

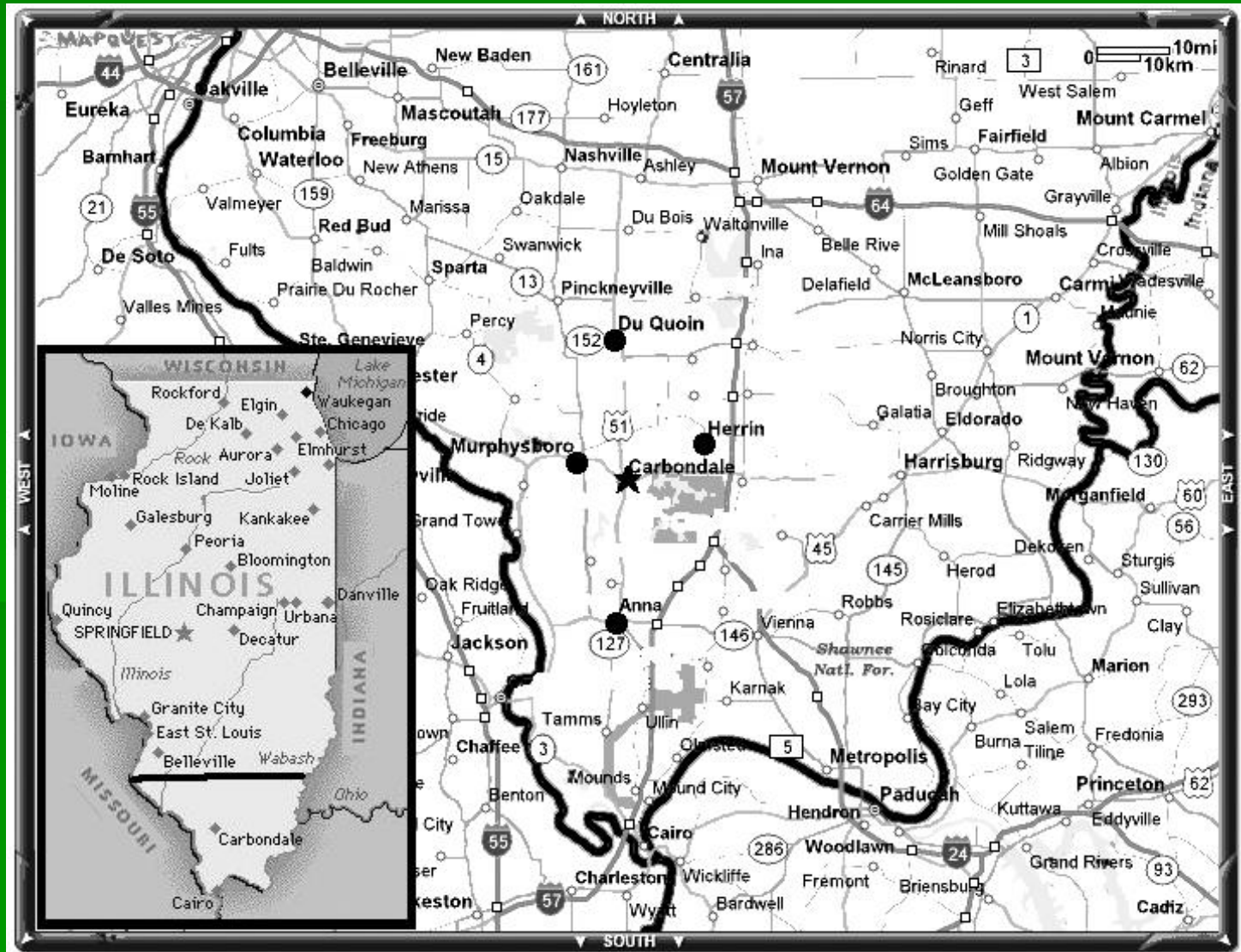
# **Vowel Variation in Southern Illinois**

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# Southern Illinois (SoIL)

- Lower-most 16 counties of Illinois (“Egypt” in Frazer, 1987)
  - Part of The Ohio River Valley (Dakin, 1966)
- An understudied dialect
- A Rural Transition Zone
  - Roughly equidistant from NCS and SS urban anchors
    - NCS = St. Louis / SS = Memphis

# Southern Illinois



# Research Questions

- What do the vowel categories of emergent adults (Arnett, 2000) in Southern Illinois look like?
- With which major system are Southern Illinois vowels most similar?
- How can these patterns be explained?

# Rural Transition Zones

- e.g., The Ohio River Valley
- Largely unexplored (esp. outside Ohio)
- Geographic diffusion models are problematic
  - too far from major dialect anchors
  - too little contact with speakers of major dialects
- Historical models aren't significant
  - SoIL has a large “shared history”
  - Individual histories are inaccurate
- Social diffusion models are also problematic
  - greater homogeneity in rural areas (Gándara et al., 2001)
  - fewer and less distinct “communities of practice”
  - regional identities ARE social identities

# Cognitive Approaches

- MOTIVATION
  - Why is one variant or set of variants chosen over another?
- ACCESS
  - How are newer dialect features, both socially-based and regionally-based, acquired?
- CATEGORIZATION
  - Where do new features and variants fit among pre-established categories?
- I focus on the MOTIVATION & CATEGORIZATION components

# Methods: Speakers

- high school seniors, age 18
- 2 different schools in Southern Illinois
  - “Tigers” = large school (~900 students)
  - “Wildcats” = small school (~400 students)
  - ~45 miles apart
- Total Speaker Pool: ~225 Participants
  - 200 Surveys
    - 120 “Tigers” / 80 “Wildcats”
  - 85 Recordings
    - 30 “Tigers” / 55 “Wildcats”



# Methods: Recordings

- 11 vowels, 2 contexts, 2 repetitions
  - (i, ɪ, e, ɛ, æ, ɑ, ɔ, o, u, ʊ, ʌ)
  - *hVd*      *bVt*
  - ~44 vowels / speaker
- Geometric normalization (Watt & Fabricius, 2002)
  - no significant difference for **TOWN** or **SEX**
- Recordings made on a computer using Praat
  - head-mounted Sennheiser microphone
  - recorded on campus and at local cafes
- F1 and F2 measured
  - checked via spectral slice, Praat auto-formant tracking, and visual confirmation
  - Steady-state midpoints or mini/max points



# Methods: Attitudes Survey

- Likert Test:
  - 40 statements, positive/negative balanced, 6-point scale
- Semantic Differential Test:
  - 82 Questions, 6-point scale
  - 21/21: “The way people talk in Region One/Two sounds...”
  - 20/20: “The people who live in Region One/Two are...”

# Regions of Illinois

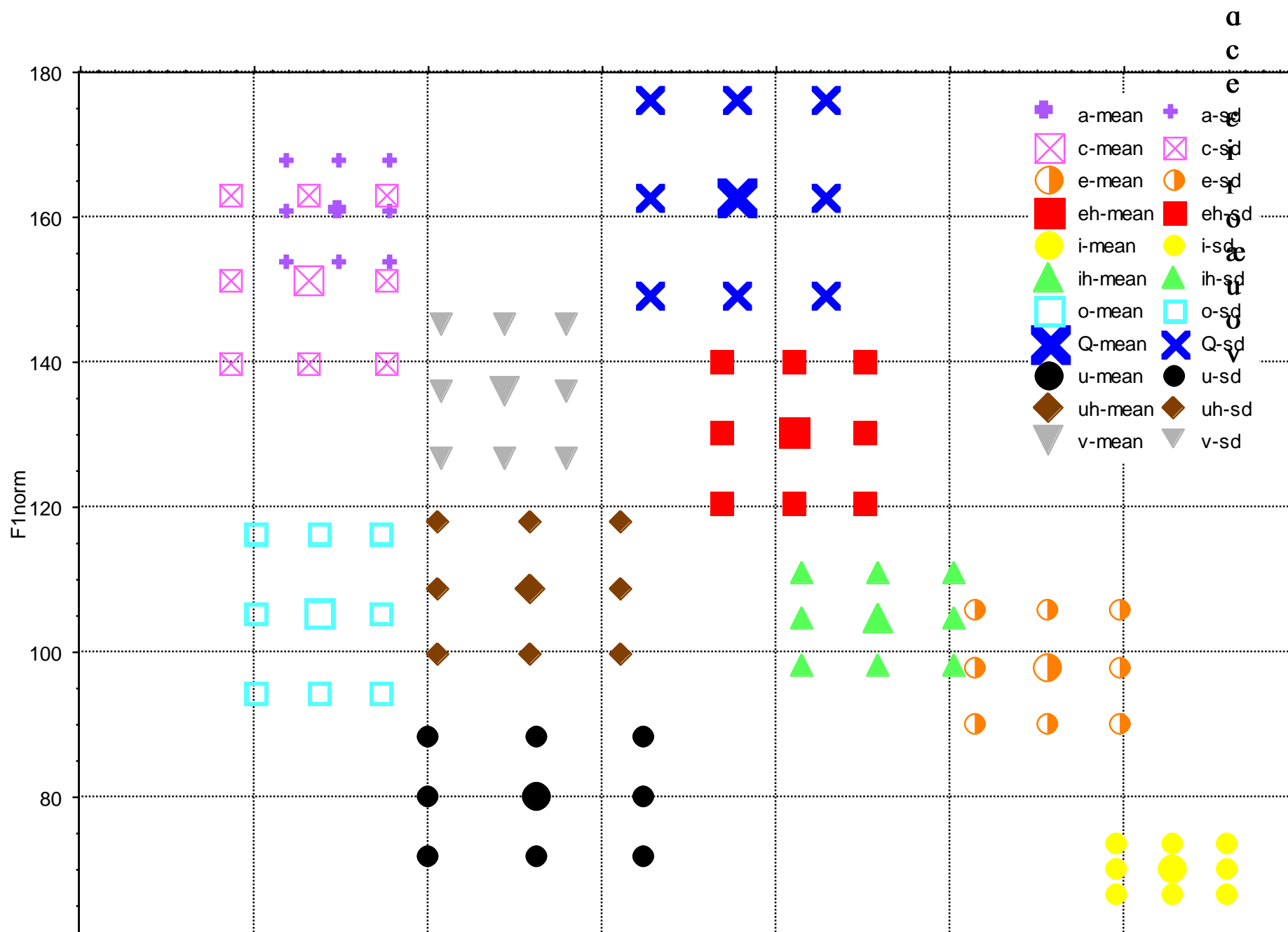


# Methods: Analysis

- 50 Recordings
  - 25 male / 25 female
  - 33 “Wildcats” / 17 “Tigers”
- 31 Surveys + Recordings
  - 21 male / 10 female
  - 17 “Wildcats” / 14 “Tigers”

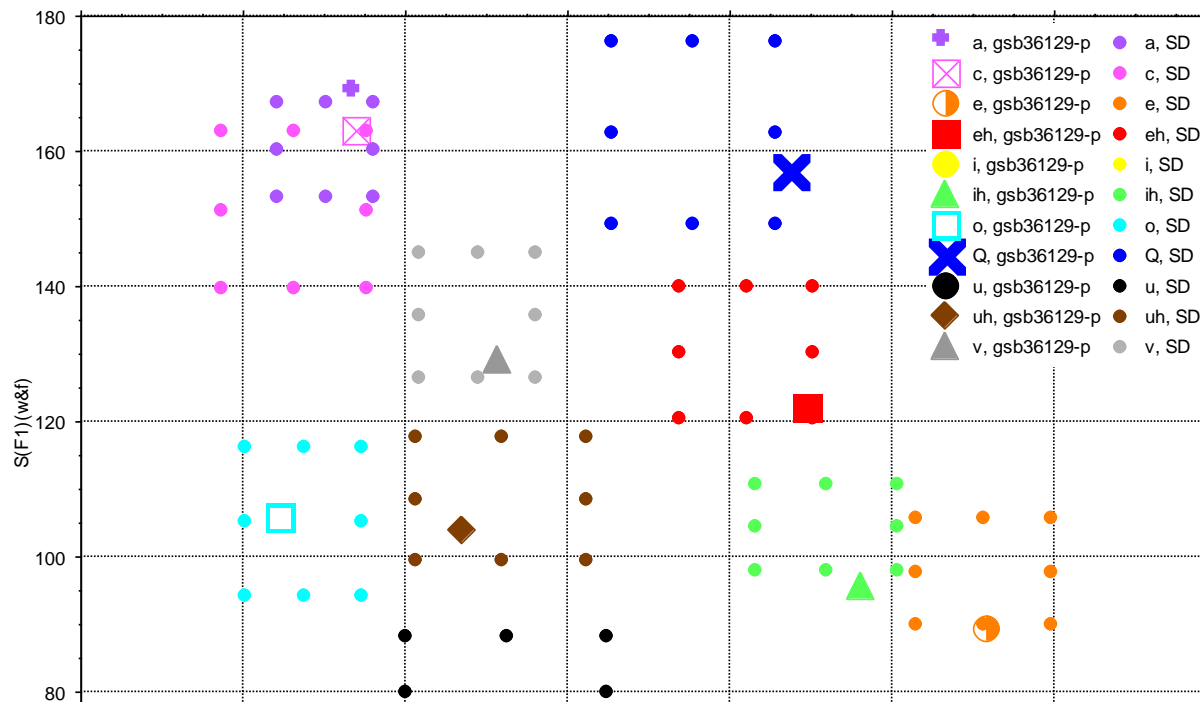
# Q1. SoIL Vowel Categories

- What do the vowel categories of emergent adults (Arnett, 2000) in Southern Illinois look like?
  - Southern Illinoisans have a lot of variation.
  - However, there is still a standard set of categories that speakers “work around”.

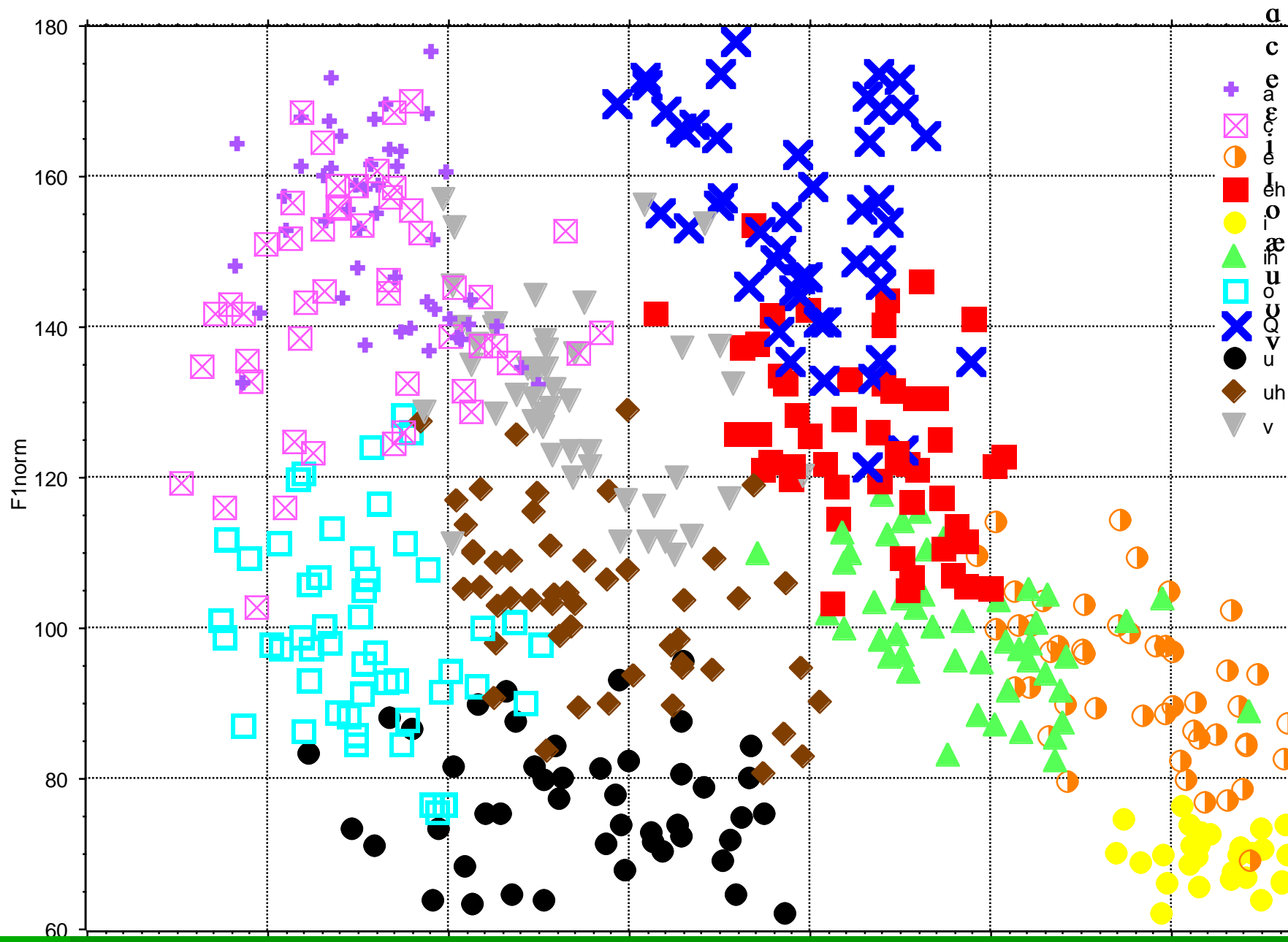


# SolL-Standard Vowel Space

## gsb36129, male, Wildcat



- /a/~/ɔ/ merged & low
- /o/ back
- /u/ & /ʊ/ central
- /æ/ low





## **Q2. Explaining SoIL Vowel Variation (part 1)**

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- With which major system are Southern Illinois vowels most similar?
    - Depends on the speaker...
    - And there are other things as well...
-

# Southern Illinois Vowels: variation gone wild!

- Northern Cities Shift (NCS) features (Labov, 1991):
  - /æ/ raising
  - /ɑ/~/ɔ/ merger and fronting
  - /ɛ/ lowering and/or backing
  - /ʌ/ backing
- Southern Shift (SS) features (Labov, 1991):
  - /u/ and /o/ fronting
  - /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ raising and unmerged
  - /i/~/ɪ/ and /e/~/ɛ/ switch
- Other things
  - /ʊ/ lowering
  - /o/ backing

# Q3. Explaining SoIL Vowel Variation (part 2)

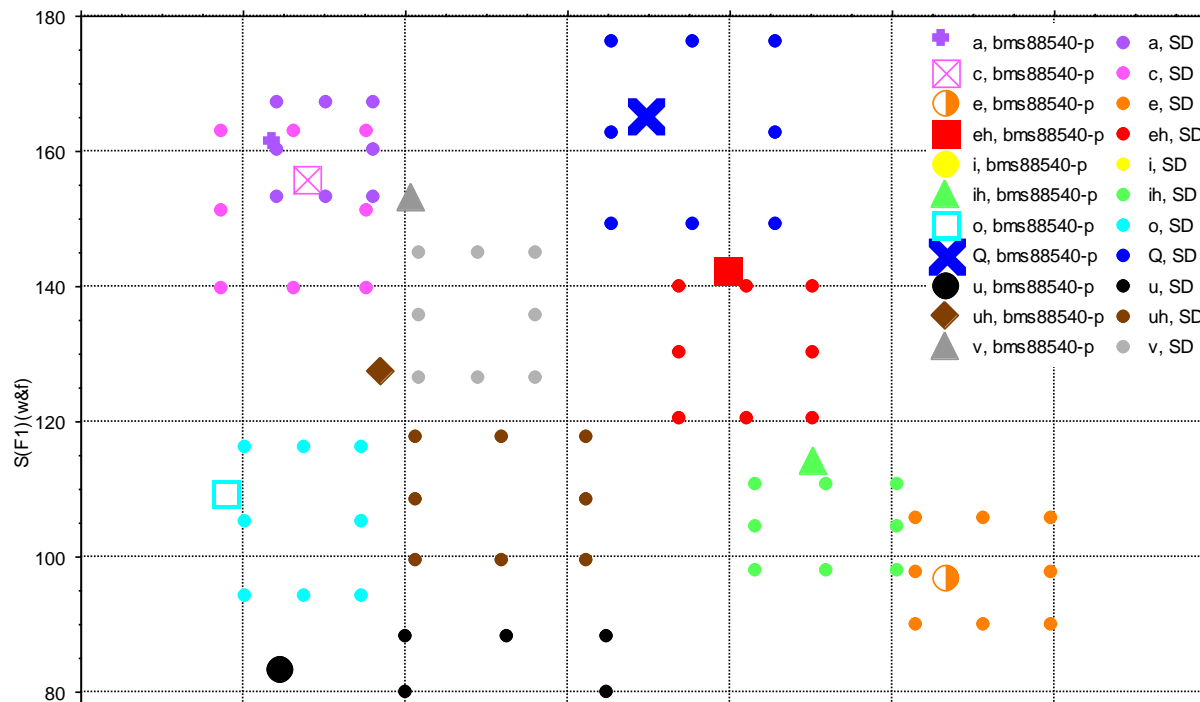
- How can these patterns be explained?
- Speaker's attitudes about Southern Illinois
  - correlations between formant and survey values
  - Most speakers have mutually exclusive attitudes toward Southern Illinois (Region One) and Chicagoland (Region Two)
    - Positive association with one entails negative association with the other
    - This is not an artifact of survey design

# Alignment toward Chicagoland

- Low /ɑ/
- Backed /ʌ/
- Lowered /ʊ/
- No patterns have been found among front vowel variations

# NCS-System

## bms88540, male, Tiger



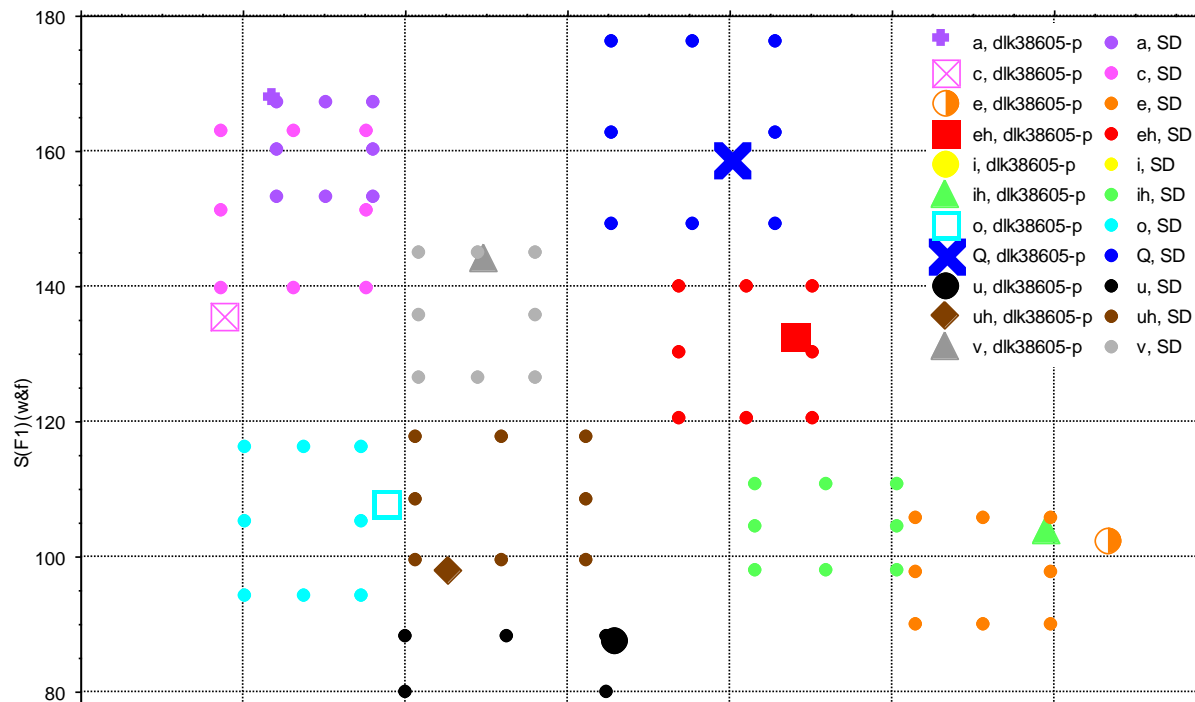
- Low /a/
- Backed /Λ/
- Lowered /u/
- /u/ & /o/ un-fronted
- /a/~/ɔ/ merger

# Alignment toward Southern Illinois

- Raised (and/or not-lowered) /ɔ/
- Lowered /æ/
- Fronted /u/
- Fronted /ʊ/
- Fronted /o/
- Again, except /æ/, no patterns have been found for front vowel variations

# SS-System

## dlk38605, male, Wildcat



- Raised /ɔ/
- Fronted /u/
- Fronted /o/
- /a/~ɔ/ unmerged
- /u/ raised

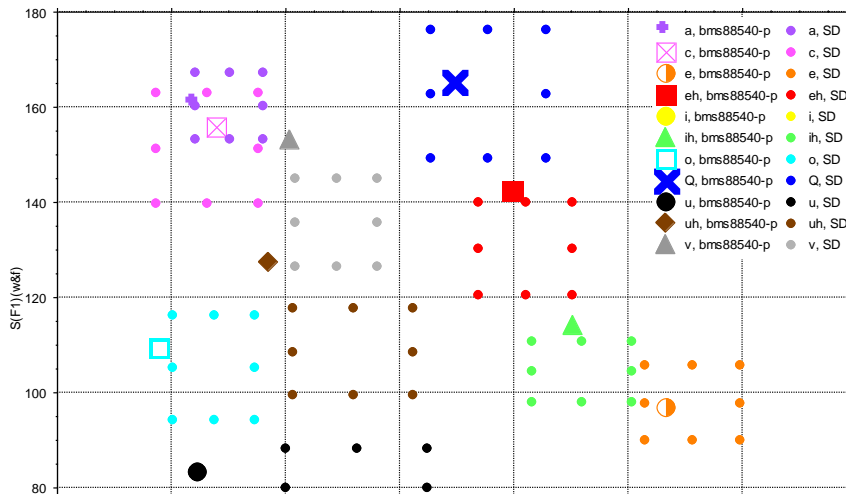


# Motivation

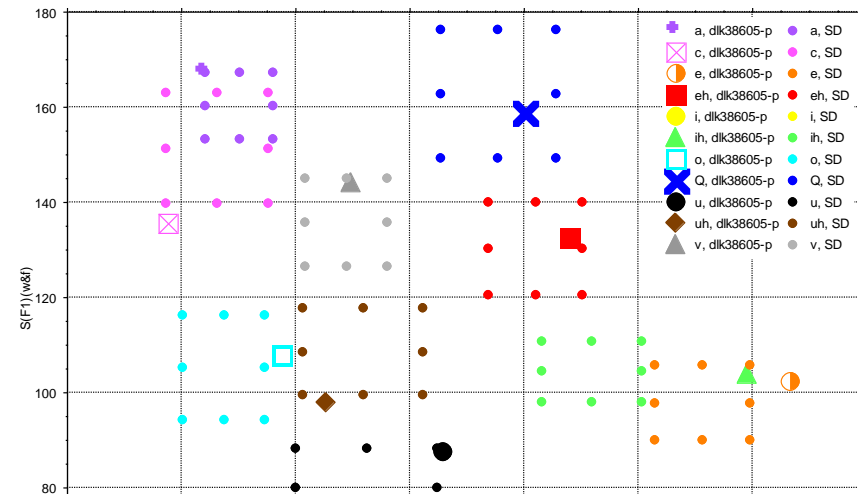
- Movements typical of NCS indicate positive associations with Chicagoland
- Movements typical of SS indicate positive associations with Southern Illinois
- However...
  - Only back vowels show these strong correlations
  - Why?

# Categorization

## ■ NCS Features



## ■ SS Features



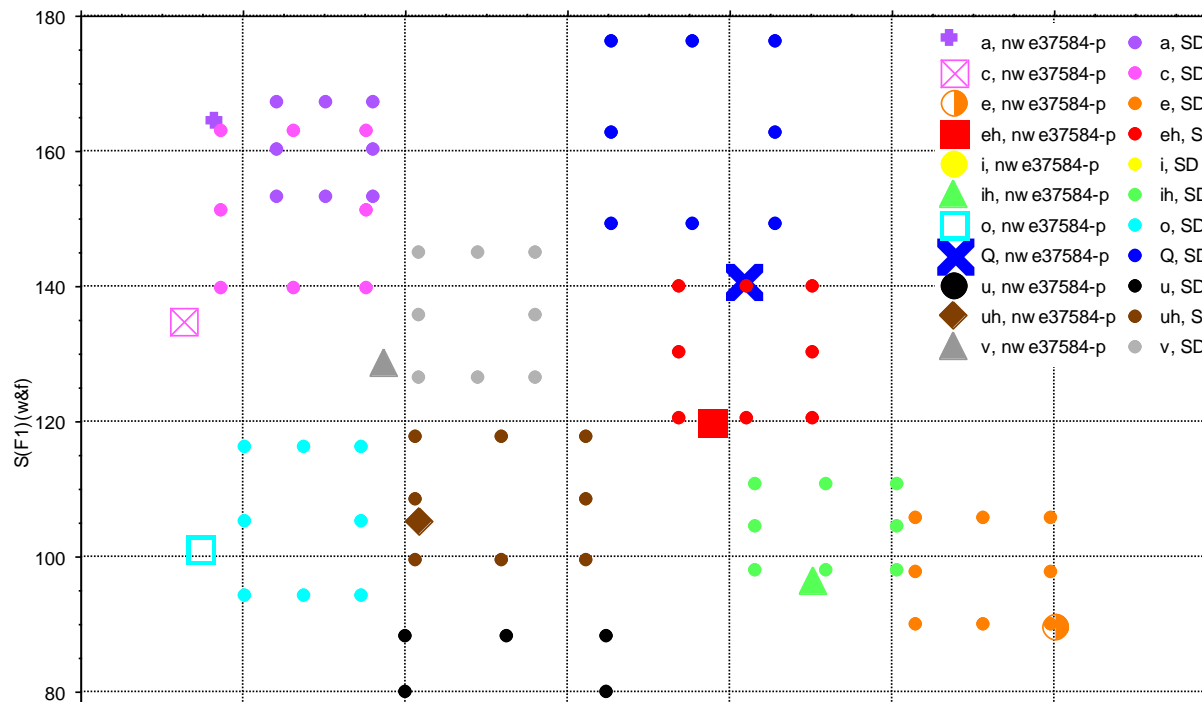
Note that vowel variants of both NCS and SS types do not enter the “territory” of another vowel.

# Problems and Further Questions

- MOTIVATION and CATEGORIZATION may have been partially explained, but what about ACCESS?
  - How can speakers without daily contact with a dialect can still be said to "have" or "use" these dialect features?
- What about speakers with mixed or fudged 'lects (Trudgill, 1986)?

# Mixed-System B

## nwe57584, male, Wildcat



- Backed / $\Delta$ /
- Unfronted /u/, /o/, / $\upsilon$ /
- Raised /a/
- /a/~/ $\text{ɔ}$ / unmerged

# Thank You!

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