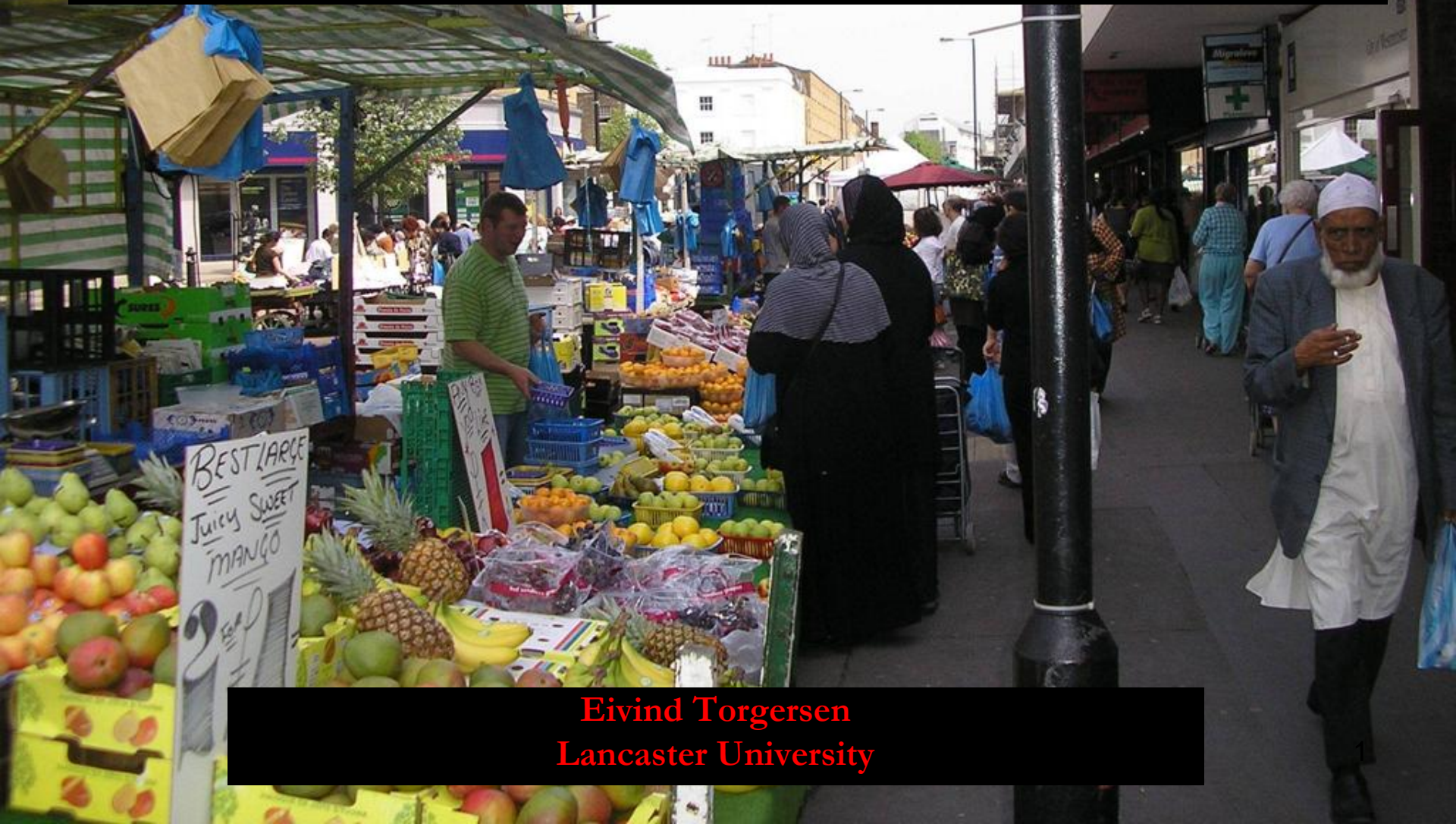


Raumkonzepte

# *A perceptual study of friendship networks in London*



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Contrary to expectations from the literature, dialect levelling does *not* originate in London!

- We find dramatic, mostly ethnic-minority and male-led **innovations**, particularly (though not only) on the phonetic level
- Some of the **dialect levelling changes** happening in the south-east cannot be traced back to London but are better understood within the context of post-WW2 sociohistorical changes in London and its hinterland (out-migration and mobility)

# Multi-cultural London English

- A variety or set of varieties with shared:
  - Phonetic features
  - Grammatical features
  - Discourse features
  - Rhythm?
  - Voice quality?
- Being in a dense multi-cultural friendship group increases the number of MLE features

# Research questions of MLE project

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

# 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

# Perceptual dialectology

- A set of methodologies addressing different RQs:
  - What are speakers' (i.e. members') perceptions of the socially structured production variability which dialectologists uncover? Do members perceive the *same* structure?
  - What are members' attitudes to linguistic varieties?
  - Where is 'good' language X spoken?
  - Can members identify the differences which dialectologists describe?

- Methods:
  - Geographical area labelling (no auditory stimuli)
  - Attitudes/social evaluations of particular phonetic features (Labov's Subjective Reaction Test; U.S. Northern Cities Shift; diphthong merger in NZ)
  - Holistic approach with authentic stimuli (testing auditory/perceptual boundaries of speech community membership)
- We will attempt the last of these



# 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?
3. If so, what are the ethnic and geographical parameters?
4. Are there sociolinguistic factors beyond ethnicity and geographical location which influence the degree of ethnic marking of an accent?

# Perception tests

- 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: 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	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

# 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

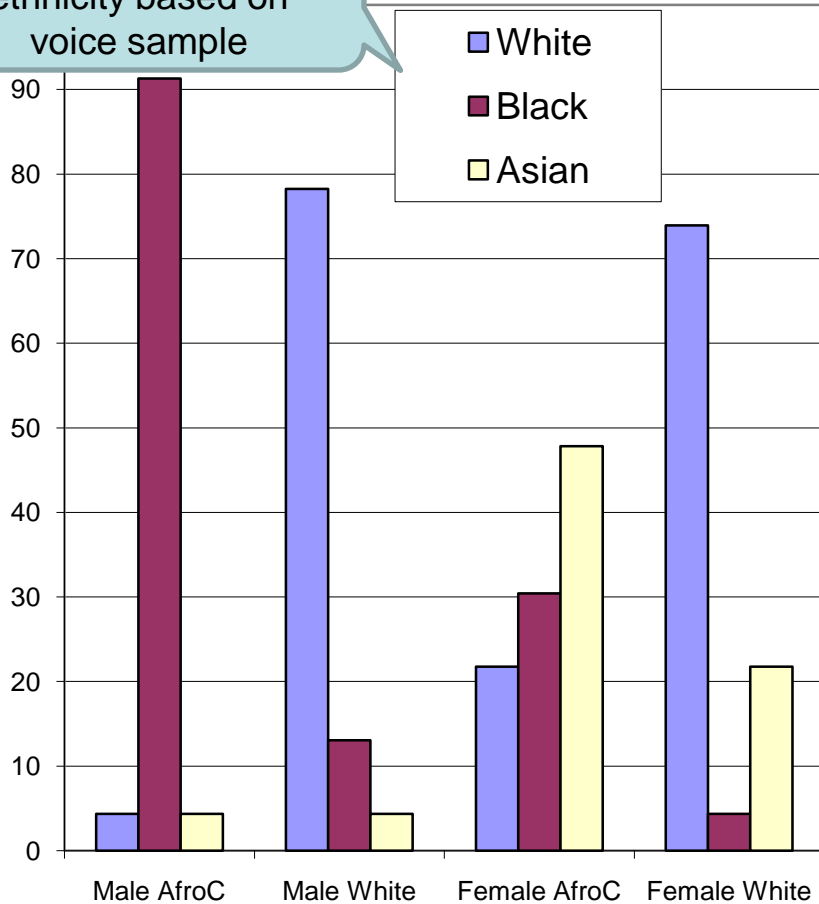
NEXT

Click here to play the last sound again

start 74 Transcriber ... Microsoft Po... Inbox - Mic... Praat objects Praat picture Natural\_spe... EN 16:56

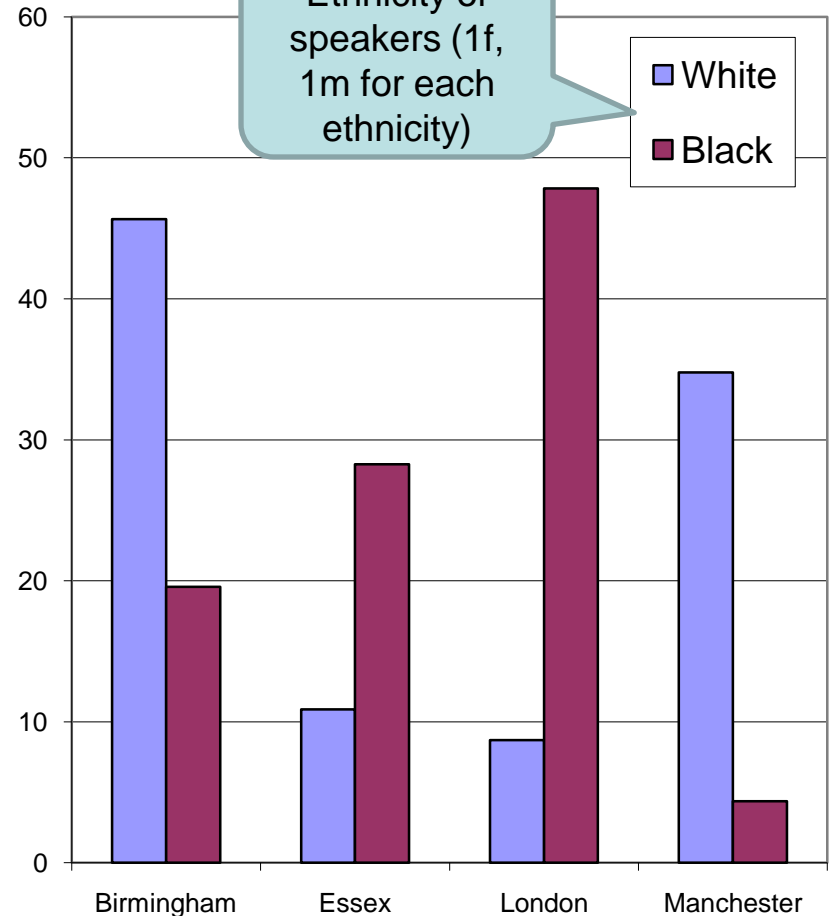
# Forced-choice judgements of **Birmingham** voices in terms of ethnicity and location

Judgement of speaker's ethnicity based on voice sample



Ethnicity/sex of speaker

Ethnicity of speakers (1f, 1m for each ethnicity)



Judgement of location of speakers based on voice sample

# Perceptions of the London voices

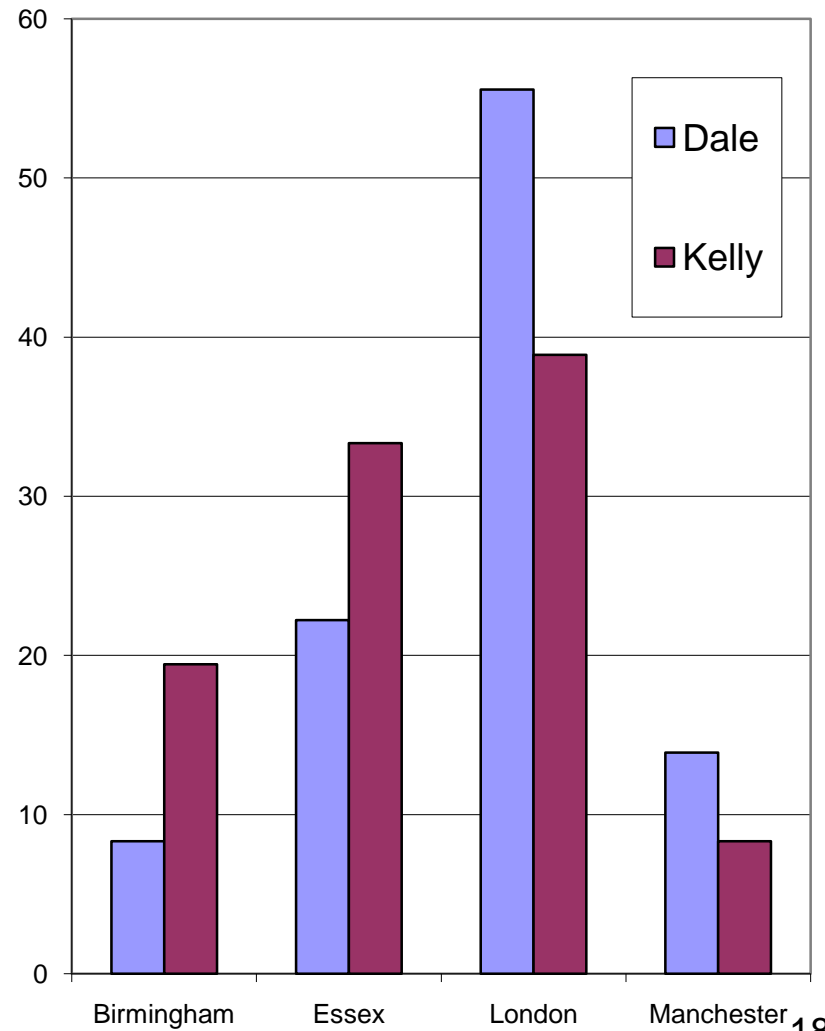
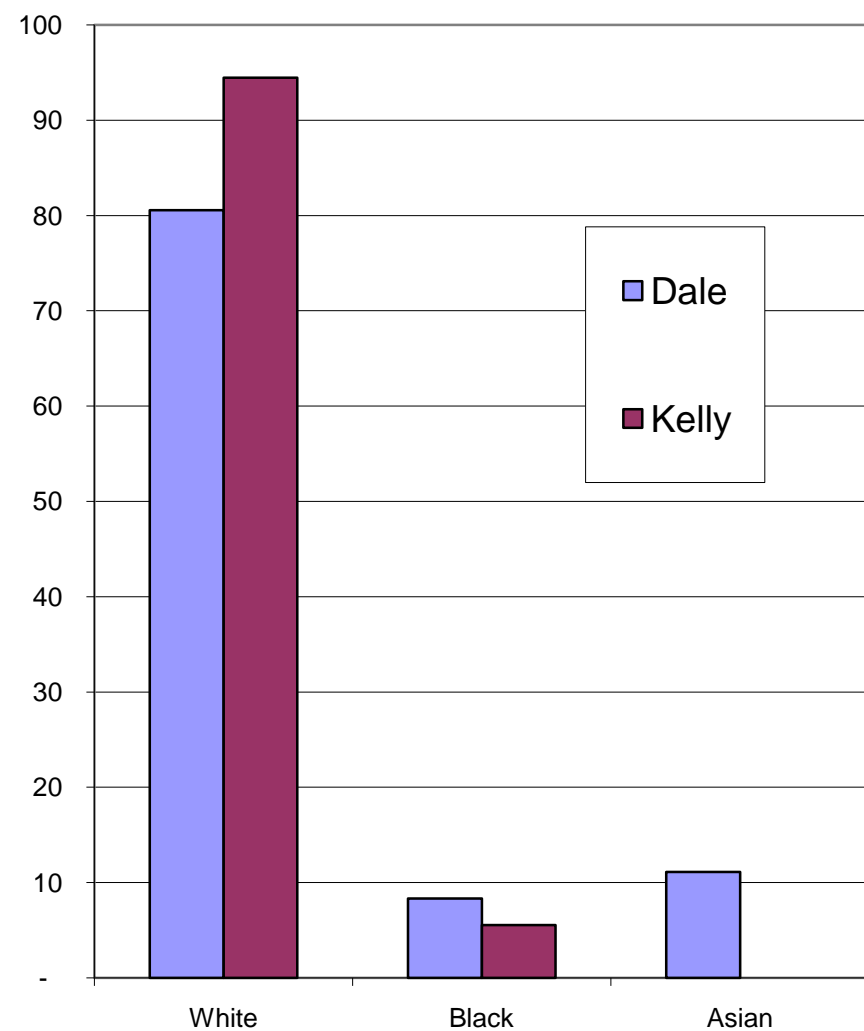
- Only the London and Havering (Essex) voices are included in the main analysis
- We examined effects of **listener** age, sex and ethnicity on making correct responses
- We examined effects of **speaker** sex and friendship network on making correct responses



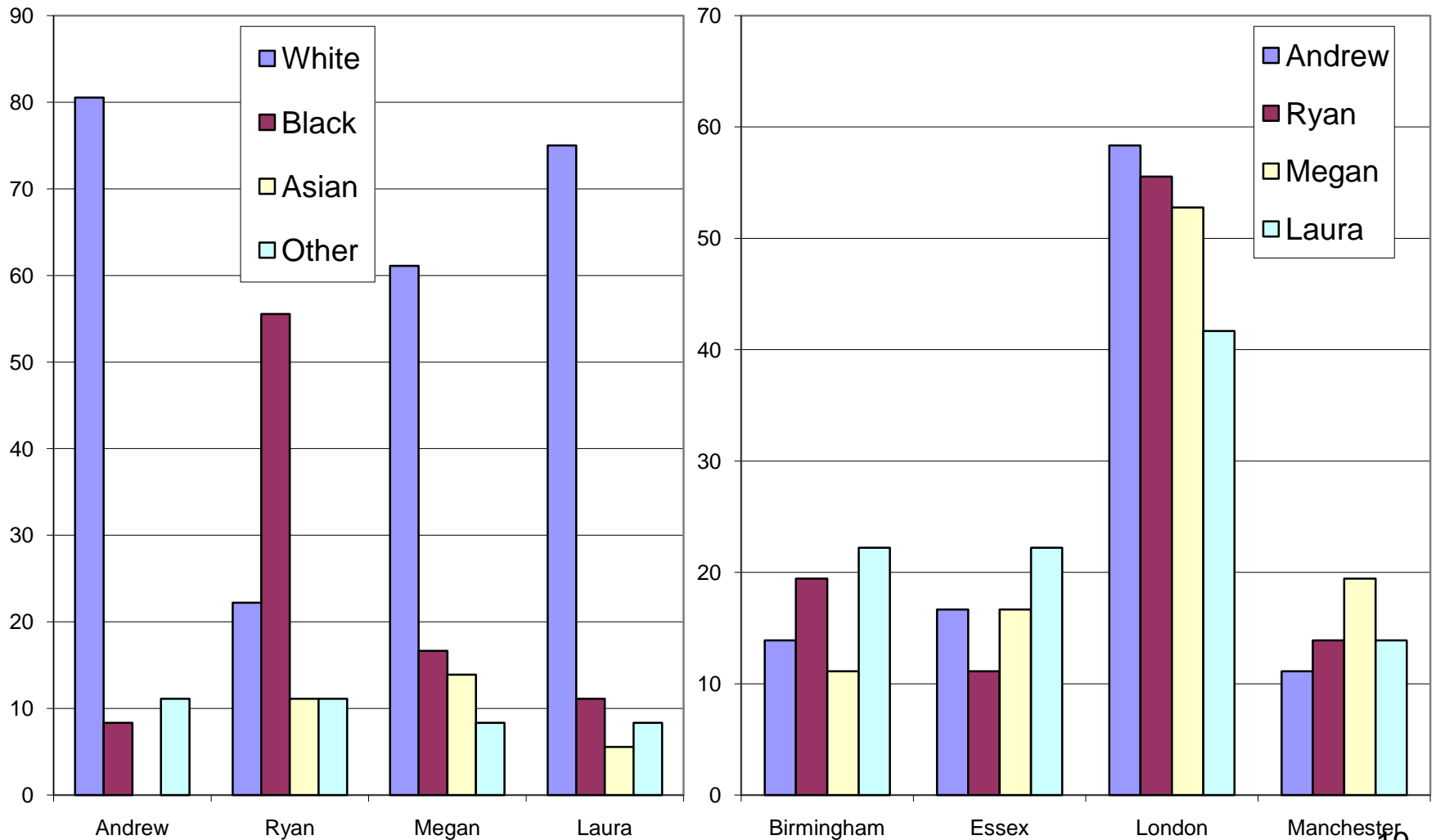
# Significant effects

- 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

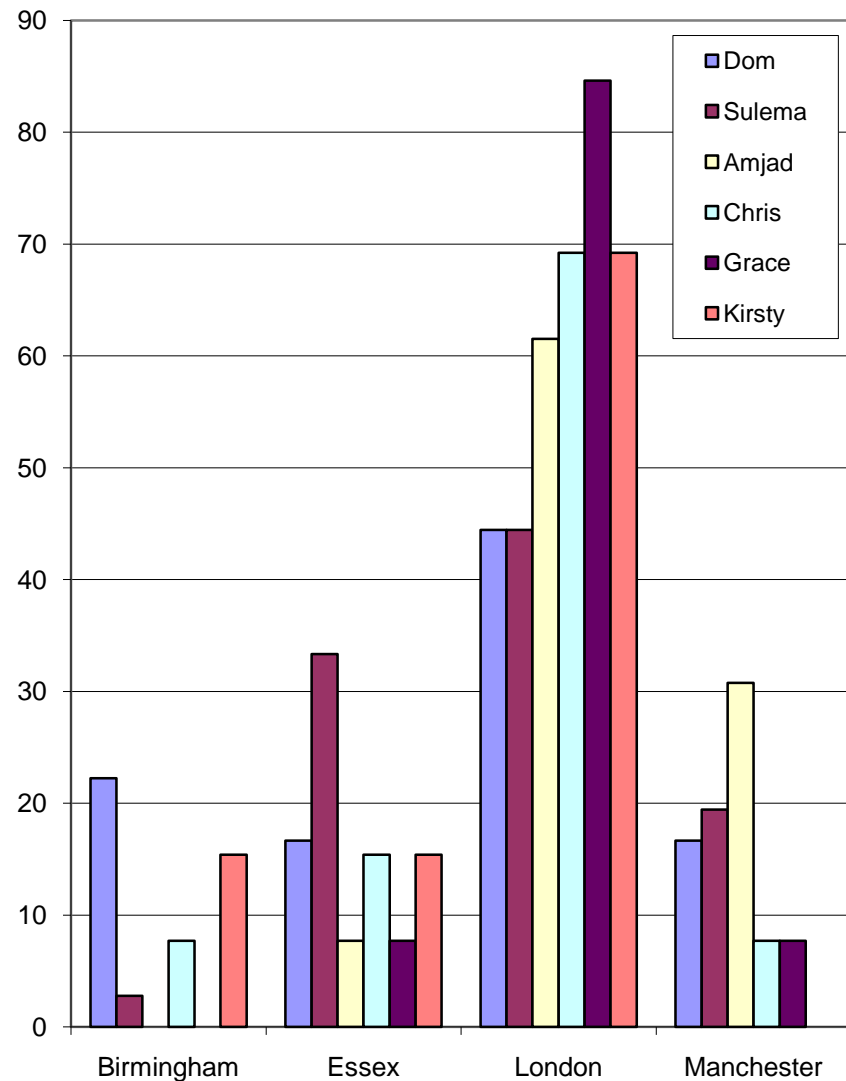
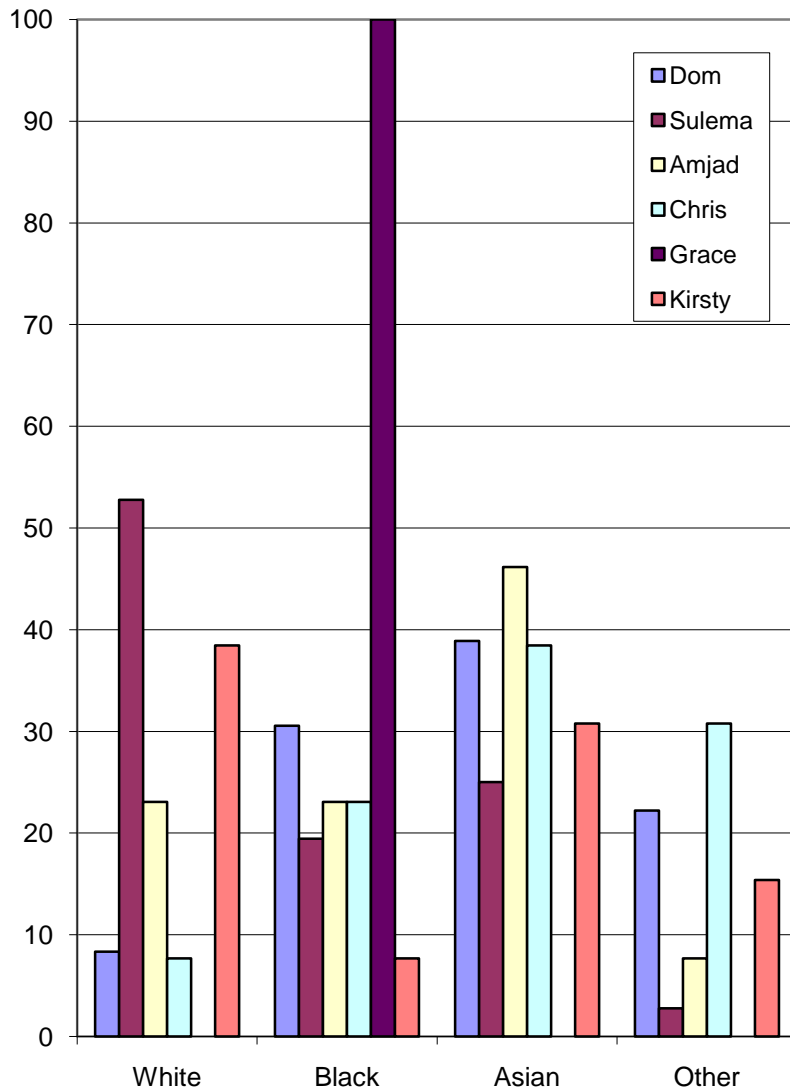
# Forced-choice judgements of **Havering ('Essex') Anglo** **(score 2)** voices in terms of **ethnicity** and **location**



# 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



# 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

# Results: location

- Listeners can distinguish between local and non-local voices
- Birmingham ‘white’ voices are classified as coming from Birmingham fairly well – but Havering voices are not reliably classified as Havering and Essex
- Birmingham ‘black’ voices were more often heard as coming from London
- Lack of familiar geographical marking = heard as coming from London

# Acoustic features

- Differences in formants structure can explain differences between Anglo and non-Anglo
- Male non-Anglo speakers have slightly higher F0 than Anglo speakers
  - But Ryan has a very low F0
- Rhythm and intonation?

# Voice quality

- No clear patterns for voice quality (jitter, shimmer, H/N ratio)
- All sound 'hoarse'! (low H/N ratio)



# Summary

- Perception test results from North London correspond to production results from Hackney
- Inner London speech is more ethnically neutral than outer London speech
- Hard to find any patterns in formant structure and voice quality

# Research questions REVISITED

1. Can we identify individuals whose accents do not reveal ethnic background?
  - A: Speakers of all ethnicities are potentially hard to identify: particularly true of the Non-Anglos, and the Anglos in Hackney. But there is great variation, and on the whole White and Black ethnicities are likely to be ‘correctly’ identified
2. Are some accents more ethnically identifiable than others?
  - A: Probably. We will try to characterise these
3. If so, what are the ethnic and geographical parameters?
  - A: ‘White’ in Essex is the easiest ethnic/geographical combination to positively identify. ‘Black’ everywhere has the potential to be easily identified
4. Are there sociolinguistic factors beyond ethnicity and geographical location which influence the degree of ethnic marking of an accent?
  - A: Ethnic composition of social network