

# Fifty Years of PRICE Variation in Kentuckiana

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## Introduction

Monophthongization of the PRICE (AY) diphthong is a well-known stereotype of English in the Southern United States. It has been argued to be the initiating event of the *Southern Shift* (Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006). Labov et al define three stages of the Shift: Stage 1 consists of AY glide deletion before voiced obstruents and word-finally; Stage 2 additionally involves a reversal of the mid front vowels FACE (EY) and DRESS (EH) on the F1 and F2 dimensions; Stage 3 further requires F1 and F2 reversal of the high front vowels FLEECE and KIT. This paper examines AY glide reduction in a speech community just outside of America's cultural South, in southern Indiana, where previous research (José 2020, to appear) revealed that Stage 2 of the Southern Shift has almost been attained –EY and EH are inverted on F1 but not on F2– but didn't consider the PRICE vowel (Stage 1).

## Research Questions; Methods, Data

Therefore, this paper seeks to round out the description of the Southern Shift in this community by addressing the following research questions:

What is the extent of AY glide reduction there?

Is there any evidence of change through real and/or apparent time?

Our approach, then, combines synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Interviews from one of three time periods –the 1960s (n=4), the early 2000s (n=14), and the mid 2010s (n=20)– were transcribed orthographically. Random samples of the AY diphthong were preliminarily coded as either diphthongal or glide-weakened (McGivern & José 2019). The data consists of nearly 1500 tokens: an average of 39 and a range of 18 to 58 tokens per speaker. Speakers are divided into three age groups: elders, adults, and teenagers. We also hope to complement the auditory analysis with Euclidean distance measurements of glide lengths, but that work has not yet been done.

## Partial, Early Results

The initial main results, excluding teenagers who are represented only in the 2010s, reveal the following patterns. Rates of AY ungliding in pre-voiceless contexts (e.g., *price*) are consistently lower than in pre-other contexts (e.g., *pry*, *prize*, *prime*); the lone exception is the 1960s elders. Pre-voiceless AY ungliding has decreased substantially into the 2010s; it's only here that AY ungliding ever falls below 20%. The lone exception is the 2010s elders, at just above 20%. Rates of AY ungliding are noticeably elevated in the 2000s; it's only in pre-voiceless contexts, particularly for elders and women, that they don't tower above the 1960s and 2010s. The results support the conclusion that this speech community has passed Stage 1 of the Southern Shift, even if it hasn't fully achieved Stage 2. However, this is coupled with a decline in glide weakening in pre-voiceless contexts over time.

## References

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