Cross-ethnic stylization and sociolinguistic variation:

Unpacking the semiotics of class, race, and vernacularity

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new ways of analyzing variation 40
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questions

- What can cross-ethnic stylization tell us about the ways in which other social forces such as class and gender coproduce local meanings of ethnicity?
- How sensitive to the local valences of social formations such as race, class, and gender must one be in order to authentically produce cross-ethnic stylings?
- Do certain levels of language (e.g. grammar, phonology) facilitate cross-ethnic stylization, while others inhibit it, or must subjects demonstrate linguistic patterning across an array of language types in order to be read as "authentic"?
- And how do cases of ethnic stylization help expose the "normal" mechanics of ethnicity and its attendant social forces for those subjects who do not use language to problematize their assigned or received ethnicities?

“bedlington” middle, ethnic profile

Ethnic Group	Percentage
African American	58%
White	19%
Latino	16%
Asian / Pacific Islander	3%
Multiracial	3%

“montana”

- Arrived in North Carolina as a young child
- Though she is “Mexican” according the ternary configuration of race at Bedlington (“Black,” “white,” “Mexican”), she is actually of Guatemalan descent.
- Admits knowing Spanish, but does not speak it at school
- Core member of popular African American 7th grade girls group

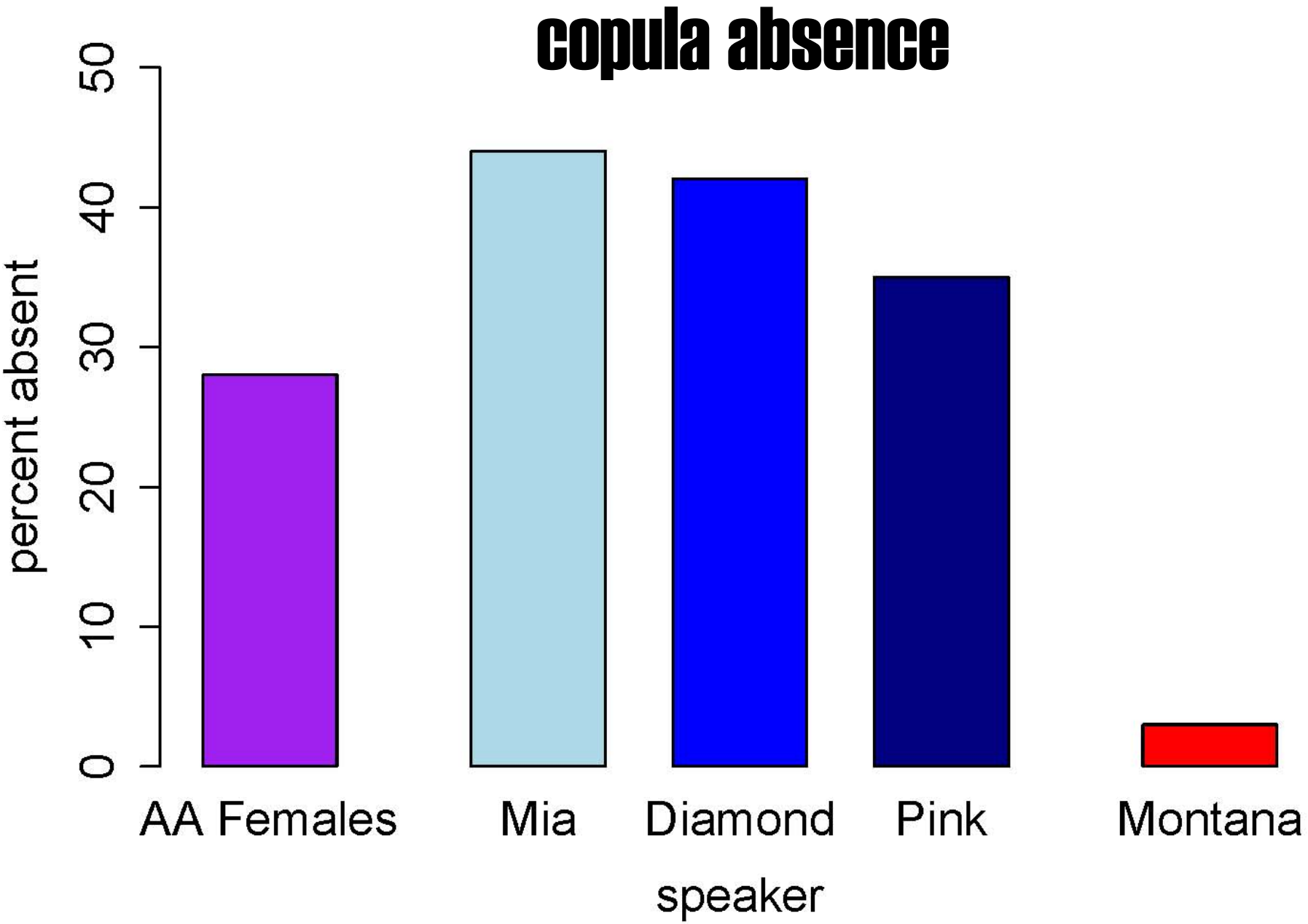
popular african american 7th grade girls friendship group

- Friendship group: Most popular 7th grade African American girls
- 4 core members: Diamond, Pink, Mia, and Montana
- All peripheral members of African American
- Shared aesthetics: Hair straightening, brightly colored tennis shoes and jeans, coordinated brightly colored earrings
- Shared social practices: buy lunch from cafeteria, “calling” boys, “french fry” economy, locker practices
- Diamond, Pink, and Mia are African American; Montana is Latina

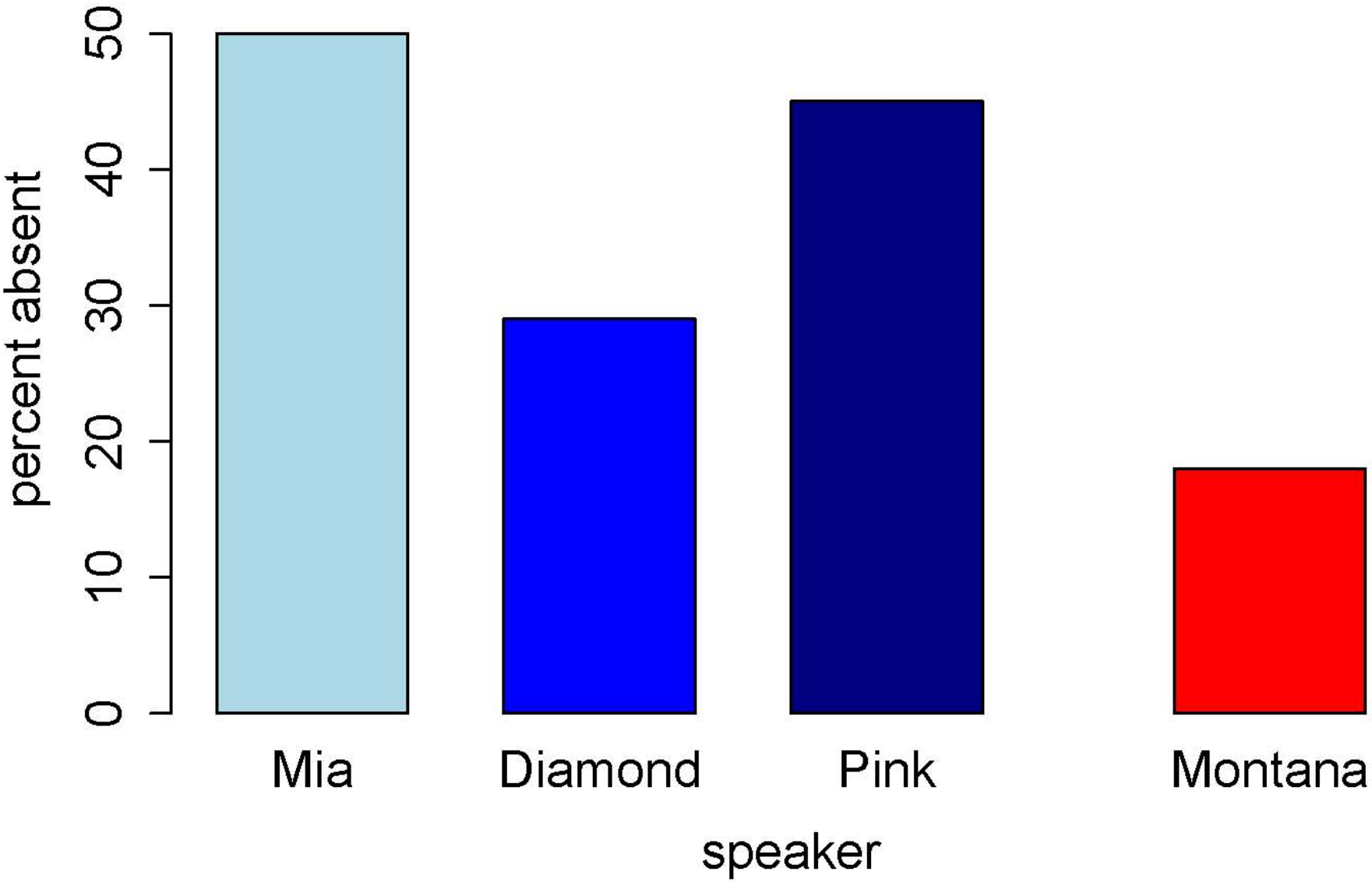
Morphosyntactic variables

variationist analysis: grammatical features of AAE

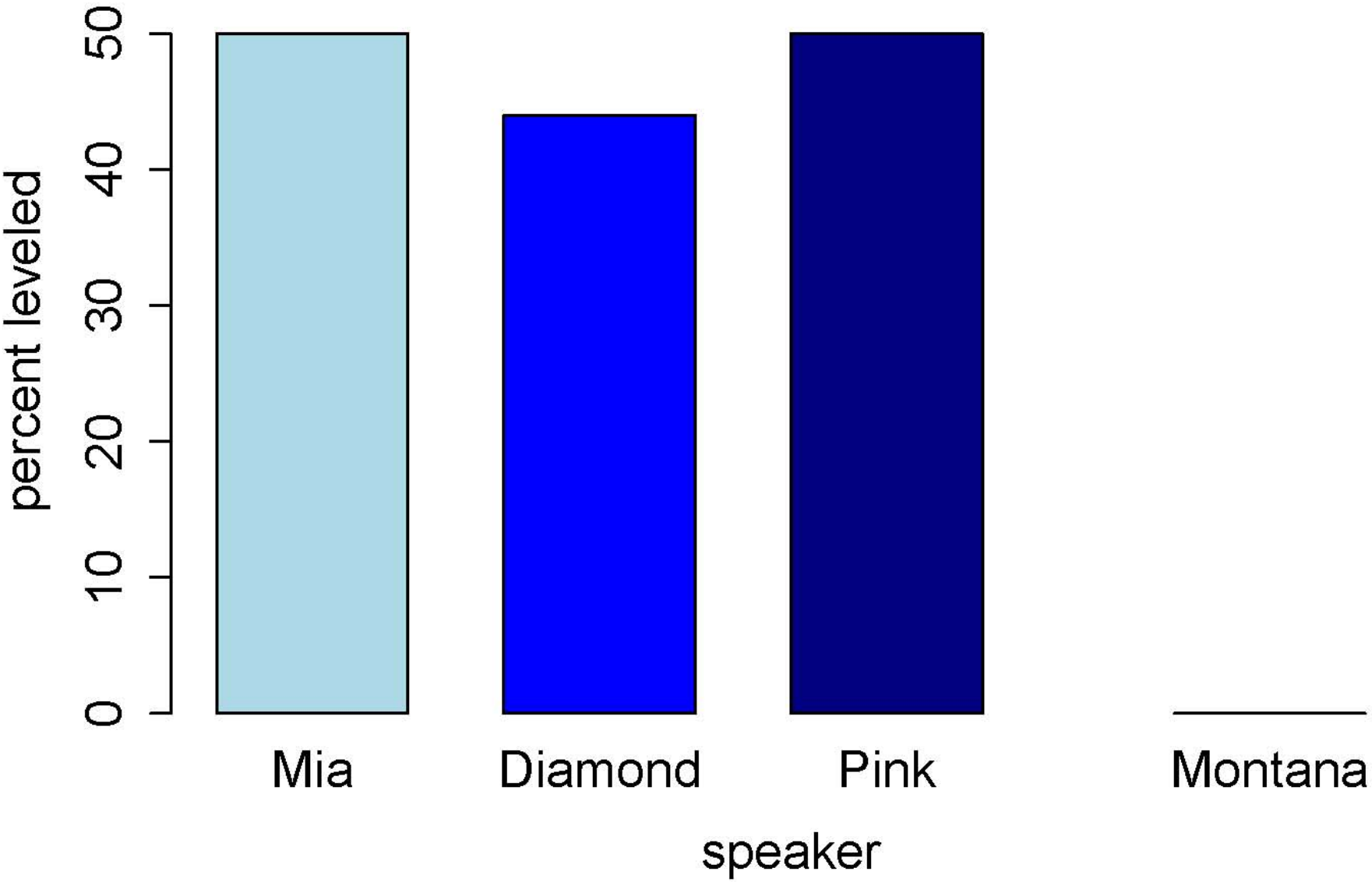
- 1. Verbal –s absence (N = 558)
  - ***The dog bark*** for ***The dog barks***.
  - *Labov et al. (1968); Wolfram (1969); Fasold (1972); Wolfram and Thomas (2002); Rickford (1999); Green (2002)*
- 2. Copula absence (N = 784)
  - ***She nice*** for ***She's nice*** or ***She is nice***.
  - *Labov (1969); Wolfram (1969); Fasold (1972); Wolfram (1974); Baugh (1980); Poplack & Sankoff (1987); Blake (1997); Rickford (1998, 1999)*
- 3. Preterit copula leveling (N = 95)
  - ***We was there*** for ***We were there***.
  - *Labov et al. (1968); Weldon (1994); Tagliamonte and Smith (1999); Wolfram and Thomas (2002); Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2003); Wolfram & Sellers (1999); Wolfram, Hazen, & Schilling-Estes (1999)*
- 4. Invariant (Aspectual) –*be* (N = 180)
  - *My mom be coming home late* for *My mom usually comes home late*


copula absence
percent absent
0
10
20
30
40
50
AA Females
Mia
Diamond
Pink
Montana
speaker

3rd –*s* absence



leveling to *was*



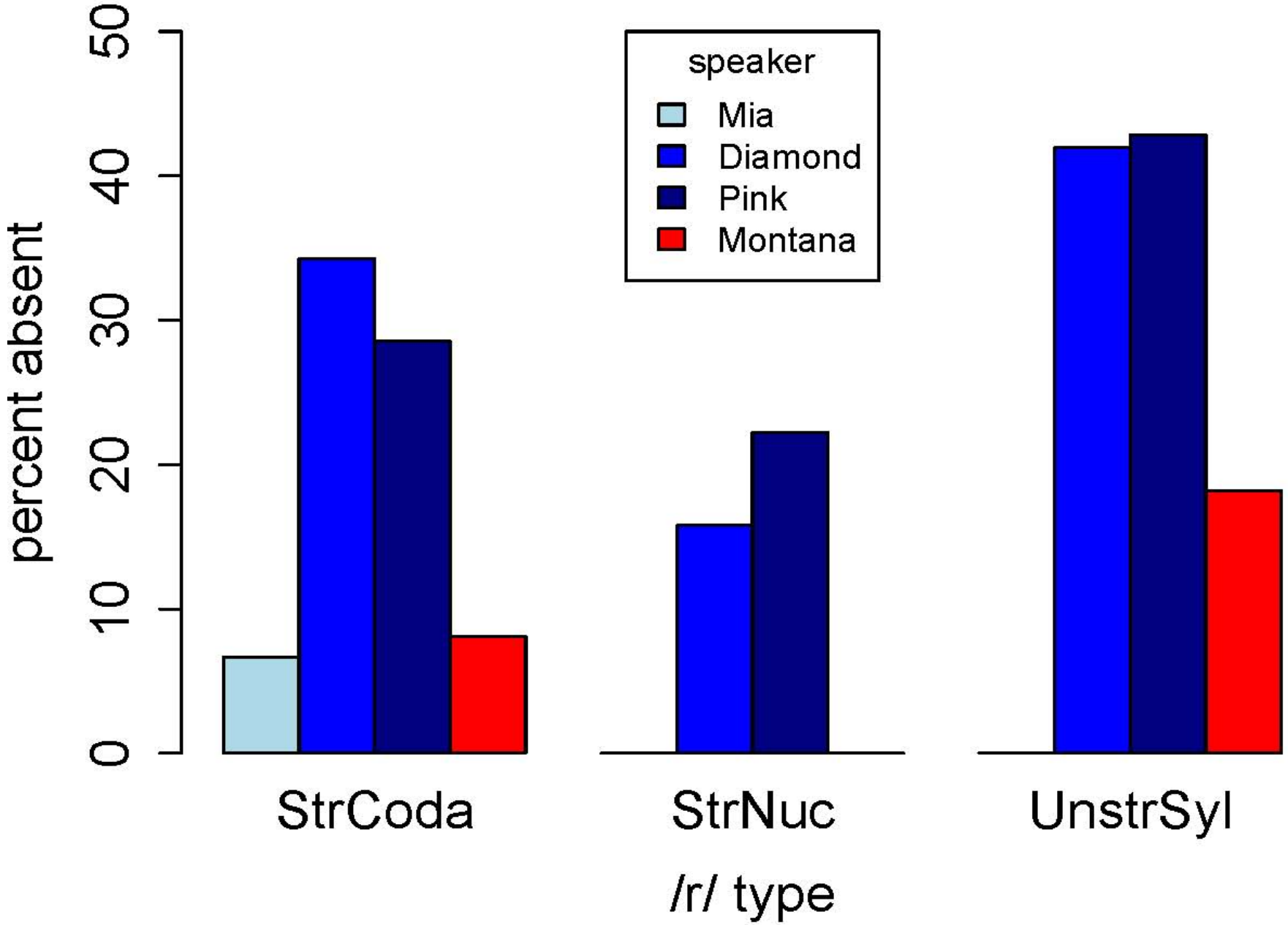
Invariant –BE

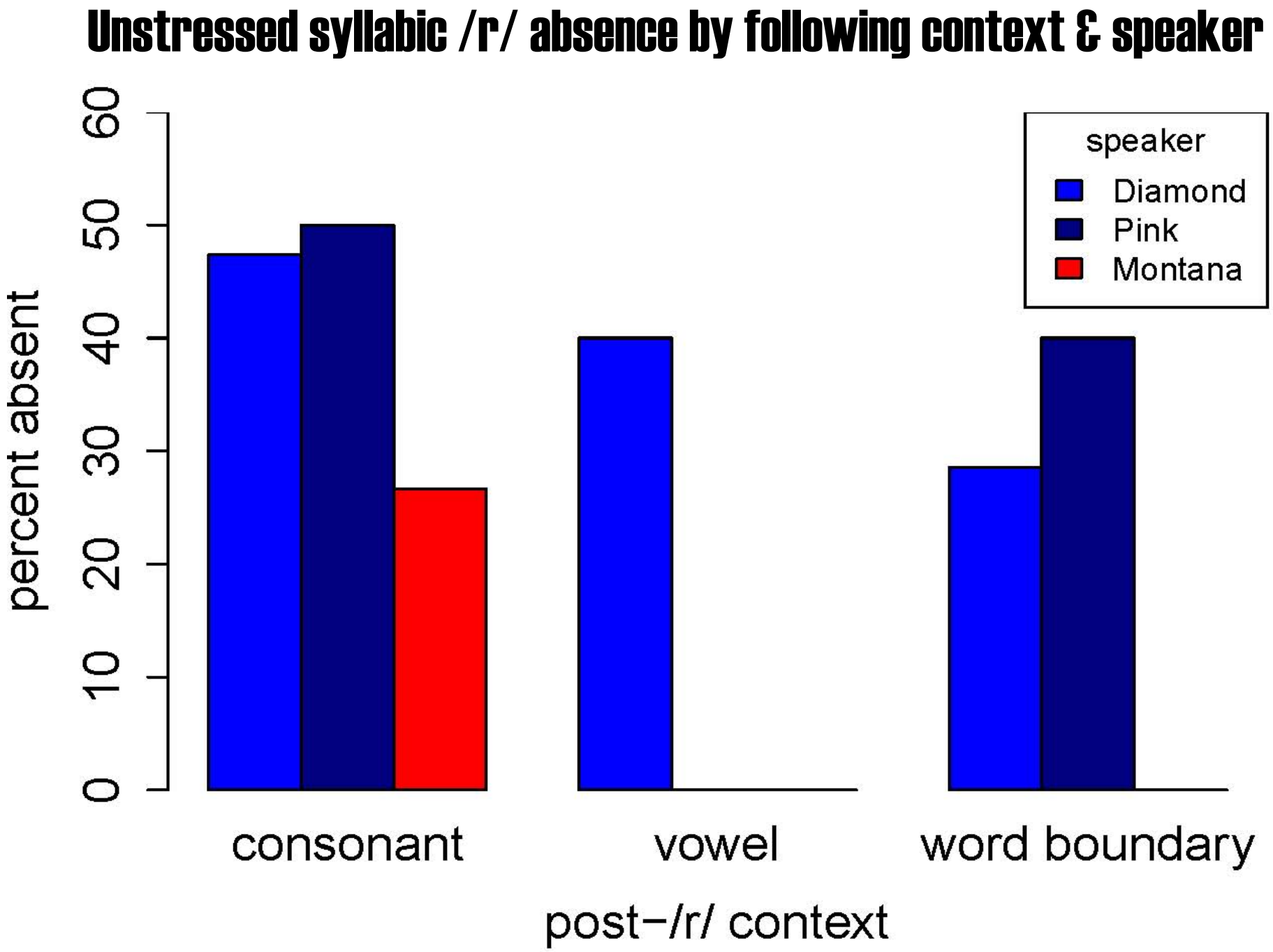
Name	Ethnicity	Rate (N / hour)	N
Julio -7	Latino	87.37	81
Dashawna -7	African American	29.06	7
Jenna -7	White	20.76	5
Jonathan -7	African American	17.09	6
Pink -7	African American	15.26	8
Shawny -7	African American	14.86	9
Rubi -7	Latina	13.68	4
Krystal -7	African American	12.46	5
Trix -6	African American	12.33	5
Lazy -8	Latina	9.86	6
Mateo -6	Latino	8.88	3
Montana -7	Latina	7.63	4
Destiny -7	African American	6.95	3
Alfonso -7	Latino	6.84	2
Mia -7	African American	5.72	3
Keandra -7	African American	4.98	2
Sakina -7	African Americna	4.15	1
Luis -6	Latino	2.95	1
Jorge -7	Latino	1.21	1

Phonological variables

variationist analysis: phonological features of AAE

- 1. Postvocalic *r-* deletion (n = 300)
  - Stressed Nuclear ***her, girl***
  - Stressed Nonnuclear ***corn, farm***
  - Unstressed Syllabic ***favor, twister***
  - *Labov et al. (1968); Bailey & Thomas (1998); Wolfram (1969); Wolfram & Thomas (2002)*
- 2. Coda Consonant Cluster Reduction (n=127)
  - Monomorphemic ***act, guest***
  - Bimorphemic ***worked, guessed***
  - *Wolfram, Childs, Torbert (2000); Wolfram & Thomas (2002); Bailey & Thomas (1998)*


/r/ absence by /r/ type & speaker
speaker
Mia
Diamond
Pink
Montana
percent absent
0
10
20
30
40
50
StrCoda
StrNuc
UnstrSyl
/r/ type

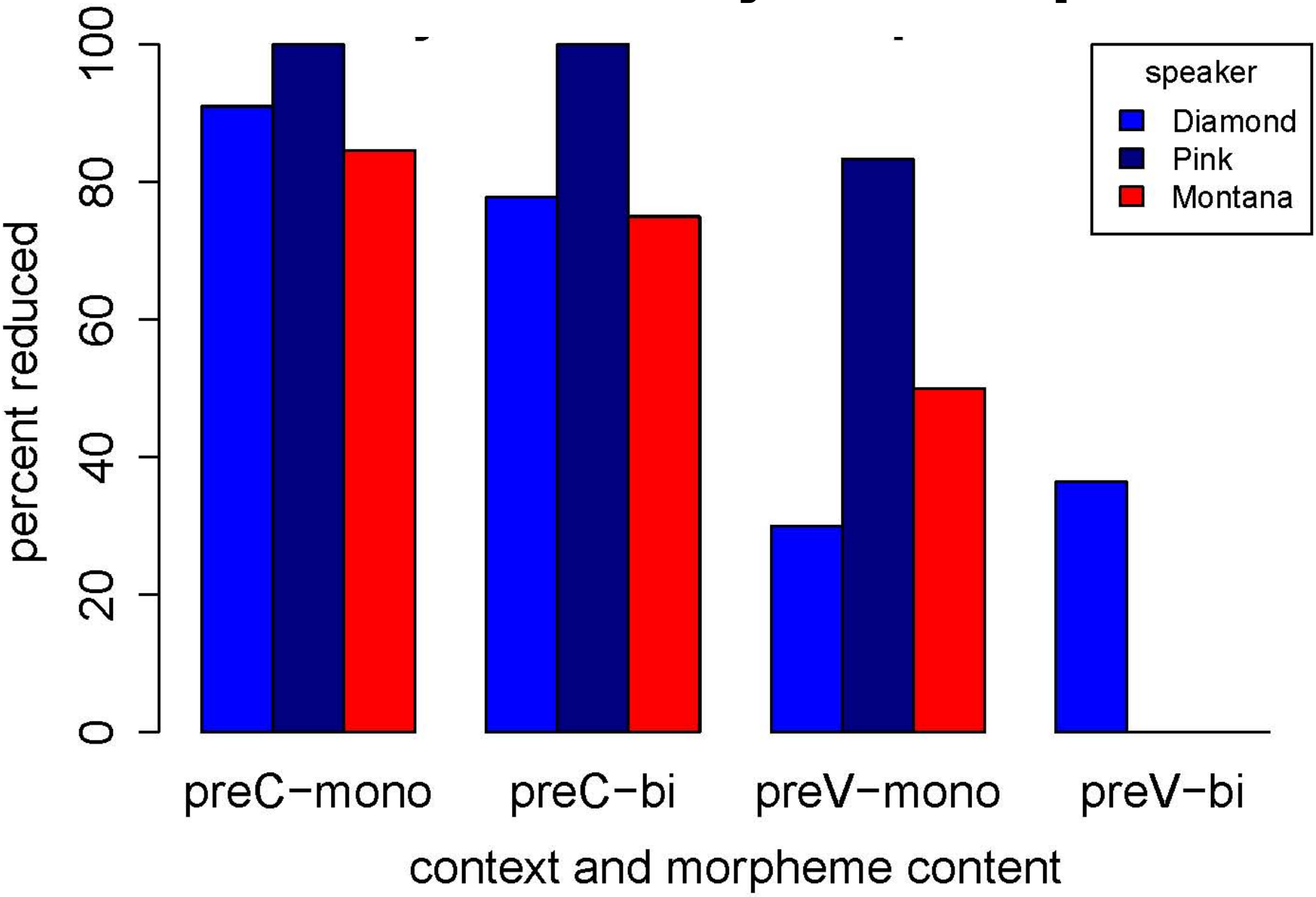

Unstressed syllabic /r/ absence by following context & speaker
percent absent
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
speaker
Diamond
Pink
Montana
consonant
vowel
word boundary
post−/r/ context

inventory of english clusters subject to reduction

Phonetic Cluster	Monomorphemic	Bimorphemic
[st]	*test, post*	*missed, guest*
[sp]	*wasp, clasp*	
[sk]	*desk, risk*	
[ʃt]		*finished, cashed*
[zd]		*raised, amazed*
[ʒd]		*judged, charged*
[ðd]		*bathed, smoothed*
[ft]	*craft, cleft*	*laughed, stuffed*
[vd]		*loved, paved*
[nd]	*mind, find*	*rained, fanned*
[md]		*named, rammed*
[ld]	*cold, old*	*called, smelled*
[pt]	*apt, adapt*	*rapped, stopped*
[kt]	*act, contact*	*looked, cracked*

source: wolfram, childs, torbert (2000)

coda cluster reduction by context & speaker



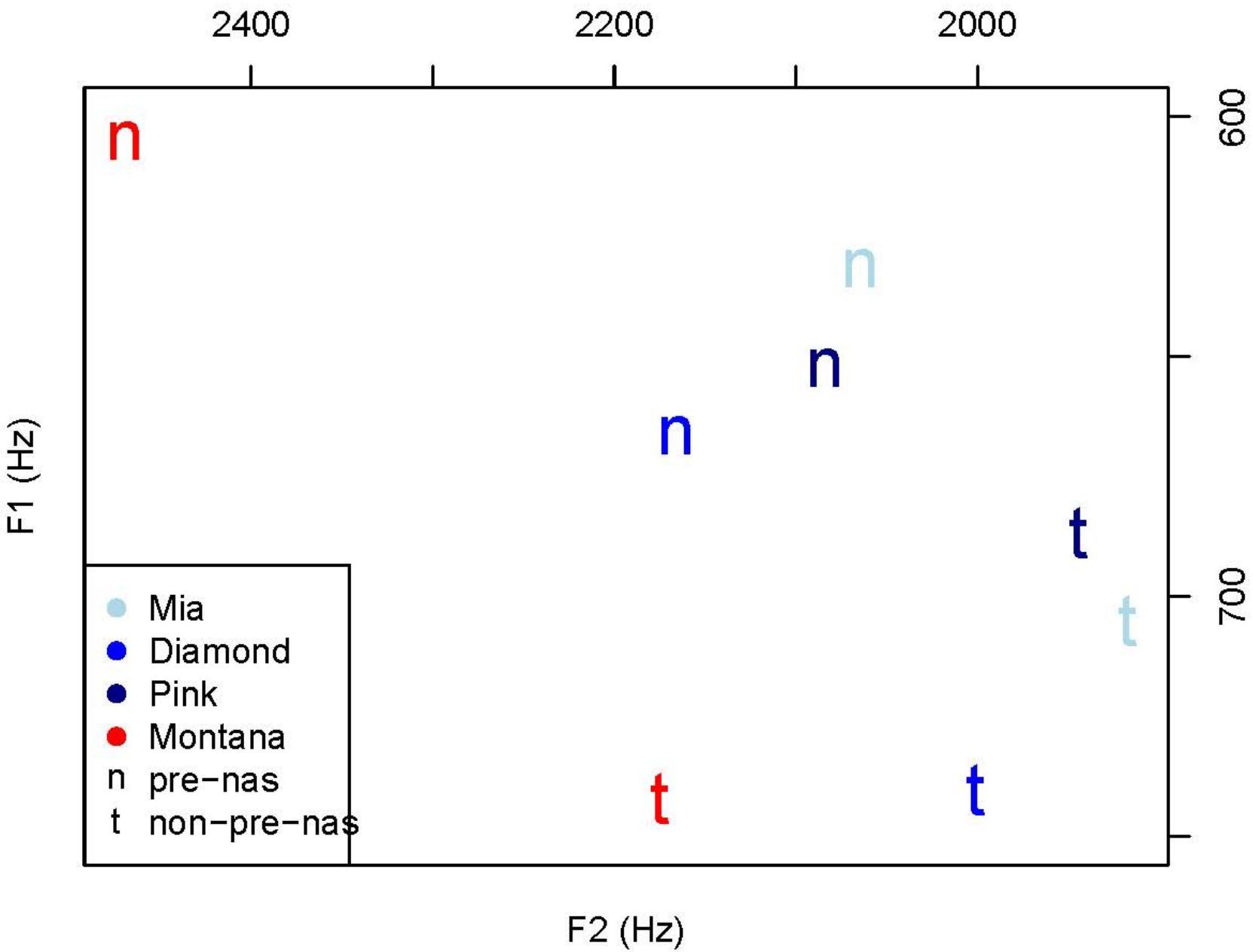
Phonetic Variables

1. pre-nasal and non-pre-nasal [æ]

- Allophonic split between:
  - Pre-nasal *ban, can*
  - Non-pre-nasal *bat, cat*
- Some studies have found that speakers of Mexican American English tend to resist the raising of [æ] in pre-nasal contexts *Thomas (2001) and Thomas, Carter, and Cogshall (2006)*

Environment	N
Pre-nasal	62
Non-pre-nasal	118

pre-nasal & non-pre-nasal [æ]



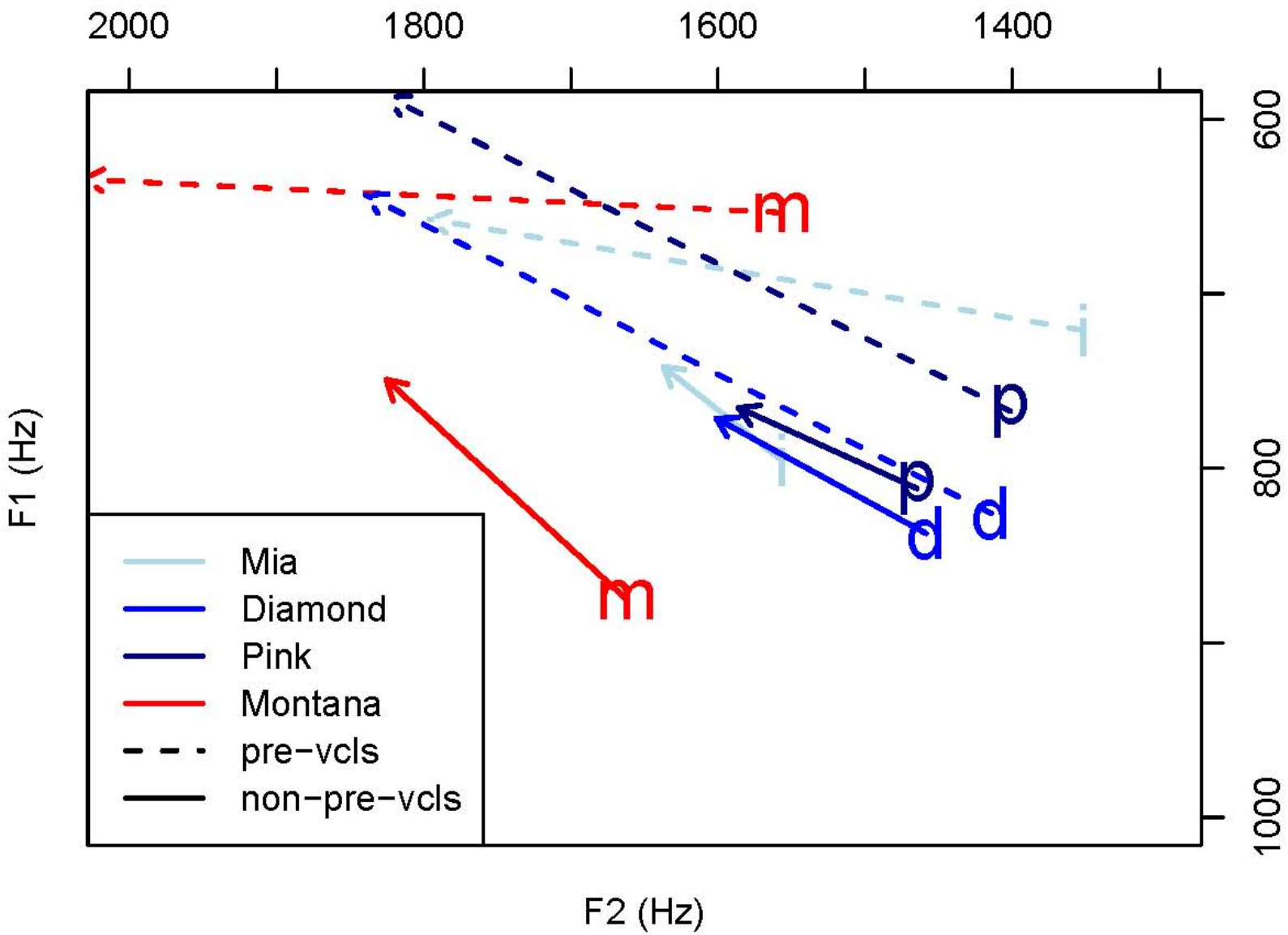
2. pre-voiced & pre-voiceless [ai]

- Voicing-conditioned glide reduction:
  - pre-voiced contexts: *ride, tide*
  - pre-voiceless contexts: *right, tight*

- Mexican Americans in North Carolina generally demonstrate productions of [ai] in English resembling the [ai] of Spanish, both in terms of **glide duration** (which is longer in Spanish) and **offset location** (which in Spanish is closer to [i]

Conditions	Total N
Pre-voiced and Pre-voiceless	136

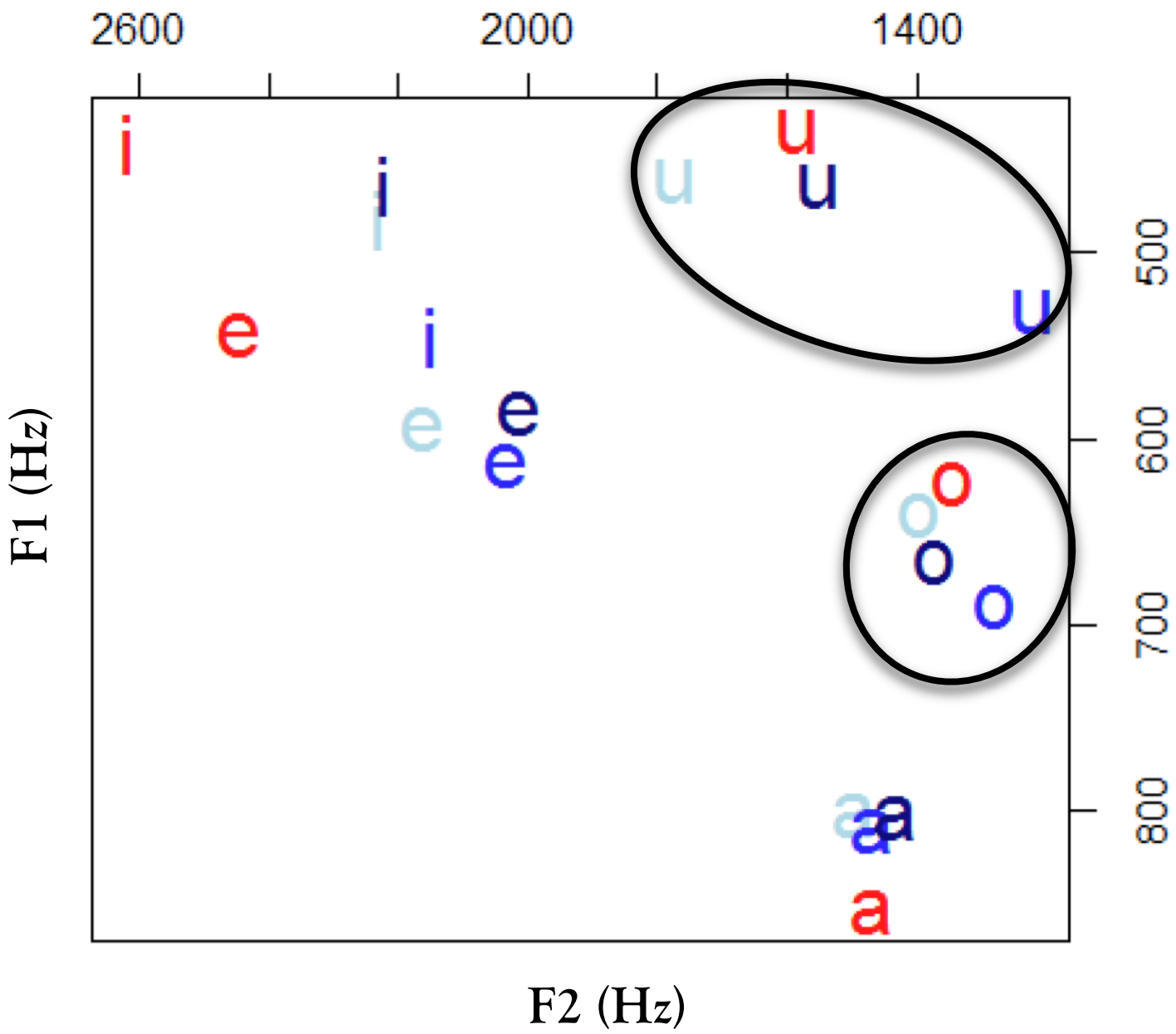
[ai], pre-voiced & pre-voiceless



3. quality of [o, u]

- Location of back round vowels, [o, u]
  - *boat*
  - *boot*
- Thomas (2001) has shown that Mexican Americans in Texas resist the back vowel fronting that is characteristic of non-Latino varieties in the U.S. South, though Fought (1999) has shown that Chicanos in Los Angeles participate in the [u]-fronting taking place there.

Vowel	N
[o]	103
[u]	76



[o] & [u], with anchor vowels

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