur, 1841, p. 41).

The following year, in a review of the studies of Maguire and Meilleur, the journalist Michel Bibaud (born 1782), also a graduate of the Collège de Montréal, makes a number of precise observations concerning the timbre and length of back A. First among the traits that his confrontation of Canadian French with “la bonne prononciation française” yields is that of back A, which he refers to as “long A” (Bibaud, 1842–1843, p. 105): “Contrary to good usage, we usually lengthen *a* in final position and the final *a* in nouns in *ation*; who is there (là)? he spoke (*parlà*), *ná*tion, *navigà*tion, etc., instead of *navigà*tion, etc.” Bibaud claims that aa well-educated Parisian (and even more so a *Parisienne*) would use front A in such contexts (p. 104):

> According to our people, people in Paris say neither *boà* [bwa:] nor *boè* [bew], even less *boè* [bew] for ‘I drink’, as the uneducated do in this country; they say rather *boà* [bwa], thus producing a sharper *a*, if it is possible, or more distant from the low *â*, than in the article or pronoun *la*, or in the possessives *ma*, *ta*, *sa* [our phonetic equivalents].

*Bois* ‘drink’ is of course an instance of the word-final context. Though written by a “Canadian,” it is interesting to note that the Parisian French ideal alleged by Bibaud involves not just the diminution or suppression of the distinction between back and front A but a veritable hypercorrective flight from back A.

In this passage, Bibaud is quite clear, however, about the fact that this fronting of back A is rare in Lower Canada. He is describing the differences between his perception of refined Parisian speech and Canadian French, and not, at least with respect to back A, differences between the *élite* and the common people. Among Canadians, the “refined” pronunciation is basically restricted to the few who have spent time studying in Paris (p. 104).  

That the comments of both Maguire and of Bibaud represent a new ideal and not a conflictual local reality is evidenced more than a generation later by the remarks of Sulte (born 1841). Elaborating on Roy’s recent description of Canadian French, Sulte noted with some regret that the [ɔ] pronunciation was still common (his use of “we” implies that the statement applies without social distinction to French Canada in general) (Sulte, 1877, p. 660):

> To the ear of those who think they have the best accent in the world, the letter that we pronounce the worst is the first letter of the alphabet. Almost invariably, we pronounce it as if it had a circumflex accent, which is no longer in fashion [in Paris]. In this way, however, we only perpetuate the Norman usage, which was in vogue for a long time in the most refined society in France.
Assuming that we can trust Sulte’s judgment, we can deduce from this statement that by the 1870s there was a consciousness at least among the intelligentsia that the [ɔ] realization of back A was passé in refined Parisian society; but that the traditional [ɔ] realization was still “almost invariably” used in all circles in Quebec.

By the turn of the century, these diverse comments, descriptions, and desiderata concerning back A seem to have given way in Quebec to something of a prescriptive consensus in favor of the use of a midback A in -ation as well as in other back A items.

To begin with, in 1896 Raoul Rinfret (born 1856) classes -ation words with other back A items such as cadre [kadrɔ] ‘frame’, théâtre [teatre] ‘theater’, and mat [maʁ] ‘mast’.

Next, we note the important statement by the journalist Tardivel (born 1851) appearing in a very widely calculated, nationalist defense of Canadian French. After noting that many educated Canadians used at the time a mid to front A in words ending in R, he notes (Tardivel, 1901, p. 62):

in trying to correct this defect [a in front of r], several people have gone to the other extreme; and believing that they are speaking à la parisienne, they reproduce in fact a defect found in Picardy by employing a very sharp, short a in places where it is absolutely necessary to use a long, low a.

He specifically cites a list of words ending in -ation and goes on to describe Parisian speech:

The little sound [in -ation] which is thin and affected is very unbecoming and must be carefully avoided. The waiters and coachmen of Paris may well use only sharp a, but educated Parisians use a long, low a where it is necessary [i.e., in -ation]. They would no more say “la natiɔ̃ française” than “ma pãʁt.” If you do not believe me, listen carefully to the French Consul General the first time you have a chance to hear him.

These last comments are particularly interesting because of their socio-linguistic detail. As opposed to the evolving and conflictual situation in Paris with respect to -ation, which according to Bibaud must go back at least to the 1830s, Tardivel recommends the traditional, long, back pronunciation. This realization may well have been retained in more upper class circles, which in the case at hand may have been quite close to the usage in traditional QF. Though favoring an /a/ realization, we will see that contemporary language specialists in Quebec did not go quite as far as Tardivel. But the fact that such an ardent and well-known nationalist came out in favor of the traditional pronunciation must not have been lost on at least some of his contemporaries.

In 1901, the founder of the important Société du Bon Parler Français, Adjutor Rivard (born 1868), states that in words such as nation and invasion
the "As should not be pronounced too closed [i.e., back]: but they should not be pronounced too open [i.e., front] either. Neither affectation nor vulgarity." Assuming that open O is the "vulgar" pronunciation referred to and that front A represents the "affected" pronunciation, we conclude that a medium back A (not too long) would be the norm according to one of the leading authorities on Quebec French in the early twentieth century.

In the Bulletin du parler français au Canada for 1902 the norm for -ation is discussed with respect to linguistic practice in France.\textsuperscript{35} After noting that for -(a)tion "the pronunciation varies from middle A [i.e., front A] to closed, long A [i.e., back A]," the author concludes: "the time-honored pronunciation, the best, involves the use of closed A [back A] [(as in pâte [pat]) in words ending in -ation: nation–nâsijɔ, admiration–admîrâsijɔ," etc."

Finally, in 1905, the orthoepist Joseph Dumais (born 1870), recently returned from a trip to Paris, where he had consulted with l'abbé Rousselot and other leading phoneticians, claimed that -ation belongs in the back A class ["closed A"] along with other words containing "â" (âge, château), "as" (bas, lilas, pas), "ase" (base, écrase), "az" (gaz, razoir), "aille" (baille, bataille), "oids" (poids), and "oix" (noix, poix) (his examples). In his remarks on the pronunciations current in Quebec, he states (Dumais, 1905, pp. 10–11):

> Our pronunciation of closed A [back A] is too low-pitched... We position our lips in the same way as in the case of middle O [open O] and naturally the resulting sound is the same. Example "carotte," which we pronounce as if it were written "corotte." We should try to lighten [adoucir] our closed A's a little without however pronouncing them as middle A's [front A's].

Similarly to Rivard, Dumais classes -ation in the back A class, but he also underlines the importance of avoiding the common [o] realization of /a/. Most significant of all, he then observes that "the educated class tends to use middle A [i.e., front A] in -ation words" and in maçon, bâtiment, cadnasser, lacer, etc., and he concludes by stating that this constitutes "a faulty pronunciation" (our emphasis). This statement confirms, on the one hand, that something sounding more like /a/ than like /a/ was used in certain circles in -ation around 1900,\textsuperscript{36} but on the other hand he insists that -(a)tion belongs in the /a/ class and that /a/ is not a "correct" pronunciation in this context either in Quebec or in Paris.\textsuperscript{37}

Now let us confront these statements with our data on MC speakers born in the last half of the nineteenth century. In fact, we have seen that with some exceptions, such as Lomer Gouin (Table 5.7), few speakers from this period were able to follow the norm as expressed by Rinfret, Rivard, and Dumais. Though most of them did avoid the most posterior realizations, they were generally unable to hold to a consistent midback A pronunciation.
For MC speakers in the prime of life in the early 1900s, we have evidence of three distinct realizations of -ation words. Some individuals like Duplessis and Bouchard maintained the traditional [ɔ] pronunciation. A limited number of speakers like Bourassa were able to correct without ostentation by radically shortening the /a/ realizations. Finally, the majority succeeded in avoiding the common [ɔ] realization, but only at the expense of a fronting tendency that often passed over the midback A to the front A pronunciation. It appears then that in reaction to the stereotyping of the [ɔ] realization, socially mobile but linguistically insecure individuals and groups avoided “vulgarity” by hypercorrecting for vowel placement while disregarding the durational feature, giving the [aˑ] and [aˑː] realizations found in Table 5.12.

The first reference that we know of to the back A realization in -ation as typical of urban WC speech is to be found in Roy’s novel Bonheur d’occasion (1945), which describes life in one of Montreal’s major WC districts, St-Henri, during the war. The reference is literary and nonanalytic, but given the paucity of information available on this period, its existence is all the more important. Here is how the tavern keeper, Sam Latour, refers to the Maginot Line (Roy, 1945, p. 409):

“I told you, Lacasse, that their Imaginot Line wasn’t worth much. Imaginot! Imaginot! It’s like imaginátiôn. It’s their imaginátiôn that got the better of them.

“First of all, it’s not Imaginot, but Maginot by itself, retorted Azarius. After the engineer who made the plans, a man named Maginot.”

“It’s their imaginátiôn all the same.”

It is well known that Roy took great pains to imitate the speech of the Montreal WC in her novel. In his thesis on the use of QF in this novel, La Follette notes that Roy used this notation only once, in this passage. It is noteworthy that in his attempt to evaluate the statistical representativity of her dialogues with respect to actual WC speech, La Follette states (1949, p. 92): “While it is clear that this use of velar a is not always heard, it seems to us that the author could have made more frequent use of this characteristic pronunciation.”

Interestingly, when Roy revised her novel with the aim of making a definitive edition, far from adding more circumflex accents, she eliminated those existing in the word imagination in this passage. According to her contact at the time at the Librairie Beauchemin, M. Paul-Marie Paquin, she aimed in her revisions at eliminating aspects or details that were “outmoded” or “too exagerated” (personal communication).

Thus, at least by the 1940s, in the city, the use of back A in -ation had come to be perceived as “characteristic” of WC speech. This coincides with what
we know about older WC speakers, who tended to use [ɔ], and with what we know about younger MC politicians during the 1930s and 1940s, whose speeches show a quite consistent use of front /a/ in -ation. But 20 years later, the decline of the [ɔ] realization had probably reached the point where younger readers might have had difficulty picking up this increasingly old-fashioned pronunciation from the printed page, even though one could say that a degree of authenticity was lost here.

We observe, then, over a period of up to 130 years, a strong resemblance between our linguistic data and remarks or indications furnished by contemporaries. It is noteworthy, however, that the existence of data for speakers born in the last half of the nineteenth century has been of considerable aid in interpreting the various positions taken by these commentators. It is in fact precisely in some of these early texts that we have found clear references to the possibilities and difficulties posed by the overshooting of the new midback A target, the roots of which appear to go back at least to the 1840s.

It is interesting that the one appeal for national unity on this point by the conservative Tardivel had little effect on MC speakers born around 1900 or slightly before. The -(a)tion suffix had already become an element about which such speakers took care in one way or another to distinguish themselves from non-MC speakers. Locally born specialists such as Rivard, taking account of this tendency, recommended a midback A pronunciation, a form that was still within the /a/ class; whereas Tardivel, who came to Quebec from the United States in his teens, seems to have adopted a consistent, socially unified solution, that is, use of a deep back A in -ation. Though historically justifiable, it appears retrospectively that his very earnestness concerning Quebec and its traditions led him to neglect or underestimate certain inexorable social and political sociolinguistic tendencies.39

Now let us return briefly to the question of the relations between Parisian and Quebec French. There is little doubt that from Bibaud on, a few educated Quebeckers have cited French examples to justify the fronting, or even merging, of /a/ to the /a/ class. Certainly variation has long existed in France on this point. But the complex realities of the recent history of the two A’s in France does not permit us to conclude that changing linguistic practice in France was at the origin of the fronting of A -(a)tion. The historiographic material from around the turn of the century makes it amply clear that neither standard French nor the usage of the Parisian upper class was the direct cause of this change.

We cannot, of course, exclude the possibility that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century educated Quebeckers convinced themselves that those who spoke what they considered “good” French fronted their back A’s. But this is quite a different matter from that of the actual origin of the change.
With respect to back A in general, it can be said that both in France and in Quebec the more posterior and lengthened realizations became a subject of preoccupation and even chagrin for certain social groups. The leaders in this evolution may well have been the new class of public school masters and above all mistresses, whose social power and influence increased greatly during the middle third of the century in France. A similar trend can be seen in Quebec with the rapid increase in the number of Church schools beginning around midcentury (voir Denault, 1975).

But the way that these two varieties of regional French have at least temporarily settled accounts with respect to the two A’s is quite different. In Quebec, it is basically -ation words that have been most affected by this increased linguistic self-consciousness, whereas in France it is the distance between the two A’s in all contexts that has changed.

With respect to -ation words, it should be underlined that the rate of fronting to /a/ has generally progressed faster in all social groups than in Paris. Is it not possible that the lack of a powerful, local francophone bourgeoisie and the consequent existence of a generalized feeling of linguistic insecurity among the élite may have led to a faster rhythm of change toward /a/? Is not this precisely the social significance of Tardivel’s observation that the French consul general pronounced nation as /na·sjɔ̃/ and not /næsjɔ̃/?

5.7. DISTINCTIVENESS OF -ATION WORDS

Returning now to a strictly local perspective, we must ask ourselves: why in particular -ation words and not other back A items? Is there something that somehow makes such words special?

With respect to length, the situation is quite simple. Modern QF spoken in all social groups has inherited and maintained the historical lengthening of A in -(a)tion even though the A has fronted.

The problem is to account for the splitting off of -(a)tion from the back A class. We underline once again that given the added length, we cannot speak here of a merger. We are talking about a change in vowel quality. Whether there has been a change in vowel class and which of the two is now the “underlying” form are interesting theoretical questions that we will not delve into here. What we have observed is a fronting of the A in -(a)tion from /a/ to /a/. Starting from a situation in which in the second half of the nineteenth century /a/ was indisputably the basic realization in this context but including some variation among the “élite,” we are confronted with a situation in which back A realizations of -(a)tion are quite marked, socially speaking, as opposed to the new norm, that of front A, which is just about the only form used by speakers of all social categories born since 1940.
After showing that there exists no apparent linguistic motivation for this change, we look at the complex question of the possible effects of the stereotyping of back A in QF. Next, as to the question why the -ation subclass in particular, we note the tendency for many -ation words to be perceived as semilearned words.

5.7.1. No Apparent Linguistic Motivation

First, let us consider basic linguistic causes. It could be argued that such a change is at least partially the result of the fundamental tendency for nonfinal syllables in polysyllabic words to be shorter (Klatt, 1975), combined with the general phonological pattern in French that prescribes that front A's are short while back A's are long. In fact, this was our initial hypothesis: that the (a) in -ation had fronted as a result of its position. The results that we actually obtained were quite different and clearly do not permit us to entertain this hypothesis as even the youngest group of speakers analyzed (Table 5.9) shows a majority of tokens lengthened at least to some degree despite the fact that the vowel color is almost categorically [a]. We must conclude then that in the case at hand there is no linguistic motivation that we can see for the change from /a/ to /a/.

5.7.2. Not a Simple Case of Stereotyping

The other possibility is that the change is social in nature. Given the evidence presented in earlier sections, it appears that we are confronted with a case of "change from above," apparently originating in a corrective or hypercorrective effort to avoid a strongly stereotyped form ([ɔ:]{\text{e}}tion). The existence of negative comments on back A provides indirect evidence of the relatively conscious nature of this change.

Since the -/a/tion form was subject to strong censure in documents dating from around 1900, we are inclined to think that the use of this particular form was of fairly recent origin. We have presented same indications that this change might have developed among MC women or within the clergy, though their dominant position as ideologues and educators make us lean toward the latter group. From certain members of the 'élite,' the front A pronunciation could have spread first to more highly educated individuals (in particular, students of the collèges classiques and of the convent schools) and then been adopted by lower MC and certain WC women before finally becoming the norm for young WC males.

The first possibility that comes to mind is that this change might somehow represent a response (delayed or not) to the constant criticism to which back A has been subjected in all contexts, not just -ation. There are instances
extending from Maguire (1841) to Laurence (1957, p. 32). It should be noted that back A is one of a small number of linguistic entities in QF to have acquired its own specific autoreferential epithet: \textit{le A gras} [lə ˈɡɾaː] ‘the fat (or heavy) A’. Here is an example from an actual classroom situation filmed in a sixth-grade. French class in 1974 (La langue, 1974, our translation)\textsuperscript{41}:

\textbf{TEACHER:} Can someone give me an example of bad speech here?

\textbf{STUDENT 1:} “Je vais [ʒva] prendre qu’ ossé que [kosɛk] j’ai d’besoin.”

\textit{I am-going take what I need}

\textbf{TEACHER:} “Je vais [ʒva] prendre qu’ ossé j’ai d’besoin.”

Take \textit{kosé}. (With a snicker, he writes the semiphonetic \textit{kosé} on the blackboard.)

\textbf{CLASS:} (guffaws and general hilarity)

\textbf{TEACHER:} You can even do worse than that.

\textbf{STUDENT 2:} “M’â [moː] prendre.”

\textbf{TEACHER:} “M’â [moː] prendre.” (He writes it on the blackboard.)

A great big \textit{mâ [ʊ̞nˈɡroː ˈmɔː,lɔː]}. (He smashes circumflex accents over the a.)

In this scene, the teacher invites his class to partake in a sort of ritualistic ridiculization of what the students clearly understand to be their own everyday speech as well as that of their parents and neighbors. Two forms are offered up to the teacher as inappropriate for use in acceptable speech. First is \textit{qu’esque} or \textit{quoi c’est que}, in this case a headless relative, a form that has undergone rapid devaluation and replacement. For speakers born after 1940, we can speak in terms of a variant whose disappearance from the speech of adults is nearly complete (see Kemp, 1979).

The second variable, \textit{mâ}, involves three different subvariables\textsuperscript{42}: \textit{m}- instead of \textit{je ‘l, m-} plus A instead of \textit{vais [ve]}, and finally /a/ as opposed to /a/. In contrast with the student who cited this form, who was probably more interested in the unique \textit{m-} for \textit{je} form, the teacher selected back A, in particular its more posterior realizations, as a further subject of ridicule. He proposes in its stead either the standard \textit{j’vais [ʒve]} or \textit{j’vas [ʒva]}, a sort of intermediate form not involving /a/.

Here is another example this time involving proper names. Some people avoid giving their children names ending in (a), such as ‘Patricia’, for fear that people will pronounce it with a heavy back A \textit{[patri joː]}. Recently we overheard the following comment on a name with word-internal (a) by a middle-aged woman who had certainly not gone further than high school:

“Jaqueline’ [ʒɔ:kIln], ça fait pas instruit. Faut dire: [ʒakIln].”

“Jaqueline’ [ʒɔ:kIln] sounds uneducated. Say: [ʒakIln].”
Though it is possible but by no means necessary that such constant harping has an effect on linguistic practice, we can be confident that this is not the case here. Most of the criticism of back A concerns the /a/ class in general. But as we have stated, back A has generally maintained its position in QF. So, although it is clear from people's subjective reactions that the [ɔː]tion realization has been stereotyped, this can be seen as just part of the general stereotyping.

The question remains why the negative evaluation of back A in -ation has resulted in a change in the manner of articulation of A, whereas for the rest of the /a/ class, which has also long been the subject of negative comments, there has been no change. Why and how has this particular subclass been singled out from the fairly long list of back A items, and why has the fronting to /a/ been so widely and rapidly accepted here?

5.7.3. Specific Characteristics of -ation Words

We argue that this particular change from above can best be understood by taking into account the specific nature of many of the words involving the -ation suffix, which we believe has increasingly become a class of semi-learned words (on the learned nature of -ation words in Middle French, see Zwanenburg, 1985).

In point of fact, the nature and status of -ation words are complex. First, this is a large and important subclass, one of the largest if not the largest in the etymological /a/ class. In the 1971 MF corpus, which contains roughly one million words, there are more than 150 separate words in -ation; the French language contains many times this number.

Next, -ation is basically a deverbalizing suffix, though it should not be forgotten that a few are of nonverbal origin (idéation), that there are other -ion forms besides -ation (composition, commission, etc.), and that other suffixes can serve a similar deverbalizing function (-age: barrage; -ment: changement). Given the latinate origin of many of these words, it is not surprising that a good number of such words are undervariable in French (nation, passion, aviation, etc.); similarly, some are not deverbalized nominals (nation) and do not have the meaning "action or process of." At the same time, -ation is a productive suffix for an important subclass of verbs, those ending in -iser or -ifier (syndicaliser/-isation, étrier/-ification, etc.).

Finally, though there is no lack of -ation words in traditional QF (see the 1930 Glossaire du parler français au Canada, some of whose listings are no longer current, for instance, accablation, écritivation), certainly a major characteristic of this class of words is that it contains many semilearned or semitechnical words. The more learned nature of many of these words is evidenced by the fact that most of the new or newly diffused -ation words that
have come into use in QF have done so through institutional, educational, printed, or media channels.

A case in point is provided by speaker 52 of the 1971 MF corpus (cited in Table 5.4), a machine-shop employee (born in 1948, eleventh grade plus 3 years of technical school). In replying to a question about changes in lifestyle in recent years, he says: “it is not life that has changed; they use the word automatisation” [— asjɛ] (‘automation’). Note that the subject of the sentence, the apparent speaker, ils ‘they’, is indefinite, almost impersonal. The subject might be the media, books, teachers, but most likely not one of his friends or his gang. Many such new or newly diffused words have appeared in Quebec over the last few generations: francisation, démocratisation, certification, déclassification, déconfessionalisation, étatisation, canadienisation, péréquation, and many more. These words have generally been diffused with a MC front A pronunciation in -(a)tion.

But it is also true that the realization of A has changed even in the case of semitechnical terms. One of the earliest pieces of social legislation in Quebec is the law prescribing compensation to workers injured on the job (1931). The loi des accidents du travail and its administrative by-product, the Commission des accidents du travail, were long referred to under the general term la compensation. Workers born before 1920, as in the case of speaker 37 (Table 5.3), as well as at least some influential members of the reigning Liberal party, such as T. D. Bouchard and the head of the opposition at the time, Maurice Duplessis (see Table 5.7), made use of back A in this newly established technical word, which does not appear to have been current in Quebec in other uses. Similarly, some older speakers still tend to use back A in the case of new or unfamiliar -ation words. But already in the 1930s the front A pronunciation was being used by some members of the middle class and on the radio (see end of Section 5.3).

We can cite two further pieces of evidence that indicate that -ation words in general and new ones in particular are basically not of popular origin. Even CEGEP students (a postsecondary level involving both preuniversity studies and vocational programs) often have trouble deciphering words in -isation or -ification. Part of the reason for this is that many -ation words are complex nominals, such as nationalisation or déconfessionalisation, whose meanings are easily derivable from their components. In addition, there is a tendency, especially in France but also in Quebec, to abbreviate some of the more common words in -ation and -ion (as well as other complex words). Here are some examples: confession—confesse, conversation—converse, manifestation—manif, information—info, télévision—télé or TV, négociation—négo, recreation—recréd.44 Both of these tendencies indicate that many -ation words do not form a basic part of the informal vernacular but are to be associated with a more complex, intellectual style of French.
We believe that the /a/ pronunciation has not just been imposed from on high but in addition has been greatly reinforced by the diffusion through official and semiofficial channels of new and more learned -ation words. If the change gives all the appearances of having been initiated by the more educated speakers of the MC and has come to be associated with upward mobility and greater schooling, we believe that it is its semilearned character, its association with modern, technical, and bureaucratic civilization, that has led to its quite rapid completion even in the WC.45

We are aware of one piece of anecdotal evidence that associates the /ɔ:/ form of -ation with uneducated speech. According to the recollections of Mr. Claude Collin (personal communication), the /a/ and especially the [ɔ] realization had attained a stereotyped status among the well-educated youth by the 1940s. Mr. Collin remembers that he and his friends at the Collège Saint-Marie in Montreal during the mid-1940s were struck by Duplessis' use of [ɔʃjɔ] in words such as éducation.46 The implication being that people who had education would not say it that way. They found this pronunciation laughable and considered it typical of what they perceived as rural speech coming from the mouth of the Prime Minister. This confirms our data indicating that for well-educated speakers born after 1900 in Montreal, use of back A in -ation was on the decline. A generation later (Mr. Collin was born in 1925), even a half-long [ɔ] such as Duplessis' in words of the -ation class appeared old-fashioned and outmoded to the educated young. It was felt that the pronunciation of -ation words, especially those referring to the world of education, must reflect what was seen as the educated standard.

5.8. RECENT SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN /a/ AND /a/

You could compare the evolution of recent times, from 1900 to 1968, to a kind of tidal wave. When this tidal wave of modernism arrived, there were some people who were able to stay afloat, there were others who sunk completely to the bottom. [...] 

What category do you put your mother in?

I'd put her with those that have stayed afloat, but with her legs a bit on the bottom."

[15-year-old youth from Quebec City quoted in Delude-Clift and Champoux (1973, p. 157—our translation)]

In this last section, we discuss how recent socioeconomic changes in Quebec coincide with changes in the relations between /a/ and /a/. First, we show that the shift to front A in -ation words is but one of a series of
small but significant changes that affected QF especially during the middle third of this century. Second, we believe that it is crucial to associate this change with the tendency for the use of /a/ in all contexts to spread upward socially and to establish itself as something of a local norm during roughly this same period. Finally, we look briefly at how these changes correlate with what can be called the second phase of urbanization in Quebec history.

5.8.1. Social Change and Linguistic Change in Modern Quebec

In Section 5.2, we presented evidence indicating the existence of three generational stages in the change from -/a/tion to -/a/tion in Montreal: speakers, particularly WC males, born before 1915 or 1920, who tend to use back A (generally [ɔː]); younger speakers, born after 1935 or 1940, including WC males, who use front A almost exclusively; and a generation between the two, whose behavior is variable.

It turns out that very similar sociohistorical patterns have shown up in the study of R (front to back) (Clermont and Cedergren, 1979), qu'osque in relation to qu'est-ce que and ce que (Kemp, 1979), on to tu (Laberge, 1977) and /ɛ/ to ə/ (Yaeger-Dror and Kemp, in press). In all these cases (and there are others), speakers born before 1915 or 1920 show one pattern of behavior, those born after about 1940 tend to show another, and those in between show variable behavior. As our data on -(a)tion show a similar age distribution, we believe that the change to front A must be looked at as part of a wider pattern.

The period between 1930 and 1945 (the Depression and the Second World War) represent a crucial watershed in the history of Quebec. Following Clermont and Cedergren (1979) we believe that this series of linguistic changes is an indirect result of the socioeconomic transformations that affected most Western societies during this period but that for various historical reasons were greatly accentuated in Quebec. We cannot even briefly repeat here the list of major socioeconomic changes that occurred in Quebec during this period. All phases of social life were affected (see Falaradeau, 1953; Trudeau, 1956; Posgate and McRoberts, 1976; Roy, 1976; Brunelle, 1978; Pelletier, 1983). It is interesting to note that this period has been constantly cited as marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. Here is a quote from the most important recent history of modern Quebec (Linteau, Durocher, and Robert, 1979, p. 11):

The choice of 1929 as a cut-off point for this volume is easily justified, since it basically marks the end of an era. In the following decades, Quebec will be shaken by the Depression and the Second World War, which represent the point of departure of new political, social and economic transformations.
Even at the end of the 1950s, there was a clear consciousness of this same break, as can be seen from the following passage of one of the earliest analysts of a postindustrial, technological Quebec given by Father Angers (1960, p. 13, our translation):

Since the beginning of the second quarter of this century, and even more so since the Second World War, under the influence of the new forces at work in the Western World, the enceinte which protected and isolated us has given way, and today we are witnessing the massive eruption of all the intellectual currents which have struck Europe and the United States. This invasion has had the effect of a shock wave on our traditional culture.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, we believe that it is useful in the case of Quebec to distinguish, following Thibault (1983, p. 27, n. 35), between periods of major socioeconomic change and more normal periods in which change is less rapid and less violent. There is always a tendency for successive age groups to impose certain small linguistic differences on their members and to devalue or depreciate certain usages of the preceding generation. But in periods of intense social upheaval, it is likely that the rising generations will try to separate themselves more radically from the older generations. When, as is the case here, the object of intergenerational conflict concerns modernization and when older generations tend to have made use of fairly nonstandard speech patterns, the existence of strong tendencies to devalue and stereotype certain linguistic usages of the older generations is even more probable. This appears in particular to have been the case for the first generation to benefit from the improved economic conditions existing in Montreal beginning in the early 1940s. These people were in their twenties and thirties during the early 1960s, that is, during the period immediately following the death of Duplessis, which has come to be known as la révolution tranquille or ‘the quiet revolution’.

5.8.2. The Case of Union Representatives

Now let us examine the speech of representatives of one of the social institutions that benefited most from these socioeconomic changes, that is, the unions. Well into the 1950s, it was said that Quebec was run by three Orders: the Church, the State, and Business. But from the late 1940s on, unions increasingly challenged the exclusive power of this “Holy Alliance” (Falardeau, in Trudeau, 1956, p. xiii). Although worker membership had been quite high previously, it is only after 1945 that we can speak of a generation
of union leaders and industrial relations specialists (see Roy, 1976, p. 87ff). Though most of this new “élite” was of WC origins, some had been to college and in certain cases had attended the newly established School of Industrial Relations at Laval University. But it turns out that whether or not they had attended college, all of the postwar union leaders we have listened to in the Radio-Canada archives consistently used /a/ in -ation.48 Thus, under Duplessis, not only the educated “élite” but also the major representatives of the workers used front A in -ation in public speeches or conversations.

At a slightly lower level of union representation, however, the situation was certainly more complex, as the following case history illustrates. In 1951, a 33-year-old worker and union representative at the provincial level, J.P., was chosen to read the union position on current negotiations with the railroad. He was selected for this task not because of any particular talent or training for public speaking but quite simply because he was the only francophone representative in the union hierarchy. In this speech, which was read over the radio and is preserved in the Radio-Canada archives, with respect to -(a)tion, 19 of the 20 tokens were realized as back A (13/19 as [o] or [ɔ], and 14 of the 19 as long). The only front A token is short and clearly deaccentuated. In general, J.P.’s speech shows certain signs of more formal French, as one would expect in reading style, but his use of back A is consistently deep in all contexts including -ation words.

When, however, the first author talked with J.P. on the telephone in 1982 about his union career, there was no evidence of back A realizations in the five items in -(a)tion that occurred during the conversation. Assuming that the telephone conversation was fairly representative of J.P.’s current speech, it appears that we have here a clear case of linguistic change in the speech of an adult. The comparison between 1951 and 1982 is all the more significant in that the reading of a written speech over the radio must certainly be recognized as a more formal context than an impromptu telephone conversation, even with a stranger.

Note, however, that J.P. cannot be considered an average Montreal worker. Though he started out in union activities as a simple local representative, he subsequently rose to positions of prominence within the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers. Though only 33 years old at the time, in terms of generations, J.P. is only 2 years younger than the lower limit of what we have fixed as the older generation for the 1971 MF corpus in which we found a majority of back A realizations (see Table 5.3). In addition, it was not only his immediate elders who used this form, but also the Prime Minister of the province, Duplessis, and at least certain of his lieutenants.

On the other hand, this case should not lead us to conclude that every one in Quebec changed their linguistic behavior between say 1950 and 1970.49
We may assume that J.P. changed or modified his network of friends and associates, that he was exposed to people whose speech contained among other things /a/ in *-ation*, and that he ended by conforming his behavior on this point to the new norm.

We have already underlined the exceptional character of J.P.'s career, in particular, the necessity of working with language in his union activities, of which the accidental 1951 speech reading is but one remarkable example. In spite of its exceptionality, there is a certain parallelism between a middle-aged man whose speaking usage appears to have changed roughly with his promotion to new and higher functions and the younger WC speakers who were coming of age during the same years in a slightly more modern and educated society (for instance, speakers 2 and 52 from the 1971 corpus were adolescents in the early 1960s).

The period of the late 1950s and early 1960s represents a watershed in just about all areas of public life. For the younger intellectuals now in power, the years of waiting were "the years of impatience" (Pelletier, 1983), a sentiment that was behind many of the reactions of the times. On the political front, Duplessis, the head of the long-reigning *Union nationale* party, died in office in late 1959, and the following year, under Jean Lesage (see Table 5.10), the Liberals came to power for the first time in a generation. Younger, more urban, and more highly educated, to our knowledge no minister in the Lesage government employed back A in *-ation* words. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, this is precisely the period during which negative evaluations of QF dramatically won out over the more positive or neutral ones, as the rapid acceptance and diffusion of the neologism *joual* for *cheval* 'horse' as a negative stereotype for QF bears witness. In 1959, Desbiens even claimed that cabinet and church officials and teachers spoke *joual* (1960, p. 28). In fact, the same radical devaluation struck many traditional cultural activities or objects at this time. For example, the most popular vaudeville group of the 1950s, "Ti-Gus et Ti-Mousse," who played traditional country music and told off-color stories, was so severely criticized in the media during the early 1960s that they virtually gave up performing. Though there is no direct correlation, it is noteworthy that the lead comic, Ti-Gus, born in Montreal in 1921, consistently used [ɔː] in *-ation* words. In such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that some older and middle-aged people, most of whom were ill-prepared for such rapid change, felt threatened and even overwhelmed by the forces of "progress" (compare the striking image appearing in the quote at the beginning of this section).

We conclude that in the more modern, postwar Quebec, the back A realization of *-ation* became increasingly unacceptable. By the early 1960s, the /a/ pronunciation had come to be part of what Goffman has described as "normal appearances" (1971, p. 279) for members of all social groups born
after about 1915 or 1920. In addition, we have seen, in this instance, that the social pressure to normalize, the increasing negative prestige of the old variant, appears to have been sufficient to lead at least some individuals to change their linguistic behavior.

5.8.3. Development of a New Norm for /a/ in Post-1945 Quebec

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the fronting movement from /a/ to /a/ in -ation words did not occur in isolation. Especially in the case of well-educated speakers born before 1900 who were practiced in public speaking, the existing tendency was not just to front A in -ation words but equally in the other etymologically back A items. As we saw in Section 5.6, the target may have been a mid to back A, but given the prevalence of the realization for back A, it appears that not all who tried were able to maintain a middling pronunciation with some shifting into the /a/ class. Though among the elite, speakers might vary with respect to the items they fronted the most, it is evident that a "light," "clear" A was the most highly valued form in circles where correct speech was cultivated. Perhaps only a tiny fraction of the population consistently followed this trend, but these people were generally referred to as models, though this would not excuse their being regarded as peteux or "precious" in some quarters.

It is clear that for speakers born after 1920, and especially after 1940, there is much less resistance to the use of a fairly deep back A in items other than -ation (see Yaeger, 1979, Section 5.1.1, for data). The oldest example we have found of a clear and consistent distinction between the use of /a/ in -(a)tion and a deep back A in other items occur in an interview given in 1959 by the deputy Maurice Custeau, who was born in Montreal in 1915 and attended only public schools. Though we should not grant too much importance to a single individual who had a fairly successful career in business and politics, and whose pronunciation of -ation may have been different 20 or 25 years earlier, we can take the date of 1915 as about the earliest birthdate for the local leaders who came to the fore during the 1940s and 1950s. It is precisely toward the end of this period that J.P. learned to switch -ation words to front A without upsetting the strong opposition between /a/ and /a/.

Thus, we could say in general that the use of an A closer to /a/ than to /a/ declined in the middle third of the century, or conversely we could say that the use of a markedly distinct back A worked its way back up towards the top of the social scale at about the same time.

Although the stigmatization of deep back A in general has not totally disappeared, it should be noted that this new tendency to admit a greater breadth of realizations of back A outside of -ation words (and a few other
items) can be seen in the work of two pioneering Quebec phoneticians, René Charbonneau and Jean-Denis Gendron. In a paper given in 1952, M. Charbonneau (born 1918) states that *le bon usage* can differ in Quebec from that prevailing in Paris. As elsewhere, here also it is determined "by a distinguished group of individuals," but this usage can also be "pleasing" to WC speakers. After noting that on many points there is little or no socially based distinction in pronunciation, he includes among his recommendations "a rather wide latitude" concerning the pronunciation of back A (Charbonneau, 1955, p. 98).

Similarly, this new tendency to admit a greater latitude of realizations of back A can be seen in an important descriptive and evaluative article written by a European-educated professor of Phonetics at Laval University, M. Jean-Denis Gendron (born 1925). Developing work done in his Ph.D. thesis on phonetic aspects of Quebec French (1958), he sets down in a short article appearing in 1960 a list of the most distinctive phonetic traits of QF and then expresses his opinion on which of these can and cannot be accepted as part of a Canadian or Québécois norm. As the following sentence indicates, his attitude is cautious, sometimes quite ambivalent (Gendron, 1960, p. 124): "we have a right to a certain Canadian accent, which is in reality inevitable, provided that it be as discrete as possible." But his attitude toward certain traits must be seen as significantly innovative for the times.

He devotes a long paragraph to back A (Gendron, 1960, pp. 125–126), in which he notes that its realization is very low (*grave*) in QF, that it is maintaining solidly its historical positions, and that in final position and in stressed syllables before *r* it has even gained new members through generalization. It turns out that this is precisely one of the points on which Gendron is willing to accept some divergence from the Parisian norm (p. 131, our translation):

> we can conserve ... the back *a*, which can appear in all its positions provided that it be pronounced with a clearer timbre; it is then perfectly acceptable; concerning the generalization of back *a* that we have made in final position (*climat*, etc.) and in stressed syllables before *r* (*tard*, etc.), we can maintain it if we pronounce a mid vowel. This solution is acceptable both with respect to our popular speech and to the French norm.

Although Gendron does censure the [*ɔ*] realizations, he nevertheless recognizes the right (and inevitability) of Quebeckers' having their own accent (all the more so because it appears that it is Parisians and not Quebeckers who have changed their pronunciation of */a*/). In addition, he accepts the extension by generalization of back A to items that are outside of the Parisian norm and that do not appear to have a direct historical justification. Finally, though weakly defined and applied, he proposes a new approach to language
planning in Quebec, that of a search, at least in some instances, for the *juste milieu* between popular, native speech, and the international norm (Gendron, 1960, p. 132): “In the corrections that our pronunciation should undergo, we must remember not to depart without reason from popular speech: there is a *juste milieu* to be observed.”

Though the maintenance of a mid vowel position appears to be a hard burden to bear, there are good reasons for looking at the evolution of back A in QF in terms of arriving at a middle-of-the-road position, in which, under new socioeconomic and sociolinguistic conditions, the departure from the vernacular has been symbolically important (the fronting of the semilearned -ation class) and yet essentially minimal (the maintenance in a large number of words of a marked opposition between /a/ and /a/ that is not limited to the mid vowel). Despite the loss of the -ation class, the /a/ - /a/ opposition is still so strong that, 100 years after James Roy (see epigraph), the phonetician, M. Laurent Santerre, recently described it as one of the two “most specific, most far-reaching traits for distinguishing the Quebec dialect from the other French dialects” (1981, p. 384).

5.8.4. Language Change in Relation to Urbanization in Quebec

Whether it be the series of linguistic changes mentioned earlier, or the development of a new norm for /a/, or the apprehension caused by rapid sociocultural change expressed in the quote at the beginning of this section, or even the real time change in linguistic behavior observed at about the same time in the case of the union leader J.P., such social, cultural or linguistic mutations tend to be concentrated in the period following the Second World War. It is important to note that this does not correspond to the earliest period of intense migration from country to city in Quebec, which in fact occurred during the 25 years preceding the First World War. Yet not only these immigrants but also their children, as well as the next generation of French Canadian immigrants, had great difficulty integrating into their new urban situation, as the major depressions of the early 1920s (see Roby, 1976) and the 1930s gave them no economic security or control over their lives. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that they held fast to most of their traditional rural traits, in particular to the institutions of the family and the Church. Similarly, there were no particularly strong socioeconomic motives for abandoning the more nonstandard but nevertheless traditional forms existing in QF.

This inability of the early generations of urban workers to adapt to urban life is clearly portrayed in Roy’s novel *Bonheur d’occasion* “Occasional happiness” (1945; Eng. tr. *The Tin Flute*). In an article on this subject, Lemire
has underlined the fact that for many of these new city dwellers the Second World War represented paradoxically the first opportunity to begin to adapt to urban life. Here in brief is Lemire’s (1969) résumé of the situation of many Montreal francophones in the early 1940s (p. 35, our translation):

[These characters] all represent uprooted people for whom the process of urbanization has been blocked by a capitalist society that is only interested in production and consumption. They are pariahs of urban society because of their lack of money but also because their language and institutions are recalcitrant to the new civilization which had developed in English. Grouped in a ring of faubourgs around the city of Montreal, they were living as uprooted country folk. This marginal existence might have lasted well into the future if the war had not forced the capitalists to take these people into account.

As in the novel, the lives of many young men were abruptly changed by life in the Armed Forces. But the effects of the war were at least as important on the lives of women, who for the first time were able to find jobs in large numbers in industry (Auger and Lamothe, 1981). As a result, slowly but surely, they and their children gained further access as workers and consumers to the life of a major North American urban center. The entire postwar period right up to the present has been dominated by new social, political, and cultural phenomena that are offshoots of this major demographic shift from country to city, a shift in which for economic reasons the actual process of urbanization was delayed for several generations.

After a brief postwar recession, Quebec underwent a 20-year period of sustained economic growth, the effects of which have filtered down to most all levels of the population. It is this period that constitutes what can be seen as the second major phase of urbanization in the history of Quebec, and it is precisely during this period, beginning in about 1940, that the speech of native-born Montrealers shows the greatest number of changes. We can say then that this series of language changes, among which must be cited both the completion of the fronting to /a/ in -ation and the fixing of a strong opposition between /a/ and /o/ in QF, coincides with this second wave of urbanization, which represents in reality the first time that French Quebeckers were able to integrate with some success into modern urban life. But to be effective, this adaptation had to take place in and through French, that is, QF. Needless to say, in the process, educators, journalists, deputies, talk-show hosts, and other self-styled specialists in linguistic etiquette have had a field day telling Quebeckers how they should speak to each other in this new world. It remains to document how they do speak, and in the case at hand how they have come to speak in precisely that way.

At the end of this Odyssey, we should not fail to note that the current standoff between back and front A has been adopted in QF generally and
that this precise array of traditional /a/ words, of fronted (and often lengthened) (a) words, as in -ation, and of /a/ words has not to our knowledge been predicted by any one and in fact corresponds to none of the ideals of "good" French recorded during the last hundred years. A series of conflicting forces acting at different, but not strictly linguistic, levels has led to this new state of affairs and to its acceptance as "normal." Whatever the prestige of Pari sian French may have been among certain groups at given times, we must recognize that in this instance QF has enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomous development—both hypercorrective and conservative in nature—within the bounds of one of the world’s most highly policed languages.

Finally over the last few years, we have noted several instances among friends and colleagues of stereotyped uses of -[ɑːs̃jɔ̃] as a devalued variant suggesting archaic, uneducated, uncultured, unproductive, working-class, or rural traits. One friend (DN), who had a vague idea of the contents of this paper, made use of the -[ɔːs̃jɔ̃] form of the word éducation with the implication that the person we were talking about did not have much of it.

Other instances among friends or acquaintances with no knowledge of our interest in this subject are as follows. A women (HT) with excellent taste in home furnishings used the -[ɔːs̃jɔ̃] variant in the word décoration to suggest that someone else had an older, lower class way of decorating an apartment. A young, well-educated Montrealer (NB) with a strong interest in modern photography referred to her country cousins’ more old-fashioned view of photography as involving cadres [kɔːdʁ] “frames,” portraits [poʁtʁæ] “portraits” and illustrations -[ɔːs̃jɔ̃] “illustrations.”

Lastly, in a politically troubled institution, a middle-aged secretary (Mme B) made the following remark on hearing of the election of a new conseil d’administration or board of directors: “Je me demande ce que ça va changer, cet [sta] nouveau conseil d’administration -[ɔːs̃jɔ̃]?” (“I wonder what is going to change with this new board of directors?”); the implication being: not much. Needless to say, such stereotyped but creative uses of the -[ɔːs̃jɔ̃] variant are only available to speakers who at some level are aware of this now archaic form.

5.9. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have examined a variable that presents a number of noteworthy social and linguistic characteristics.

To begin, to get a clear picture of the evolution of the Ation variable, it has been necessary to supplement the data of the 1971 MF corpus, which provided us basically with a glimpse of the last stages of its development. Our
understanding of the evolution of the diverse variants has been confirmed and enhanced by the analysis of earlier recorded material mostly from the 1940s, as well as by historiographic information. It is by combining evidence from these varied sources that we have succeeded in giving a certain historical depth to our contemporary sociolinguistic data and interpretations. With the aid of these materials, we have been able to reconstruct with what we believe is a reasonable degree of accuracy the evolving sociolinguistic patterns for this variable over nearly a 150-year period.

We have presented data on a variable that appears to have developed from a fairly stable situation in which the A of \textit{-ation} was etymologically posterior and long. From that point it moved to a situation in which there was a small but socially significant degree of variation (midnineteenth century) and then to a more socially differentiated phase in which men, especially but not exclusively of WC origin, tended to retain the back variant, while women tended to front the vowel (first decades of this century). Though less extensive, we have found a slight tendency among older MC speakers to use shortened tokens. It appears to be over the period 1860 to 1940 that the phonological link between long-back and short-front A vowels came undone in the \textit{-ation} suffix. Eventually, the change progressed to such a point that speakers who retained the older variant came to be regarded as old fashioned and laughable. Then, beginning after roughly 1945, a new phase has come about, in which the only variation remaining involves the duration of the /a/ in \textit{-ation}. From the evidence of the 1971 corpus, virtually none of the durational variation correlates with social factors. Thus, after an interval of 100 to 150 years, during which varying degrees and types of socially based variation existed, a new consensus reigns in the speech community on this matter.

Given the quite rapid disappearance of the back variant in the speech of younger WC speakers, we have argued that it is necessary to invoke the existence of strong intragroup pressures. We have claimed that this is one of the ramifications of the strong modernizing currents active in Quebec since the 1930s. The change to front A appears to have spread from higher status, more urban social groups to lower status, more rural groups. But we have also shown that social pressures favoring linguistic self-improvement, which were particularly acute during the late 1950s and early 1960s, appear to have pushed certain individuals to change their behavior with respect to this variable.

The study of \textit{-ation} has turned out to be of particular interest because it represents a clear case of the rapid devaluation, what we might even call the destruction, of a formerly local and international \textit{standard} variant. There is no doubt that the norm has also changed in continental French, but we have indicated that this change has progressed faster in Quebec since the realiza-
tion of back A was traditionally, from a phonetic angle, slightly off target ([ə] instead of [ɑ]).

Already in 1947 Lamontagne and Falardeau underlined the conflicting tendencies existing in contemporary Quebec society, which they described as "the paradox of a North American society dramatically engaged in the process of remaining true to symbols of social stability while immersed in often unnoticed violent industrial and social changes" (p. 247). The recent history of back A in QF nicely reflects these opposing forces: as a rule, the traditional back A class has remained stable, and has in fact even been strengthened in most non-ation words, but in a few instances, in particular, in the case of the -ation suffix, a quite abrupt change to what has come to be perceived as a more "modern" pronunciation has taken place in all social groups.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the fact that this sociolinguistic process has had linguistic repercussions, as the change to /a/ in -ation seems to have led to the constitution of a class of lengthened front A's.
# APPENDIX 5.1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OLDER POLITICIANS, RADIO-CANADA ARCHIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Sec</th>
<th>Coll</th>
<th>Univ</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R. Dandurand</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Senator 1898&lt;br&gt;King's Counsil 1898&lt;br&gt;Canadian representative to the League of Nations (1927–1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Gouin</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Grondines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Deputy (Q) 1897&lt;br&gt;PM (Q) 1905–1920, Lt-Gov. (O) 1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Bourassa</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Deputy (O) 1896&lt;br&gt;Founder of Nationalist League (1903)&lt;br&gt;Founder of newspaper <em>Le Devoir</em> (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Lapointe</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>St-Eloi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Deputy (O) 1904, Minister (O)&lt;br&gt;King's Counsil 1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Patenaude</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>St-Isidore</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Deputy (Q) 1908&lt;br&gt;Deputy (O) 1915&lt;br&gt;Minister, Lt-Gov. (Q) 1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.D. Bouchard</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>St-Hyacinthe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Deputy (Q)&lt;br&gt;Minister (Q), Mayor of St-Hyacinthe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. St-Laurent</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Compton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Deputy (O)&lt;br&gt;PM (O) 1948–1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Fauteux</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>St-Hyacinthe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>Deputy&lt;br&gt;President of House of Commons (O) 1945&lt;br&gt;Lt-Gov. (Q) 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Laflèche</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Sorel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Major (WWI), Ambassador&lt;br&gt;Minister of National War Services (WWII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Duplessis</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Trois-Rivières</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>LL.B.</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Deputy (Q) 1927&lt;br&gt;PM (Q) 1936–1939, 1944–1959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sec: secondary schooling, Coll: College d'Examen, PM: prime minister, Q: Quebec, O: Ottawa, O: Other
NOTES

1 We also use the less formal designations of "back A" and "front A" to refer to /a/ and /æ/, respectively.

2 Morin (1980) presents evidence that QF should be most closely associated historically with popular spoken French of the Paris region and not with Norman. By QF, we understand the non-Acadian French spoken in Canada. This, of course, includes most of Quebec, which forms its demographic, cultural, and political centers, as well as the major francophone areas west of Quebec. Though Acadian and QF share many features (see Note 15), the differences are sufficient to merit separate treatment.

3 Coding of data has been done by ear. We have spectrograms for seven of the speakers in the 1971 MF corpus. They were made in the preparation of Yaeger (1979) and have been put to use here. Note that we include the small class of -(a)/j3/ words (erasion, occasion, etc.) in the -ation class.

4 Speaker 81 is not only the most educated speaker in the 1971 corpus, 22 years of school and a doctorate, but he also spent three of those years in Paris. He still claims to take Parisian French as his personal norm. To give some idea of the degree of attention that he accorded to his speech in an informal interview, we cite the fact that the retained word-final consonant clusters at a rate of about 40%, overall. This is roughly twice as high as the next highest speaker (see Kemp, Pupier, and Yaeger, 1980).

5 It should be noted that his back A is more front than is usual in Quebec. In this respect, his speech is perhaps most comparable to that of educated Parisians of his generation.

6 The recordings in this corpus were made in 1978. It comprises tapes of 54 speakers from the Montreal area who were over 65 years of age at the time. The interviews were conducted by Pierre-Alain Lacasse.

7 To complete this picture without multiplying the number of tables, we note that the following young non-WC women have only front A's (number of tokens in parentheses): No. 1 (4), No. 9 (14), No. 43 (13), No. 49 (2), No. 53 (19), No. 112 (2). The interviews of No. 85, on the other hand, contains three back A's (1/ə/, 2/a/, 1/æ/) out of a total of four tokens. For young non-WC males, the following have only front A's: No. 13 (19), No. 25 (8), No. 92 (7). The interview of speaker 36, whose social origin has been hard to establish, contains 1 back A out of 11 tokens.

8 In the case of older WC male speakers, there is not only a certain consciousness of distance with respect to the current norm but also at least some evidence of embarrassment and correction. Thus, one older speaker, even in an unrecorded discussion with the first author (who is perceived to speak standard French) and two of his peers, stopped at one point to correct his pronunciation of 'nation' from [næ3j3] to [nas3].

In addition, in the 1971 corpus, there is an instance where an older WC speaker stops his sentence in the middle of a word that ends in -ation before a retake: "Il montent l'éval... l'évaluation" ([as3]) 'They raise the evaluation' (speaker 28, line 225).

9 A strong back A pronunciation can generally be elicited even from younger speakers by asking them to complete the phrase "comme Barabas." An instance of this expression occurs in the monologue of Yvon Deschamps "Le petit Jésus" (Polydor 2424017), which came out in the mid-1970s. Deschamps is well known for his comic uses of MF. Though his speech in monologues is usually very conservative, he uses /a/ in -ation, except in this case.
Data in Martinet and Walter (1973) for the words listed under the suffix -ation indicate that most of these same processes have been at work in France. For instance, after front vowels only 2 to 4 (depending on the word) of the 17 subjects used back A; whereas after r this number rose to 8 to 10 speakers.

Though negative attitudes certainly existed well before this period, 1959–1960 does represent an important watershed: it not only saw the change from Union nationale government under Duplessis to Liberal government under Lesage but also represents the period during which the term “joual” (dialectal form of cheval ‘horse’) was invented and diffused in the sense of “lousy French” (see Desbiens, 1960).

The classic descriptions of rural and village life in Quebec are Gérin (1898), Miner (1939) and essays in Rioux and Martin (1964).

The best description of the techniques of the Canadian conteurs is given in Labrie (1976). There can be no doubt that the language of folktales is virtually identical to the everyday speech of the informants. The first linguist to make extensive use of folktales in the study of QF, James La Follette, is of the same opinion (1969, p. 15):

Dans le débit d’un conte populaire, les sons et les diverses formes de la langue se présentent, pour ainsi dire, à l’état naturel. Les éléments du langage se trouvent intégrés dans un mode d’expression spontané et irréfléchi où le sujet parlant ne s’efforce pas de bien prononcer ni de parler “correctement,” puisqu’il s’agit simplement, pour lui, de raconter “une histoire.”

[See also his doctoral dissertation (La Follette, 1952).] This correspondence can in fact be verified by comparing the language of folktales with that of an interview or other nonfolk material produced by some of these same individuals.

Here is a significant passage from Tocqueville’s notes (September 2, 1831):

Nous avons vu un très grand nombre d’ecclésiastiques depuis que nous sommes dans le Canada. Il nous a semblé qu’ils formaient évidemment la première classe parmi les Canadiens. Tous ceux que nous avons vus sont instruits, polis, bien élevés. Ils parlent le français avec pureté. En général ils sont plus distingués que la plupart de nos curés de France. (Tocqueville, 1957, p. 218; also in Bouthiller and Meynaud, 1972, p. 144)

We thank Carole Saulnier for her advice and assistance in the selection of materials from the archives. We also owe a particular debt of thanks to Viviane Labrie, who generously forwarded to us a copy of her list of informants whose repertory includes five or more folktales. The speakers used in assembling Table 5.6 were selected from her unpublished list. Though born slightly later (and recorded later), we have included Mrs. Morin (No. 10) because of the large number and high quality of her stories. She is also the only conteur whose recordings are not at Laval, but rather at the Université de Québec à Trois-Rivières. A large portion of her repertory has been transcribed and published (Contes populaires de la Mauricie, narrés par B. Morin-Guimond, présentés par C. Legaré, Fidès, Montreal, 1978). We thank M. Clément Legaré for sending us recordings of selected stories.

The earliest phonetic transcription of back A in -ation in QF that we know of is that given by Geddes in his description of the Acadian dialect spoken at Carleton.
Quebec. Transcribing final A as [ɔ], for which he glosses 'law', he notes Geddes, 1908, p. 12): "C·sjo = learned for popular C·sjè = Fr. -ation." He underlines the existence of variation in the final nasal vowel but not in the suffix-initial A. Geddes' data was collected in large part in 1890.

We thank Mme. Charlotte Ferland for authorizing the first author to consult the catalog and tapes in the Archives sonores de Radio-Canada. We thank Claudine Gay for her help in locating documents which in some cases had not seen the light of day for several decades. For a chronological listing of holdings in the archives up to 1950, see Gagné and Moreau (1981).

We have included all the male speakers born in or before 1880 (6/6). Of the 15 speakers born between 1881 and 1890, we have selected 5 based on availability and length. Some were not used because the material did not contain any words in -ation.

There exist recordings of two other women of this age group, Mrs. Louis Saint-Laurent and Mrs. Ernest Lapointe. In the former case, there were no words in -ation. We have not listened to the one short speech of Mrs. Lapointe, which is only available in Ottawa.

In the oldest recording still existing, the director and reporters of the first Montreal radio station, CKAC, used /a/ in -(ation) (Catalogue collectif, Vol. 1, item 7: "Reportage de Jacques Cartier, de la station CKAC ... au sujet des fêtes de la 60e anniversaire de la Confédération," 35 min., July 1, 1927. It is generally felt that we should not look to media speech as a major influence on everyday speech, but because as we will see -ation words are frequently of a more learned nature, we must not exclude this as a possible factor. For an interesting case of correlation between the use of a standard variant and the tendency to follow upper MC television novellas in Brasil (see Naro 1981, pp. 84-87).

For other statements associating length with back A, see, for instance, the Dictionnaire Robert (1972, p. xxiv) and Santerre (1974). It is clear from data in Martinet and Walter (1973) that etymological back A's are also occasionally realized as lengthened front A's. Of the 17 subjects in their study, which we return to below, 5 show at least some instances of lengthened front A's. But in only one case is this a common feature of their speech [/a/ is "often realized as /a:/" (1973, p. 46)]. In another case, /a:/ occurs "exceptionally" (p. 39) and in three speakers "occasionally" (pp. 41, 42, 45). As will be seen, these 17 speakers are generally extremely well educated and mostly MC. Santerre has also noted the existence of long front A's (1976, p. 26).

This historiographic material is discussed more fully in Section 5.6.

Though we find no explicit judgmental statements in Quebec documents, the following remark by the French grammarians La Touche should be noted: "the A which precedes syllables ending in sion and in tion is somewhat long, as in passion, création, application, etc. One should be careful not to lean too heavily on this vowel for fear of rendering the pronunciation disagreeable" (1696, p. 62).

Here is Gendron's (1966) interesting remark on the effects of lengthening (our translation): "In popular speech, the historically long duration of /a/ in unaccentuated syllables has been conserved. The length of the vowel is such that it gives the impression that the accent has moved up from the final to the penultimate syllable. But this impression, which is false, disappears as soon as the duration becomes semilong." (p. 85).
25 J. Drapeau (born 1916) and L. M. Gouin (born 1891, son of L. Gouin cited in Table 5.7 and brother of P. Gouin cited in Table 5.10) were not presented in Section 5.3 because of their birthdates, which do not fall in the periods discussed. Drapeau and Gouin were first recorded in 1942.

26 Lennig's data indicate that it is not easy to make a simple generalization about the recent evolution and status of back A in spoken Parisian French. One must take the age, social class, and sex of the speakers into account. In terms of formants, back A shows a significant tendency to lower and front in accordance with age. Second, "a highback pronunciation of /a/ is a marker of local working class speech" (Lennig, 1978, p. 111). As other social classes have been moving away from the back A pronunciation, its value as a social class marker has probably increased. Finally, there is a very significant sex effect: women tend to front and lower their back A's more than men do. In the speech of some subjects, this can mean a complete fusion of back A and front A, though as Lennig underlines this is not the rule. In some other areas of France where Standard French is spoken, Martinet has maintained that back A usage is on the wane (1945).

27 Lennig's omission here was the only appropriate one for his study as the A of -a(t)ion is unstable.

28 We thank Lise Tremblay of Radio-Canada, without whose assistance we probably not have succeeded in obtaining a copy of the sound track of this program.

29 Further confirmation is provided by the speech of the French biologist René Dubos (born 1900) who employed only [a] and [o] in -a(t)ion in a recent interview (1981) with Robert Blondin of Radio-Canada.

30 The use of back A in this context has regressed to the point where it has become possible to employ -a(t)ion as a symbol of how things used to be in the good old days. This is precisely the effect of a heavily stressed back ([a:]) in the word récréations in the following verse of "Le temps de la rengaine" composed in the late 1960s by the French songwriter Serge Lama (born 1943):

C'était le temps de la Communale
J'usais ma voix presqu' autant que mes pantalons
J'étais presqu'un enfant de la balle
Je faisais partout le bonheur des récréations

(Pleins feux sur Serge Lama, Phillips 6621015). The "Communale" is a reference to the public schools of old. His father, Georges Chauvier, also a singer and songwriter, plays an important role in the song. In an earlier line, he says: "Sing for me all your songs of those times." Récréations is used in referring to those times.

31 Current pedagogical wisdom shows a definite orthographic twist: it is often stated that only those A's that have a circumflex accent (pâte, châle, âge, etc.) can be pronounced [a]. This is of course a typical mnemonic device, heavily slanted in favor of front A, which for a germ of truth passes over whole chunks of etymological back A items.

32 Initial research for this section was carried out by Richard Patry of the Université de Montréal. His work was funded by means of a grant from the Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada and by Fonds FCAC from Quebec to
Professors Denis Dumas (Université du Québec à Montréal) and John Reighard (Université de Montréal). We express our thanks to them for helping us gain access to this most useful material.

33 Maguire cites other -ation words —cognition (p. 174), impregnation (p. 176), stagnation (p. 179) — but his corrections bear only on the gn. There is no circumflex accent in -ation in these words.

34 Further information on the pronunciation of A in the early 19th century is given by Demers in his debate with Maguire, which took place in Quebec City in 1842. Here is the pertinent passage concerning -ation (Dionne, 1912, p. 193): "A is long in words ending in -ation. The true sound of this a is that of the first letter of the alphabet. In such words, we lean too heavily on the a when we pronounce it. A few, on the contrary, shorten and close it excessively".

35 According to the Bibliographie linguistique du Canada français by Dulong (Laval, Quebec, 1966, p. 61), the anonymous articles in the Bulletin were written by S.-A. Lortie, E. Rouillard, and A. Rivard.

36 In addition to front A, it is possible to use the old technique of whispering that causes vowels with high F₂ (front vowels) to sound higher pitched than vowels with a lower F₂ (back vowels).

37 Dumais states in the introduction that his description "is absolutely correct: it represents the 'current' pronunciation of Parisian high society" ['la bonne société parisienne'] (V).

38 This is not the first instance of the use of the circumflex accent to mark the open O realization of /a/. We have already noted the cases of Maguire and Bibaud during the early 1840s. In Quebec literature, it was used at least occasionally prior to Roy. Thus, in the poems he put in the mouth of a 1930s bum, Emile Coderre (born 1893) used sometimes used this notation, as in entrebâillant, gâg(ne), gâ(r)s, but not in -ation words (Jean Narrache Quand j'parle tout seul, Lévesque, Montreal, 1932). Though it appears that Coderre used /a/ in -ation sparingly in his formal speech, when playing his character, he used [ɔ:] consistently in his popular radio program (Radio-Canada Archives: 460927-2 and 610816).

39 Tardivel's linguistic views were, nevertheless, in perfect harmony with his political views, as the ultramontaine and separatist theses of his futurist novel Pour la patrie (1895) make clear.

40 It is, of course, not impossible that -ation had long shown a stable pattern of variation between the two A's, though we know of no evidence that points in this direction.

41 This film, the last part of a trilogy made for the Société Générale des Moyens d'Enseignement, has never been made public. We thank the producer, Jacques Vallée, for allowing us to see his copy of the film.

42 See Kemp (1979b) for a description and examples of such "variable complexes."

43 This analysis is derived from the relevant passages in Aronoff (1976).

44 Converse in the sense of "conversation" is a technical term of fairly recent origin that is used in the newsroom at Radio-Canada to refer to a televised conversation between the anchor and a reporter.

45 Technical terms containing etymological back A's other than -ation may still be pronounced with a back A in Quebec, for instance, infra-rouge /ɛnfrarə:/ We speak
of -ation words as semilearned semitechnical because only certain of this class of words are learned or technical in the sense that many people do not know what they mean. Words in -ation do not appear in the Standard French dictionary of learned vocabulary (H. Cottez Dictionnaire des structures du vocabulaire savant. Eléments et modèles de formation, Robert, Paris, 1980).

46 It should be noted that this judgment bears only on -ation words and not on other back A contexts, in which back A was and is still the rule. Although he remembers hearing Bourassa’s speeches in the early 1940s, Mr. Collin does not recall any similar remarks being made about -ation in his speeches (which as we have seen contained a strong majority of short open O’s in -ation).

47 Here is the way Father Angers (1960) wrote about the unions in 1960 (our translation):

The union movement...is one of the most important movements of our times; its influence extends to all sectors of our society. It is one of the manifestations of the general tendencies affecting all Western societies...but, precisely because of its importance, it has become in itself a factor promoting transformation. (p. 97)

48 We have listened to tapes from the 1950s or early 1960s of the following labor leaders born between 1900 and 1926: Michel Chartrand, Fernand Daoust, Jean Gérin-Lajoie, Renè Gosselin, Claude Jodoin, Louis Laberge, Jean Marchand, Jean Philip, and Gérard Picard.

49 In the original version of this paper given at NWAVE 10, we cited the case of Jean Drapeau as an example of someone who had shifted from back to front A in -ation. Though the shift is not as absolute as we stated, it is nevertheless statistically significant. If we only mention the case of J.P. here, it is because his case is more clear-cut and more interesting from a social viewpoint.

50 Our information on this point comes from a recording of a later, repeat public performance given in the early 1980s: 25 ans de Rires avec Ti-Gus et Ti-Mousse, Jade AD2-86245, released in 1983 [side D: respiration, imitation (2)].

REFERENCES


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