

A photograph of a busy outdoor market stall in London. The stall is covered with a green and white striped canopy and is filled with various fruits, including mangoes, pineapples, and bananas. A sign in the foreground reads "BEST LARGE Juicy SWEET MANGO". Several people are visible, including a man in a white cap and a woman in a black hijab. The background shows a multi-story brick building and a street with other market stalls.

# Perceiving ethnicity and place in Multicultural London English

Paul Kerswill, Eivind Torgersen, Arfaan Khan and Susan Fox

Queen Mary, University of London  
Lancaster University

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

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

*Investigators:*

Paul Kerswill (Lancaster University)

Jenny Cheshire (Queen Mary, University of London)

*Research Associates:*

Sue Fox, Arfaan Khan, (Queen Mary, University of London)

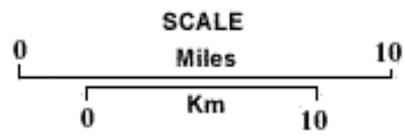
Eivind Torgersen (Lancaster University)



Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

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

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



# Contact, innovation, diffusion and levelling in dialectology

(1) Overall patterns:

- **Divergence/innovation** in inner London
- Non-Anglos and Anglos with non-Anglo networks in the lead in innovation
- **Some diffusion** to outer London
- **Levelling** in outer London

## (2) Locus of contact in dialectology:

- Transmission of innovations through **social networks** can be demonstrated quantitatively
- Contact varieties have the potential to spearhead language change, given the right social relations and favourable identity factors

# Research questions MLE project

- Are there differences between areas within London?
- How does it spread?
- Is it changing?
- Is it age-graded?
- Are there effects of home language?
- Characterisation of the ‘multiracial vernacular’ of London: is it ethnically neutral?

# Project design: MLE project

- 4, 8, 12, 17 year olds and adults
- North London
- Female, male
- “Anglo” and “non-Anglo”
- Free interviews in pairs
- Phonological and grammatical analysis
- Perception tests

# Perception tests

- Classification of real speech
  - 10 second sound clip per speaker
  - Examine effect 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

- 1: lower than 20% multi-ethnic network
- 2: between 20 and 40% multi-ethnic network
- 3: between 40 and 60% multi-ethnic network
- 4: between 60 and 80% multi-ethnic network
- 5: higher than 80% multi-ethnic network

# Who are the speakers?

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

# Perception test screen

Natural\_speech\_all\_revised

File Query Help

1 / 12

Restore Down

Make your selection: ethnicity and location

WHITE BIRMINGHAM

BLACK LONDON

ASIAN ESSEX

OTHER MANCHESTER

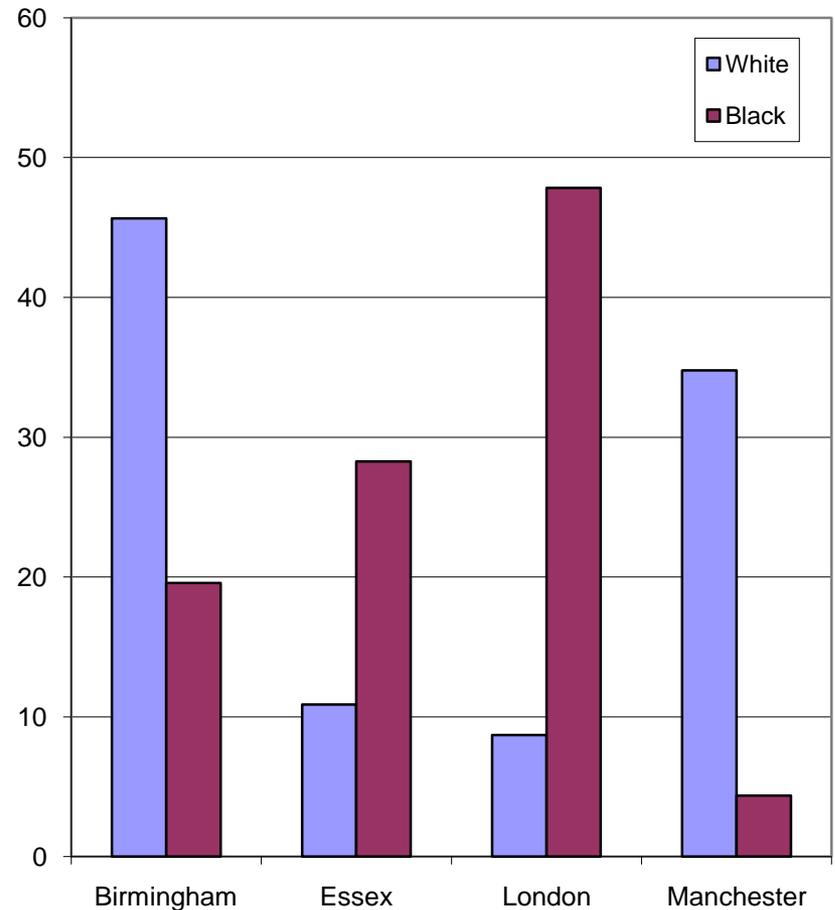
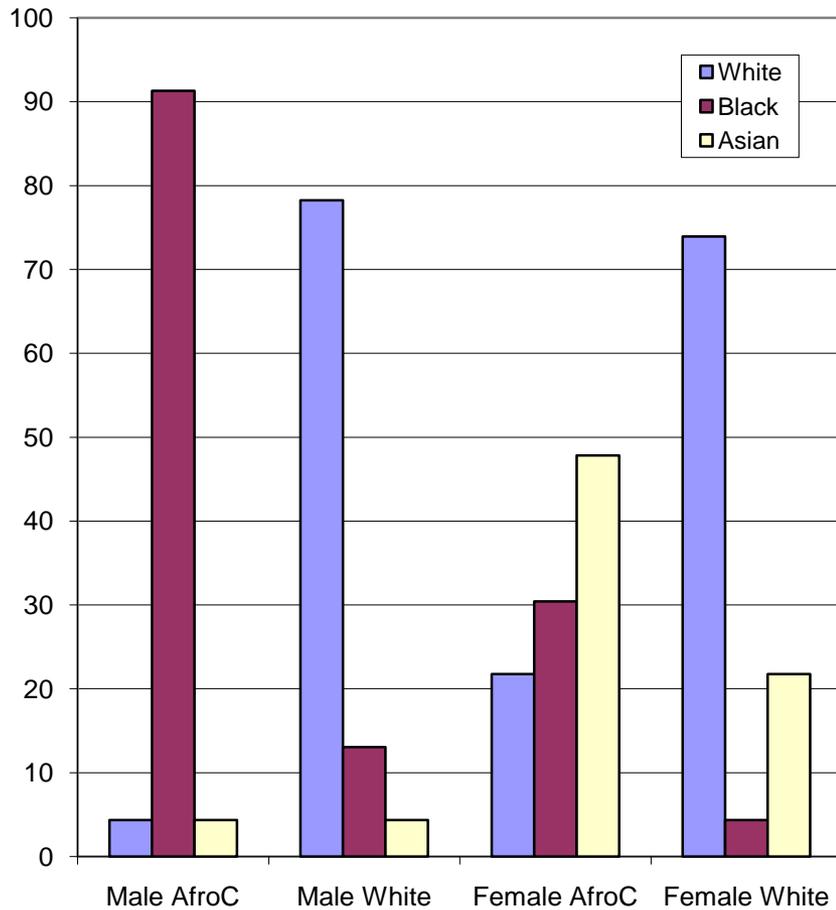
NEXT

Click here to play the last sound again

start

Transcriber ... Microsoft Po... Inbox - Micr... Praat objects Praat picture Natural\_spe... EN 16:56

# Birmingham voices



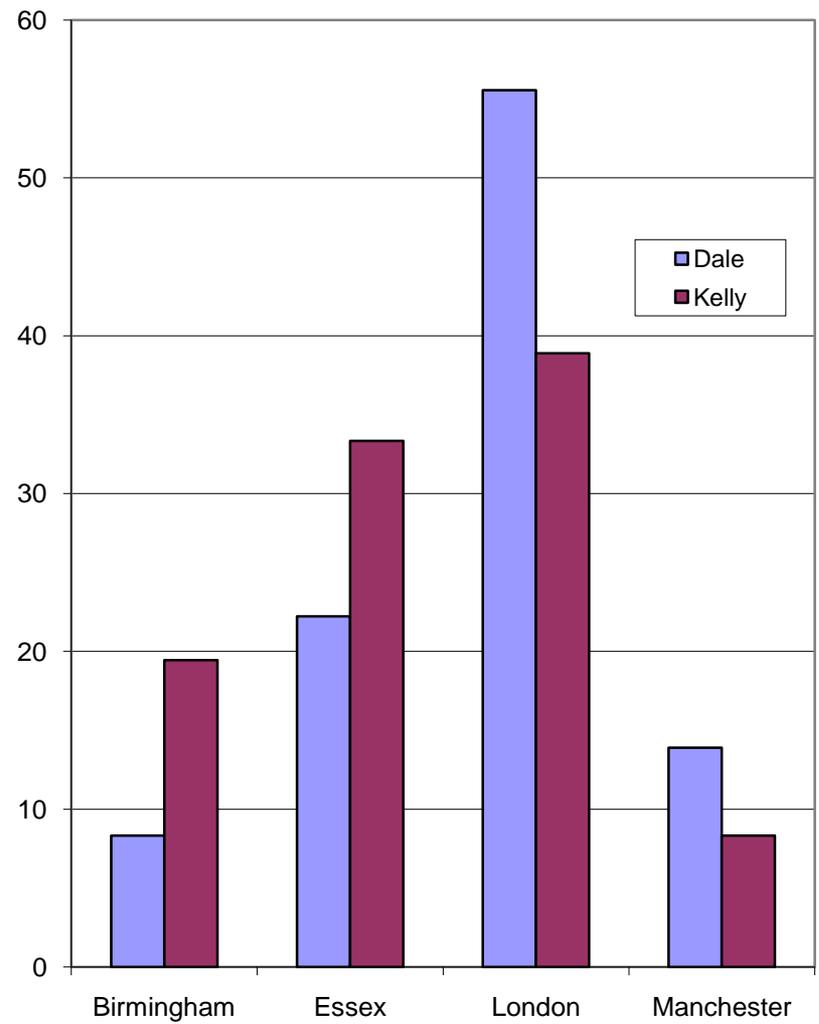
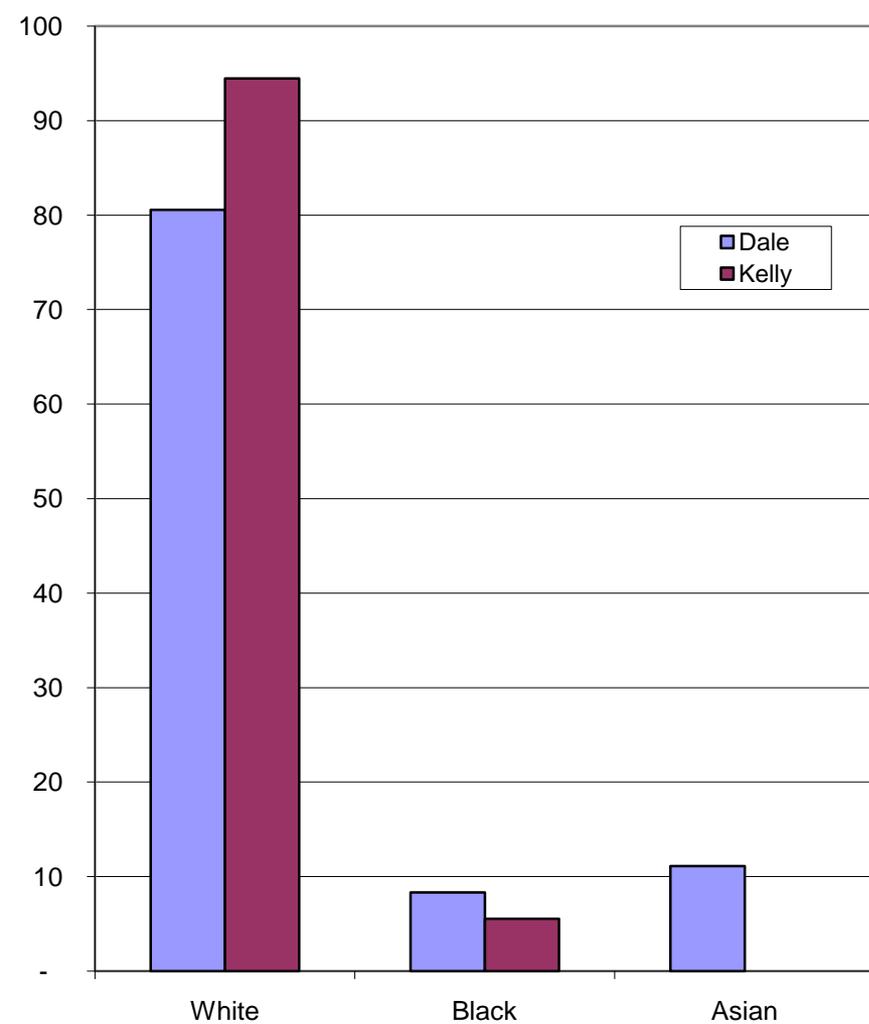
# Analysis

- Only the London and Essex voices are included in the analysis
- Examined effects of listener age, sex and ethnicity on making correct responses
- Examined effects of speaker sex and friendship network on making correct responses

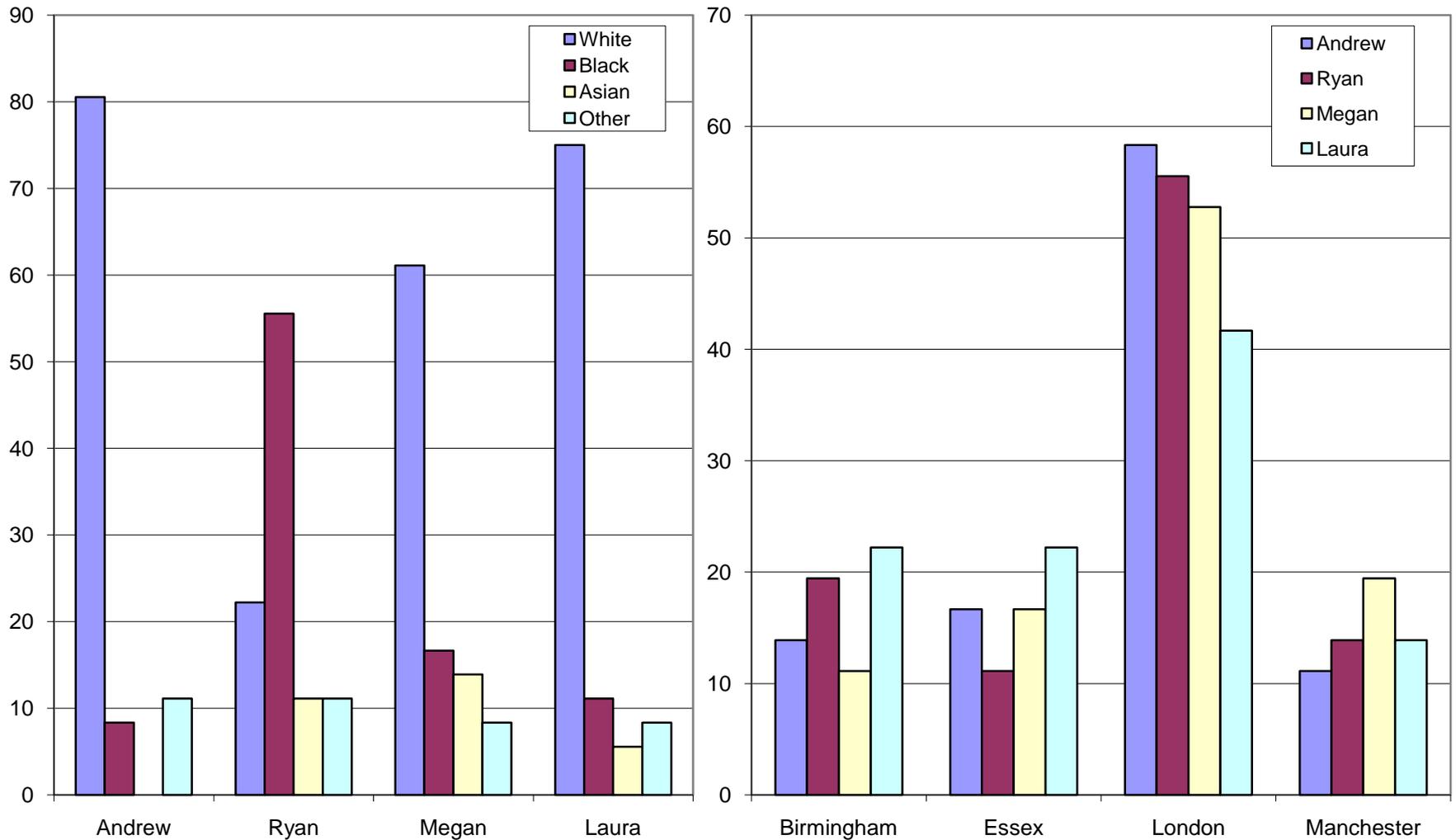
# Significant effects

- Friendship network had an effect on making correct identifications of speaker ethnicity and location
- Speaker sex was not significant
- Listener age, sex and ethnicity was not significant

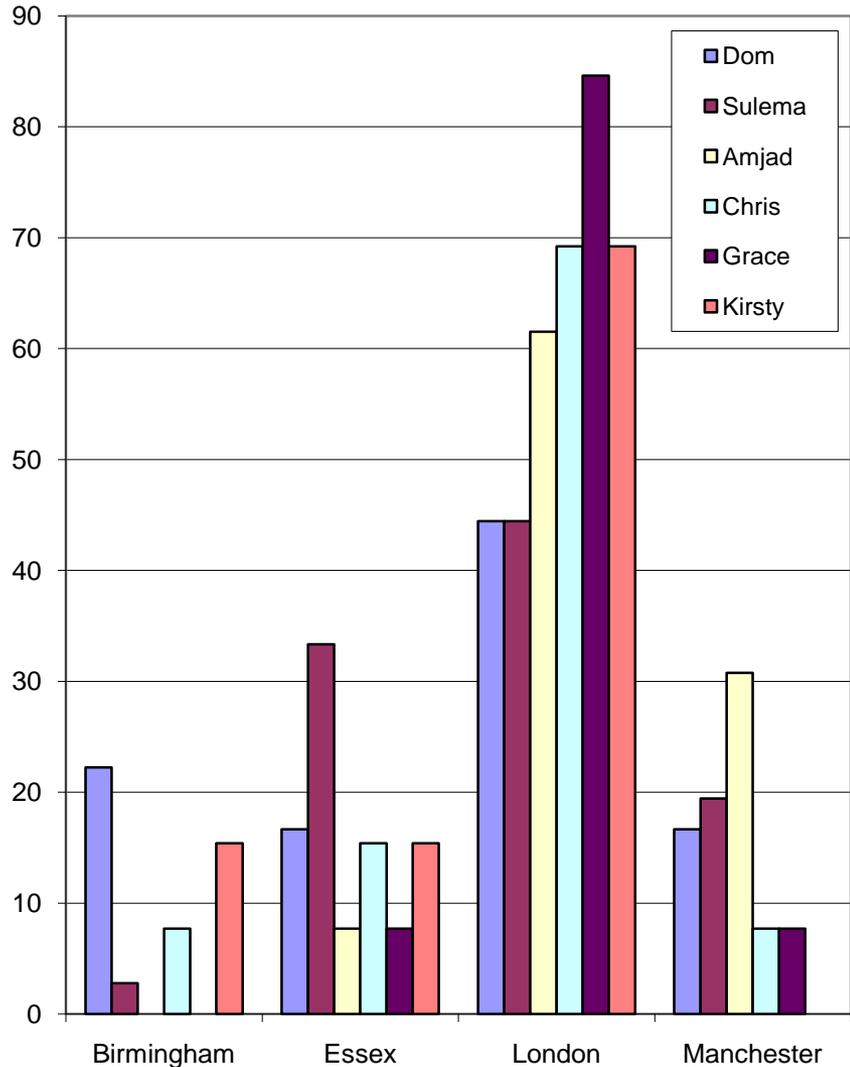
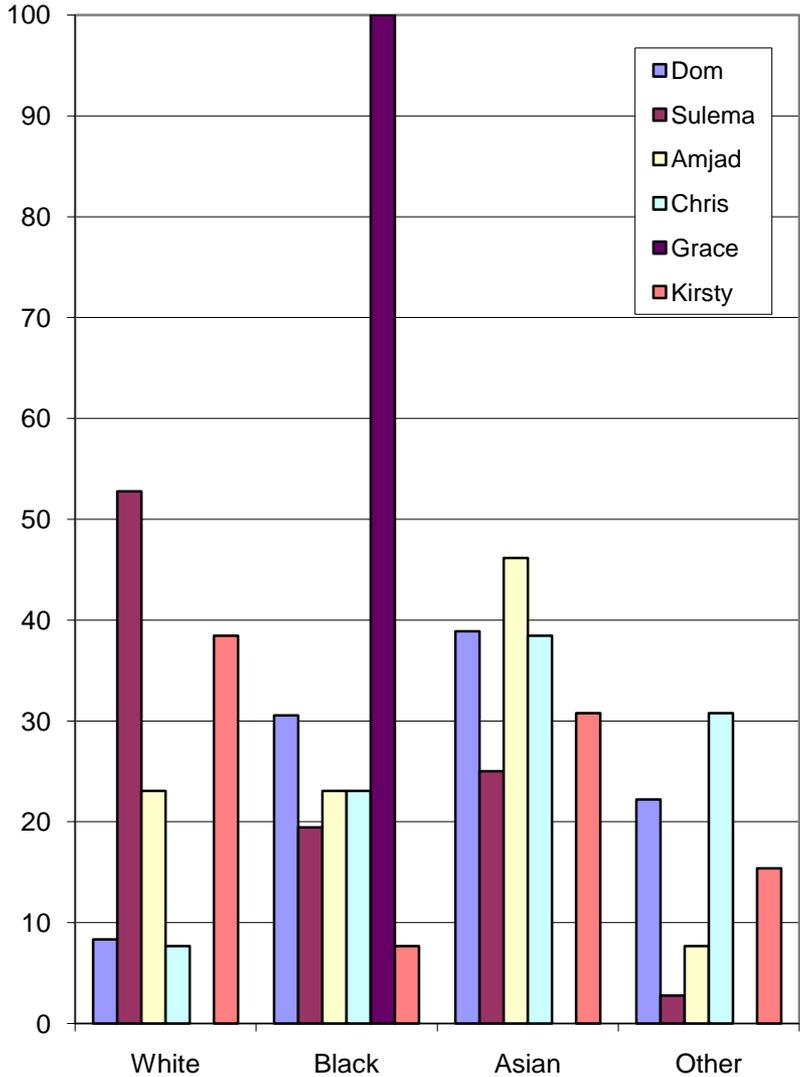
# Haverling Anglo voices (score 2)



# Hackney Anglo voices (score 3 and 5)



# Hackney non-Anglo voices (score 4 and 5)



# Results: ethnicity

- Network score 2, Anglos from Havering, are overwhelmingly identified as 'white'
- Network score 3, Anglos from Hackney, are identified as 'white' but less correctly than Network score 2
- Network score 5, Anglos from Hackney, are least correctly identified as 'white'
- Network score 4 and 5, Non-Anglos from Hackney, are often identified incorrectly

# Results: location

- Listeners can distinguish between local and non-local voices
- The local voices are classified more correctly regardless of ethnicity
- Birmingham ‘white’ voices are classified as coming from Birmingham fairly well – but Havering voices are not reliably classified as Havering
- Birmingham ‘black’ voices were more often heard as coming from London

# Conclusion

- Relationship between ethnicity and network score:
  - 2=Havering='white voice'
  - 3=Hackney (local voice)='white voice'
  - 5=Hackney (local voice)='multi-ethnic voice'
- Difficult to identify a speaker's ethnicity correctly if the network score is high, regardless of the speaker's ethnicity

# Perception test results: manipulated vowels

- Goodness test: Pairs of manipulated vowels in words (boot, good, bike, cake)
- Listeners found the task very hard
- Only significant effect: how they replied to the first trial influenced all further trials
- Maybe unable to distinguish between fine-grained acoustic differences
- Or the differences were not great enough (even though they reflected the production data!)

# Summary

- Perception test results from North London correspond to production results from Hackney
- Inner London speech is more ethnically neutral than outer London speech
- Data collection is almost completed and we will have production results ready at a later stage