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TITLE: From Jeff Spicoli to Woody Wooderson: Chill Bro-Dudes, GOOSE, GOAT, and the Urban Southwest

LONG ABSTRACT:

The ANAE (Labov et al. 2006) characterizes California with “the West”, defined by merger of the LOT/THOUGHT vowels and fronted GOOSE without concomitant fronted GOAT. Likewise, Eckert (2004; also Podesva 2011; Kennedy & Grama 2012) have described a "California Vowel Shift" similar to the Canadian Shift (Clark et al. 1995), which includes the merger of LOT/THOUGHT, the retraction of TRAP, the lowering of DRESS and KIT, and fronted GOOSE and GOAT classes. However, the degree to which either of these descriptions is generalizable to Southern California is not currently known.

In fact, with the exception of Hagiwara (1997), we know little about the vowels of Southern Californians, a population encompassing two of the largest metro areas in the US (Los Angeles and San Diego). Comparing findings from the ANAE and previous reports from "California" and "the West", along with evidence from social geography (e.g., Selby 2014; Bucholtz 2007; Weber 1983; Zelinsky 1973) and new data our team has collected from 30 speakers in the San Diego and Los Angeles areas, we suggest that Southern California is unlike the rest of California, and instead part of a broader "Urban Southwest" variation of the Third Dialect (Labov 1991), potentially stretching along the entire US/Mexico border.

Further, by comparing the production of vowel tokens from natural speech to that of performance-register speech, we suggest that there is a distinction between those changes affecting the front/low vowels—LOT, THOUGHT and TRAP—and those affecting the high/back vowels GOOSE and GOAT. Specifically, merger of LOT/THOUGHT and retraction of TRAP are unconscious and stable features whereas the frontness of GOOSE and the backness and height of GOAT are variable and salient markers of identity, available both as indexes (Eckert 2008) of a local Southern Californian identity and as enregistered (Johnstone 2011) components of nonchalant masculinity—a specific "chill bro-dude" persona.

Indexically, if we think of a straight, white, male as the linguistically unmarked Southern Californian, then the frontness of GOOSE and backness/height of GOAT appear to reify this ideal, with straight white men exhibiting the most fronted GOOSE and least fronted / most low GOAT productions, while white women, non-white speakers, and LGBT speakers are more variable in their production of GOOSE and GOAT. Further, in performed speech, we see precisely these variants being manipulated—linking or distancing the performed character with broader discourses surrounding this SoCal identity.

Finally, we also suggest that the manipulation of GOOSE and GOAT is not unique to Southern California, but seems to exist along the entire Urban Southwest as part of an enregistered “chill bro-dude” identity that co-constructs masculinity, coolness, personal freedom, and, interestingly, being blond—as seen with Matthew McConaughey in *Dazed & Confused* (Austin, TX), Christian Slater in *Pump Up the Volume* (Phoenix, AZ), Jeff Bridges in *The Big Lebowski* (Los Angeles), and Sean Penn’s preeminent SoCal bro-dude Jeff Spicoli in *Fast Times at Ridgmont High* to name a few.

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