Most recent innovation in Texas English (TxE) is a diffusion of Mainstream American English (MAE) features, replacing traditional Southern features (Bailey et al. 1991). With regard to the GOOSE vowel, this process has been partly obscured by the fact that both its traditional TxE as well as its MAE realization display a similar degree of fronting and are thus untractable by single-point formant measurements. Koops (2010), however, demonstrates that there are subtle but persistent sub-differences in F2 trajectory between the two variants. Using a corpus of digital/digitized recordings of Central TxE speech (72 speakers, 384 tokens), spanning 30 years in real and 100 in apparent time, we ask: how are the different types of trajectories distributed among speakers of TxE? Answers to this question can shed light on the changing norms of spoken English in Texas and thus on the mechanics of the devernacularization of TxE.

In order to turn the different phonetic trajectories of the GOOSE vowel into a viable sociolinguistic variable, we test two different techniques of analysis. First, F2 measurements from 9 points in each token of the vowel are plotted on a graph as a reflection of the tongue's horizontal movement during vowel production. Each graph is coded as either MAE or SAE according to the distinct trajectory shapes described by Koops (2010: 117). Using this binary impressionistic coding as a response variable, binary mixed effects regression is performed to test the influence of preceding and following phonetic environment, interview style, speaker age, ethnicity, gender, and year of birth as well as time of recording on the realization of GOOSE. Results are unclear, with preceding phonetic environment emerging as the single significant predictor. We attribute this fact to problems with our coding scheme.

In order to develop a more robust outcome variable, we focus on the points of greatest divergence in the two trajectory shapes by subtracting the normalized F2 at 80% of the vowel from that at 20%. The resulting continuous outcome variable is used in another mixed effects regression model testing the influence of the predictors mentioned above. In this analysis, sociolinguistic factors can be shown to exert significant impact on realizations of GOOSE. The general direction is as expected, with women favoring the prestige mainstream variant over men and the most careful interview style, word lists, showing a similar effect. Among the more surprising results is the inversion of the expected order of reading passage and interview data as factor levels. Latino speakers lead the orientation toward the mainstream norm, followed by Anglos and African Americans.

Findings indicate that while the familiar pattern of a change in progress is suggested in the gender dimension, it is not pronounced in either real or apparent time. This may tentatively be attributed to the limited size of the sample. Meanwhile, the stark departure of stylistic factor levels from familiar patterns supports descriptions of modern-day Texas English as a complex resource featuring forms of the conservative, Southern-oriented dialect deployed in rhetorically complex, performative contexts (Johnstone 1999).