

Movement, Economy, Orientation

20th Century Shifts in North American Language

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How are regional varieties of English faring in the US?

Ample evidence shows that canonical regional variables are undergoing _____

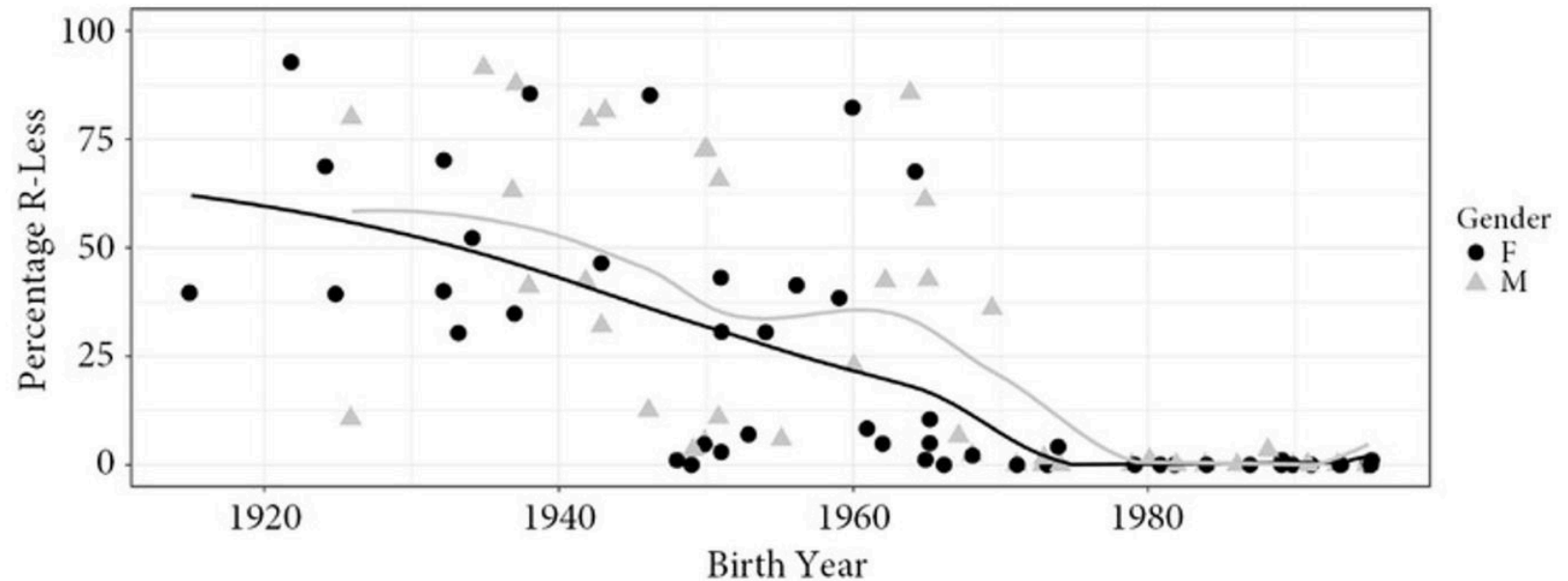
- “reversal” in Cincinnati and Philadelphia (Strassel & Boberg 1996, Fruehwald 2017)
- “decline” and “fall” in Michigan (Rankinen et al. 2019, Nesbitt 2021)
- “rejection” and “retreat” in Raleigh (Dodsworth & Kohn 2012; Dodsworth & Benton 2017)

Nesbitt (2021: 359) observes that “[T]he Baby Boomer–Gen X transition appears to be a pivotal transition throughout the country [and] appears to be of great importance to North American dialects in general.”

Changes in New England English

“Car” or “cah”?

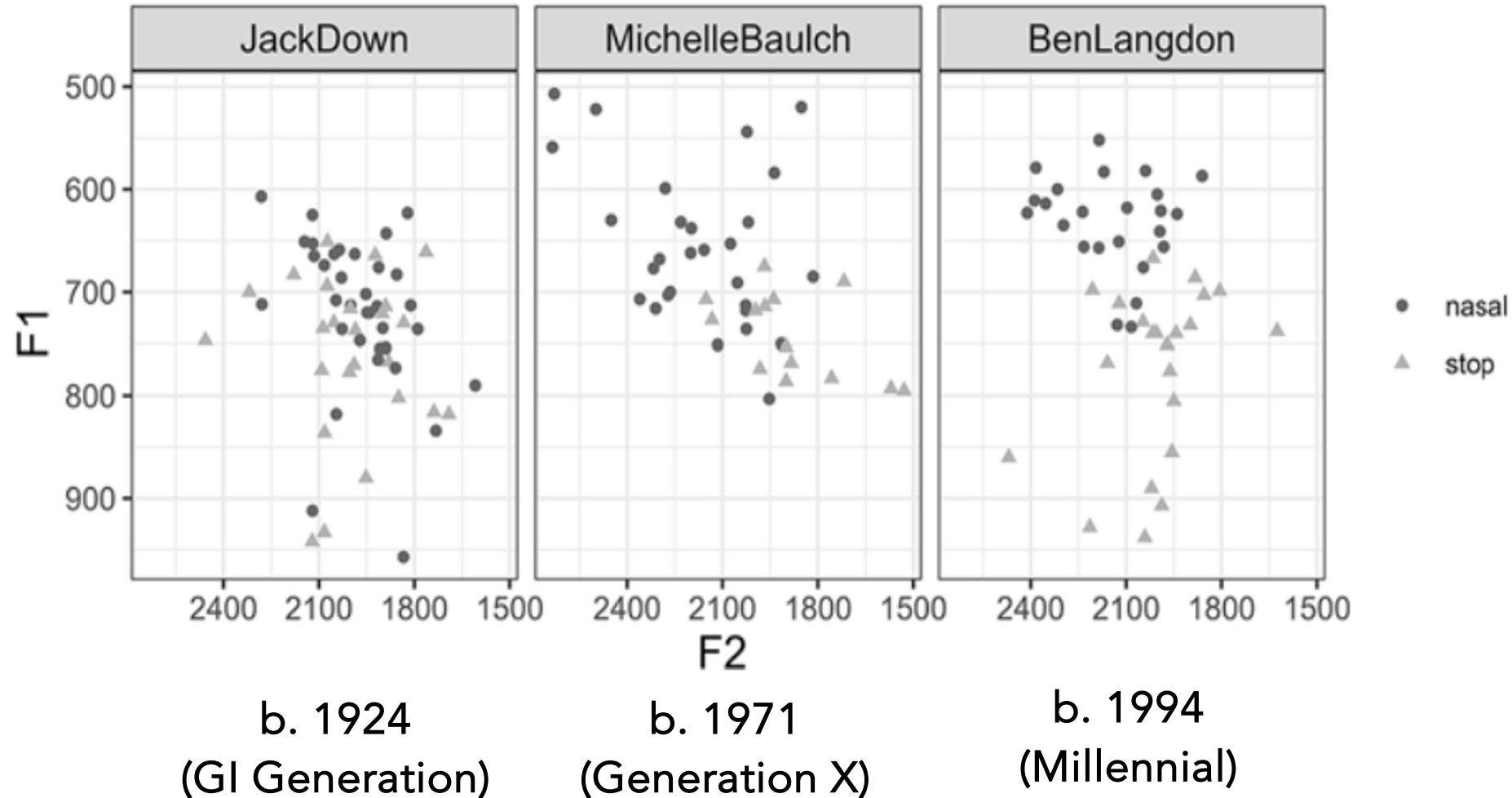
Non-rhoticity declined steadily among speakers born in the 20th Century, vanishing by the mid-1970s (Gen X)



Eastern New England (n = 92). Speaker average r-less by birth year and gender. (Figure 8.1 from Stanford 2019)

Changes in the Northern Cities Shift

Inter-generational
tensing and raising
of pre-nasal TRAP
(Nesbitt 2023)



Generations as linguistic pivot points

Boomer–Gen X

- NCS and Inland North (Nesbitt 2021, Dinkin 2022)
- “Traditional” southern features in Oklahoma (Bailey et al 1996)

Gen X–Millennial

- AAL in Georgia (Forrest et al, this panel)
- Grammatical features in Canada (Tagliamonte 2023)

Other locally salient pivot points

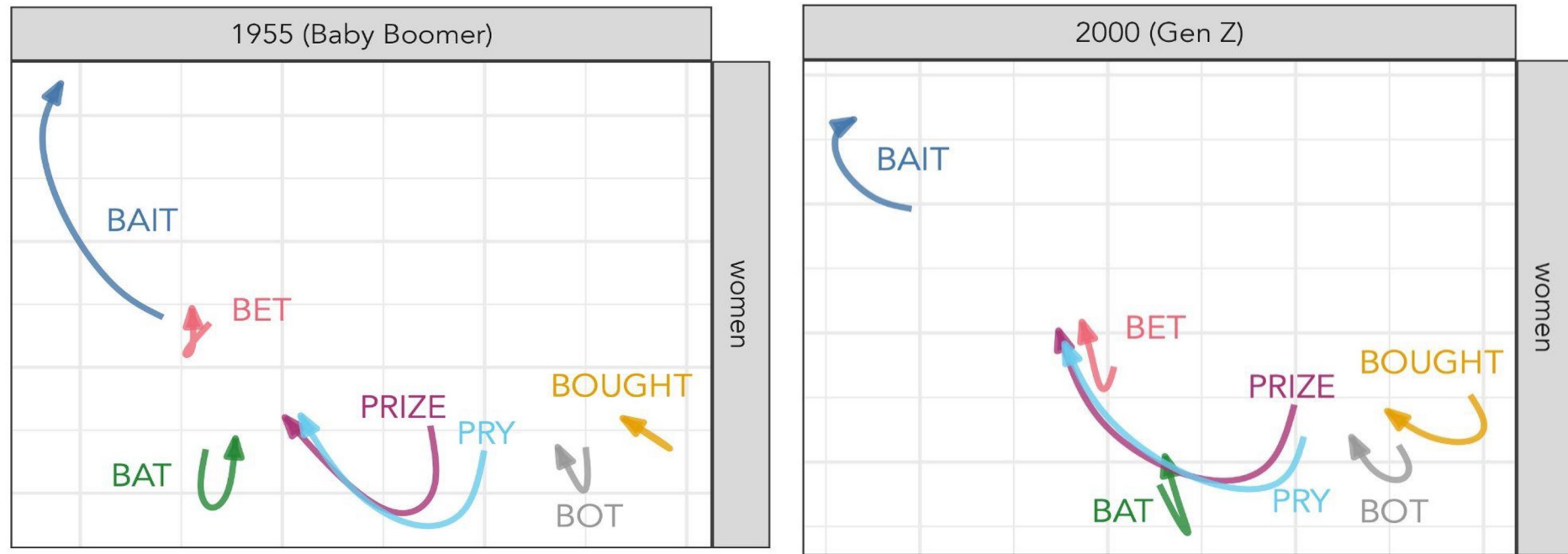
- Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Carmichael 2017)
- Daily ferries to Smith Island (Schilling 2022)

Generation	Approximate birth years
Lost	1883–1900
G.I. (aka “Greatest”)	1901–1924
Silent	1925–1945
Boomer	1946–1964
Generation X	1965–1982
Millennial	1983–1996
Generation Z	1997–2012

Southern Vowel Shift to Low-Back-Merger Shift in Georgia

SVS was stable in Georgia until Gen X

- BAIT, BET, BAT move from SVS positions to LBMS realizations
- PRIZE, PRY no longer monophthongal in Gen Z



Renwick, Stanley, Forrest & Glass (2023)

What's driving reorganization in North American language?

Regarding generational change, “we must also consider other important social changes of the period, such as the increase in (geographic and economic) mobility, the rise of television and mediated speech, and so on.” (Nesbitt 2021: 359)

Themes of our volume

- **Movement:** population shifts, migration, (sub)urbanization
- **Economy:** booming/failing industries, economic recessions and growth
- **Orientation:** towards place, identity, social movements

These can be “catastrophic events” (Labov 1994, Bailey et al. 1996) catalyzing linguistic change

The volume

Local Attitudes and Dialect Change in a Tourist Town	Aaron Dinkin
Mass Migration, Social Networks, and Generational Change: The Proliferation of <i>ain't</i> for <i>didn't</i> in Post-Migration Philadelphia	Sabriya Fisher
Demographic Change, Migration, and the African American Vowel System in Georgia	Jon Forrest, Margaret E.L. Renwick, Joseph Stanley, & Lelia Glass
When <i>Missoura</i> got <i>washed</i> out: The rise of prescriptivist influence as a factor reshaping pronunciation	Matthew Gordon & Christopher Strelluf
Yats no more: Intergenerational change and the development of the 'New' New Orleans vowel system	Katie Carmichael
Why San Franciscans Used to Sound Like New Yorkers	Lauren Hall-Lew
What kind of fronting?: Leveling of /o/ in Raleigh	Sean Lundergan
Contested Place Construction and "Local" Sound Change	Daniel Duncan

References

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- Carmichael, Katie. "Displacement and Local Linguistic Practices: R-Lessness in Post-Katrina Greater New Orleans." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 21, no. 5 (November 2017): 696–719. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12253>.
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- Schilling, Natalie. "'Backwards Talk' in Smith Island, Maryland." *American Speech* 97, no. 4 (November 1, 2022): 483–511. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-9412530>.
- Tagliamonte, Sali A., Patrick Kinchsular, and Mechelle Wu. "Obsolescence and Innovation: English Dialects of the Lake Superior North Shore." Presented at the American Dialect Society Annual Meeting, Denver, January 6, 2023.