



Apparent-Time Low Vowels among Mexican-Americans and Anglos in Austin, Texas

Douglas S. Bigham
Jessica White-Sustaíta
Lars Hinrichs

Texas English

- Associated with South Midland and Southern speech (Bailey & Tillery 2006; Bailey et al 1991; ANAE)
- Dallas area distinct - “Texas South” (ANAE)
- Based primarily on Anglo speech
- Assumed to be Anglo-led (Bailey et al, 1991)

Ongoing Texas English Research

- Houston (Niedzielski's HUES)
- San Antonio (Bayley, Santa Ana)
- Rural Central Texas ("Springfield", Bailey & Cukor-Avila)

The Texas English Project: Austin

- Austin Texas

- Medium-sized urban center (<1 million)
- In the 1990s, Austin's population grew by 48% and between 2000 and 2006 it was rated as the 3rd most rapidly growing city in America.
- 30.5% Latino, 10% African American, 65% White

Fig. 2. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2002.



Fig. 3. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2012.



Goals of the Texas English Project

- Sound Change: Ethnolects in contact
- Importance of minorities' roles in majority sound changes.
- Who leads change in ethnically-diverse contact milieux?
 - Torgersen, Kerswill, & Fox 2007; Fought 2002; Kerswill 2002; Preston 1999

Minority & Majority Dialects in Contact

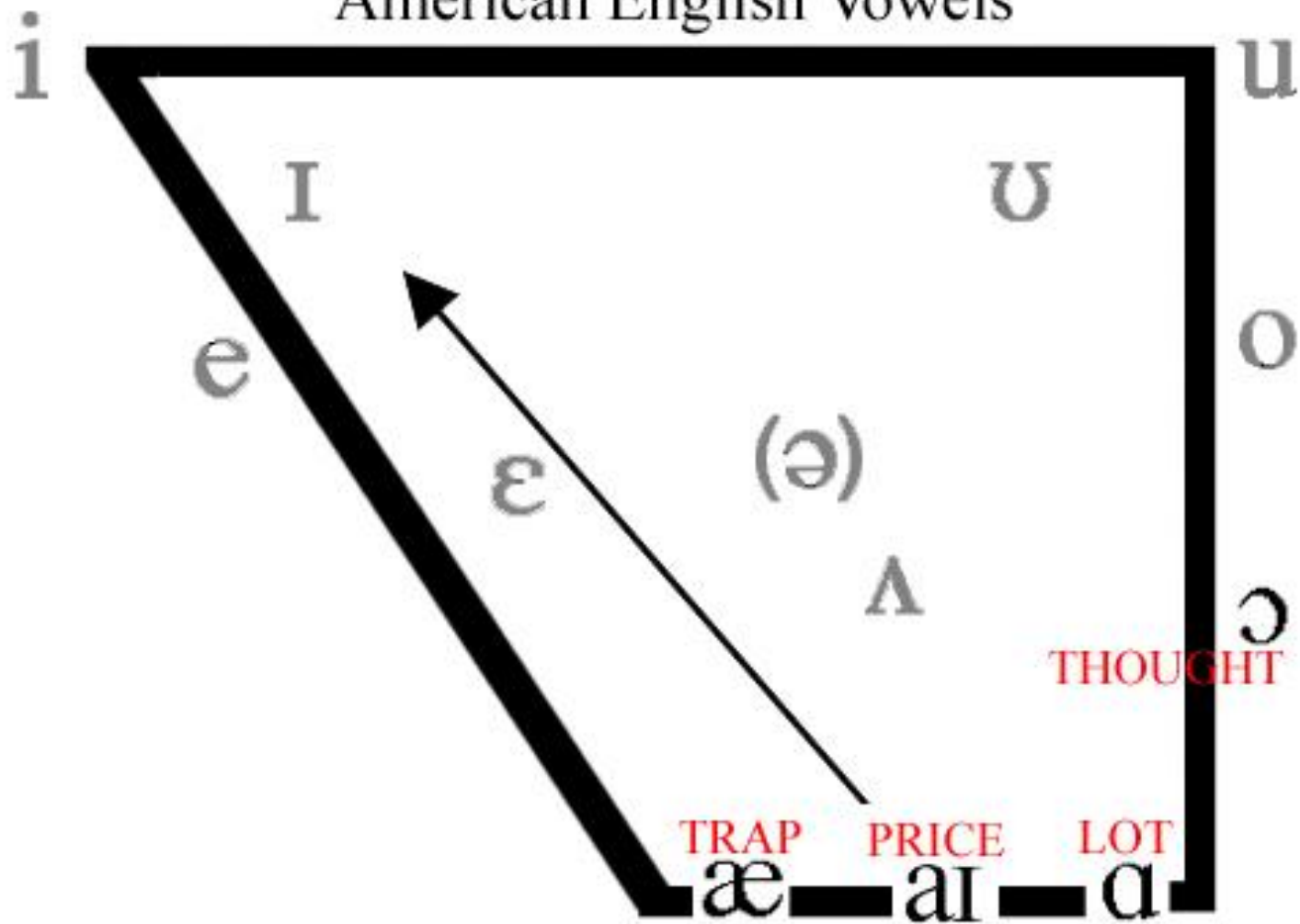
- Assumed that minority speakers pressured to assimilate to majority norms.
- Influence is not uni-directional.
- Majority speakers may adopt minority features for covert prestige.

Research Questions



1. How are low vowels realized by Austin speakers?
2. Are low vowels realized differently across ethnicity?
3. Are low vowels realized differently according to age?

Stylization of American English Vowels



Low Vowel Paradigm

- PRICE, LOT, THOUGHT, TRAP (Wells, 1982)
- PRICE: status of monophthongization
- LOT~THOUGHT: merged or distinct
- TRAP: raised, backed, stationary

PRICE



- Monophthongization: key feature of Southern speech (ANAE)
 - May block both TRAP retraction and LOT fronting (Bigham 2008)
- Texas English:
 - (Tillery et al 2004; Thomas 2001)
 - monophthongal PRICE among Anglos
 - diphthongal PRICE among Latinos

LOT~THOUGHT

- Merger: key feature of “Third Dialect” (Labov 1996)
 - Promotes TRAP retraction (Clarke et al 1995; Gordon 2004; Bigham 2008)
- Texas English:
 - merger incomplete among Anglos (ANAE)
 - merger complete among young, urban Anglos (Bailey et al 1991)
 - merger: Latinos to LOT; Anglos to THOUGHT (Thomas 2001)

TRAP



- Movement up left periphery: first stage of Northern Cities Shift (ANAE)
- Retraction in Canadian Shift (Clarke et al. 1995; Roeder & Jarmasz 2008) and other “Third Dialects” (Eckert 2004; Bigham 2008)
- Texas English (Thomas 2001):
 - Latinos- front and low, even pre-nasally
 - Anglos- raises pre-nasally

Methodology

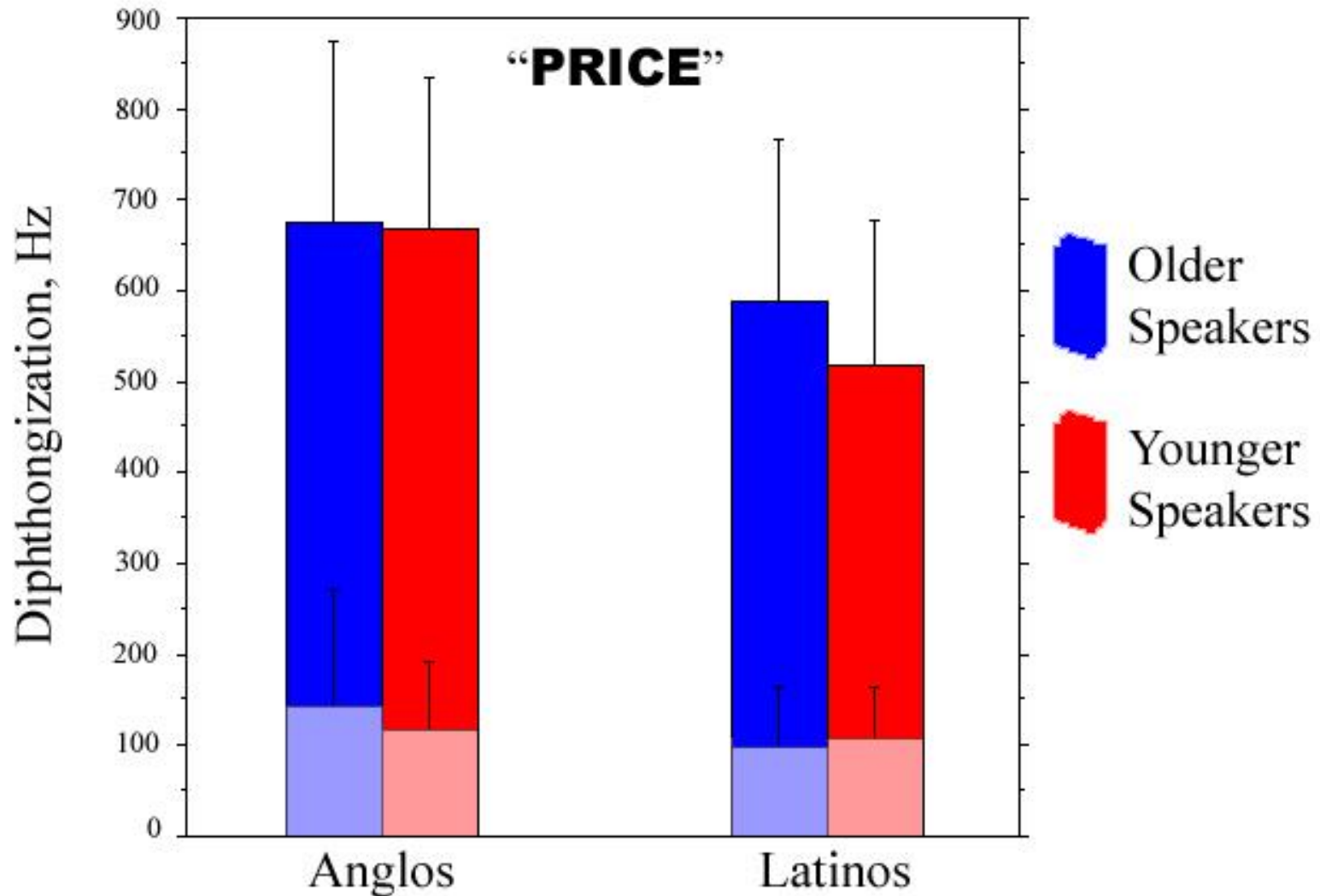
- 14 female participants

- Full adults (older) & emerging adults (younger) (Arnett 2002)
- Anglo & Latino
- Evenly distributed across categories
- Span of classes and educational levels
- Austinites

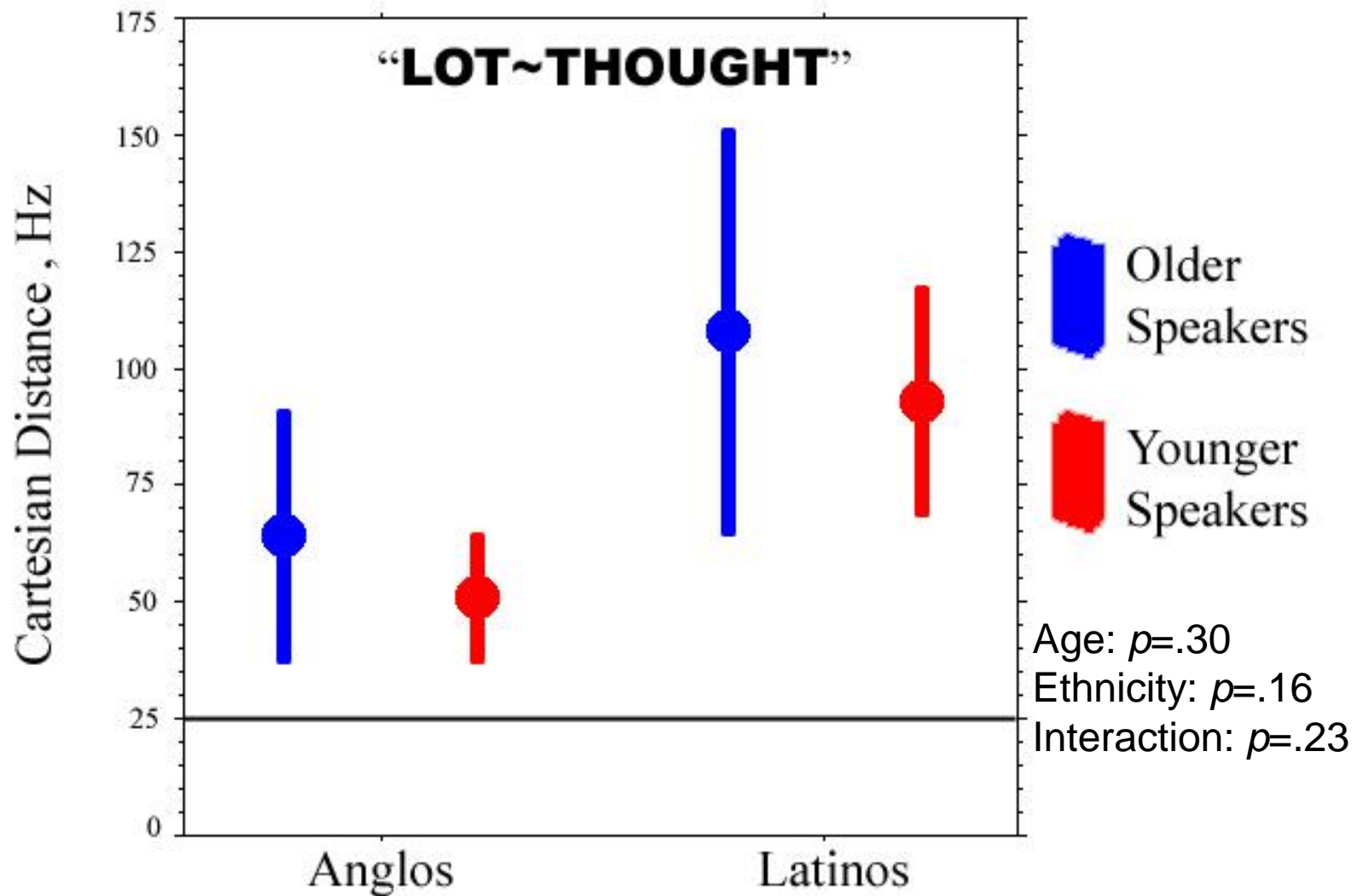
- Data

- Word list recitations, *bVt* & *hVd* tokens, six repetitions each (2*6*14 tokens total per vowel)
- F1 and F2 measurements at five points
- Standard F1xF2 and Cartesian Distance

PRICE non-monophthongization

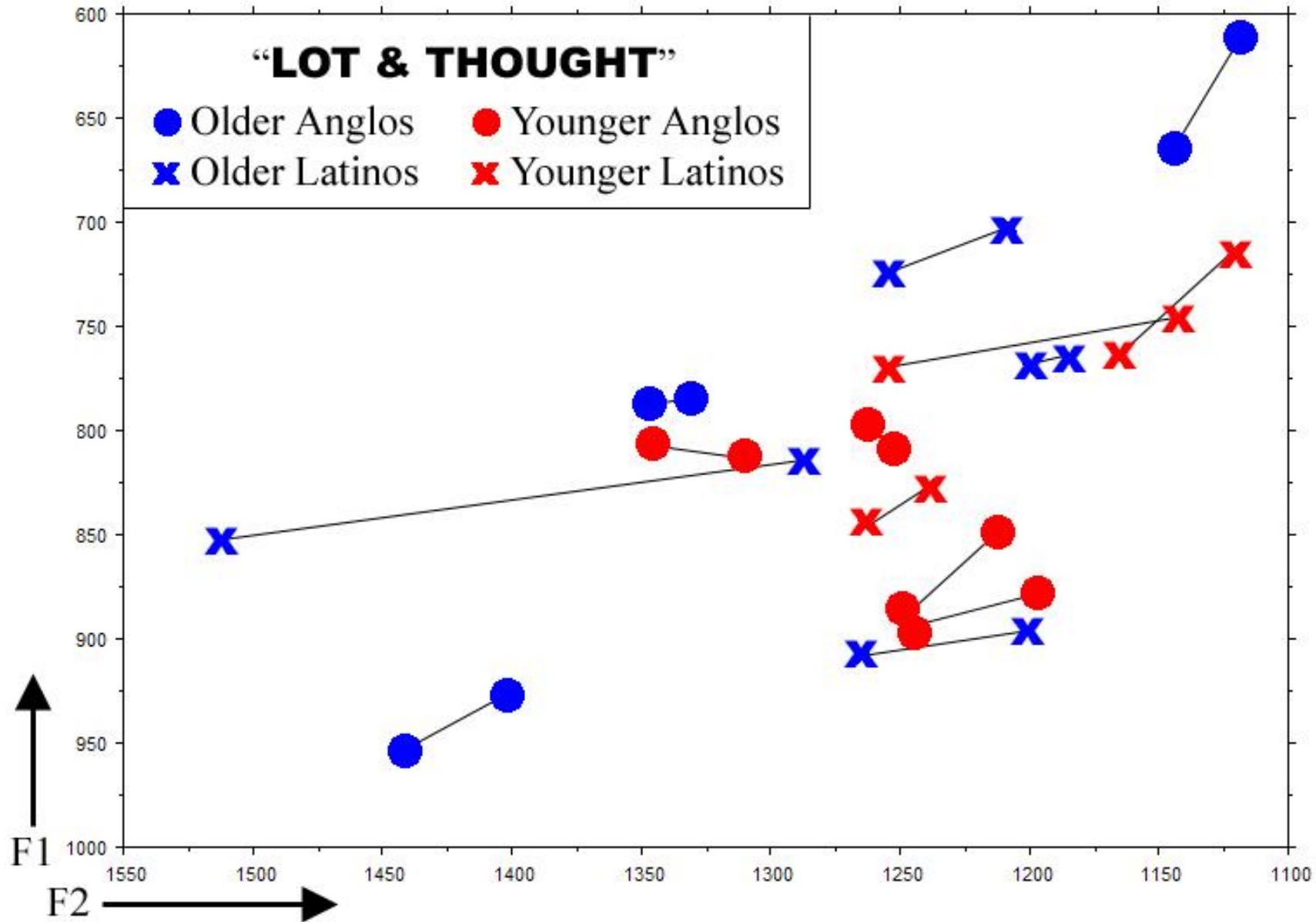


LOT~THOUGHT merger

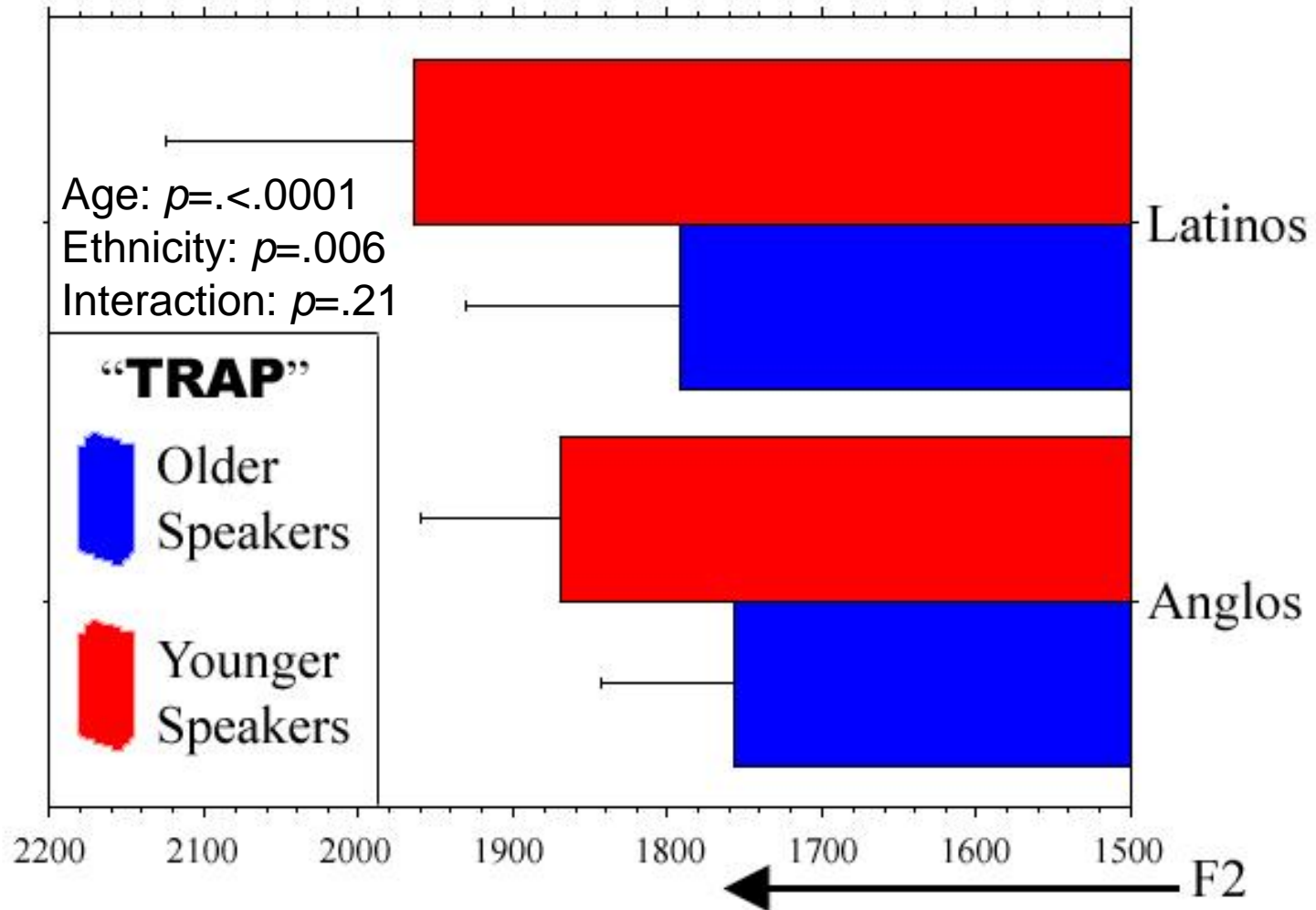


“LOT & THOUGHT”

- Older Anglos
- Younger Anglos
- ✕ Older Latinos
- ✕ Younger Latinos



TRAP fronting (!)



Conclusion: *Austin* Texas English

● PRICE

- completely diphthongal
- No difference between Anglo & Latino speakers

● LOT~THOUGHT

- no distinction in Latino & Anglo placement
- distinct in production but becoming closer
- majority-led change

● TRAP

- fronting without raising (!)
- minority-led change

What's Next for the Texas English Project?

- Adding a third, extra-older, generation
- Adding males to the data (come to our ADS talk!)
- Adding African-American speakers
- Analyzing additional stylistic contexts for data
- Determining what, if any, social meanings may be attached to these variables.



The End

Thanks to: University of Texas at Austin

- Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services
- Division of Instructional Innovation & Assessment
- Department of English

Texas English Project: www.texasenglish.org

- Lars Hinrichs: lars@mail.utexas.edu
- Douglas Bigham: douglas.s.bigham@gmail.com
- Jessica White-Sustaíta: jessicawhite@mail.utexas.edu