

**The Movement of Front Vowel Allophones Before Nasals
in Southern Illinois White Vernacular English
(The PIN~PEN Merger)**

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This work considers the merger of the allophones of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ before nasals, commonly called the PIN~PEN merger. Vowel tokens from twenty speakers in Southern Illinois are sampled; statistical information and vowel graphs, based on F1 measurements, are generated for discussion. While the majority of these Southern Illinois speakers do show the PIN~PEN merger, there is a wide range of variation in the ways and degrees that each individual speaker participates in the merger. Data on pre-nasal allophones of /æ/ are also included, and the effect of the PIN~PEN merger on pre-nasal /æ/ is examined. The possibility of a change in progress, from a PIN~PEN merger to a PEN~PAN merger is considered. The data reported here provide an important link between the phonetics literature and the sociolinguistic/dialectology literature on the effect of nasals on preceding vowels.