

Relatives from the South

Jenny Cheshire¹ Sue Fox¹

David Britain²

¹Queen Mary, University of London ²University of Essex

UK Language Variation and Change

University of Lancaster, 11-13 September 2007

- 1) Most people *that have been born and bred in the Fens* tend to stay there, don't they?
- 2) I'm the only one *who's gone to college*
- 3) the new underfelt *which I'm gonna have*
- 4) the boy *whose arm is broken**
- 5) the girl *whom you described as intelligent**
- 6) that's just as far as them trees *what I noticed*
- 7) the same old man *as hit the horse behind the ear*
once shod two hundred donkeys in one day
- 8) I didn't like the person *I was with*

*No examples found in datasets

- Is there evidence of a North/South divide?
 - *that* prevalent in the North and *WH* in the South?

(Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2002:112)

- Is there evidence for a mainstream/periphery divide?

(Tagliamonte 2002:164)

- Is there evidence of *that* generalisation?

(Tagliamonte 2002:153)

- Is there evidence of *what* generalisation in the south?

(Hermann 2005:58)

Aims of present study:

To contrast three Southern English varieties of English

- a) A rural, relatively isolated non-standard variety of the south of England – the Fens;
- b) A London suburb
- c) An urban inner London Borough

with respect to the distribution of relative markers and the internal and external factors constraining their use.

The Fens:

- A South Eastern English rural variety
- Situated approx. 80 miles north of London
- Sparsely populated, largely white population (98.6% - Census 2001)
- Data from 15 speakers, 10 older (55-65), 5 younger (16-24)
- 294 tokens

London:

- A South Eastern English urban variety
- Outer London:
 - predominantly white population
 - large-scale in-migration from inner London since the 1950s
 - Data from 34 adolescents (16-19) and 6 older speakers (+65)
 - 880 tokens

- Inner London:

- multicultural population

- large-scale in-migration and out-migration since 1950s

- Data from 44 multi-ethnic adolescents (16-19) and 6 white Anglo older speakers (+65)

- 991 tokens

Distribution of relative markers

	<i>that</i>		\emptyset		<i>WH</i>		<i>as</i>		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
The Fens	15	44	36	107	48	141	1	2	294
Outer London	61	542	15	130	24	208	-	-	880
Inner London	63	623	9	90	28	278	-	-	991
Total <i>N</i>		1209		327		627		2	2165

Distribution of WH relative markers

	<i>who</i>		<i>which</i>		<i>what</i>		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
The Fens	10	29	-	1	38	111	294
Outer London	21	182	1	12	2	14	880
Inner London	22	220	2	20	4	38	991
Total <i>N</i>		431		33		163	

Factors constraining the distribution of relative markers within the relative marker paradigm:

- Grammatical function of the antecedent head
- Animacy of the antecedent head
- Definiteness of the antecedent head
- Sentence structure
 - Existentials
 - Cleft sentences
 - Possessives with *have/got*
- Length and complexity of relative clause
- Education of speaker
- Age
- Gender

Distribution of relative markers in *SUBJECT* function

	<i>that</i>		<i>what</i>		<i>which</i>		<i>who</i>		<i>zero</i>		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
The Fens	21	37	37	65	-	-	13	24	29	51	177
Outer London	64	351	-	-	2	9	31	170	3	19	551
Inner London	64	449	2	13	2	13	28	194	4	28	697
Total <i>N</i>		837		78		22		388		98	

Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT FUNCTION by human property of antecedent

	Humans		Lexical item 'People'		Things		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
The Fens							
<i>that</i>	20	22	15	3	27	12	37
<i>what</i>	39	44	25	5	34	15	64
<i>who</i>	16	18	30	6	-	-	24
<i>zero</i>	25	28	30	6	39	17	51
Total <i>N</i>		112		20		44	176

Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT FUNCTION by human property of antecedent

	Humans		Lexical item 'People'		Things		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
Outer London							
<i>that</i>	56	184	65	67	85	100	351
<i>what</i>	-	1	-	-	1	1	2
<i>which</i>	-	2	-	-	6	7	9
<i>who</i>	40	131	34	35	3	3	169
<i>zero</i>	4	12	1	1	5	6	19
Total <i>N</i>		330		103		117	550

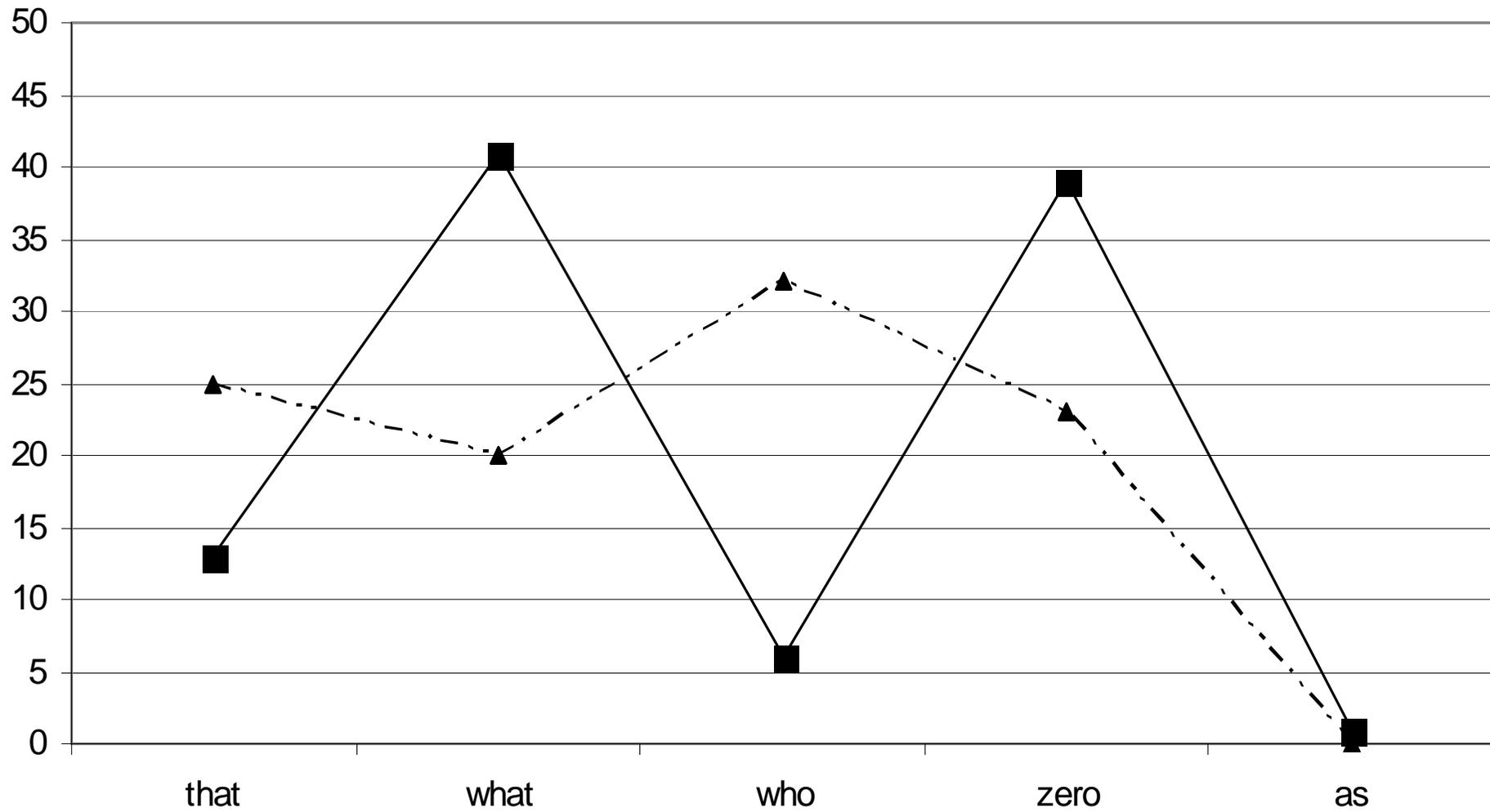
Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT FUNCTION by human property of antecedent

	Humans		Lexical item 'People'		Things		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
<i>that</i>	59	251	70	102	79	95	448
<i>what</i>	-	2	-	-	9	11	13
<i>which</i>	-	2	1	1	8	10	13
<i>who</i>	36	154	26	38	1	1	193
<i>zero</i>	5	20	3	4	3	4	28
Total <i>N</i>		429		145		121	695

Distribution of relative markers in OBJECT function

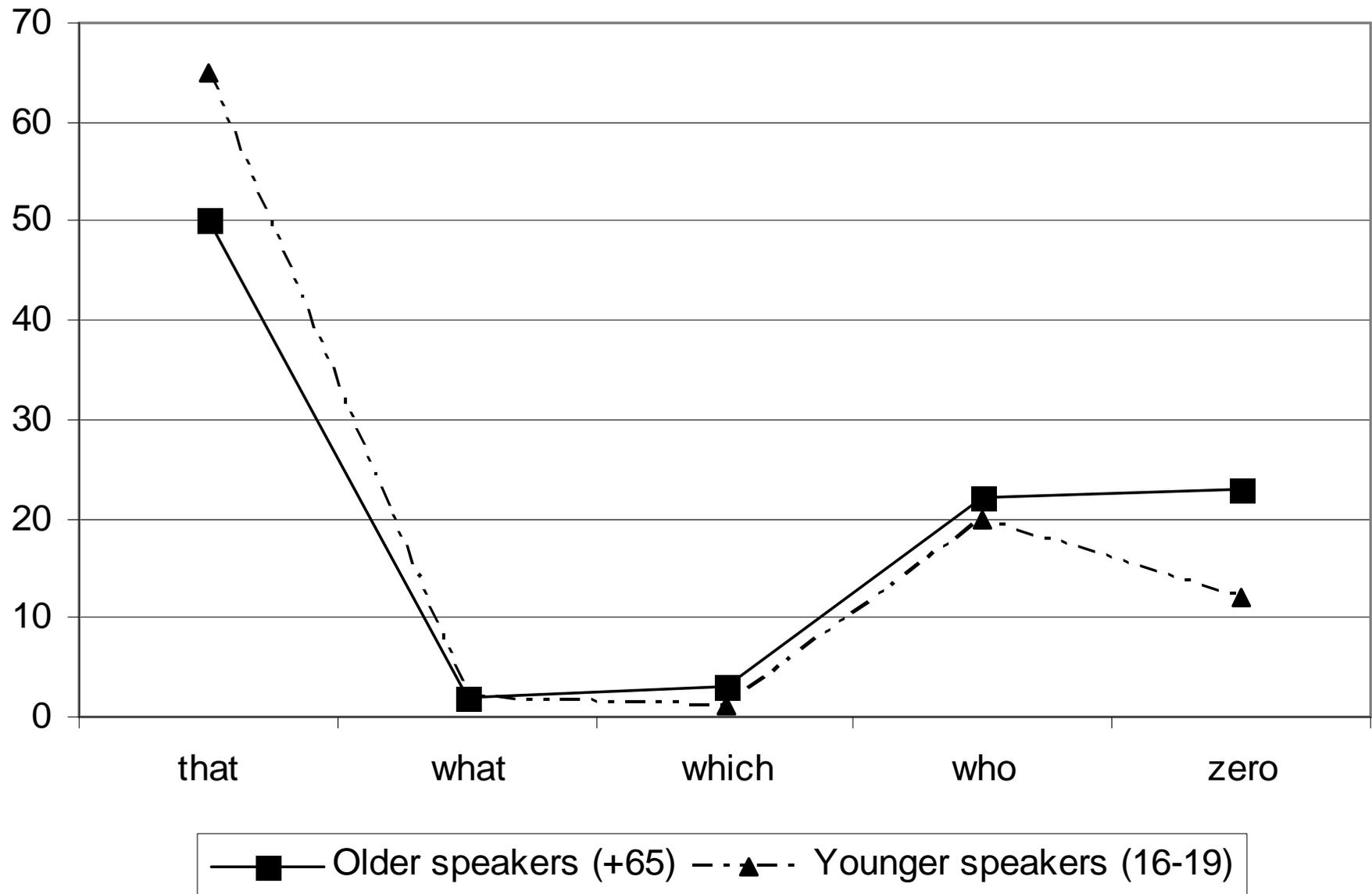
	<i>that</i>		<i>what</i>		<i>which</i>		<i>who</i>		<i>zero</i>		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
The Fens	5	4	42	35	1	1	1	1	51	42	83
Outer London	59	164	4	10	1	2	3	9	33	92	277
Inner London	60	135	11	25	3	7	8	18	18	41	226
Total <i>N</i>		303		70		10		28		175	

Distribution of relative markers in The Fens by age

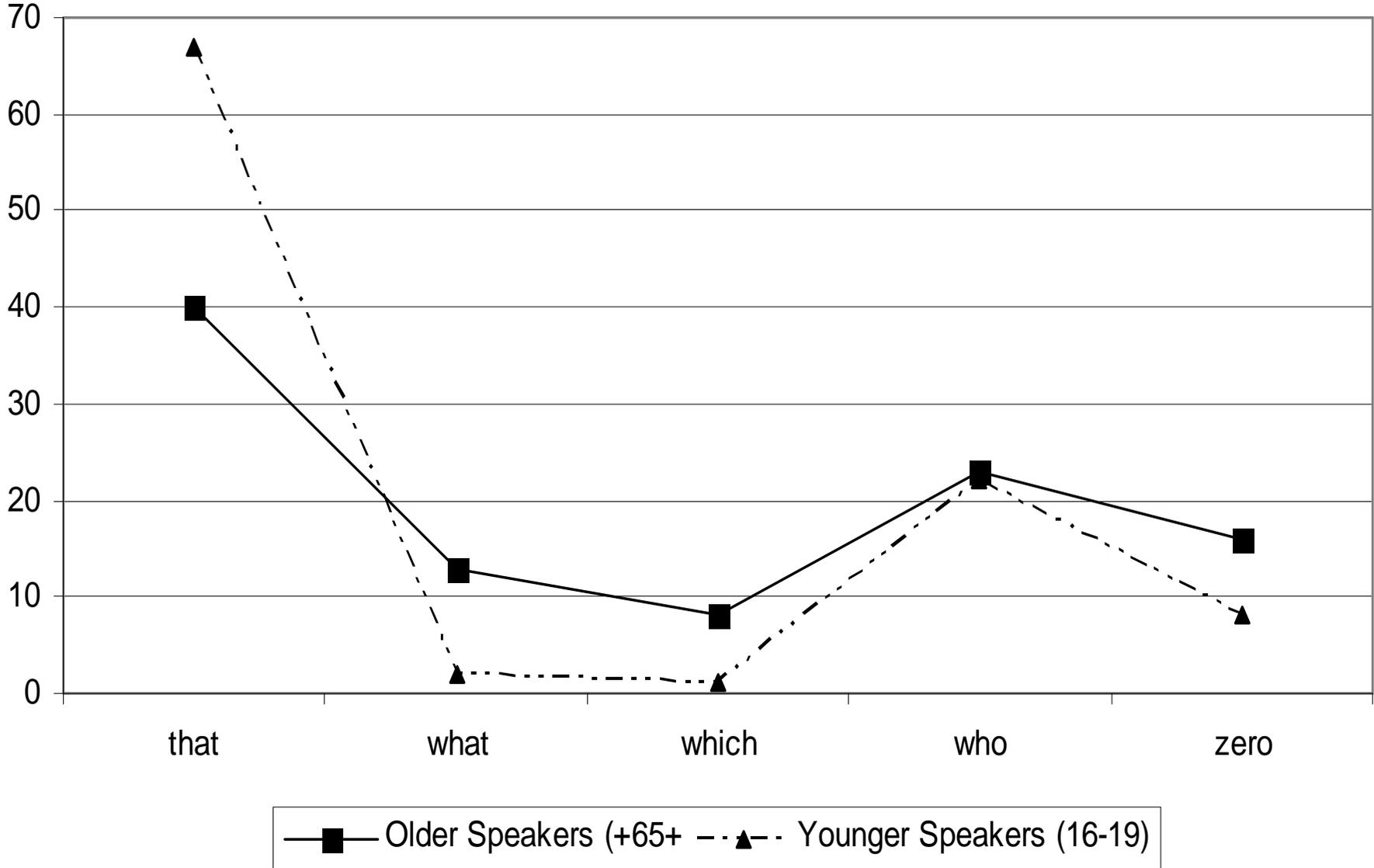


—■— Older Speakers (55-65) - -▲- - Younger Speakers (16-24)

Distribution of relative markers in Outer London by age



Distribution of relative markers in Inner London by age



Conclusions

- Is there evidence of a North/South divide?
 - *Evidence of variation across varieties not necessarily separated by geographical north/south divisions*
- Is there evidence for a mainstream/periphery divide?
 - *Results demonstrate substantial differences between The Fens (peripheral) and mainstream London varieties BUT London forms diffusing to East Anglia?*

- Is there evidence of *that* generalisation?

- Results from London demonstrate that **'that'** is the predominant marker in all contexts. Younger speakers have more use of **'that'** suggesting that it is generalising. Younger speakers in The Fens also use more **'that'**.

- Is there evidence of *what* generalisation in the south?

- **'what'** is robust in The Fens and continues to be the predominant marker in all contexts confirming East Anglia as the heartland of **'what'** usage **BUT** possibly under threat from the spread of **'that'**?

- very little use of **'what'** among young speakers in London leading to its obsolescence in these varieties

Our thanks to.....

Eivind Torgersen for extracting tokens;

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for
research grant RES-000-23-0680

Linguistic Innovators: the English of adolescents in London

Paul Kerswill¹, Jenny Cheshire², Eivind Torgersen¹, Sue Fox²

¹University of Lancaster ²Queen Mary, University of London

www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators/index.htm

(website maintained by E.Torgersen)

References:

- Ball, C. (1996). A diachronic study of relative markers in spoken and written English. *Language Variation and Change* 8:227-258.
- Beal, J. and Corrigan, K. (2002). Relatives in Tyneside and Northumbrian English. In Poussa, P. (ed.) *Relativisation on the North Sea Littoral*. Munich, Lincom Europa.
- Britain, D. (2007). Grammatical Variation in England. In Britain, D. (ed.) *Language in the British Isles*. Cambridge, C.U.P. p75-104.
- Cheshire, J. (1982). *Variation in an English Dialect*. Cambridge, C.U.P.
- Hermann, T. (2003). Relative clauses in English dialects. A typological approach. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Albert-Ludwigs Universität, Freiburg i.Br.
- Hermann, T. (2005). Relative clauses in English dialects of the British Isles. In Bernt Kortmann, Tanja Hermann, Lukas Pietsch and Susanne Wagner (eds.) *A comparison of English dialects: Agreement, gender, relative clauses*. Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nevalainen, T. and Raumolin-Brunberg, H. (2002). The rise of the relative *who* in Early Modern English. In Poussa, P. (ed.) *Relativisation on the North Sea Littoral*. Munich, Lincom Europa.
- Sigley, R. (1997). (1997). *Choosing your Relatives: Relative Clauses in New Zealand English*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Wellington, Victoria, University of Wellington.
- Tagliamonte, S. (2002). Variation and change in the British relative marker system. In Poussa, P. (ed.) *Relativisation on the North Sea Littoral*. Munich, Lincom Europa.
- Tagliamonte, S., Smith, J. and Lawrence, H. (2005). No taming the vernacular! Insights from the relatives in northern Britain. In *Language Variation and Change* 17:75-112.