



Kretzschmar Jr., W. A. (2015) African American voices in Atlanta. In: Bloomquist, J., Green, L. J. and Lanehart, S. L. (eds.) Oxford Handbook of African American Language. Series: Oxford handbooks. Oxford University Press: New York, NY, pp. 219-235. ISBN 9780199795390.

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Deposited on: 11 November 2016

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African American Voices in Atlanta

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Atlanta is known as "the center of the New South," and even the abbreviation of its name, ATL, has resonance in popular speech of the region; ATL it made the title for a 2006 feature film. No doubt Atlanta does hold a central position in national African American culture. We need only consider the hip-hop music scene to know the truth of this, as thoroughly documented by Joycelyn Wilson (2008). Still, when you look closely at survey evidence regarding the vowels of African American speakers in Atlanta, it is hard to tell that they speak with one voice. African Americans in Atlanta and surroundings show highly variable vowel production that does not match traditional accounts of the vowels of African American English. Moreover, we know that speakers from the historic African-American community in Roswell, a town just north of Atlanta, also differ from our expectations. The resolution of this apparent paradox lies in a new way of understanding what we take to be language varieties: complex systems.

Let us begin with historical data collected in Atlanta for the Linguistic Atlas project (www.lap.uga.edu; all data discussed and presented here is available on the Web site). Tables 1 through 9 show both the white and the African American speakers, each table for the vowel used in a single word. Interviews from earlier dates represent information collected from the South Atlantic portion of the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS); interviews from the 1960s and 1970s were collected for the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS). LAMSAS interviews were transcribed in the field, in the time before field recording, and the fine phonetic transcriptions presented here show the single words and short phrases so transcribed as modified to remove material not relevant to the focus here on stressed vowels. Only 41 African Americans were interviewed for LAMSAS, not a full quota given the extent of the project, but these 41 interviews constitute some of the best available evidence on the history of African American English from the 1930s and 1940s. Unfortunately no LAMSAS interviews

with African Americans were conducted in Atlanta, but there are some in Clarke (GA 34), Walton (GA35), and Rockdale (GA36) counties nearby in North Georgia, in the same topographical region as Atlanta but in rural instead of urban locations. LAGS interviews were tape recorded in the field and transcribed later; full audio recordings from the interviews are now available on the Atlas Web site. LAGS interviewed African Americans in proportion with white speakers all across the Gulf States in a quota sample, so besides the two African Americans interviewed in Atlanta itself, it will be possible to find numerous other African American speakers from the 1960s and 1970s for comparison. There is some missing data in the tables, notably the lack of evidence for African American /æ/. The tables give the date of the interview, and the sex, age, and race of the speaker; the "Type" classification encodes the relative education and social connections of the speaker, where Type I is little educated and socially restricted, Type II is moderately educated (most often high school) and socially involved, and Type III is highly educated (most often college) and highly involved socially.

Our expectations for African American vowels in Atlanta, and elsewhere, have been established by Guy Bailey and Erik Thomas. Bailey and Thomas have called phonology "the neglected step child of research on African American vernacular English" (1998: 85). While Bailey and Thomas list and assess realizations of consonants and consonant clusters commonly attributed to African American speakers, which constitutes the bulk of what the literature reports, they also claim that "the vowel system may be a more important locus for addressing some of the fundamental questions about the history of AAVE and its relation to other American dialects" (92). Bailey and Thomas cite Labov's regional framework of vowel shifts underway in America--the "Northern Cities Shift," the "Southern Shift" (as illustrated graphically in Figure 1), and "Western Merger" (now see esp. Labov et al. 2006)--and show that African American speakers are not participating in them. Thus, the bottom line for Bailey and Thomas (106):

Although some of the earlier AAVE features that most clear lit AAVE to its creole relatives have disappeared (e.g., monophthongal /e/ and /o/), other features (e.g., non-front onsets of /au/ and fully back vowels) persevere. During the last quarter of the

nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century, a number of innovations emerged in AAVE. Some of these are shared with Southern white vernaculars (e.g., glide shortening in /ai/ before voiced obstruents and a series of conditioned vowel mergers), while others (e.g. the raising of /æ/) appear only in AAVE. AAVE does not share more recent innovations that developed in Southern white vernaculars (e.g. the radical reorganization of vowel space ["Southern Shift"] which began to emerge around the turn of the century). The changes in white vernaculars serve to accentuate and widen differences that already existed between these vernaculars and AAVE.

This account suggests that, even without grammatical, lexical, or consonantal cues, the vowels can create an impression of a separate African American English because the vowel system for African Americans is just different from any of the regional non-African American vowel systems.

As for what the tables actually show, in no case is it possible to say that the two African American speakers have distinctly different vowels from the white speakers in Atlanta. Indeed, the overall impression of the fine phonetics is that Atlanta speakers, both Black and white, are quite variable in how they pronounce their vowels, and the same speakers sometimes pronounced the same word in different ways. Some of the differences are small, consisting of shift signs and other minor or weakly realized (the segments in curly braces). Nonetheless, the differences were there to be heard and recorded by the highly trained and experienced Atlas transcribers. For the African American speakers and most of the white speakers from Atlanta (viz., those from LAGS), it is now possible to listen to the interview itself, to verify for oneself the impressions of the transcribers. As for the specific points raised by Bailey and Thomas, in Atlas evidence for Atlanta neither the African Americans nor the white speakers show changes in /i, ɪ, eɪ/ characteristic of the Southern Shift, and both groups do show some raising of /ɛ/. While we unfortunately lack Atlas evidence for African American /æ/, all of the white speakers show some tendency towards raising, which Bailey and Thomas suggested was restricted to African Americans. As for the suggestion by Bailey and Thomas that African Americans retain fully back back vowels, in the Atlas evidence we see that both African American speakers front /u/ to some extent, just like the white speakers (the "-" diacritic indicates a degree of centralization); one of

the African Americans, GA37M!, also fronts /ʊ, ou/. These facts do not make Bailey and Thomas wrong, but they do highlight the difference between a broad generalization such as the one they made and the facts on the ground in any given locality. Atlanta has its own historical characteristics, which sometimes agree with the big picture and sometimes disagree--and of course the Atlas sample of only two African American speakers from Atlanta is not sufficient to get a broad sense of the speech overall in the Black community there.

We achieved a better picture of speech in Atlanta with survey research carried out beginning in 2002 (the present author and Sonja Lanehart, the PIs, are grateful for funding from NSF grant SBR-0233448 for the survey). We conducted a random-sample survey of Fulton County and DeKalb County, the two most populous counties of the Atlanta metropolitan area, with a total population of approximately 1.5 million people according to the 2000 census (<http://www.census.gov>). We created parallel samples based on three binary variables: race (African American vs Non African American), sex (female vs male), and occupational type (blue-collar vs white collar). Because of housing patterns in Atlanta, we ended up with the African American speakers all in the southern part of the survey area, and the Non African Americans in the northern part. Table 10 shows the speakers in the sample as we drew it. All the subjects were primary English speakers, adults age 18 or older, and ideally lifelong residents. We followed current standard methods for randomized field research to draw the sample, using a random telephone list to qualify potential speakers before in-person interviews. When our quotas were mostly full, in the end we were not able to find two Non African American male blue-collar speakers. As it happens, all of the non African Americans in our small sample are Caucasians, although our sampling plan would have admitted Hispanic or Asian or other ethnic speakers.

The data presented here comes from a fixed-format elicitation task in which the speakers were asked to say particular words for us. For elicitation cues, we used the word set developed by Hagiwara so that we would stay as close as possible to the practice of speech scientists (Hagiwara 1997; see also Hillenbrand et al. 1995):

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| beat/teak/heed | boot/duke/hoot |
| bit/tick/hid | put/took/hood |
| bate/take/hate | boat/toke/Hode |
| bet/tech/head | bought/tock/hod** |
| bat/tack/had | but/tuck/hut |

**mixed class of /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ words

Unfortunately, we realized in the middle of the work that Hagiwara's cues are deficient in the low-back vowels /ɑ/ as in *cot* and /ɔ/ as in *bought*. This set of cues also does not include diphthongs, paired vowels such as /ai/ in *eye*. We also encountered another problem, that some African American speakers either resisted or otherwise had trouble with the task while the non-African American speakers did not (Osiapem 2005). On the whole, however, the task was easy and effective for most speakers.

Acoustical analysis of the fixed-format data was carried out by Mi-Ran Kim (for details see Kim, Kong, and Kretzschmar 2005). "Acoustical analysis" involves computer study of the waveforms of speech sounds. Results are commonly reported by speech scientists and sociolinguists as frequency values on F1/F2 plots, on which two different measurements from the waveform are plotted against each other on a chart arranged to correspond to the way that linguists talk about vowel sounds (high/low, front/back). I report here the mean F1/F2 scores for nine tokens of each vowel per speaker (but not /ɑ/ in *cot* and /ɔ/ in *bought* or diphthongs, as above). In order to help evaluate the Atlanta data, I present it in comparison to the national means compiled by Kent and Read (2002). Also, in order to simplify comparison of vowels between different groups and different speakers, I report differences between vowels as "steps," so that, for example, one might say that in Atlanta, as we shall see, African American male speakers tend to pronounce the /ae/ vowel two steps higher than the Kent and Read value.¹

¹ We selected these 50x200 Hz intervals because they represent a rough indication of the standard deviations we often found between tokens from individual speakers, and between

The Kent and Read means that we use as a reference point are national, and thus will not show the effects of any of the contemporary regional shift patterns claimed by Labov, such as the "Southern Shift". Following Bailey and Thomas, we might expect to see evidence that the African Americans mostly have vowels relatively close to the "unshifted" Kent and Read means, while we might expect to see evidence that the non-African American speakers have "shifted" vowels. In particular, the "Southern Shift" should have us look for fronted /u/ as in *boot*, /ʊ/ as in *put*, and /ou/ as in *boat* from non African American speakers while African American speakers should have "fully back vowels." We should also observe the reversal in height of the tense and lax mid and high front vowels (/ɪ/ as in *bit* higher than /i/ as in *beat*, /ɛ/ as in *bet* higher than /ei/ as in *bait*) in non African American speakers affected by the "Southern Shift". For such speakers, many listeners might hear *still meal* when the speakers said *steel mill*. African American speakers should retain the unreversed Kent and Read positions, so that people would hear *steel mill* when they said it.

In fact, the situation in Atlanta is more complicated than the popular generalization has it. The mean F1/F2 values for African American speakers do not remain unshifted from the Kent and Read means. We see that /æ/ as in *bat* is two steps higher than the Kent and Read mean for the male speakers (Figure 2), as Bailey and Thomas suggested, and that the back vowels are all fully back, again as they suggested. However, /ɛ/ and /ei/ have reversed positions as might be expected from speakers with the "Southern Shift," although /ɪ/ and /i/ have not reversed positions. The F1/F2 means for the African American women in our survey (Figure 3) show the same basic pattern for these vowels, high /æ/, fully back high-back vowels, and reversal of /ɛ/ and /ei/ but not /ɪ/ and /i/. If anything, the women's vowels are more different

speakers in the group means. The actual mean values for individuals or groups are put into the closest grid box. Thus, sometimes two different values appear in the same grid box, and they may actually vary by nearly 50 Hz in F1 and 200 Hz in F2; values reported in adjoining boxes may actually vary by as little as 5 or 10 Hz, but may also vary by up to nearly 100 Hz in F1 and 400 Hz in F2. The "steps" are thus merely a useful heuristic for assessing whether particular values are similar or different; selection of a different size interval would affect the assessment.

from the Kent and Read means than the men's vowels, with /æ, ε, ei/ fully three steps away from the national means when only /æ, ε/ are as much as two steps different for the men. In addition, the women show a distinctly lower mean for /ou/, again three steps, a difference which is not implicated in any of the regional shifts. Part of this difference from the men comes from the broader vowel space of women speakers, something we expect from the difference between genders. However, this result does not match the Bailey and Thomas generalization that African American vowels are not participating in regional shifts and thus must be near the national means. Several of the Atlanta African American vowel means are quite different from the national means, and while Atlanta African Americans do not show all the characteristics of the "Southern shift," they do have the reversal of /ε/ and /ei/ as claimed for the Southern Shifters.

Our non African Americans in Atlanta also fail to match the national generalizations. The male speakers approximate the national means for all of our vowels except for /i, ei/, which are two steps lower than the national means. However, the high front tense and lax vowels are not reversed in position, and there is no fronting of the high and mid back vowels, so that the men show no sign of the "Southern Shift." The non African American women have means two steps lower for /i, ei/, still without reversal of the high front tense and lax vowels, just like the men. The women do have /u/ fronted by two steps, the only characteristic anything like the "Southern Shift" among the non African Americans, but the other back vowels are well back; /o/ is lowered by two steps, which parallels the situation for the African American women. It is clearly the case that the common generalization of shifted non African Americans vs. unshifted African American speakers simply does not work in Atlanta. The African American speakers show one characteristic of the shift, reversal of /ε/ and /ei/, and the non African American women show one other, fronting of /u/ when compared to the national mean. Our women speakers appear to have greater differences from the national means overall than the men, but there are differences for every category of speakers.

To introduce one final dimension of the Atlanta data, we have also surveyed speakers from Roswell, Georgia, a city just north of Atlanta (see Kretzschmar et al. 2007; Roswell interviews will be available at www.lap.uga.edu). The site of Roswell was in Cherokee territory, and in 1839 after the Native Americans were expelled in the "Trail of Tears" the Roswell settlement was founded with a textile mill on the Chattahoochee River. The coastal Georgians who built the town made homes for themselves, cottages and apartments for mill workers, and dwellings for slaves not much different from those of the mill workers. Eventually, the historic African American population formed its own neighborhood within the community, Groveway, which today thrives as a center for African American culture in the northern section of the Atlanta metro area. Groveway has two megachurches that serve African American interests to anchor an African American population that has now spread out across Roswell, as Roswell itself has spread from its original town square and mill to cover an area of 39 square miles.

Our survey of Roswell speakers began in 2002 when the local Convention and Visitors Bureau invited us (the present author, Sonja Lanehart, and Bridget Anderson) to conduct language and life interviews there in preparation for the sesquicentennial celebration of the official incorporation of the town in 1854. We talked to community icons of the oldest living generation, both Black and white, and then extended our coverage to their children's and grandchildren's generation. We used guided conversational interviews for this purpose, including for most speakers a fixed-format elicitation task like the one we pioneered in the Atlanta survey. I report here front vowel means from two pairs of African American speakers, men and women from the oldest and youngest generations, derived from work by graduate assistants Claire Andres (who carried out the acoustic phonetic measurements) and Rachel Votta.

Figures 4 and 5 add the Roswell front vowel means to those from Figures 2 and 3, the Kent and Read national means and the Atlanta African American means. The acoustic phonetic measurements were carried out slightly differently, which accounts for some of the separation

between the Roswell plots and the Atlanta plots. However, the relationship between the two pairs of vowels implicated in the Southern Shift, /i, ɪ/ and /ei, ε/, shows that the Roswell African American speakers are different from those in the Atlanta survey. Both the men and the women in Atlanta showed mean values of /i, ɪ/ that were closer together than the Kent and Read national means, perhaps a suggestion of the Southern Shift, and reversal of the positions of /ei, ε/ from the Kent and Read means, definitely like the Southern Shift. For Roswell African Americans, however, /i, ɪ/ are well separated and /ei, ε/ remain unreversed, which is more like the status of these vowels for Atlanta white speakers. We are not talking about a highly mobile suburban population in Roswell (African Americans like that do live in Roswell, but we have not interviewed them), but instead about people affiliated with the longstanding Groveway community, so we cannot explain these Roswell vowels on those grounds. Instead, we can cite work by Walt Wolfram and his students on small North Carolina localities, among them Hyde County, Texana, Princeville, and Roanoke Island (Wolfram and Thomas 2002, Childs and Mallinson 2004, Rowe and Kendall 2004, Hilliard and Carpenter 2004, Childs 2005). These studies have found Black speech and white speech in each place to be much more comparable than expected. Local social dynamics such as literacy and occupation appear to account for the differences, or as Childs 2005 demonstrates, even smaller communities of practice. One of the younger Roswell African American speakers reported that, when students were bussed to schools in different parts of the country (Roswell and Atlanta are both in Fulton County):

they were bringing kids from south county, up to north county schools, and I just remember those kids just thinking they were like so bad, you know, “We’re so tough,” you know, “We’ll whoop you all up here in Roswell,” you know, “You all are up here with the white folks and” you know, “you guys...”. It’s like they almost tried to make it seem like we weren’t black enough because we lived in Roswell and they were from like College Park and East Point or something like that. (Kretzschmar et al. 2006)

Stories like this one confirm that, as much as we often want to consider Atlanta as one big, central cultural entity, people from different parts of the county live different lives, and it shows in their different voices.

None of this evidence of variation in speech by African Americans in Atlanta actually undercuts the status of a national African American cultural pattern including language, or of Atlanta as a cultural center within it. Traditional models for languages and language varieties have emphasized rule systems that made varieties appear to be more closed and separate than they are. A new model, complex systems (Kretzschmar 2009, 2010), instead focuses on the frequencies with which pronunciations, words, and other linguistic features are used in different communities. The essential process of all complex systems can be summed up in just a few principles: 1) random interaction of large numbers of components, 2) continuing activity in the system, 3) exchange of information with feedback, 4) reinforcement of behaviors, 5) emergence of stable patterns without central control. Complex systems were originally described and are still used in the physical and biological sciences (e.g. Prigogine and Stengers 1984; Hawking and Mlodinow 2010, Gould 2003). Complex systems in speech consist of randomly interacting variant realizations of linguistic features as deployed by human agents, speakers. Human agents can choose how to deploy linguistic variants, and our implicit comparison of the use of different components by different speakers and writers contributes to the operation of feedback and reinforcement. The order that emerges in speech is simply the configuration of components used at different frequencies, whether particular words, pronunciations, or constructions, that comes to occur in the local communities, regional and social, and in the occasions for speech and writing, text types and registers, in which we actually communicate.

An important aspect of complex systems of all kinds, and the one that explains the variation in Atlanta vowels, is that such systems are scale-free, that is, order emerges at all levels of scale simultaneously. For any size community we care to consider, there will be some features that occur a great deal, and many features that hardly ever occur. This means that practically no features are the exclusive property of any community, but instead that differences between communities occur as differences in the frequency of use of the features. So, white speakers and Black speakers can share a great many features, and we can note that African Americans

considered at the top, national level of scale use some features much more frequently than other communities of speakers. At the same time, the usage of African Americans in Atlanta does not have to go along with the national pattern point for point, but instead is likely to have some differences from it. And the same is true in the "north county" and the "south county" in Atlanta, as Joshua Byrd put it, where the African American kids tend to act and to sound a little different. As Byrd went on to say, "And, once we got past that, I mean, it was fine. But there was a little tension there at first, you know, between the south county students and the north county students that grew up here in Roswell." We cannot help but notice the differences, but such differences in frequency of use of linguistic features, or other cultural activities, does not prevent us from still being part of local, regional, and national communities, all at the same time.

As the evidence from Atlanta shows clearly, we do violence to the facts if we try to make our communities too separate from each other. The Atlas evidence shows that, historically, the possible pronunciations of individual vowels in Atlanta are largely shared by African Americans and non African Americans. The Atlanta survey shows the same thing, but also indicates that we can describe trends in the evidence that mark the operation of complex systems and identify how communities may differ in large terms, even while they can share all of the components individually. The Roswell evidence, both from vowels and from the accounts of residents, shows that such trends can vary across the city but that the differences need not keep people apart in the end. We can all "get past that" when we recognize that our local communities all contribute to our larger sense of cultural identity.

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Figures

Table 1 Atlas data from Atlanta: *three*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|-------|------------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | three | θri·j | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | three | θri· | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | three | θri | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | three | θri· | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | three | θri·{i^} | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | three | θri· | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37E! | three | θri·{i^} | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | three | θri·j | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | three | θri·{j} | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | three | θri | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | three | θri· | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | three | θri·{i^} | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | three | θri·{i^} | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37M! | three | θri·v·{i^} | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | three | θri· | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |
| GA37N | three | θri·{i^} | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 2 Atlas data from Atlanta: *six*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|------|-----------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | six | sɪ^ks | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | six | sɪ^ks | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | six | sɪks | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37C | six | sɪ^ks | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | six | sɪ·{ɪ-}ks | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | six | sɪks | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | six | sɪ^ks | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | six | sɪ^ks | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | six | sɪ^ks | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | six | sɪ^ks | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | six | sɪks | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | six | sɪks | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37M! | six | sɪ^ks | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | six | sɪks | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 3 Atlas data from Atlanta: *eight*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|-------|---------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | eight | e·i>t | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | eight | e·i-<t | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | eight | ei-^t | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | eight | e{I-}t | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | eight | ei-t | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | eight | ei- t | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | eight | e^I-t | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37F! | eight | e·{I-}t | 1947 | III | F | 84 | W |
| GA37G! | eight | e·{I-}t | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | eight | e·it | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37H! | eight | e·i-t | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | eight | e·{I-}t | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | eight | ei-t | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | eight | ei-t | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | eight | e·{I-}t | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |
| GA37N | eight | ei-t | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 4 Atlas data from Atlanta: *ten*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|------|-----------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | ten | tε^·{ə}n | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37A | ten | tI{ə}n | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | ten | tI^V{ə}n | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | ten | tI·{I-}n | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37C | ten | tn | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | ten | tI·n | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | ten | tI·n | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | ten | tI^·{I-}n | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | ten | tε^·{ə}n | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | ten | tε·n | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | ten | tε^n | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | ten | tε^·{ə}n | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | ten | tI^V·{ə}n | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 5 Atlas data from Atlanta: *half*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | half past seven | hæ{ε}f | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | half past seven | hæ{ε}f | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37D! | half past | hæ^{ε}f | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | half after | hæ^{ε}f | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | half past eleven | hæ{ε}f | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | half past seven | hæ·{ε}f | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | half past seven | hæ{ε}f | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37H! | half past seven | hæ{ε}f | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| no AfAm responses | | | | | | | |

Table 6 Atlas data from Atlanta: *two*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|------|-----------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | two | tu·w | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | two | tu· | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37B | two | tu-<· | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | two | tu· | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | two | tu· | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | two | tu·{u-^} | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | two | tu- | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | two | tu-{u-^} | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37E! | two | tu-<{u-^} | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37F! | two | tu· | 1947 | III | F | 84 | W |
| GA37G! | two | tju-<·w | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37G! | two | tu- | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | two | tu· | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37H! | two | tu-<· | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | two | tu- | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | two | tu<u^< | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | two | tu-{u-^} | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | two | tu<· | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | two | tu· | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |
| GA37N | two | tu-< | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |
| GA37N | two | tu-{u-^} | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 7 Atlas data from Atlanta: *good*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|--------------|-------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | good morning | gʊ<d | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | good morning | gʊ<d | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | good morning | gʊ<d | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | good morning | gʊ<d | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | good morning | gʊ<d | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | good morning | gʊ->d | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | good morning | gʊ<d | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | good morning | gʊ<d | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | good morning | gʊ<d | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | good morning | gʊ- d | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | good morning | god | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |
| GA37N | good morning | god | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 8 Atlas data from Atlanta: *sofa*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|-------|---------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37B | sofas | so<·ʊ< | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | sofa | so<ʊ< | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | sofa | soʊ- | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | sofa | so<ʊ< | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37F! | sofa | so<·ʊ< | 1947 | III | F | 84 | W |
| GA37G! | sofa | so<·ʊ< | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | sofa | so^<·ʊ< | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | sofa | soʊ< | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | sofa | so<ʊ< | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |

Table 9 Atlas data from Atlanta: *one*

| Speaker | Item | Pron | Date | Type | Sex | Age | Race |
|---------|------|-----------|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| GA37A | one | wyV{ə}n | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37A | one | wyVn | 1947 | I | M | 95 | W |
| GA37B | one | wyVn | 1947 | II | M | 75 | W |
| GA37C | one | wΛ^<·{ə}n | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37C | one | wΛ^Λn | 1970 | II | F | 45 | W |
| GA37D! | one | wΛ^<n | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | one | wΛ^Λn | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37D! | one | wΛ^<n | 1968 | III | M | 59 | W |
| GA37E! | one | wΛ^Λ{ə}n | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37E! | one | wΛ^<·{ə}n | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37E! | one | wΛ^Λn | 1970 | III | F | 53 | W |
| GA37G! | one | wyV{ə}n | 1947 | III | M | 51 | W |
| GA37H! | one | wyVn | 1947 | III | M | 73 | W |
| GA37I! | one | wΛ^<{ə}n | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37I! | one | wΛ^<n | 1968 | III | F | 59 | W |
| GA37M! | one | wΛ^Λ·{ə}n | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37M! | one | wΛ^<n | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37M! | one | wΛ^Λn | 1968 | III | M | 55 | B |
| GA37N | one | wΛ^<·{ə}n | 1971 | I | F | 82 | B |

Table 10 Speakers in the Atlanta Survey

| Code | Sex | Race | OccType | Age |
|--------|-----|---------|---------|-----|
| A01Mw | M | AfAm | White | 48 |
| A02Mw | M | AfAm | White | 35 |
| A03Mb | M | AfAm | Blue | 50 |
| A04Mb | M | AfAm | Blue | 38 |
| A05Mb | M | AfAm | Blue | 33 |
| A01Fb | F | AfAm | Blue | 25 |
| A02Fb | F | AfAm | Blue | 43 |
| A03Fw | F | AfAm | White | 38 |
| A04Fw | F | AfAm | White | 20 |
| A05Fw | F | AfAm | White | 24 |
| NA01Mw | M | NonAfAm | White | 43 |
| NA02Mw | M | NonAfAm | White | 28 |
| NA03Mw | M | NonAfAm | White | 84 |
| NA01Fb | F | NonAfAm | Blue | ?45 |
| NA02Fb | F | NonAfAm | Blue | 54 |
| NA03Fw | F | NonAfAm | White | 33 |
| NA04Fw | F | NonAfAm | White | 69 |
| NA05Fb | F | NonAfAm | Blue | ?38 |

Figure 1 The "Southern Shift" as represented in Bailey and Thomas 1998

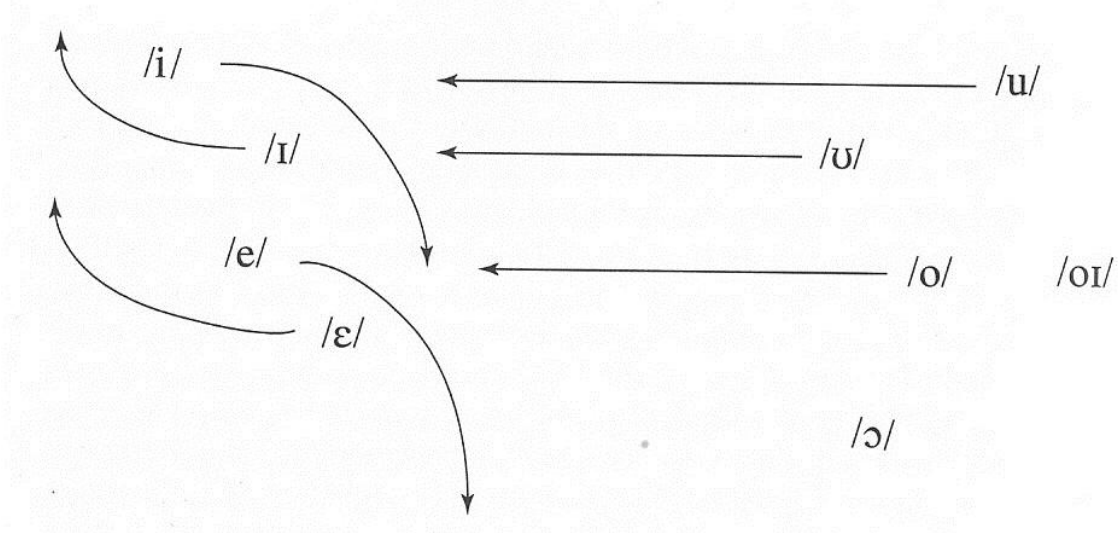


Figure 2 Atlanta African American Male vowel means vs. Kent and Read national means

| AfM | 3200 | 3000 | 2800 | 2600 | 2400 | 2200 | 2000 | 1800 | 1600 | 1400 | 1200 | 1000 | 800 | 600 | F2 |
|-----|---|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|--------|
| 200 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 250 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 300 | | | | | | i□j■ | | | | | | | | | |
| 350 | | | | | | | ɪ■ | | | | u□u■ | | | | |
| 400 | | | | | | | ɪ□ | | | | ʊ■ | | | | |
| 450 | | | | | | | ei□ε■ | | | | ʊ□ | | | | |
| 500 | | | | | | | | ei■ | | | ou□ | ou■ | | | |
| 550 | | | | | | | | ε□æ■ | | ʌ■ | | | | | |
| 600 | | | | | | | | | | | ʌ□ | | | | |
| 650 | | | | | | | æ□ | | | | | | | | |
| 700 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 750 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 800 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 850 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 950 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F1 | Kent & Read mean vowel scores for F1/F2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | □ male |
| | Atlanta survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ male |

Figure 3 Atlanta African American Female vowel means vs. Kent and Read national means

| AfF | 3200 | 3000 | 2800 | 2600 | 2400 | 2200 | 2000 | 1800 | 1600 | 1400 | 1200 | 1000 | 800 | 600 | F2 |
|-----|---|------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|------|-----|-----|----|
| 200 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 250 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 300 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 350 | | | i ^o | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 400 | | | i [•] | | | | | | | u ^o | | | | | |
| 450 | | | | i [•] | i ^o | | | | | | u [•] | | | | |
| 500 | | | ei ^o | | | | | | ʊ [•] | ʊ ^o | | | | | |
| 550 | | | | | ɛ [•] | | | | | ou ^o | | | | | |
| 600 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 650 | | | | | ei [•] | | | | | | | | | | |
| 700 | | | | | æ [•] | ɛ ^o | | | ʌ [•] | | ou [•] | | | | |
| 750 | | | | | | | | | ʌ ^o | | | | | | |
| 800 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 850 | | | | | | | æ ^o | | | | | | | | |
| 900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 950 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Kent & Read mean vowel scores for F1/F2 | | | | | | | | | ^o female | | | | | |
| | Atlanta survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | [•] female | | | | | |

Figure 4 Roswell African American male front vowel means vs. Atlanta means

| AfM | 3200 | 3000 | 2800 | 2600 | 2400 | 2200 | 2000 | 1800 | 1600 | 1400 | 1200 | 1000 | 800 | 600 | F2 |
|-----|---|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|--------|------|------|-----|-----|----|
| 200 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 250 | | | | | | i♦ | | | | | | | | | |
| 300 | | | | | | i□■ | | | | | | | | | |
| 350 | | | | | | | I■ I♦ | | | | | | | | |
| 400 | | | | | | | I□ | | ei♦ | | | | | | |
| 450 | | | | | | | ei□ε■ | | ε♦ | | | | | | |
| 500 | | | | | | | | ei■ | | | | | | | |
| 550 | | | | | | | | ε□ | | | | | | | |
| 600 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 650 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 700 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 750 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 800 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 850 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 950 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Kent & Read mean vowel scores for F1/F2 | | | | | | | | | □ male | | | | | |
| | Atlanta survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | ■ male | | | | | |
| | Roswell survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | ♦ male | | | | | |

Figure 5 Roswell African American female front vowel means vs. Atlanta means

| AfF | 3200 | 3000 | 2800 | 2600 | 2400 | 2200 | 2000 | 1800 | 1600 | 1400 | 1200 | 1000 | 800 | 600 | F2 | |
|-----|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|------|-----|-----|----|--|
| 200 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 250 | | | | i♦ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 300 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 350 | | | i○ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 400 | | | i● | | ei♦ | | I♦ | | | | | | | | | |
| 450 | | | | I● | I○ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 500 | | | | ei○ | | | | ε♦ | | | | | | | | |
| 550 | | | | | ε● | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 600 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 650 | | | | | ei● | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 700 | | | | | | ε○ | | | | | | | | | | |
| 750 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 800 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 850 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 950 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Kent & Read mean vowel scores for F1/F2 | | | | | | | | | | ○ female | | | | | |
| | Atlanta survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | | ● female | | | | | |
| | Roswell survey mean vowel scores, AfAm | | | | | | | | | | ♦ female | | | | | |

Abstract

Survey research in Atlanta suggests that the usual national generalizations about race and language need to be examined in the light of local evidence. The Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States preserves recordings of interviews with a number of African Americans from the 1970s, to set a historical baseline for the community. A contemporary random-sample study of African Americans in Atlanta showed that our speakers were highly variable in their vowel production. They not only did not match national generalizations, but appeared to have more of Labov's "Southern Shift" than the local non-African-American speakers who were supposed to be characterized by it. Only a minority of speakers show "mean" behavior for the whole set of vowels. Still, black/white speech relations in the Atlanta metro area create perceptions such that a child from a historic African American neighborhood in Roswell had to "learn how to talk hood" to fit in with children from the Atlanta public schools. And Atlanta, with its central place in the hip-hop community alongside New York and Los Angeles, maintains an identity on the national scene with roots in local speech. History and contemporary evidence combine to show that African American voices in Atlanta belong to a complex system in which speakers can be themselves in their neighborhoods, while at the same time they participate in historical and national trends.