FOM AND FRIENDS: RESPELLINGS, ENREGISTERMENT, AND VARIABLE PRE-NASAL /æ/ IN MULTICULTURAL TORONTO ENGLISH[*]

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1. Introduction

Multiethnolects are innovative language practices of a dominant host language, typically spoken by racialized and immigrant youth. These language practices emerge in urban, often working class neighbourhoods of first arrival, where language contact between immigrants from different language backgrounds gives rise to linguistic innovation at all levels of the language (Cheshire, Nortier, and Adger 2015). Multiethnolects have been reported in many major metropolises across Europe (London, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, etc.). More recently Denis (2016; 2021) has argued that the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the site of a multiethnoect: Multicultural Toronto English (MTE). We think of multiethnolects, MTE, and its features, as representing *linguistic alterity* for young people who speak this way, in contrast to what we might call *linguistic normativity*.[1]

Following previous observations that it is predominantly lexical items that have been enregistered as features of this emergent way of speaking and not phonetic/phonological features (Bigelow, Gadanidis, Schlegl, Umbal, and Denis 2020), we investigate the variable realization of /æ/ in pre-nasal contexts among a group of racialized, first and second generation Torontonians and its connection with a particular enregistered word: *fom*.

2. MTE and enregisterment

While some researchers have argued that multiethnolects constitute unique varieties and are speakers' Labovian vernaculars (cf. Wiese 2009), others suggest that multiethnolects – or more accurately, multiethnolectal features – should be understood primarily as stylistic

[1]We prefer to use the term Normative English to Standard English because it incorporates the idea that the concept of a standard is not a linguistic fact but an ideological one that is linked with race, place and class.

resources (Quist 2008, Nortier 2018). Cheshire et al. (2015) argue that European multiethnolects have a "dual status" within the speech community. For some speakers, the features of the multiethnolect constitute aspects of their 'vernacular'. For others, the features are drawn on only stylistically. We approach MTE, then, not as 'a dialect', or even a 'variety' per se, but, rather as a 'feature pool' (following Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox, and Torgersen 2011 and Mufwene 2001). MTE is a set of various linguistic features that are present in the speech community, whether they exist as a result of second language acquisition, language and dialect contact, or innovation. Different speakers have different kinds of access to the multiethnolect's dual status.

The feature pool of MTE is comprised of elements at all levels of the grammar. Phonetic features that have been examined so far include *th*-stopping, the variable realization of /ð/ and /θ/ as [d] and [t] respectively (Bigelow et al. 2020) and a vowel space with multiple distinctions from Normative Canadian English (NCanE) (e.g., monophthongization of GOAT, a lack of 'Canadian Raising' of MOUTH) (Denis et al. 2021). MTE includes several discourse-pragmatic features including the response particle/confirmational *ahlie*, borrowed from Jamaican Patwa and the utterance final concessive marker *styll* (Denis 2016). One of the most meta-discursively identified features of MTE is a morphosyntactic feature, pronominal *mans*, which can be used for first person, singular pronominal reference, or 3rd person reference, regardless of number (Denis 2016). A morphological feature of MTE is the variable lack of allomorphy between *an* and *a*, where *an* prescriptively appears before vowel initial words, in MTE *a* [ə]/[əʔ] is common (e.g., *a apple*) (Schlegl and Tagliamonte 2021). Finally, there are numerous lexical items that are part of the feature pool of MTE. Some lexical items are home-grown innovations, but many are borrowings from Jamaican Patwa and Somali. Thus, while MTE is used by a young people of many different backgrounds in the city, it is only these two languages that are of linguistic influence; they are, notably, the languages of the largest demographic group in the city racialized as Black (Afro-Jamaicans) and the largest African immigrant group in the city, also racialized as Black (Somalis) (see Denis 2021).

MTE is interconnected with what is emically labelled *Toronto Slang*. We understand *Toronto Slang* to be a subset of features – mainly lexical items, and some discourse-pragmatic features – drawn from MTE's feature pool which have come to be enregistered as part of a recognizable 'Toronto' way of speaking, where enregisterment is the "processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population" (Agha 2007: 81). This register of *Toronto Slang* is subject to extensive contemporary metadiscourse in the city, particularly through new media (Elango and Denis 2021), which has increased both its visibility and the amount of people who have access and knowledge of it. In addition to the place-based association of the register, *Toronto Slang* is also linked with gendered, racialized, and class-based indexicalities, often mediated through certain salient personæ in the social imaginary (e.g., the 'Toronto mans', the 'wasteyute') (Bigelow et al. 2020, Denis 2021, Elango 2021, Khan 2020). We note that these often stigmatizing and ultimately anti-Black discourses are typically a result of operative raciolinguistic ideologies (Rosa

and Flores 2017) in the community that ascribe deficiency to the variety and its mainly racialized speakers and features sourced from two of the city's Black languages.

It is primarily words and phrases that are enregistered as Toronto Slang. However, the non-normative orthographic representation of some of these words suggests that some phonetic distinctions are also salient in the community. Bigelow et al. (2020) documented this with respect to TH-stopping. Several enregistered lexical items borrowed from Patwa preserve orthographic *th*-stopping: for example, in the words *wasteyute* ('loser'), *ting* ('girl'), and *mandem* ('group of men, your friends'). Through a variationist sociolinguistic analysis of variable (TH/DH) among young, racialized speakers in the GTA, Bigelow et al. (2020) argue that this orthographic enregisterment does not simply reflect a faithful phonological borrowing from Patwa but rather reflects a broad pattern of variable *th*-stopping. They found that about half of the speakers – some of whom were born in Canada and others who arrived later in life – participated in this variation, regardless of how long they had lived in Canada. Furthermore, they found that the stop variant was not limited to these enregistered loanwords and that the pattern was led by young men. Thus, while *th*-stopping as a phonological process is part of the feature pool of MTE, the process itself is not part of the metadiscourse; nobody is saying "in Toronto we say [t] for /θ/", for example. The metadiscourse only exists implicitly, embedded within specific enregistered words.

3. *Fom* and pre-nasal /æ/

Beyond *th*-stopping, we have also observed a non-normative orthographic representation of another word enregistered as *Toronto Slang*, the word *fom*. *Fom* is an alternative respelling of *fam* – itself is a clipping of the word *family* – meaning something like your close friends. While *fam* is also part of general North American slang, many list of *Toronto Slang* and social media (meta)discourse in and about Toronto orthographically represent the word as *fom*.[2] So what exactly does this indicate? As Johnstone (2014) and Johnstone, Bhasin and Wittkofski (2002) have observed with Pittsburgh English, these kinds of respellings are often claims about phonetic distinctness. We might understand the respelling as what Silverstein (2003: 195) called a "penumbral sign": its meaning arises by implication of another sign; the orthographic distinctness of *fom* implies phonetic distinctness.

If so, what broader phonological feature/process does this folk respelling represent? We hypothesize that the respelling of *fam* as *fom* represents a laxer pronunciation of pre-nasal /æ/.[3] In many dialects across North America, there is a stable allophonic alternation in which /æ/ is tensed (that is, realized higher and fronter in the vowel space) in pre-nasal contexts like in the words *ban*, and *Canada* (Boberg 2008, 2010). Using data collected from word lists as spoken by young people from various parts of Canada, all students at McGill University at the time, Boberg (2008, 2010) found that this process is common

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[2]For example: <https://www.narcity.com/toronto/60-scarborough-slang-words-for-everyday-situations>.

[3]A second respelling we've observed is *fham* which we believe is orthographically representative of the same phonological feature as *fom*.

in across the country with speakers from Toronto, Eastern Ontario, and Southern Ontario having the highest degree of tensing. Boberg's participants were assumed to be middle-class (given McGill's typical student population) and were required to be at least third generation Canadian – suggesting that they were unlikely to be racialized. Thus, we take Boberg's results to represent NCanE and therefore understand pre-nasal /æ/ tensing to be a phonological feature of NCanE. Thus, the prevalence of the folk respelling *fom* in discourse linked with *Toronto Slang* suggests that perhaps a *lack* of this tensing is part of linguistic alterity in the city.

Indeed, this is something we have previously observed in our earlier work. In Denis, Elango, Kamal, Prashar, and Velasco (2021), we analyzed wordlist data from more than 30 ethnolinguistically and racially diverse young people from Brampton, a multicultural city in the GTA. The speakers had lived in Brampton for at least one year. Almost all were first or second generation Canadians. There was significant intraspeaker variability with respect to pre-nasal /æ/. As presented in Figure 1, some speakers showed a clear normative pattern (speaker DD01) and others showed no tensing at all (speaker DD05), but most speakers produced variation: some tensed tokens and some laxed tokens. We also found that fewer men than women have tensed realizations of pre-nasal /æ/, suggesting that women were more likely to align closer to the NCanE pattern.
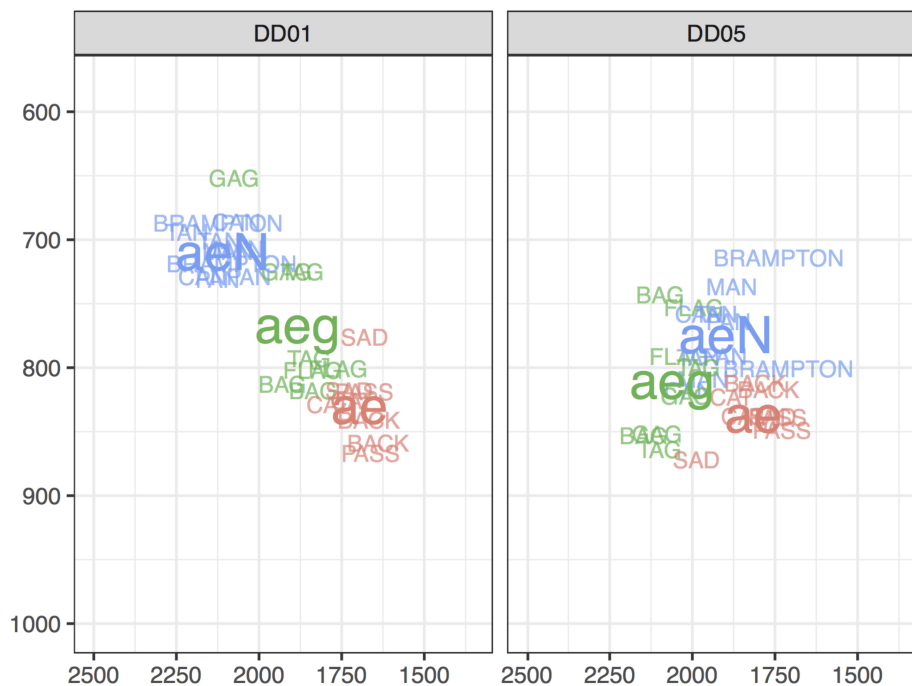

Figure 1. Wordlist data of two speaker's /æ/ vowel in three contexts: pre-nasal (blue), pre-g (green), and elsewhere (red). Speaker DD01 is a 15 year old, male, Sri Lankan Canadian, born in Canada and speaker DD05 is a 14 year old, male, Panjabi Canadian who immigrated to Canada when he was 1. Data from Denis et al. (2021).

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Our wordlist findings are further supported by examples we have seen on social media. For example, 1 is a transcript of a video posted on the Instagram account @6ixbuzz on May 5, 2020, in which a young racialized man, ostensibly from Toronto, discusses the characteristics of different types of people, depending on which mall in the region is their favourite.[4] Tokens of pre-nasal /æ/ are bolded. Note that all instances of pre-nasal /æ/ (in *fam*, *and*, and *transit*) are laxed and are perceptually indistinguishable from the (non-prenasal) /æ/ token in *Apple*.

(1)   Okay, **f[æ̝]m**, if Eaton Centre's your favourite mall, you either work there, or you're from O.T. O.T. [= out of town], like, out of province. It's probably the closest [æ]pple Store to your house **[æ̝]nd** you probably go there and never cop [= buy] nothing. You've also been caught slipping by the BELIEVE guy.

     [...] 'Kay, **f[æ̝]m**, if any of these malls are your favourite, you swear you're from the city even though you're not. Like, you guys have your own **tr[æ̝]nsit** system, just drop it.

Given the salience of the variation in pre-nasal /æ/ in the GTA – orthographically, impressionistically, and in our own previous exploratory work – we ask: 1) to what extent do young, racialized speakers of Toronto English incorporate a laxer, non-normative realization of prenasal /æ/ into their everyday vernacular, and 2) what are the social and linguistic factors conditioning it?

4. Methodology

In the present study, we examine pre-nasal /æ/ in a data set, representing speech from sociolinguistic interviews. In contrast to our previous word list data, the language in sociolinguistic interviews is likely more indicative of a speaker's Labovian vernacular. This new data comes from 16 racialized speakers from Mississauga, Ontario ranging in age from 13 to 26 who all were members of the interviewer's social network, the interviewer herself being a racialized woman in her 20s. Table 1 shows the sample of speakers according to gender, and ethnic identity.[5] Because of the nature of the data source (a specific social network) there are some imbalances in the table.

Table 1. Distribution of speakers by ethnicity and gender.

	Somali	South Asian	Arab	TOTAL
Men	1	3	1	5
Women	7	2	2	11
TOTAL	8	5	3	16

[4]Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/B_z8ZKoAG2YSb6sBZQ50VpHfNmtHxbIP3I1SZA0/.

[5]All participants filled out a demographic survey and so this data is all self-identified.

The sociolinguistic interviews were segmented and transcribed in ELAN (Wittenburg, Brugman, Russel, Klassmann, and Sloetjes 2006).[6] The interviews were force-aligned using FAVE align (Rosenfelder, Fruehwald, Evanini, Seyfarth, Gorman, Prichard and Yuan 2014). The F1 and F2 of each vowel was extracted using FAVE extract based on the *Atlas of North American English* measurement methods (Labov, Ash, and Boberg, 2004). By speaker, by-allophone outliers (n = 3 723; $n_{æ}$ = 645) were removed based on the Minimum Covariance Determinant with a breakdown point of 0.25 (MCD75) as described in Leys, Klein, Dominicy, and Ley (2018). The remain primary stressed vowels (73 164 in total) were then manually Lobanov normalized.[7] Of these vowels 8 511 were /æ/ and 947 were pre-nasal /æ/ (with a by-speaker mean of 59 tokens). All tokens in each sociolinguistic interview were included in the analysis however only anterior nasal codas were counted as tokens for our purposes due to the possibility of prevelar raising with [æŋ]. Functional and auxiliary words (e.g., *can, am*) were also excluded as tokens.

5.   Results

In Figure 2, we present individual vowel plots of all of our speakers pre-nasal /æ/ tokens and all their elsewhere /æ/ tokens.[8]

First, we note that the realization of elsewhere /æ/ for all speakers is centred around approximately the same realization with a normalized F1 around 1 and normalized F2 around 0. For pre-nasal /æ/, we observe three distinct patterns among the speakers. Seven speakers (SAR01, SAR02, SAR14, SAR16, SAR18, SAR11, and SAR12) exhibit extensive overlap in their articulation of prenasal and elsewhere /æ/. This is similar to the young man in 1. There are five other speakers (SAR05, SAR10, SAR15, SAR17, and SAR07) who exhibit a clear allophonic distinction with prenasal /æ/ articulated higher and more advanced in the vowel space than elsewhere /æ/ and with little overlap in the distributions. These speakers appear to have more or less the NCanE pattern. The four other speakers (SAR13, SAR19, SAR20, SAR21) have somewhat of an articulatory distinction between BAT and BAN but have far more overlap than the speakers just mentioned. Moreover, for each of these speakers in the middle, we can also see a handful of tokens of /æ/ that are clearly laxed. We can already see then, that like with *th*-stopping, some speakers pattern with the norm, others with alterity, and others are variable within their vernacular speech. Consistent with the dual-status of multiethnolects, some speakers have this feature in their vernacular, while others might not. But who are these speakers? Is there any sociodemographic consistency with these groups?

We investigated this question by coding all tokens for several social factors including the speaker's age, gender, ethnicity, age of arrival to Canada, birthplace, and other lan-

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[6]Some of the data contain explicit metadiscourse about *Toronto Slang*.

[7]Following Barreda (2021), we also normalized the data following a single parameter scaling method (log-mean normalization) but the results were essentially the same as using Lobanov.

[8]The elsewhere contexts exclude pre-/g/ contexts which also exhibit tensing in NCanE (Boberg 2008, 2010).
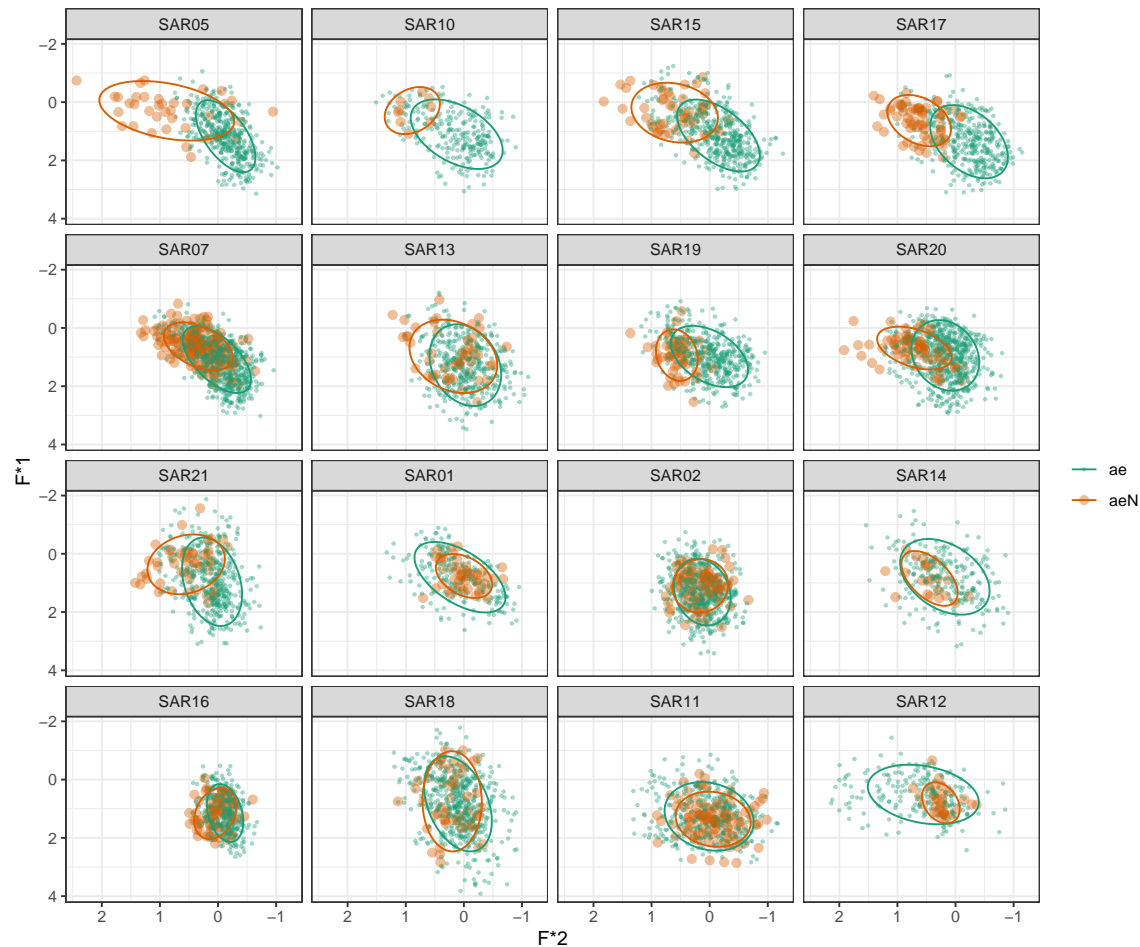
Figure 2. Individual patterns of /æ/ allomorphy in Lobanov normalized vowel space. Larger orange dots are tokens of pre-nasal /æ/ and smaller green dots are tokens of elsewhere /æ/. Ellipses contain 80% of data.

guages spoken. We also coded for several linguistic factors (following nasal, number of syllables, and manner and place of articulation of preceding segment) but none of these came to be particularly relevant and so we do not discuss them here.

With respect to our dependent variable, in our measure of tenseness of pre-nasal /æ/, we differ slightly from Boberg (2008. 2010). Boberg uses the Cartesian distance between prenasal tokens and the mean of elsewhere tokens as a measure of tensing. Cartesian (or Euclidean) distance, as shown in the formula in (2a), measures the absolute distance between two points in the vowel space. While generally informative, Cartesian distance has the effect of distorting the measured tenseness of vowels certain vowels. We can see that in Figure 3. On the left of the figure, the length of each line from the four labeled, red vowels, to the mean of the elsewhere vowel in blue, represents the measured Cartesian distances. As you can see here, tenseness as measured by Cartesian distances becomes distorted with tokens like 4 which are essentially measured as more tense than the token in 3, despite

being lower and more retracted than the elsewhere mean. So these four vowels would be ranked by Cartesian distance, from largest to smallest: 1, 2, 4 3.

As an alternative to Cartesian distance, we measure tenseness by considering the difference between prenasal /æ/ tokens and the elsehwere /æ/ mean along the Diagonal dimension of the vowel space. This offers more fidelity to us. By subtracting F2 from F1 (as in 2b), we can place vowels along this dimension and by subtracting the mean of elsewhere /æ/ from these tokens, we have a measure of tensing that ranges from positive to negative values and more accurately captures the ordering of vowels from more tensed to more lax. On the left side of Figure 3, the same vowels are now ordered in the intuitive order: 1, 2, 3, 4.

(2)   a. $CartD = \sqrt{(F2_{pre-nasal} - F2_{elsewhere})^2 + (F1_{pre-nasal} - F1_{elsewhere})^2}$
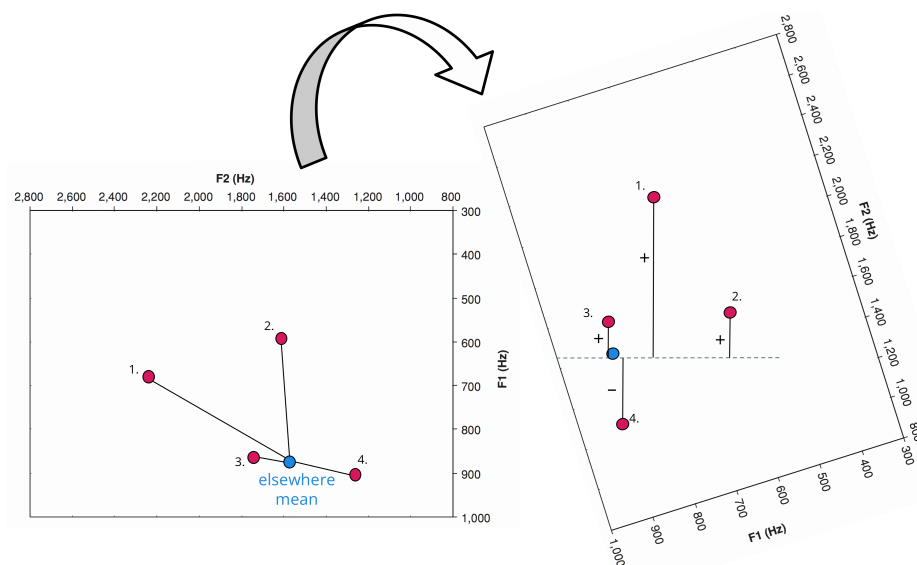   b. $Diag. = F2 - F1$

Figure 3. Schematization of Cartesian distance measure versus diagonal difference measure. Cartesian distances on the left, diagonal differences on the right.

Thus, our dependent variable is the difference between the diagonal position of each token of pre-nasal /æ/ and the given speaker's mean diagonal position of their elsewhere /æ/ tokens. To investigate the possible social correlates with tensing/laxing of pre-nasal /æ/ in our data, we begin by examining each individual speaker's realization of their pre-nasal /æ/ vowels according to this measure.
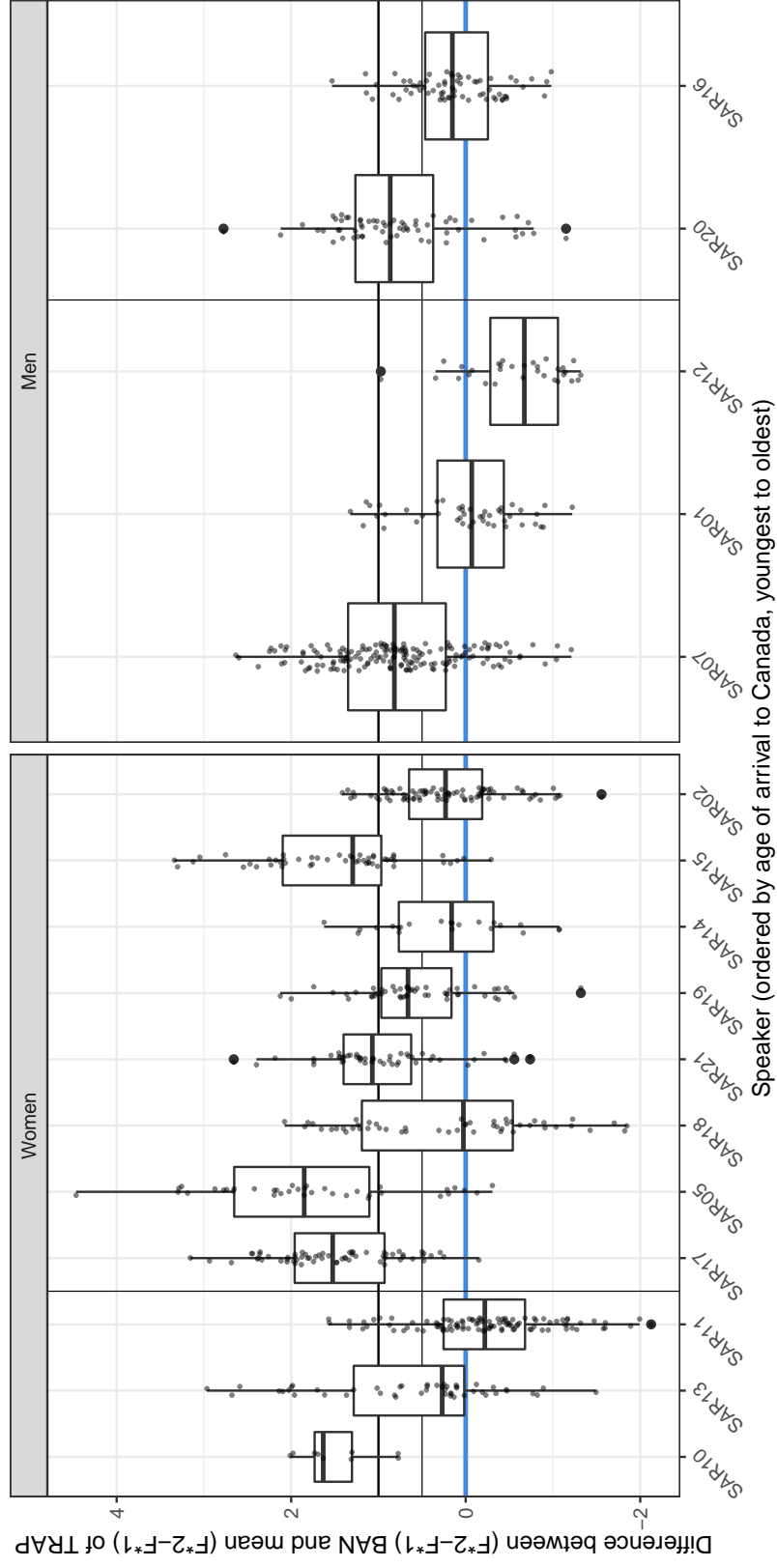
Figure 4. Box plots of the diagonal difference between pre-nasal /æ/ tokens (BAN) and speaker's mean elsewhere /æ/ (TRAP) by individual. Individual speakers are categorized by gender and ordered with respect to age of arrival to Canada.

Figure 4 presents as series of box plots, one for each of our participants. The y-axis of this figure plots the diagonal difference described immediately above. Importantly, 0 on this scale, marked with the blue line, represents each speaker's elsewhere /æ/ mean. The higher the box and whiskers, the more tense a speaker's pre-nasal /æ/ is overall; the lower, the more lax their tokens are. Note that the solid black horizontal bar inside each box represents each speaker's median diagonal difference. Speakers' individual tokens are also plotted as points. Speakers are categorized by gender and ordered with respect to age of arrival to Canada. Those on the right of the vertical black line were born in Canada and those on the left were not.

By and large, no clear patterns emerge. Just as we saw with the vowel plots, some speakers (SAR10, SAR17, SAR05, SAR21, and SAR15) have a high diagonal difference indicating a tensing pattern. These speakers all happen to be women, one born in Canada and four who were not born in Canada. That said, other speakers (SAR11, SAR18, SAR01, and SAR12) have a median diagonal difference around zero, indicating a lax pre-nasal /æ/. There is really no consistency across social factors though: SAR 11 is a woman born in Canada, SAR01 and SAR12 are men born in Canada, and SAR18 is a Somali woman born outside Canada. As previously found with *th*-stopping (Bigelow et al. 2020), age of arrival does not seem to be a strong predictor of tensing or laxing of pre-nasal /æ/. Gender may be important in so much as none of the men in our data have a strongly tensed pattern.

Because of the complex interactions among our social factors, investigating these patterns with a traditional regression model was not viable. As an alternative, we built a conditional inference tree, a non-parametric decision tree method that attempts to make optimal binary partitions in the data based on the dependent variable and according to the predictors it is given.[9] The results can be visualized in a tree structure. At the terminal nodes are boxplots that represent the distribution of tokens for the groups as determined by these optimal splits. Our model is given in (3).

(3) `ctree(DiagonalDifference∼Age+AgeOfArrival.Canada+AgeOfArrival.GTA+Gender+Ethnicity+IndividualSpeaker)`

As shown in Figure 5, only individual speaker was selected by the model.

The model splits our participants into four groups. Starting at right, the two most laxed speakers are both Somali, one man and one woman, both born in Canada. Among the most tensed speakers, all are women, two are South Asian, two are Somali with one born in Canada and the others arriving at ages 4, 5, and 14. There is extensive diversity in the middle two groups with respect to gender, ethnicity, and age of arrival. Essentially, what we are seeing here is that none of the social factors show any compelling patterning through statistical modelling – certainly nothing in addition to what we saw in Figure 4. However, we note again that our most tensed speakers are all women, and that all of the men are on the more laxed side of the initial split. This may suggest some gender effect, though we also note that SAR11, a Somali woman born in Canada, is one of the most laxed speakers.

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[9]We use the `party` package in R to build this model (Hothorn, Hornik, and Zeileis 2006).
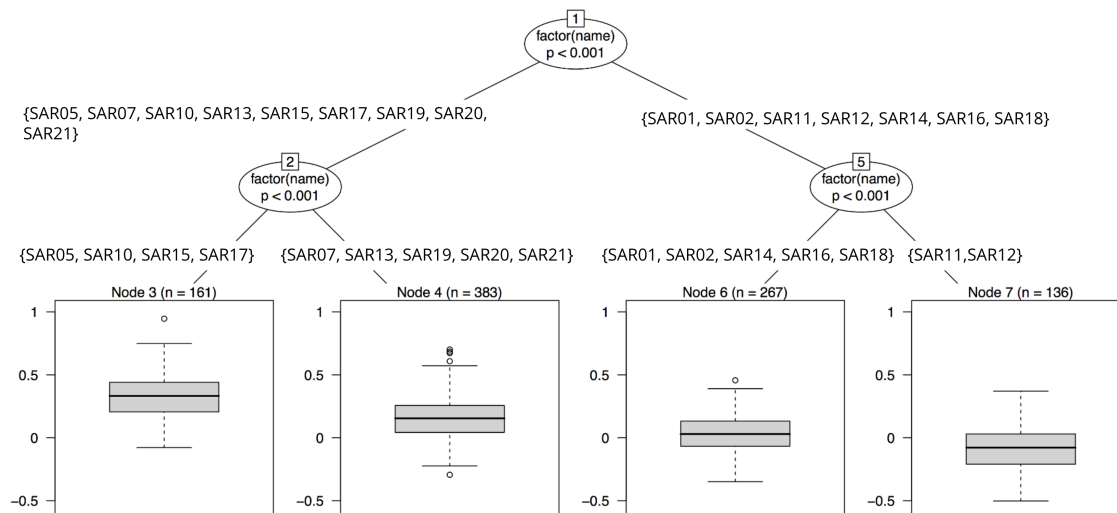
Figure 5. Best conditional inference tree based on the model in (3).

Finally, we checked for any potential lexical effects. In particular, we ask, does laxing only occur with that one orthographically enregistered word (*fom* or does it occur broadly? Given that there were only two tokens of *fam/fom* in the data, we can safely say that this is a broader pattern. Figure 6 presents boxplots of the most frequent pre-nasal /æ/ words in the data (all those that occurred more than 5 times). A few lexical items are particularly laxed, like *ambulance*, *panic*, *pan*, and *Spanish*. For *ambulance*, *panic*, and *Spanish*, almost of the tokens come from our most laxed speakers. Otherwise, no individual word seems to be especially laxed or tensed. So, as we suggest in our title, laxing of pre-nasal /æ/ applies to *fom* and its friends.

6. Discussion

Let's return to the questions that were posed above. First, to what extent do young, racialized speakers in the GTA incorporate a laxer, non-normative realization of pre-nasal /æ/ into their everyday vernacular? The pattern of laxing that we hear impressionistically, see enregistered orthographically in social media, and find in word list data does indeed seem to be a part of the feature pool of MTE as represented by our speakers. Non-tensed pre-nasal /æ/ is incorporated into the vernacular of some young, racialized speakers in the GTA, and others use it more variably, at times incorporating the more normative realization. Secondly, what are the social and linguistic factors that condition this: beyond a weak gender effect, we did not find any compelling social or linguistic factors conditioning the variation.[10] This is not particularly surprising, however, given that other authors working on European multiethnolects have found that macro-level social factors, in particular ethnicity,

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[10]We did not code for whether the following nasal was tautosyllabic (e.g., *tran.sit*) or not (e.g., *Ca.na.da*). This differences has been found to condition the tensing of pre-nasal /æ/ elsewhere; in future work we will consider this possible factor.
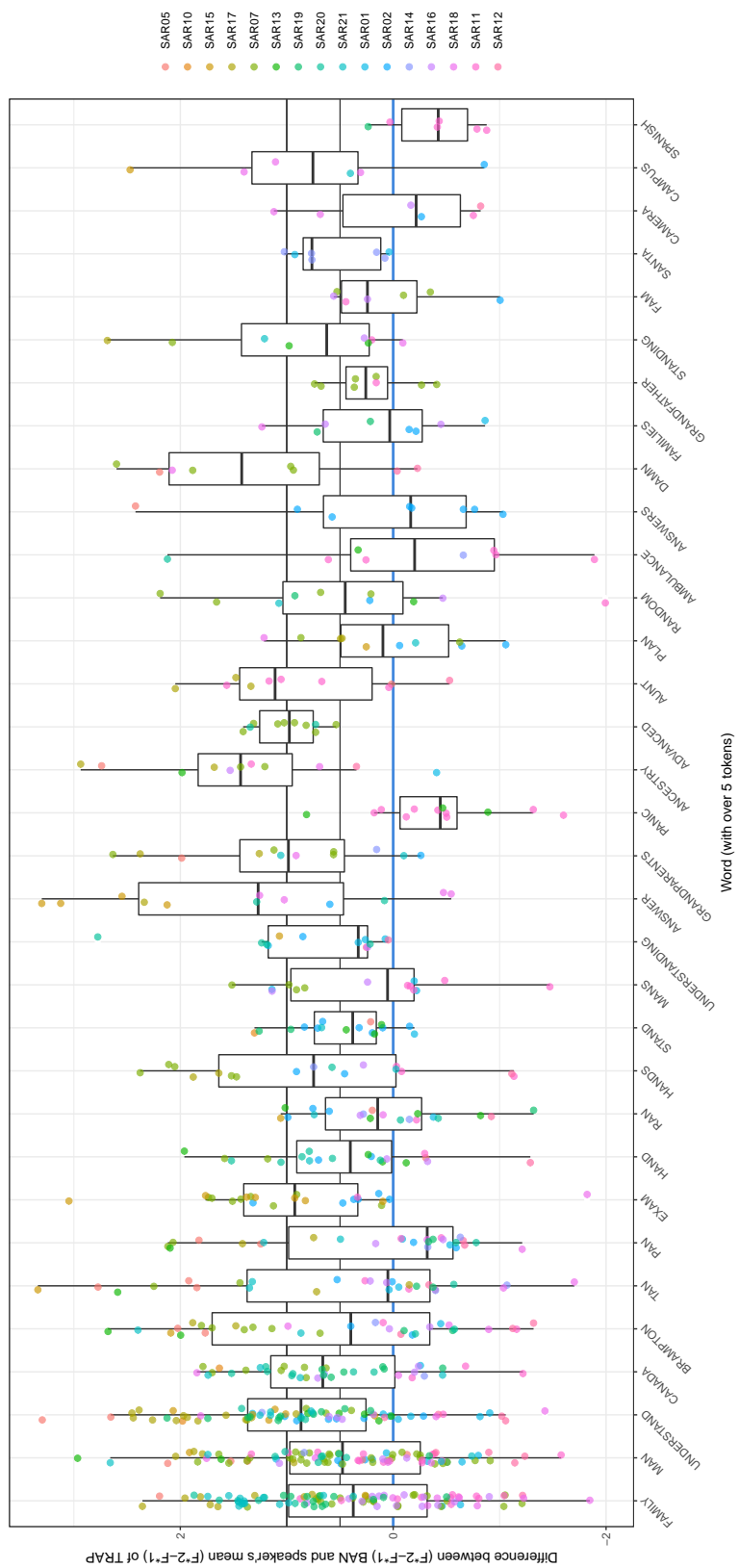
Figure 6. Boxplot of the diagonal difference of the most frequent pre-nasal /æ/ words in our data, ordered from left to right by frequency.

are not always as informative as micro-level factors like the composition of a speaker's social network (see Britain 2018). We note that the weak effect of gender, such that men are more likely to have a laxed pre-nasal /æ/, is consistent both with the local masculine indexicality of *Toronto Slang*, MTE, and also multiethnolects elsewhere (e.g., Cheshire 2013, Drummond 2017, Quist 2008, Svendsen and Røyneland 2008). See Denis (2021) for discussion of how this gendered meaning arises through attendant racialized indexicality.

In closing, we want to muse a little about why it is that this broad phonological process is only enregistered in *Toronto Slang*, insomuch as it is orthographically conventionalized in one single word. People don't 'hear' phonological patterns; people hear particular words as being constitutive of a local dialect, in line with what Eckert (2003: 395) has called the 'Bag o Words' folk language ideology. Consider, (4), an excerpt from a qualitative interview conducted by the first author (VE) with a young woman from Toronto, discussing perceived features of *Toronto Slang* and MTE.

(4) **RG:** Exactly. It's like the pronunciation of them as well. Like, if I (inc) say, like, like, "fam" ((tensed pronunciation, [fæm])), like that's not how they ((*Toronto Slang* users)) would say it, right? Like, they would have like a specific, like, **twist on the word**, or they'd, like, **say it a little bit differently**. So, like, when I say it, it just sounds like I'm uncomfortable saying it, because I don't have that, like, **fluidity** of being able to just like throw it in a sentence. So, it's more of, like, how comfortable you are with the usage of words. And then that, like, translates to like **the tone** that you use and things like that. So, I sound, like, uptight when I try to use these words because, like, I would- like don't use them. But, they would sound more casual and like, it would flow better when they use it.

VE: Oh, okay, cool. So, like, with "fam", like, can you- You don't have to if you don't feel comfortable, can you like maybe demonstrate how, how that would be said?

RG: Um- ((laughs uncomfortably)) Uh, no, so if it was like- "Fam"'s a bad example because **I don't know how they would say it**. But like, it would- it would be like- like, "waste tings", like it would- they, they have a very specific, like, **tone** to it. I really can't do it. I'm so sorry.

The interviewee, RG, in thinking about *Toronto Slang*, acknowledges that, along with the enregistered lexicon, there are ways of pronouncing words that distinguish the speech of *Toronto Slang* users from others. While RG is aware of a phonetic/phonological difference, and indeed first suggests *fam* as an example of a word that is pronounced with a 'twist' and 'a little bit differently', she struggles to articulate exactly what the difference is, framing the difference around comfort, fluidity, and tone. When asked to produce the contrast, she admits she is unable to. Consistent with this, while the enregisterment of *fom* (and not the phonological process in general) suggests that Torontonians (like RG) can perceive the variation with pre-nasal /æ/, they are not generalizing the process of laxing as a unique linguistic attribute of English in the city.

So then why *fom* specifically? Why not *fomily*, *understond*, *rondom*, or *Conada*?

As with the words conventionalized with *th*-stopping, *fom* has come to have local index-ical salience. We hypothesize that the word's indexing of 'Toronto' and the noticing and metadiscursive uptake of its local pronunciation are co-constitutive: the word can be understood as a 'Toronto' word (in contrast to some other meaning) because its pronunciation has been taken up as a means of semiotic differentiation and its local pronunciation has been noticed because the word has been taken up as a sign with local indexicality. For Gal and Irvine (2019: 19) such contrasts are organized in axes of differentiation, that is, "schema[s] of qualitative contrast both for indexical signs and for what they are taken to represent". The respelling of *fom* creates call an additional, mutually reinforcing, axis of differentiation. The axes of differentiation of *fom* are schematized in Figure 7.
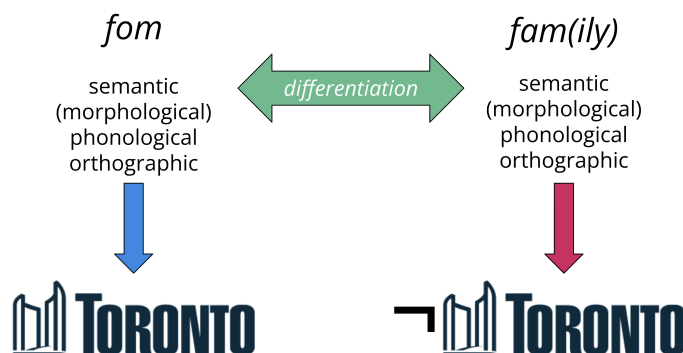

Figure 7. Schematization of the axes of differentiation.

On one side is *fom*, semantically, (morphologically), phonologically, and orthograph-ically distinct, which indexes 'Toronto', and the other is *fam* (or even *family*), which, given the "totalizing" (Gal and Irvine 2019: 118) nature of such axes of differentiation, indexes, at the very least 'Not Toronto'. Through the enregisterment process – specifically through acts of noticing contrast and the subsequent communication, uptake, and revision of that contrast – the distinctness of this word has come to be maximally marked through ortho-graphic contrast.

Indeed, this process is not unique to *fom* and *Toronto Slang*. Respellings of particular words may well be the primary way in which phonetic/phonological distinction is metadis-cursively conceptualized, enregistered, and circulated. Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson (2006) frame this process – in their case the monophthongization of /aw/ and the word *dahntahn* – within Silverstein's (2003) concept of indexical order:

> "In Pittsburgh, the (aw) variable acquires third-order indexical meaning when it gets "swept up" into explicit lists of local words and their meanings and reflexive performances of local identities, in the context of widely circulat-ing discourse about the connection between local identity and local speech." (Johnstone et al. 2006: 84)

The vehicle through which phonetic/phonological features are "swept up" (Silver-stein 2003: 219) into a higher order – and metadiscursively-available – indexicality is folk

respellings of particular words. Many examples from other varieties easily come to mind: *oot and aboot* ('out and about') as the lexicalized representation of Canadian Raising (the raising of the nucleus of /aʊ/ and /aɪ/ to [ʌ] in NCanE, *hoi toider* ('high tider') as representing a similar phonological distinction in Outer Banks English in North Carolina, and *fush and chups* ('fish and chips') representing the centralization of /ɪ/ in New Zealand English; these are a handful among dozens of possible examples. While some of these , like *oot and aboot*, may be more widely enregistered (i.e., more speakers have been socialized to recognize their indexicalities), we suggest that *fom* is just another example of this general phenomenon.

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