

*Investigating language and ethnicity in London:
Production and perception data*

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□ *Linguistic innovators: the English of adolescents in London (2004–7)*

□ *Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety (2007–10)*

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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators/>

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/multicultural/>

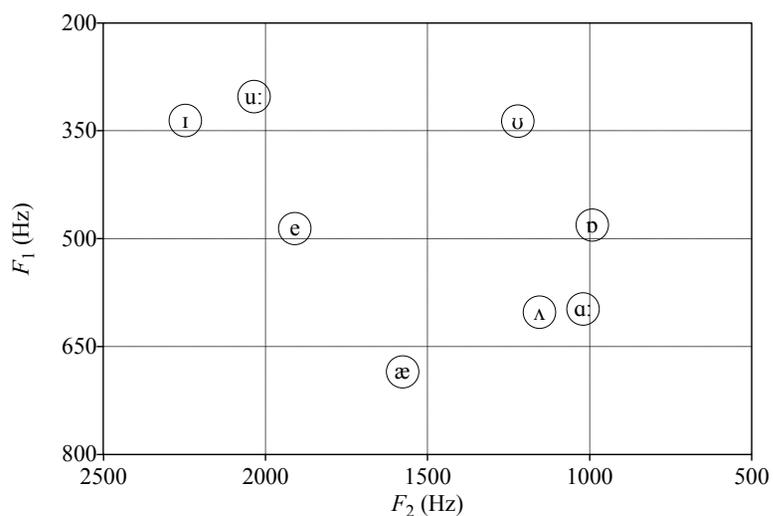


Research questions of MLE project

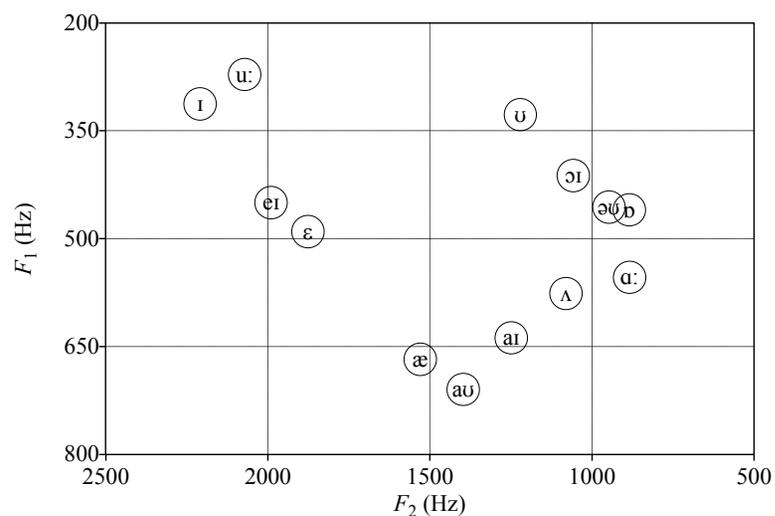
- Is it **age-graded**?
- Characterisation of the ‘multiracial vernacular’ of London:
 - Is it **ethnically neutral**?
 - Is it **regionally neutral**?
- Are there differences between areas within London?

Comparison of production data: teenagers from different areas have very similar vowel systems

Hackney 2005 teenagers

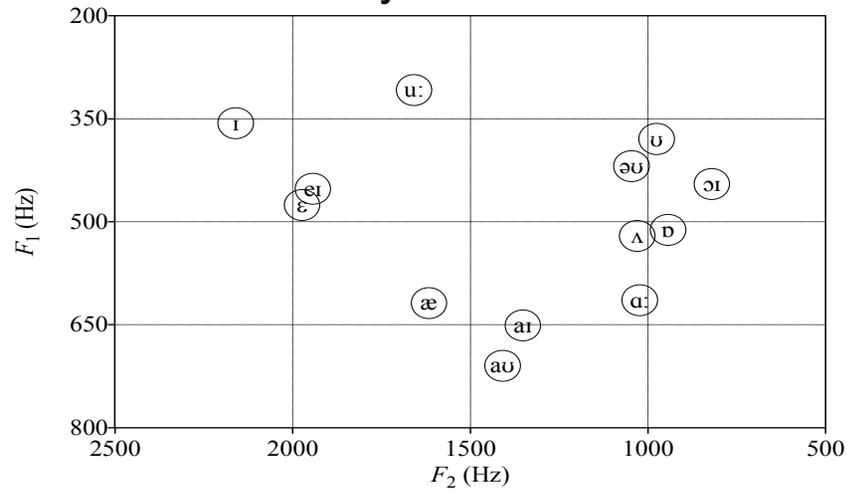


MLE project teenagers

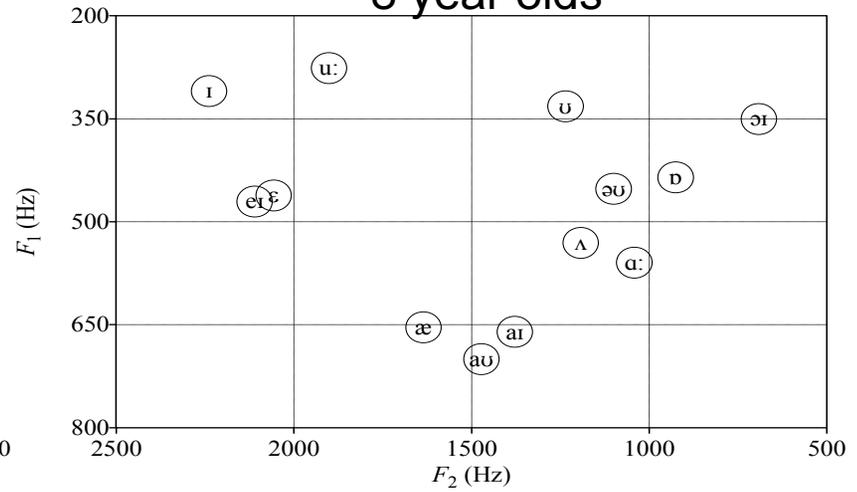


Development in vowel system

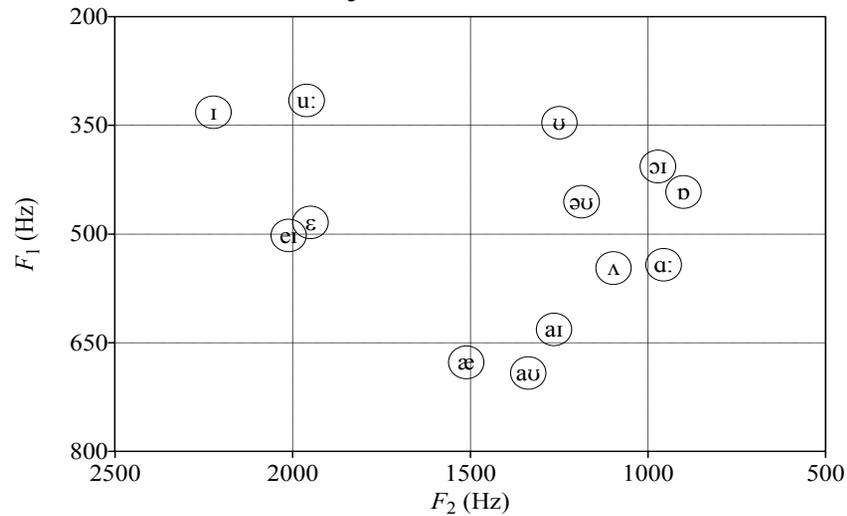
4 year olds



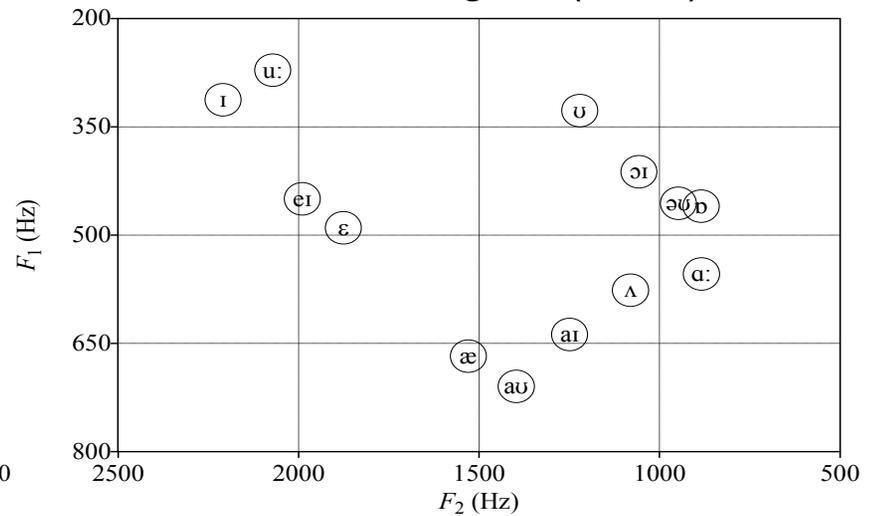
8 year olds



12 year olds



Teenagers (2008)



Research questions for the MLE **perception study**

1. Given our hypothesis that Multicultural London English is ethnically neutral, can we identify individuals (of differing ethnic backgrounds) whose accents do **not** reveal ethnic background?
2. Are some accents more ethnically identifiable than others?
 - Is there an interaction with local accent?

Perception test in London

- Classification of real speech
 - 10 second sound clip per speaker
 - Examine effect of the sociolinguistic factor of **friendship network** on classification of ethnicity and geographical location of the speaker
 - All listeners from inner London
 - Listeners aged 12 or 17 (N=68)

Friendship network scores of speakers

- 1: all friends same ethnicity as self
- 2: up to 20% of a different ethnicity
- 3: up to 40% of a different ethnicity
- 4: up to 60% of a different ethnicity
- 5: up to 80% of a different ethnicity

Who are the speakers?

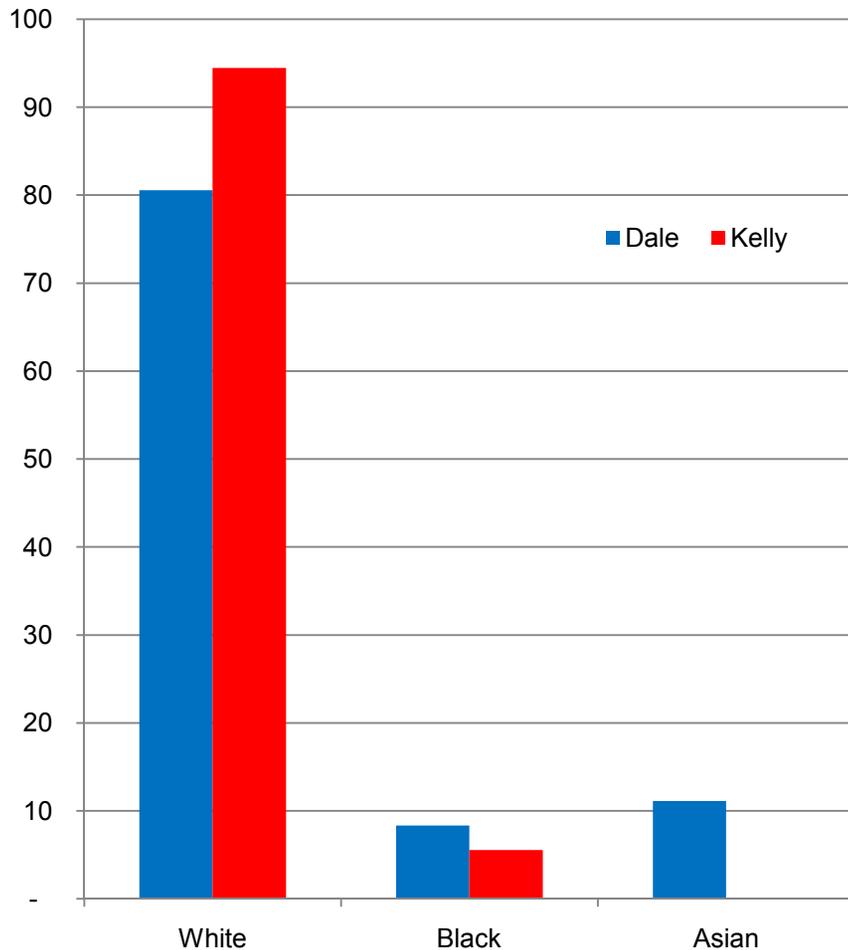
Megan	Hackney	Anglo	3 (mainly Anglo network)
Andrew	Hackney	Anglo	3 (mainly Anglo network)
Laura	Hackney	Anglo	5 (multiethnic network)
Ryan	Hackney	Anglo	5 (multiethnic network)
Sulema	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('other')	5 (multiethnic network)
Kirsty	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('Asian')	5 (multiethnic network)
Grace	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('black')	5 (multiethnic network)
Dom	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('other')	4 (multiethnic network)
Amjad	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('Asian')	5 (multiethnic network)
Chris	Hackney	Non-Anglo ('black')	5 (multiethnic network)
Kelly	Havering	Anglo	2 (mainly Anglo network)
Dale	Havering	Anglo	2 (mainly Anglo network)

- Plus four Birmingham voices:
 - 2 female, 2 male
 - One Afro-Caribbean, one White for each sex

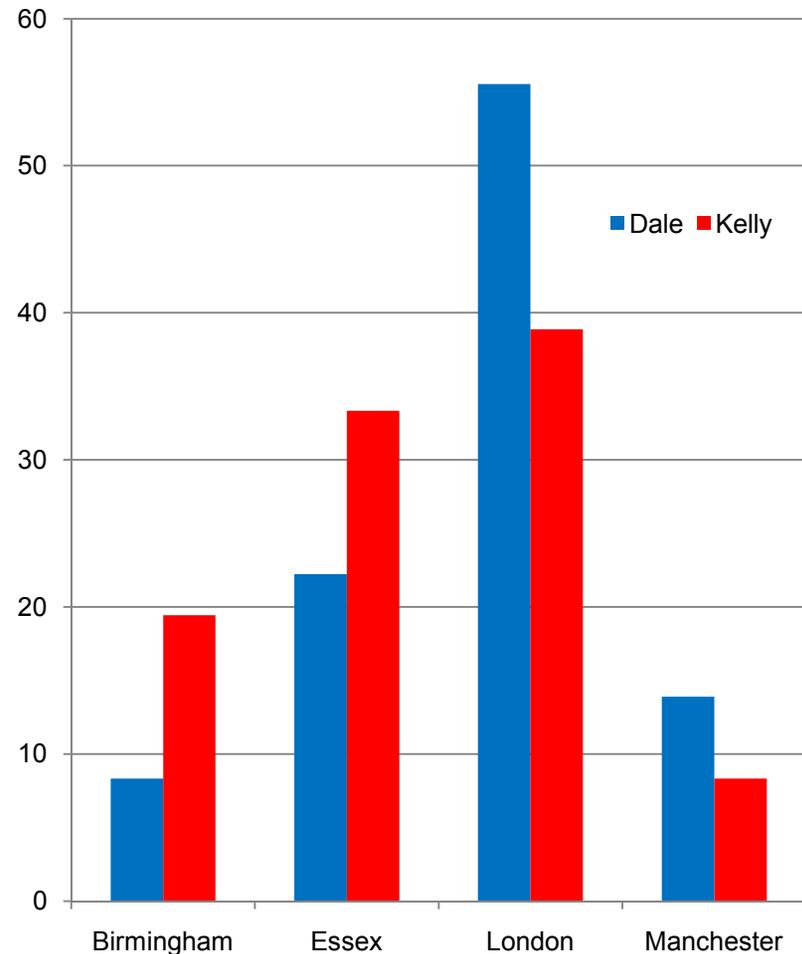
Significant effects

- Only **speaker's friendship network** had a significant effect on identifications of speaker ethnicity and location
- Speaker sex was **not** significant
- Listener age, sex and ethnicity were **not** significant

Forced-choice judgements of **Havering ('Essex')** Anglo (score 2) voices in terms of **ethnicity** and **location**

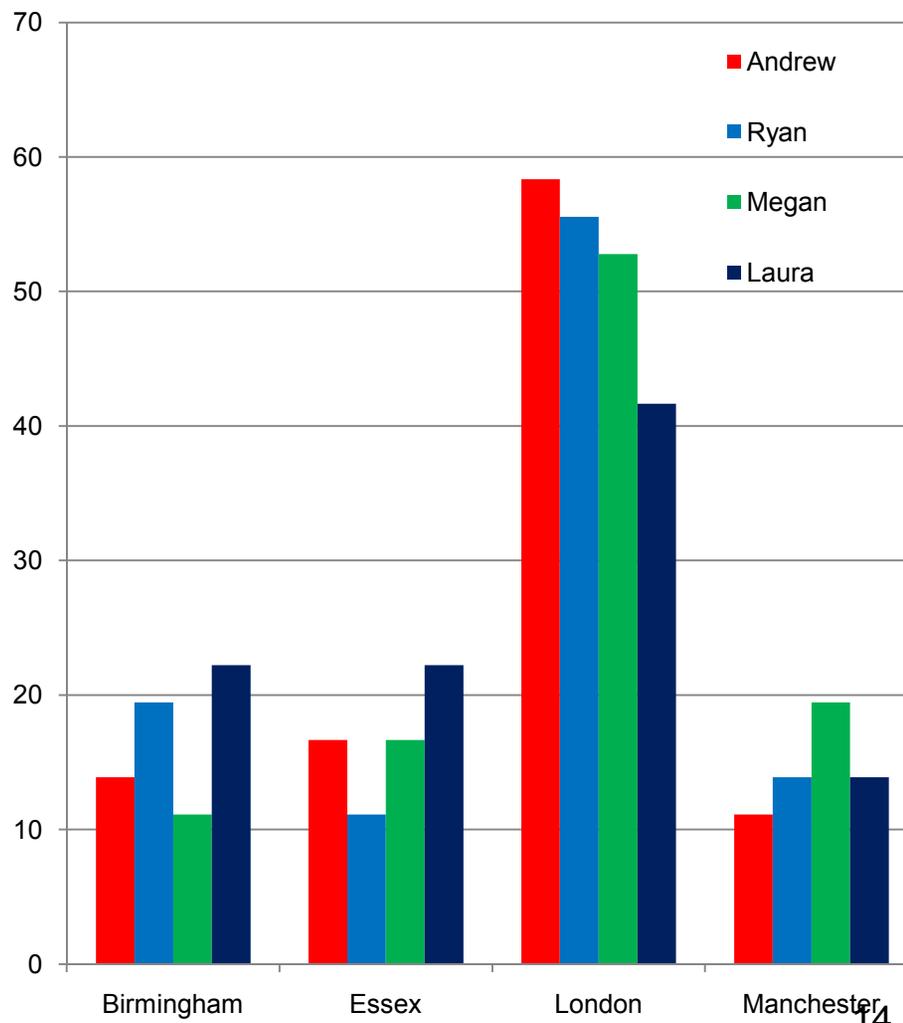
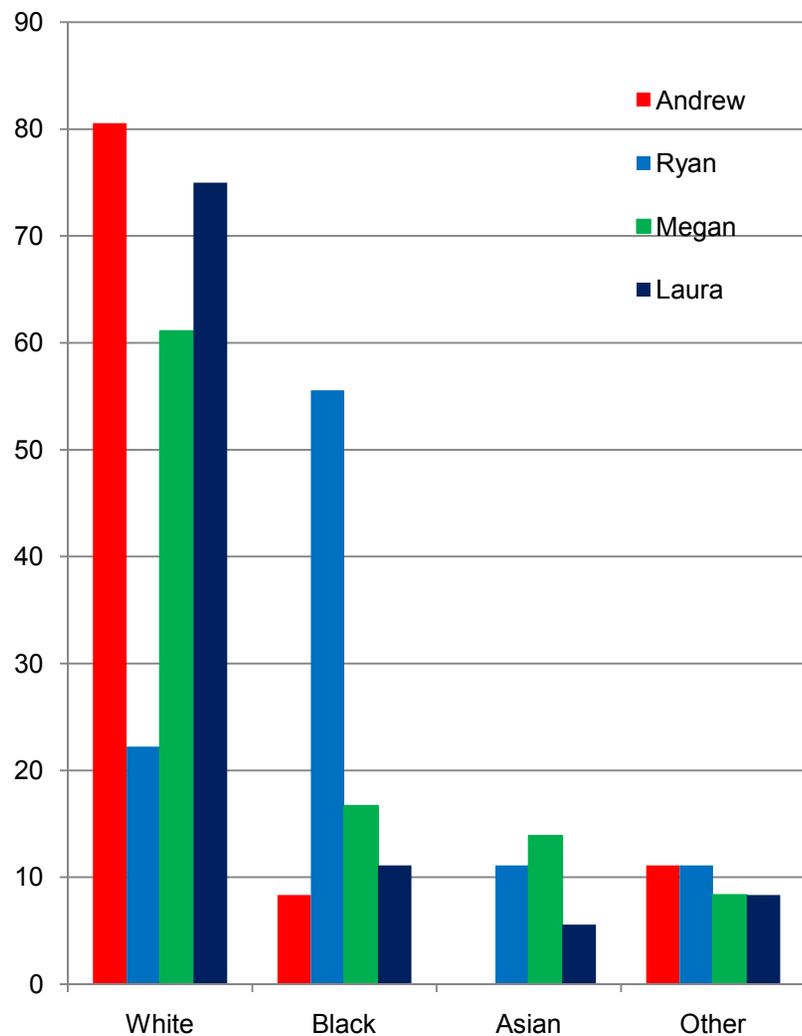


Judgement of **ethnicity** of speakers based on voice sample

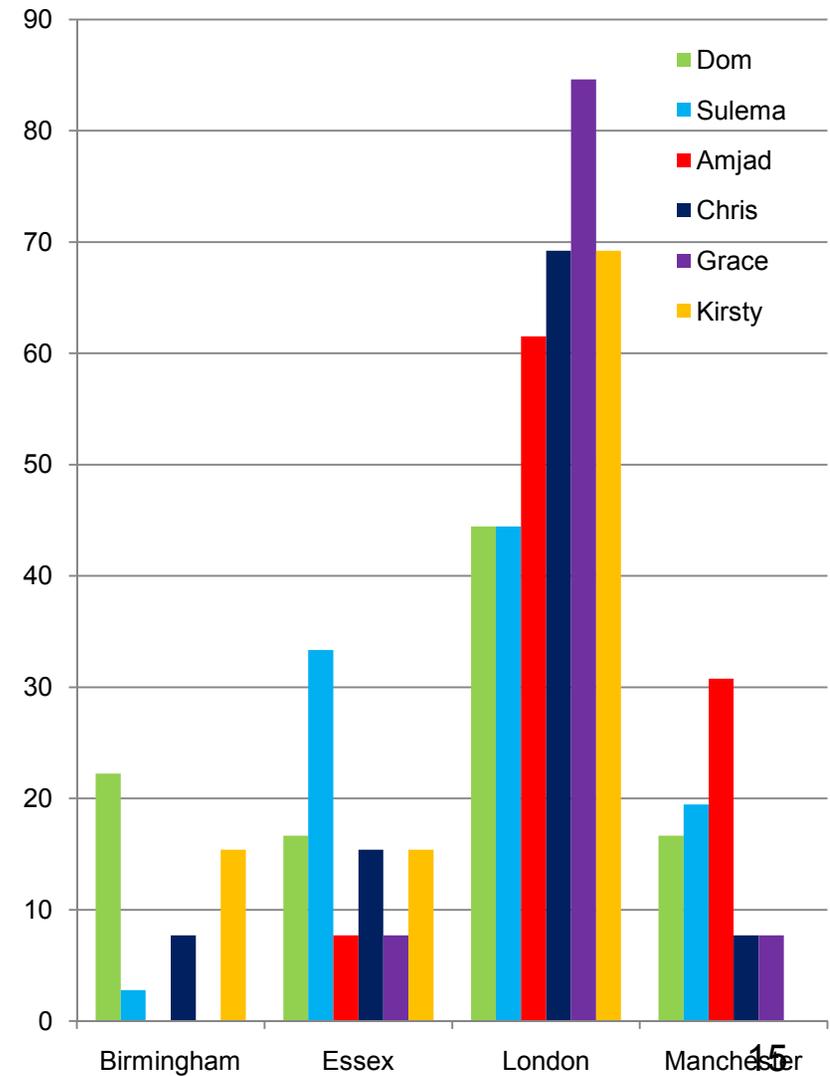
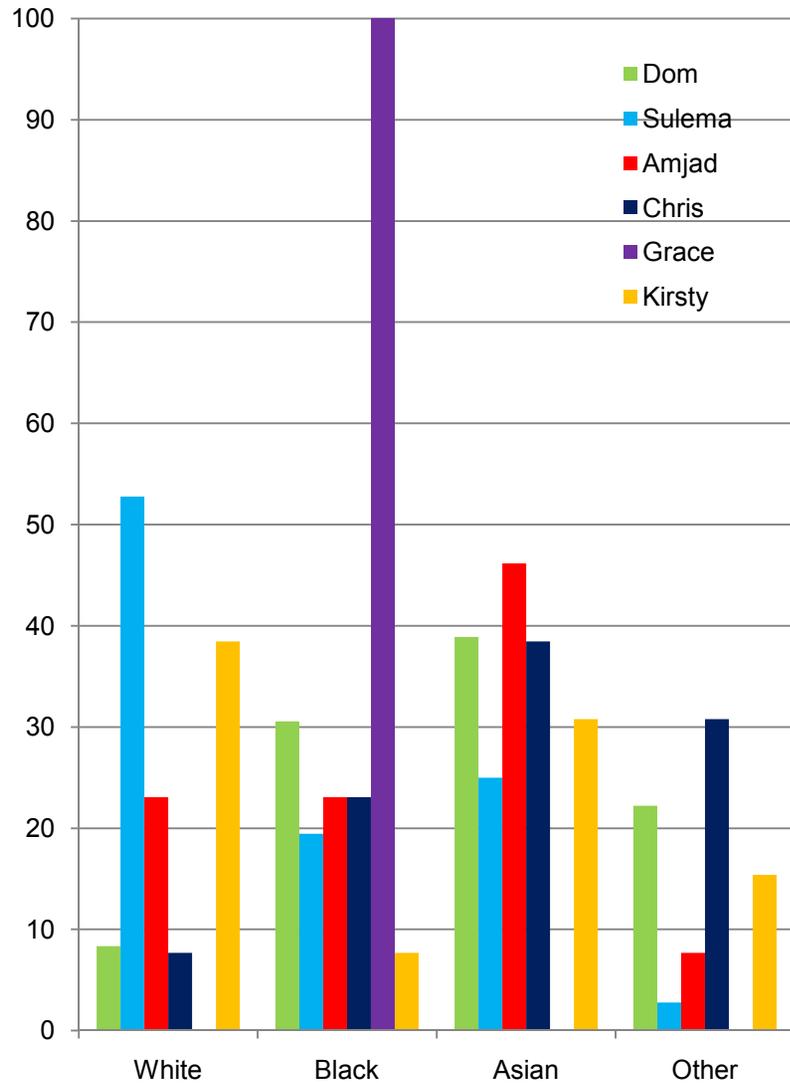


Judgement of **location** of speakers based on voice sample

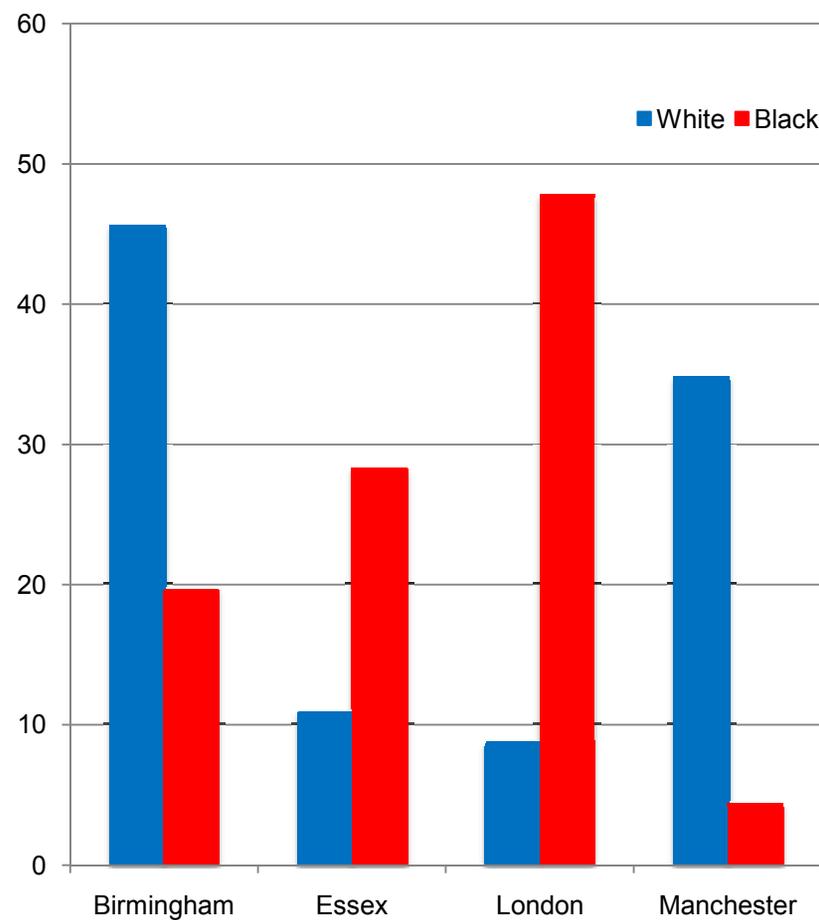
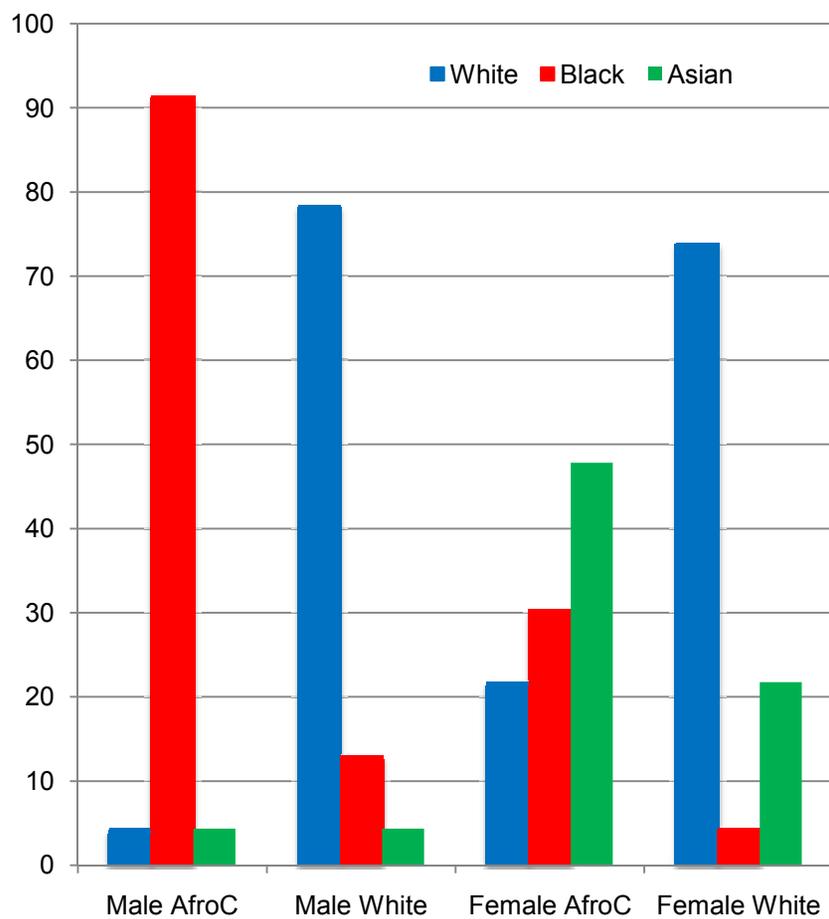
Forced-choice judgements of *Hackney Anglo* voices (score 3 and 5) voices in terms of ethnicity and location



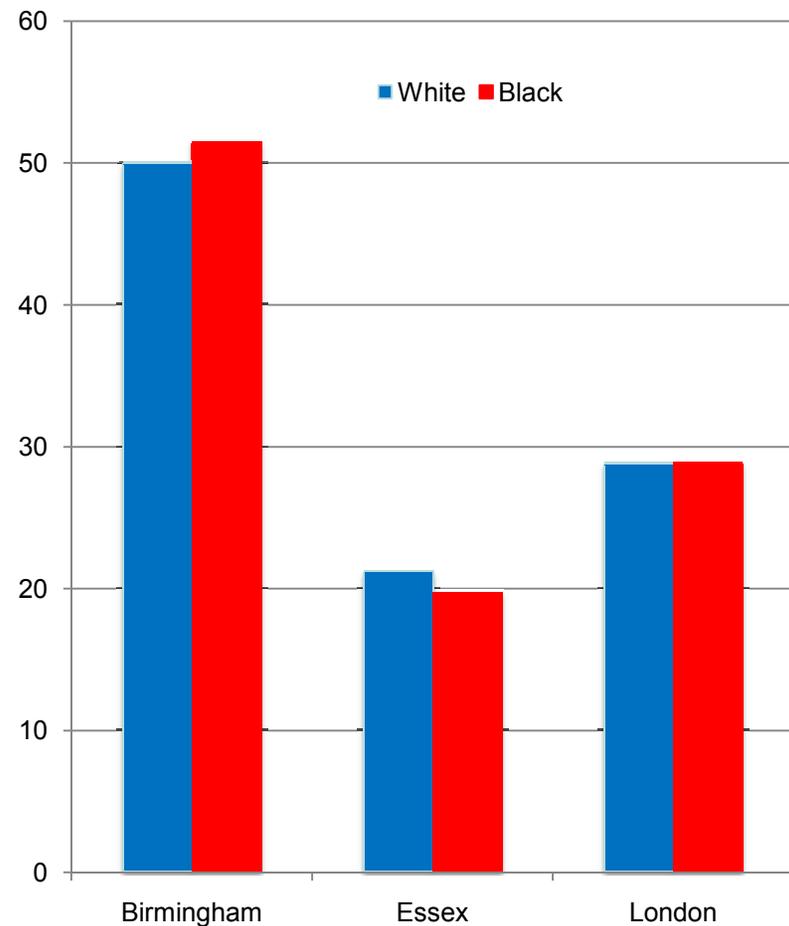
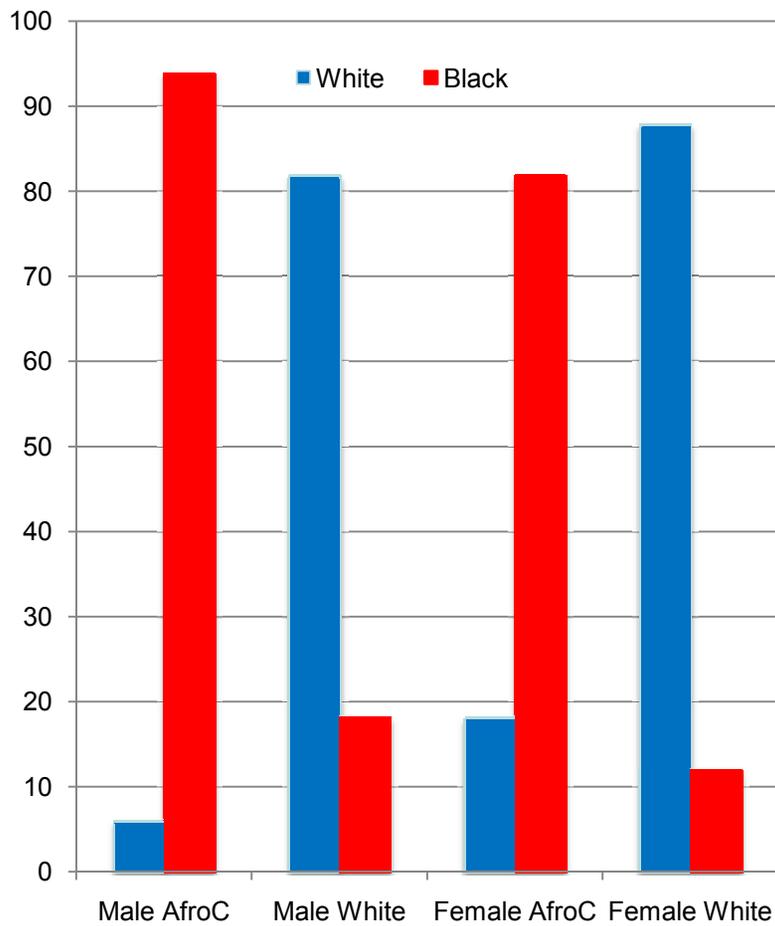
Forced-choice judgements of Hackney non-Anglo (score 4 and 5) voices in terms of ethnicity and location



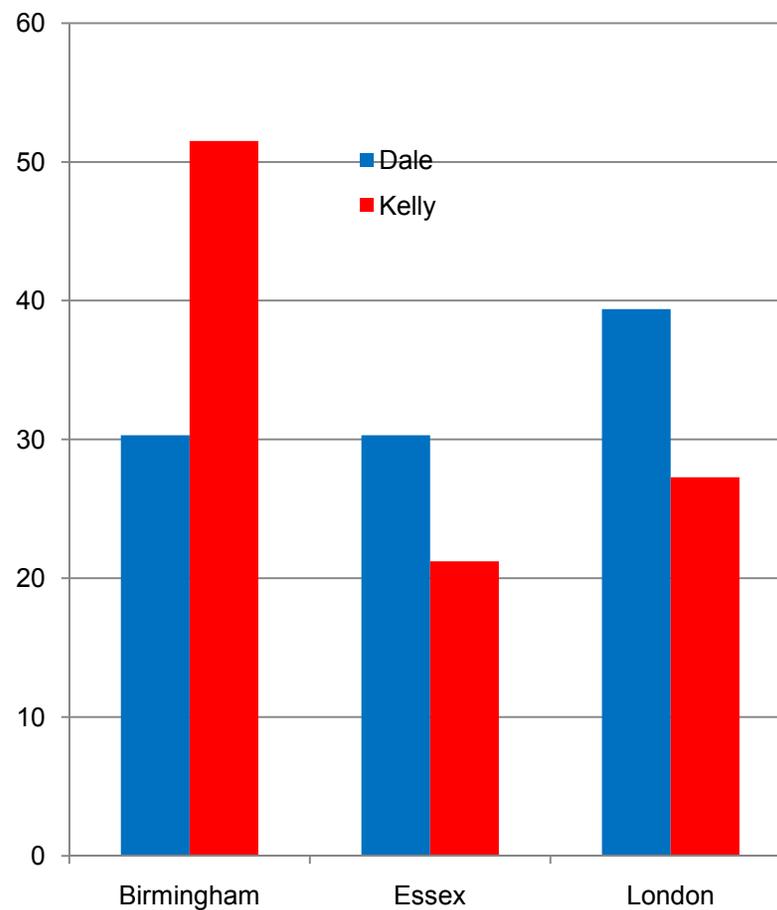
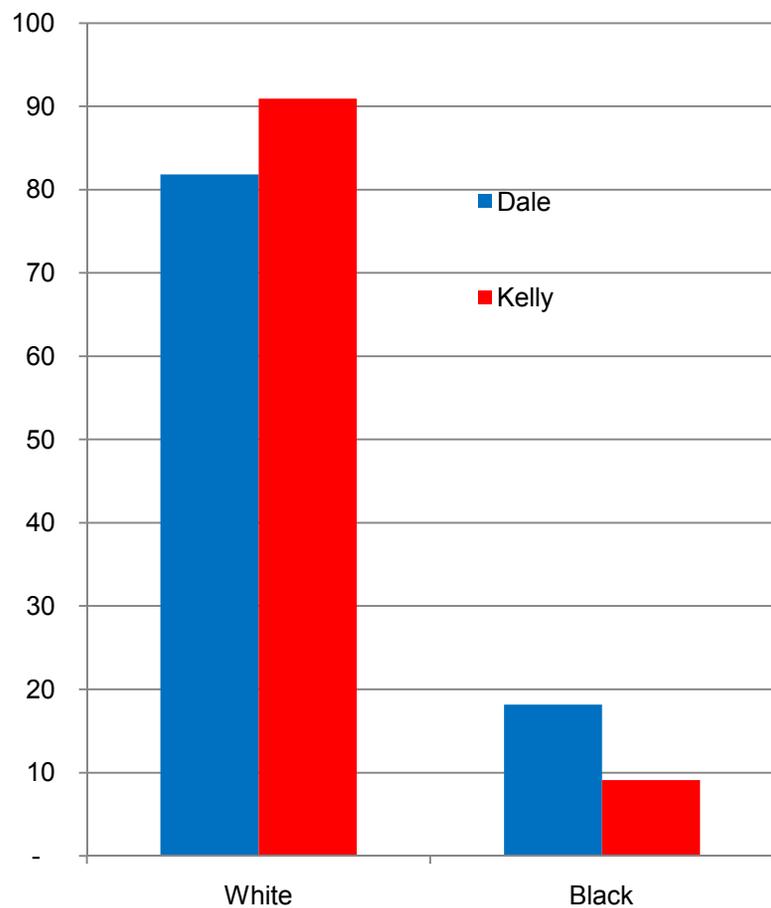
Forced-choice judgements of **Birmingham** voices by **London** listeners in terms of **ethnicity** and **location**



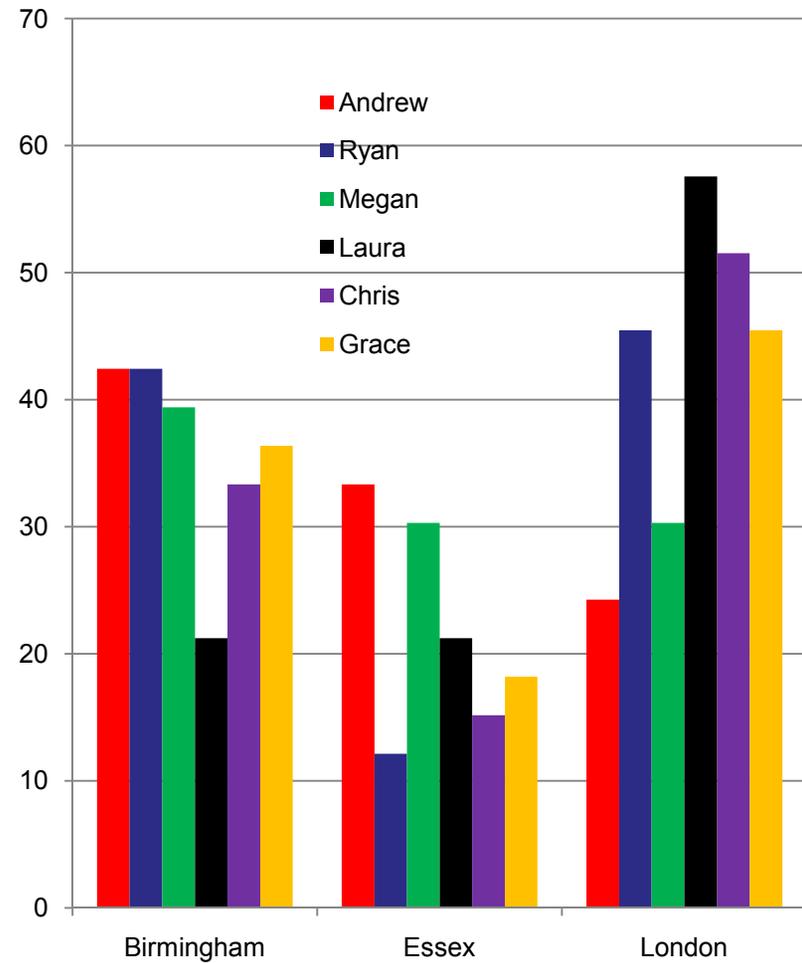
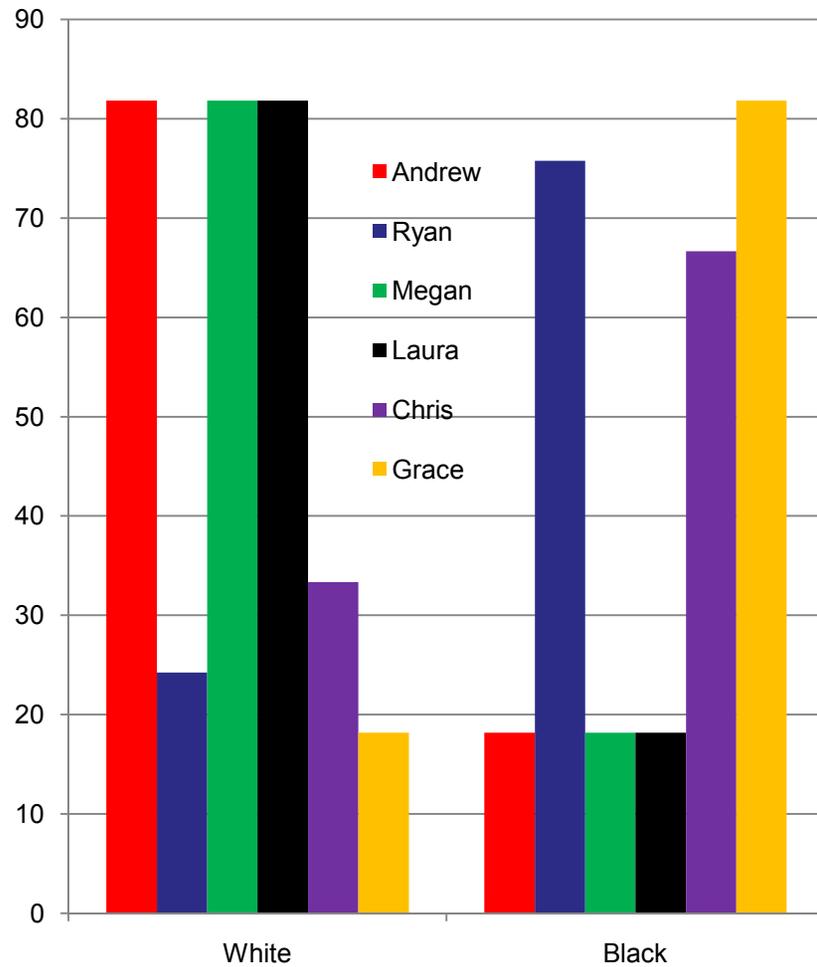
Listeners (n=33) and voices from **Birmingham** in terms of **ethnicity and location**



Birmingham listeners and London voices in terms of ethnicity and location



Birmingham listeners and London voices in terms of ethnicity and location



Results: ethnicity

- Anglos from Havering (Essex) with Network Score 2 are overwhelmingly identified as ‘white’
- Anglos from Hackney with Network Score 3 are identified as ‘white’, but less consistently than Network score 2
- Anglos from Hackney with Network score 5 are least often identified as ‘white’
- Non-Anglos from Hackney with Network score 4 and 5 are identified in disparate ways
- This suggests lack of specific ethnic marking among Non-Anglos in London

Results: location

- Listener were fairly good at distinguishing between local and non-local voices
- But:
 - Birmingham ‘black’ voices were more often heard as coming from London (London listeners)
 - MLE-voices are heard as coming from cities
 - But it’s difficult to hear which city it is
- Lack of familiar geographical marking = heard as coming from London

Results: location

- ‘White’ traditional voices are heard as coming from Essex (or supposed non-multicultural areas, such Birmingham (for Birmingham listeners))

Summary

- Inner London speech is more ethnically neutral than outer London speech
- *Traditional speech*, whether from Birmingham or London/Essex, is judged as local – even if this means identifying the voice with the wrong city
- *Multicultural voices* are more often placed in London, even if this also results in placing the voice in the wrong city