

A Real-Time Perspective on the Southern Vowel Shift in Kentuckiana

Brian Jose

Indiana State University

The *Southern Vowel Shift* (SVS; e.g., Fridland 2012) is a series of changes affecting the pronunciation of vowels throughout much of the southern United States. When fully instantiated, it is characterized by monophthongization of the PRICE diphthong, a reversal of the front tense (FLEECE & FACE) and lax (KIT & DRESS) vowels, and fronting of the back vowels GOOSE & GOAT (although back vowel fronting is by no means unique to the SVS). Recent research on the SVS has examined such issues as its heterogeneity within the South (Fridland & Kendall 2015), ethnic minorities' participation in it (Fridland 2003), its reversal in increasingly urbanizing areas (Dodsworth & Kohn 2012), and its robust persistence in rural areas (Irons 2007). However, what continues to be lacking ---as remains to be true of sociolinguistic research more generally, although the situation is improving (cf. Sankoff 2013)--- are examinations of the SVS through real time. In contrast, some other English vowel shifts have been studied in real time (e.g., Hollett 2006 for the *Canadian Shift*, McCarthy 2010 for the *American Northern Cities Shift*; also cf. Labov et al 2013).

This paper contributes to filling that gap through a real-time study of the SVS in extreme south-central Indiana, not far from Louisville Kentucky. The primary data comes from interviews recorded in 2016-2017 (N=21) and in 2002 (N=18) by the author; supplementary data comes from interviews (n=3) recorded in the 1960s for *DARE* and *LANCS*. Preliminary results from the 2002 interviews (n=13) reveal (1) PRICE monophthongization to be common in non-pre-voiceless environments, while (2) FACE & DRESS are aligned on F1 but with FACE remaining slightly farther forward than DRESS on F2. Data from the 1960s and from 2016-2017 will be analyzed to determine if and how the SVS has evolved here during these 50-some years.