

Inter- and Intra- generational Monophthongization and Appalachian Identity: A Family and Self Study



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

Paul Reed
The University of South Carolina
SECOL 79
Lexington, KY

- Linguistic Identity
- Monophthongization
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Outline of Presentation

- This study deals with how speakers express identity with language.
- How do these go together?
 - 'the language process is essential for the development of self' Mead (1934, 1964:100)
 - Torbert 2004 understands 'the process of selving to be crucial to to our entire existence... language represents a crucial process in maintaining a unity of self' (5)
 - Linguistic Identity forms part of the construction of self, using language as the vehicle.

What is linguistic identity?

- Identity is part of self, and language is part of that identity
- We use language to create and demonstrate our identity, who we are and aspects of ourselves
 - Identification with a city (e.g. Johnstone and Kiesling 2008)
 - Social Network (e.g. Milroy and Milroy 1985, Milroy 1987)
 - Gender (e.g. Eckhert 2002)
 - Sexuality (e.g. Leap 1995)
 - Region (e.g. Greene 2010)

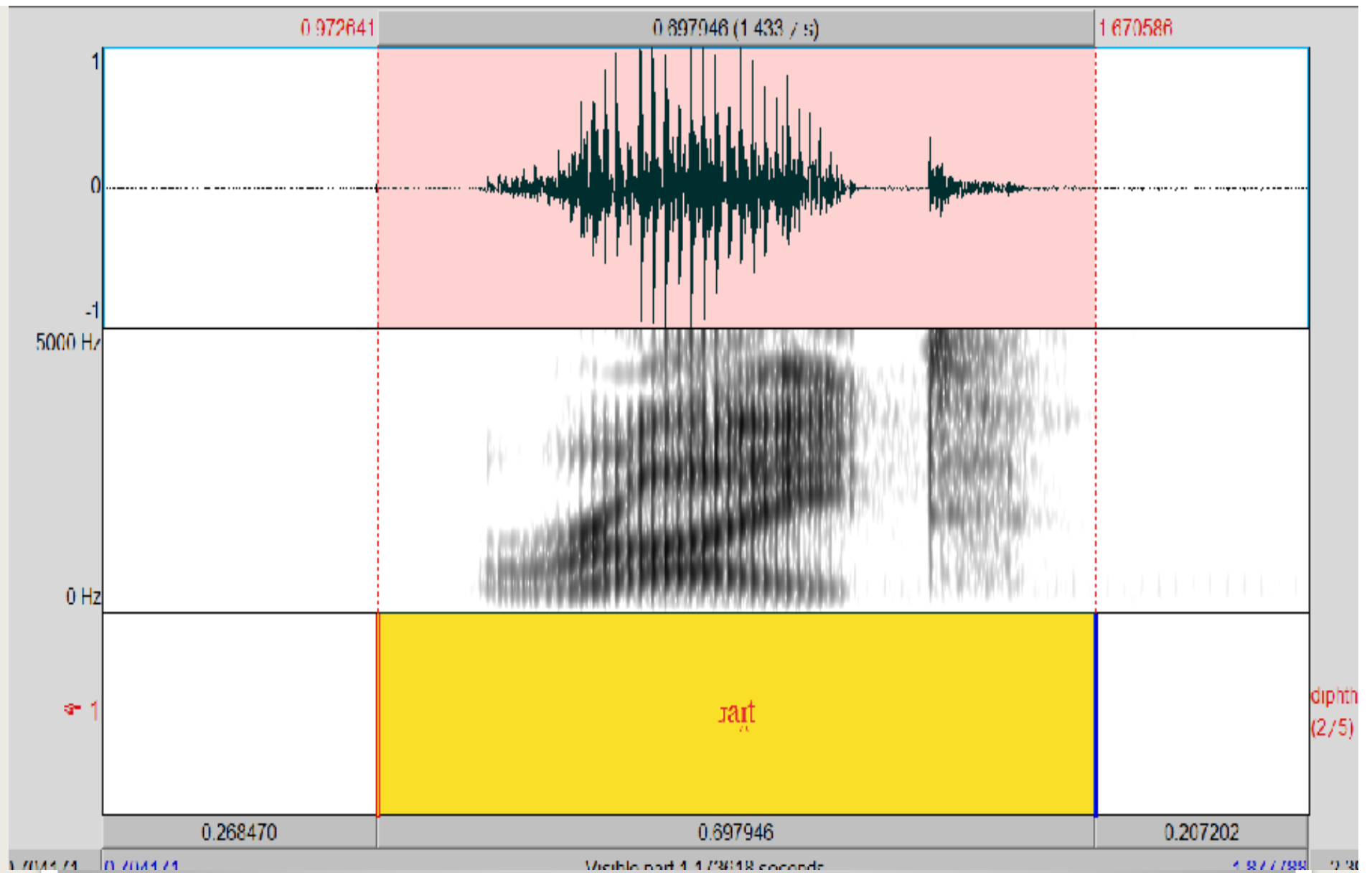
Linguistic Identity

- Why do we do this?
- We are social beings, and our identities are socially constructed
- Schneider (2000) 'linguistic expressions serve as markers of group solidarity or desired group membership'
- Language is one way we show who we are or who we want to be
 - Or perhaps who we want others to think we are

Linguistic Identity

- It is widely known that there are certain sounds that are associated with the South
 - Monophthongization of /ay/
- This is considered a hallmark of Southern speech (Thomas 2001, 2003; MacMillan & Montgomery 1989)
- Seems to be both stigmatized and beloved
 - Greene (2010), Torbert (2004)

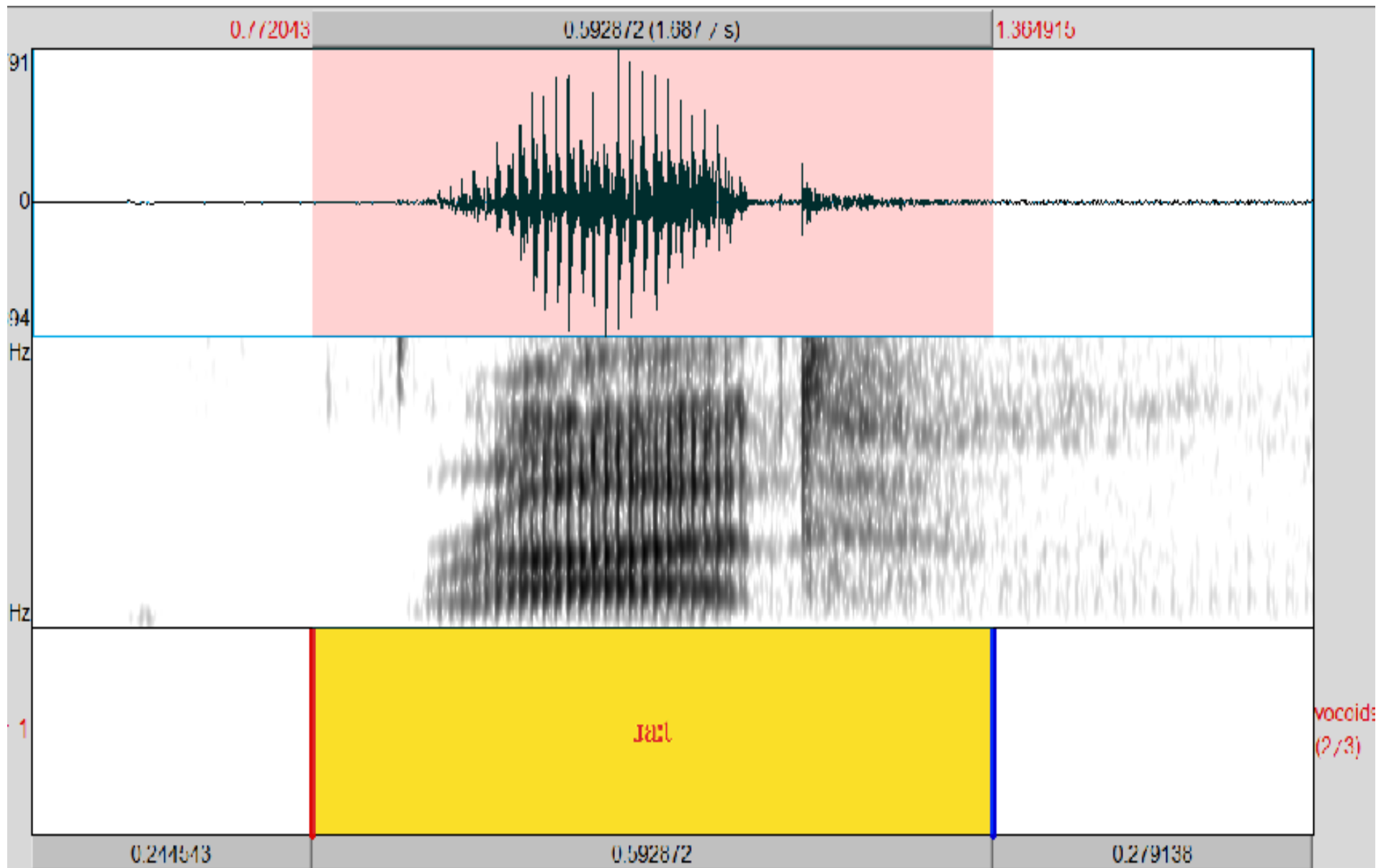
Monophthongization and the South



diphth
(2/5)

Diphthong Example





Monophthongization



- Feagin (2000) discusses how people who identify with the South will have certain features, such as monophthongization
- This paper takes these ideas of the construction of self and identity using features that are associated with the South as its central tenet
- People who self-identify with the South will have more Southern features in their speech
 - In this case, monophthongization

- I add to this line by positing that Appalachian Identity will be even more important and salient to certain speakers
 - This is important because Appalachian monophthongization is slightly different than general Southern
 - Hall (1942) showed that in Smoky Mountain (Appalachian) speech, /ay/ was monophthongal in all circumstances, in any phonemic setting

- Monophthongization is a process where a diphthong is realized as a monophthong
 - Also called glide weakening
- This means that F2 approaches F1
 - Formants are resonances in the vocal tract
 - They reflect the size of various cavities during speech
 - F1 is related to how high a vowel is
 - F2 is related to frontness/backness

Monophthongization

- What would happen to monophthongization if a person's identity with the South changed?
- What happens to this feature in successive generations?

Research Question

- **3 Generations**

- Grandparents – 87 yr. old female, spent entire life in Appalachia and the South
- Parents – 62 yr. old male, spent entire life in Appalachia and the South
- Children – 3 females (38, 36, 31)– all raised in Appalachia and educated in the South
 - All received post-graduate degrees from Southern Universities
- All were from the same small Southern Appalachian town

Methodology - Participants

- Family narratives were used for the Grandparent and Parent generations
- Family Discussion was collected for the Children
- Sociolinguistic interviews were later conducted with each person
 - Labovian style (Labov 1966)
 - Additional Conversation, reading passage, and word lists

Methodology - Data

- The first 30 possible occurrences the /ay/ variants were extracted from the conversation and reading, and subjected to an acoustic analysis
 - Praat (Boersma and Weenik 2012)
- I measured the F1 and F2 values at 25%, 50%, and 75% of the vowel
 - Monophthongization was called if the values were stable across the measurements and the auditory impression was monophthongal

Methodology - Acoustics

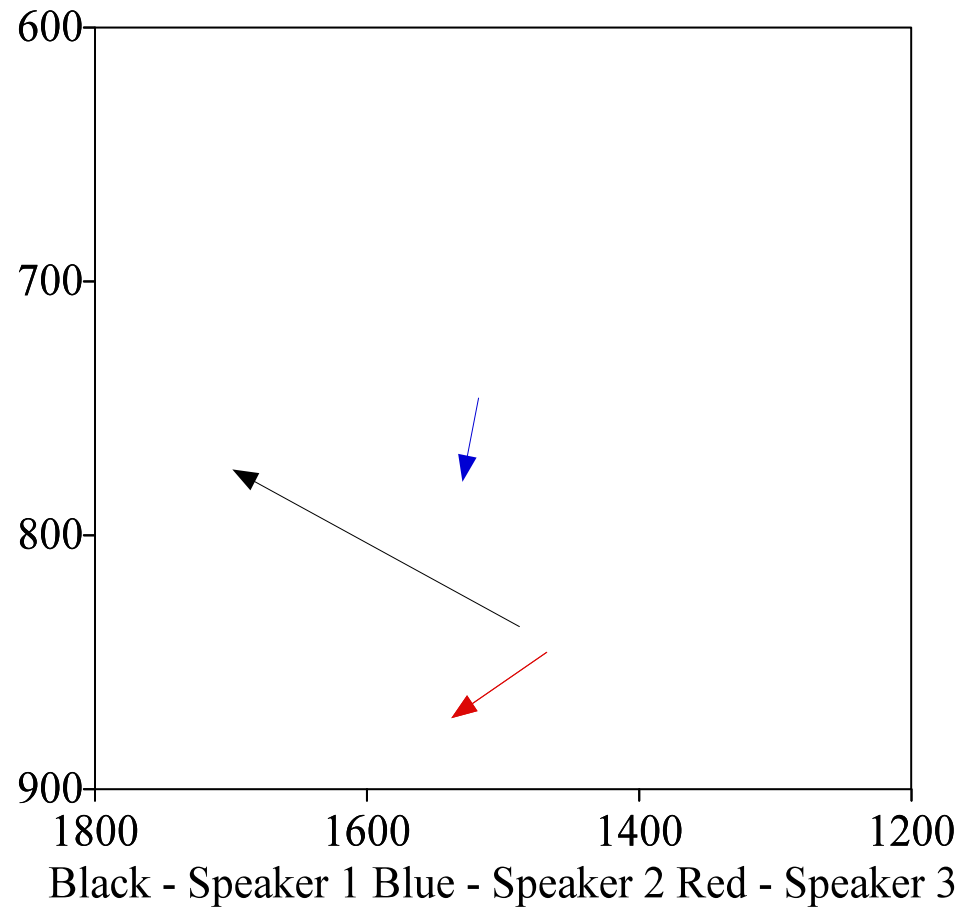
- The amount of monophthongization will depend upon how strongly the person self-identifies with the South.
 - In my study, the Grandparent and Parent generations had strong Southern and specifically Appalachian ties, and will have more monophthongization.
 - The Children have varying degrees of Southern and Appalachian self-identification, and will have variation in their monophthongization.

Hypothesis

- The Grandparent and Parent Generations were categorical in their rates of monophthongization
 - There was no variation, both were monophthongal in all contexts
- Within the Children, there was variation
 - For two of the Daughters (36, 31), the rates of monophthongization were very high, practically categorical.
 - For the other Daughter (38), there was very little to no monophthongization with a clear off-glide

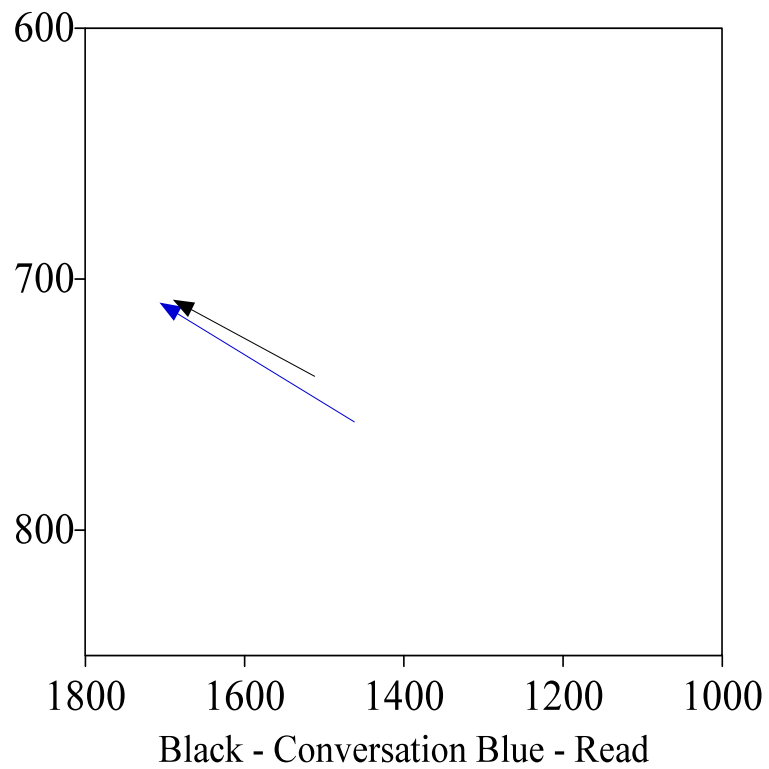
Results

Average Value /a_i/ Dipthongs All Speakers

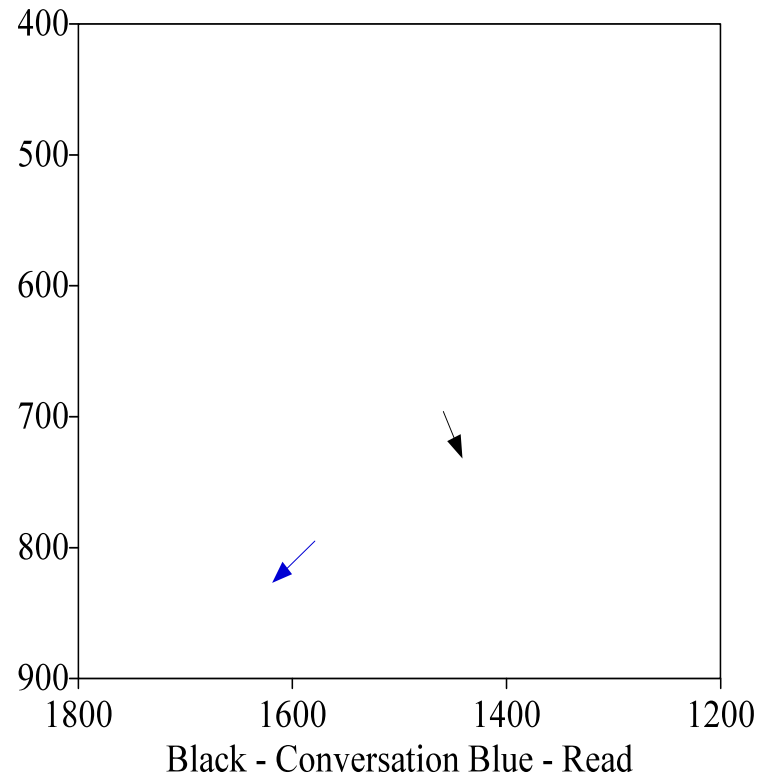


Results

Speaker 1 /aɪ/ Diphthongs



Speaker 2 /aɪ/ Diphthongs



Results

- What could account for this difference?
- One facet is identity
 - Speaker 1 – ‘displaced hillbilly’ but no longer just that, ‘citizen of the world’, has an affinity for the South in general, but does not consider it a core part of her identity
 - Speaker 2 – ‘Appalachia is home’, identifies closely with a certain location, loves the ‘hills’, is aware of possible stigma but does not care
 - Speaker 3 – ‘You know that you’re Appalachian’, ‘straight up Southern’, upholds an Appalachian identity personally and professionally

Discussion

- Both Speaker 1 and 3 have careers where they have to present in front of groups often. Each relies profoundly on their speech, yet the realization is quite different.
 - Different types of careers, which is a possible limitation
- Speaker 2's career does not require much presenting, but she no longer lives in Appalachia. She says she longs to move back.

Discussion

- Hypothesis – Grandparent and Parent would have more monophthongization than Children
 - Not Confirmed – Two of the three were very similar
- Hypothesis – Children with a greater Southern Identity would have more monophthongization
 - Confirmed – in addition, Appalachia Identity trumped all, even Southern

Conclusion

- Small Sample
 - Only 5 speakers
- Careers and Current Residence
 - Each affects Social Network and could potentially have an impact
- Earlier Evidence
 - Would allow to see change over lifetime
 - Was Speaker 1 more monophthongal earlier in life? When did the shift begin?

Limitations

- Fill the gap with earlier evidence
 - I now have this data, and more is on the way!
- Include other widely found Southern and Appalachian features
 - Fronted /u/ and /o/
 - Pin/pen, steel/still merger
 - Southern Shift
- Possible grammatical features

Next Steps...

Questions?