**The enregisterment of “Barnsley” dialect: vowel fronting and being ‘broad’ in Yorkshire dialects**

**1. Introduction**

There has been a relatively stable repertoire of language features associated with the county of Yorkshire in Northern England since at least the nineteenth century (see Cooper 2013, 2015). This repertoire is enregistered (Agha 2003) as “Yorkshire” and indexes social values including the geographical location of Yorkshire along with more abstract concepts like ‘‘plain speaking’, ‘authenticity’, ‘independence’, ‘sense of humour’, ‘geniality’ and ‘hospitable’’ (Cooper 2013: 270). Historical data also illustrates that speakers perceived additional, more localised varieties that were distinct from other areas in the county but categorised under the broader label of Yorkshire dialect. However, although the historical county of Yorkshire has not officially existed since 1974 when it was split into several administrative areas as shown in Figure 1, the perception of a “Yorkshire” dialect can still be observed today. For this reason I will use the term ‘Yorkshire’ here to refer collectively to these areas. Yet, despite evidence for an enregistered repertoire of modern Yorkshire dialect, local speakers also assert that dialects vary across the Yorkshire region. When asked in interviews, they define several areas in which distinct dialects were perceived to exist including general areas covering North, South, and West Yorkshire, plus more specific areas within Yorkshire such as Sheffield, and Hull. The area defined most frequently and consistently was Barnsley, which is also shown in Figure 1, and discussion of this area highlighted a perception that local Barnsley people pronounce the name of their town with [aː] in the first syllable as opposed to [ɑː].

The town of Barnsley is the centre of a metropolitan borough north of Sheffield but south of Wakefield and Leeds. It forms part of South Yorkshire, which consists of Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster. This is administratively distinct from West Yorkshire which is made up of Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Calderdale (including Halifax), and Kirklees (including Huddersfield). Like many post-industrialised urban areas in South Yorkshire, Barnsley has a mining heritage which can be traced back at least as far as the nineteenth century. However, as Burland (2017: 237) points out, mining is no longer the main industry in the town and there are ‘no working pits remaining; wholesale and retail trades now account for the majority of employment’. Furthermore, Barnsley shares a border with West Yorkshire and boundary changes of administrative areas in recent decades has had an impact on local identity in the region. In some cases this has resulted in Barnsley dialect becoming ideologically distinct from other areas in the Barnsley district (Burland 2017).



*Figure 1. Location of Barnsley metropolitan borough in England (inset) and in South Yorkshire sharing boundary with West Yorkshire[[1]](#footnote-1)*

The most extensive study of Barnsley English is that of Cave (2001) who interviewed 30 speakers mostly from Royston[[2]](#footnote-2), which is approximately 4 miles from Barnsley and was made part of the Barnsley metropolitan district in 1974 (see also Burland 2017: 237). Cave’s study highlights that Barnsley speakers believe that their speech is different from nearby areas like Wakefield, Doncaster, and Sheffield, and illustrates that there are several features that are frequently and consistently observed in the region. For instance, he states that the following vowels were used regularly by his informants regardless of age and gender: /a/ in both the pronunciation of ‘I’ [a] and of father [faðə], plus ‘/ʊ/ in ‘go’ [gʊ], /ʊə/ in ‘more’ [mʊə], /aː/ in ‘down’ [daːn], /ɔi/ in ‘hole’ [ɔil], and /iːə/ in ‘there’ [ðiːə]’ (Cave 2001: 115). Burland’s (2017) later study of Barnsley English focuses on the realisations of the FACE and GOAT diphthongs and considers differences within the region. She finds that Barnsley and Wakefield speakers produce the monophthongs [eː] and [oː] in these lexical sets respectively, but many speakers in Royston have a closing diphthong which goes against the supra-regional trend. Burland attributes this to an influx of people from the Black Country in the West Midlands into Royston as well as subsequent historical events such as the loss of a specific Royston local council and its incorporation into Barnsley. She goes on to note that these events helped to reinforce the idea that there are dialect differences between Royston and Barnsley.

Wales (2006: 17) notes that the tendency to distinguish between varieties can be observed regarding dialects in the wider North of England. She states that, historically speaking different regions have different physical landscapes and differing linguistic histories based on settlement patterns, so it is unsurprising that ‘communities have developed and preserved cultural practices and different varieties of speech; and just as significantly have come to perceive differences in speech.’ An example of such perceptions can be seen in Montgomery’s (2010: 593) study where informants from Hull, Carlisle and Crewe were asked to draw dialect areas on a blank map of the UK. He notes that ‘given the county’s historical size and its prominence in England’s history, a “Yorkshire” dialect area was drawn by relatively few informants’. So it appears that speakers place less significance on the historical county of Yorkshire as a whole in their conception of local dialects. Montgomery also notes that only Hull informants drew a ‘Hull’ dialect area on their maps, and goes on to conclude that proximity is an important factor in dialect perception as it ‘enables informants to distinguish a greater number of dialect areas or to be more accurate in their recognition of boundaries’ (ibid. p.604). This suggests that more localised areas have a greater cultural prominence (Leach et al. 2016: 195) for Yorkshire speakers as they have a greater knowledge of them than they do the wider Yorkshire region. However, although both Cave and Burland discuss the perception of a distinct Barnsley dialect, neither of them discusses the pronunciation of the name ‘Barnsley’ itself, nor how the variety is perceived to local Yorkshire people who are not from the Barnsley metropolitan district.

In this paper I discuss how the individual sub-Yorkshire variety of Barnsley dialect is enregistered to modern Yorkshire speakers. Processes of enregisterment are those by which language features comes to be associated with particular social values. These features are subject to shifts in indexical order (Silverstein 2003) where speakers become aware of them and begin to associate them with social values. Based on Silverstein’s concept, Johnstone et al. (2006: 82-83) describe three orders of indexicality which illustrate how features can become enregistered. Features at the first order of indexicality do not have any social meaning for speakers, although a linguist may observe that correlate with a particular group. Second-order indexical features are those which have acquired social meaning and may become ideologically linked with notions of class, correctness, aesthetics, and regional location (amongst others). Speakers are consciously aware of these features and can use them for social work such as style shifting. Third-order features are usually second-order indexicals that become strongly associated with a specific group of speakers or an identity and tend to appear in relatively standardised lists of features such as dialect dictionaries. Both second and third-order features may be enregistered, and Johnstone et al. (ibid.) illustrate that there is a repertoire of features that are strongly associated with Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, referred to as “Pittsburghese”. Johnstone (2009: 160) explains that for these associations to be made, a language feature ‘must be linked with an ideological scheme that can be used to evaluate it in contrast to another variant’, and that we can see evidence for these links by considering explicit ‘talk about talk’. Her interviews highlighted that Pittsburgh speakers were aware of Pittsburghese, could readily discuss it, and list linguistic examples. Moreover, there were particular language features that were enregistered in multiple ways simultaneously. That is, a feature is indexical of the geographical area of Pittsburgh, but also of qualities like sounding ‘ignorant’ at the same time (ibid.). Based on the points made by Montgomery and Wales discussed above, and following the methodology of Johnstone, I will address the following research questions, given the frequent definition of Barnsley as a Yorkshire dialect area:

1. What kind of dialect variation is perceived in Yorkshire?
2. How is Barnsley dialect enregistered to Yorkshire speakers in terms of metalinguistic commentary and social values?
3. What language features do Yorkshire speakers specifically associate with Barnsley dialect?
4. What are the implications for theories of enregisterment in relation to Yorkshire dialect?

In the following section I discuss how processes of enregisterment have operated specifically on Yorkshire dialect. I then move on to explain the interview methodology I followed when collecting my data in §3. Finally in §4, I address the theoretical issues surrounding the embedding of an enregistered Barnsley variety within a more widely recognised Yorkshire one. I also discuss the concept of a variety being ‘broad’ and suggest that this is also enregistered to Yorkshire speakers, due to the frequency with which the term ‘broad’ was used to describe Barnsley dialect. This is similar to the enregisterment of ‘diversity’ in Indonesia discussed by Cole (2010: 2) who notes that ‘enregisterment does not apply only to the semiotic category of registers’, and argues that concepts like ‘culture’, ‘identity’, and ‘diversity’ can also become enregistered and are interdiscursive in nature. The description of Yorkshire varieties as broad clearly indexes many additional social values for Yorkshire speakers and can apply to repertoires associated with different areas in Yorkshire, as well as different ideologies surrounding characterological figures (see also Johnstone 2017) relating to Yorkshire speakers.

**2. Enregisterment and Yorkshire dialects**

Just as with Pittsburghese, there is an enregistered repertoire of Yorkshire dialect which speakers both from within Yorkshire and without strongly associate with the county (Cooper 2013: 256). This repertoire was illustrated in the results of an online survey where speakers were asked to rate the strength of certain dialect features with Yorkshire, which was based on the analysis of a corpus of written representations of Yorkshire dialect, and of features which frequently and consistently appeared on Yorkshire commodities like t-shirts, coffee mugs, etc. (see also Cooper 2017). The repertoire of Yorkshire dialect set out in Table 1 indexed Yorkshire generally for the speakers surveyed in Cooper (2013) as opposed to any specific area within the county, and displayed links to social values at both the second and third orders of indexicality.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Feature | Definition | Examples (Kellett 2007) | Gloss |
| DAR | Definite Article Reduction | *Well, t’ landlord taks another look at Mary, sees t’ state t’ lass is in* | Well, the landlord takes another look at Mary, sees the state the girl is in |
| *Nowt* | Nothing | *Nay, there’s nowt ter bi afeeared on!* | No, there’s nothing to be afraid of! |
| *Owt* | Anything | *owt aht o’ t’ ordinary* | Anything out of the ordinary |
| *Summat* | Something | *Ah’ll tell thi summat else* | I’ll tell you something else |
| H-dropping | N/A | *‘e’d feel ‘at ‘ooame* | He’d feel at home |
| *Reight* | Really/right | *some reight cheerful neews* | Some really cheerful news |
| *Sen* | Self | *t’ lass ligged ‘ersen dahn in t’ corner* | The girl laid herself down in the corner |
| *Tha/thee* | You/your | *Can’t tha fit us in somewheeare?* | Can’t you fit us in somewhere? |

*Table 1. Enregistered repertoire of Yorkshire dialect*

However, in cases like that of Pittsburghese, speakers tended to associate language features with a single city. The enregisterment of Yorkshire dialect is somewhat more complex, as indicated by the online survey mentioned above, which yielded comments indicating that speakers believed there to be more than one Yorkshire variety (Cooper 2013: 250). For instance, we see comments such as the following: ‘People from West/North Yorkshire speak very differently to those from South Yorkshire. It might be worth splitting them up’, and ‘if you compare Barnsley to sheffield [sic] there is again a massive difference and Leeds to Huddersfield, or Hull’ (ibid.). Several survey respondents made comments to this effect, indicating a perception that different sub-Yorkshire dialects exist within the region which are distinct from one another, yet still generally considered to be Yorkshire dialect. Finnegan (2015: 243-244) records similar findings in her study of identity and Sheffield English. She notes that her informants identified primarily as ‘Sheffield’ and secondly as ‘Yorkshire’ speakers, and that there are ‘marked supralocal rivalries’ between ‘Sheffield and Leeds (West Yorkshire) and Sheffield and Barnsley/Rotherham (South Yorkshire)’. The linguistic differences between the latter areas are described as ‘very salient’. Additionally, in some cases we see named sub-Yorkshire varieties such as “Hullish”, which is evidenced by representations of Hull language features in lists of local words and on commodities such as the Hull Dialect Pack, which consists of a t-shirt, mug, fridge magnet and postcard available for purchase from website www.thehullshop.co.uk. Commodified Hullish features include *Err nerr* ‘oh no’ and *Goin on rerd* ‘going on the road’, which are examples of GOAT fronting (Cooper 2017: 360-361). GOAT fronting is a stereotypical feature of Hull English and involves GOAT words being pronounced with [ɜː] (Watt and Smith 2005: 109). Hull speakers are sufficiently aware of this pronunciation so that it appears in written representations of the local dialect (Watt 2013: 217) and this has contributed to the enregisterment and commodification of this feature (see also Cooper 2017).

To an extent, this kind of commentary on the differences between Yorkshire dialects reflects speaker awareness of the actual linguistic variation that exists in Yorkshire. Many of these differences have been influenced by the historical division of Yorkshire into three ‘ridings’, a term which derives from an Old Norse word meaning ‘third part’ (Wales 2006: 13). The ridings are known as the North, East, and West Ridings and, except for the East Riding of Yorkshire, they no longer officially exist and have been replaced by the administrative areas of North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, and South Yorkshire (ibid. p.15). Moreover, Yorkshire has traditionally been divided into different dialect areas, as discussed by Beal (2004: 113-114) who notes that Ellis (1869-1889) included the North and East of Yorkshire in his ‘Northern’ dialect area but excluded some of the West Riding and certain southern parts of the county. This division is later studied by Wakelin (1972: 102), who labels it the Humber-Lune/Ribble line and illustrates how it marks a major isogloss bundle that divides traditional Northern dialects from those further south. In addition, when we consider the variation perceived to occur in the pronunciation of ‘Barnsley’ we can see that this may be reflective of actual variation in the realisation of START in the Yorkshire region. For instance, Wells (1982: 360) records START as [aː] in the middle north and particularly Leeds, while Petyt (1985: 161) states that it occurs in West Yorkshire, but notes that realisations vary and that ‘little significance is generally attached to these fronter variants’. Hughes et al. (2012: 104) similarly list this pronunciation in Bradford and illustrate that this is a tendency to be observed across the county. However, Stoddart et al. (1999) highlight that START varies in Sheffield as older speakers prefer [aː] whereas younger speakers tend towards [ɑː].

Although each of my interview informants stated that there was a Barnsley dialect which was distinct from other parts of Yorkshire, when asked to illustrate how it varied compared to other “Yorkshire” varieties, they would initially struggle to think of any distinct language features, instead preferring to describe Barnsley dialect using metalinguistic labels like ‘broad’ or ‘old fashioned’. Jansen (2013: 209) discusses a similar issue affecting Carlisle English, where speakers couldn’t immediately name many language features of this variety while insisting that it is distinct from others. The reason for this with Barnsley dialect is likely that it shares a strong association with Yorkshire dialect. This kind of ideological relationship between Yorkshire dialect and a variety within Yorkshire has also been discussed by Beal (2009: 153), who describes ‘the embedding of “Sheffield” identity in a broader “Yorkshire” one’, although further discussion of Barnsley dialect did eventually lead to informants describing specific language features, such as a demonstration of the perceived local pronunciation of the name ‘Barnsley’ with [aː] in the first syllable as mentioned above. This challenges Petyt’s claim that these fronted pronunciations are not significant as some speakers do attach significance to [aː] in this context. Where this vowel was performed, it was demonstrably fronted when compared to those speakers’ usual pronunciations, which had lower F2 values. As this fronted pronunciation was only demonstrated relative to a more backed one in the name of the town to illustrate how its speakers would pronounce it I am terming it the ‘Barnsley vowel’.

A similar phenomenon was recorded by Coupland (1988: 27) in Cardiff English. He notes that the pronunciation of [aː] in certain words is salient in Cardiff due to its occurrence in many words that relate to local culture. The most notable of these is in the pronunciation of ‘Cardiff’itself. Just as with Yorkshire speakers, Coupland explains that Cardiff speakers are aware of this pronunciation and can demonstrate it when performing Cardiff English. He concludes that ‘regional pronunciation and local experience have a mutually encouraging, we might say symbiotic, relationship’, illustrating that the social significance of these local pronunciations is reinforced by speakers’ awareness of them. Other examples of specific pronunciations that are explicitly associated with place names include [ɒ] replacing [ə] in the final syllable of ‘Manchester’. This is described by Baranowski and Turton (2015: 296) as a stereotype of Manchester English, but one that appears to be an exaggeration of actual F2 backing of [ə] in the pronunciation of the word Manchester. Johnstone (2004: 126) also discusses the velarisation of /t/ in the pronunciation of ‘Pittsburgh’, which is represented in writing by Pittsburgh speakers online as ‘Pix-burgh’ as an expression of a sense of pride in coming from that city. We can therefore see that the discussion of this pronunciation is evidence for the enregisterment (Agha 2003) of the Barnsley vowel for Yorkshire speakers. It is also evidence for an enregistered Barnsley dialect that is both related to, and yet distinct from, the enregistered repertoire of Yorkshire dialect identified by Cooper (2013). Moreover, this indicates that are language features which distinguish Barnsley from other varieties of Yorkshire dialect such as “Sheffieldish” discussed by Beal (2009) and “Hullish” (Cooper 2017).

**3. Method**

I conducted interviews with 19 Yorkshire speakers from areas across the county who have lived in Yorkshire all their lives and as such have a high degree of familiarity with the dialect. 10 female and 9 male speakers of various ages were interviewed, as set out in Table 2. I had aimed to recruit informants from as broad a range of regions across Yorkshire as possible, but there were more informants forthcoming from South Yorkshire than other areas, and there were none from North Yorkshire. As a result, there is something of a skew in the data towards South Yorkshire, and more generally towards urban areas. This disparity may also be influenced by the fact that South and West Yorkshire are around 2.5 times more populated than North Yorkshire and the East Riding combined according to the UK 2011 Census (see also Cooper 2013: 202), which illustrates a greater likelihood of recruiting informants from the former areas than the latter ones. The interviews were audio-recorded using a Phillips DVT6000 digital recorder and ultimately comprised around 6.5 hours of data. Following Remlinger (2009) and Johnstone (2009), I conducted semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews in either one-to-one or group settings. There were four group interviews where the first group consisted of Louise, Donna, Nora, Jordan, and Alfred, the second was Elaine, Liam, and James, the third was Esme and Carol, and the fourth Helen and Barry. The groups were a result of employing a snowball technique (Llamas 2007: 14) of informant recruitment, where interviewees were encouraged to invite family members, friends, etc. to participate as well. All other interviews were one-to-one. Speakers were encouraged to talk about their experiences with and knowledge of “Yorkshire” dialect, and whether they believed there to be one or multiple “Yorkshire” dialects.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pseudonym | Age group | Gender | Native part of Yorkshire |
| Esme | 18-29 | Female | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Louise | 30-39 | Female | Rotherham, South Yorkshire |
| Lucy | 30-39 | Female | Wakefield, West Yorkshire |
| Helen | 30-39 | Female | Bingley, West Yorkshire |
| Elaine | 40-49 | Female | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Carol | 40-49 | Female | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Donna | 50-59 | Female | Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire |
| Nora | 50-59 | Female | Rotherham, South Yorkshire |
| Agnes | 50-59 | Female | Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire |
| Pam | 60-69 | Female | Darfield, South Yorkshire |
| Liam | 18-29 | Male | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Miles | 18-29 | Male | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Jordan | 20-29 | Male | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Noah | 30-39 | Male | Wakefield, West Yorkshire |
| Scott | 30-39 | Male | Doncaster, South Yorkshire |
| Ryan | 30-39 | Male | Barnsley, South Yorkshire |
| James | 50-59 | Male | Sheffield, South Yorkshire |
| Alfred | 60-69 | Male | Rotherham, South Yorkshire |
| Barry | 70-79 | Male | Bingley, West Yorkshire |

*Table 2. Demographic information for interview informants*

Where informants indicated that there were multiple “Yorkshire” dialects, they were subsequently asked to expand on this and explain how these varieties differed from one another. This yielded data regarding the perceived linguistic differences between the dialects of different areas within Yorkshire, along with evaluative metacommentary regarding particular varieties’ degree of ‘broadness’, intelligibility, or relative difference when compared to informants’ ‘native’ “Yorkshire” variety, or other named variety of “Yorkshire” dialect.

Most interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes, and I identified 64 usable tokens of the word ‘Barnsley’ from 14 informants. The distribution of these tokens according to speaker is set out in Table 3. Of these 64 tokens there were 5 examples of the Barnsley vowel demonstrated by Nora, Lucy, and Esme.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Speaker** | **Number of ‘Barnsley’ tokens** |
| Ryan | 9 |
| Lucy | 8 (6 ‘usual’, 2 Barnsley vowel) |
| Scott | 7 |
| Nora | 6 (4 ‘usual’, 2 Barnsley vowel) |
| Esme | 5 (4 ‘usual’, 1 Barnsley vowel) |
| Liam | 5 |
| Pam | 4 |
| Noah | 4 |
| James | 4 |
| Miles | 4 |
| Elaine | 3 |
| Agnes | 2 |
| Carol | 2 |
| Donna | 1 |

*Table 3. Number of ‘Barnsley’ tokens per informant organised by frequency*

The vowel in the first syllable in each token was extracted manually using Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2017) and formant frequency measurements were taken for F2 to investigate the degree of fronting in each token of this vowel. The results of this analysis showed that there was a measurable difference between certain speakers’ usual pronunciation and when they were performing their perception of a Barnsley pronunciation.

**4. Results and discussion**

**4.1 The ‘Barnsley vowel’**

Figure 2 shows the range of F2 measurements for the first vowel in the word ‘Barnsley’ in the interview data[[3]](#footnote-3) as well as measurements for the Barnsley vowel. Following Kirkham and Wormald (2015) who record a correlation between F2 and ethnicity for British Asian speakers’ use of /l/ and /r/ in Bradford, and Jansen (2010) who notes a correlation between F2 and age in the amount of GOOSE-fronting demonstrated by Carlisle speakers, I am only focusing on the differences in F2 here as the Barnsley vowel was deliberately fronted when performed by informants. These data were normalised according to the method described in Labov et al. (2006: 39-40) via the NORM Vowel Normalization and Plotting Suite (Thomas and Kendall 2007). This method was chosen because of its speaker-extrinsic nature and would account for speakers coming from different areas of Yorkshire who were of different ages and genders. The majority of the pronunciations displayed an F2 in the 1200-1400Hz range whereas the tokens of the specifically performed Barnsley vowel tended to have a higher F2 with an average F2 of 1462Hz.

*Figure 2. Range of normalised F2 measurements for the first vowel in the word ‘Barnsley’ plus average measurements of the Barnsley vowel.*

We can see a noticeable difference in F2 when Nora, Lucy, and Esme switch to the enregistered variant and perform the Barnsley vowel. The majority of these three speakers’ pronunciations generally have an F2 in the range of 1200-1400Hz suggesting that this is the norm for these speakers. None of these three speakers is from Barnsley, so the higher F2 represented by the Barnsley vowel is a performance of their perception of a variety other than their own. However, Figure 2 also shows that the only speaker to explicitly identify as a Barnsley speaker, Ryan, tends to pronounce this vowel with a similar F2 as Nora, Lucy, and Esme’s ‘normal’ pronunciations. That is, he consistently demonstrates pronunciations in the 1200-1400Hz range and does not produce a token with a higher F2 as an example of the Barnsley vowel. Ryan’s usage initially suggested that the higher F2 of the Barnsley vowel was an entirely artificial (and possibly stereotypical) realisation with little connection to ‘reality’, at least for modern speakers. Similar findings for other Yorkshire features have been noted by Finnegan (2011: 239), who discusses the pronunciation of words like *coal* and *hole* with [ɔɪ]. Her findings illustrate that this pronunciation is both traditional and even recessive in Yorkshire, yet it retains salience for speakers particularly in the performance of ‘authentic local identities’. Such performances were also identified by Haigh (2015: 86) in her study of Yorkshire speakers in the Millennium Memory Bank[[4]](#footnote-4), where one speaker seemed to deliberately use this [ɔɪ] pronunciation to perform what she describes as ‘an eccentric local character’ with a strong Yorkshire identity.

There are two factors which challenge the suggestion that the Barnsley vowel is only a stereotypical variant that speakers don’t actually use, though. Firstly, Figure 2 illustrates that speakers Pam, James, and Elaine demonstrate reasonably consistent pronunciations of ‘Barnsley’ with a higher F2 of around 1400-1600Hz. Pam states in her interview that she has lived all her life in Darfield, which is in the Barnsley metropolitan borough, but does not identify as a Barnsley speaker, preferring instead to describe her accent as ‘Yorkshire’. This illustrates the same tendency noted by both Burland and Cave for local people to differentiate Barnsley dialect from other areas within the Barnsley metropolitan district, which has the effect of localising the concept of the variety to the town of Barnsley itself. In spite of this, Pam demonstrates the highest overall range of F2 measurements in ‘Barnsley’ of all the informants interviewed, highlighting a tendency to have a more fronted vowel in this word. In addition, although they explain that they are originally from Sheffield, both James and Elaine state that they have lived in Barnsley for the last 10 years. They also display a higher F2 range for this vowel relative to the other speakers, and their range of pronunciations is very similar to that displayed by Pam. None of these three speakers is demonstrating the ‘Barnsley vowel’ and when we consider these speakers’ pronunciation of START in contexts other than the word ‘Barnsley’, we can see similar frequencies occurring. Elaine demonstrated 10 such tokens and had an average F2 of 1408Hz, James had 7 with an average F2 of 1517Hz, while Pam had 22 with an average F2 of 1488Hz, suggesting that START in this range is the usual pronunciation for these speakers. Given that Pam, James, and Elaine all live in the Barnsley area this suggests that Barnsley speakers may have [aː] in START whereas some other areas in Yorkshire have a more backed vowel. However, this must be treated as a tentative suggestion due to the small number of speakers considered here, and is further complicated by the data from Ryan, who is also from Barnsley, although I consider a potential explanation for Ryan’s seemingly anomalous results below. But, the fact that the examples of the ‘Barnsley vowel’ displayed by Nora, Lucy, and Esme all fall within the higher F2 range demonstrated by Pam, James, and Elaine could indicate that the ‘Barnsley vowel’ may be an attempt to imitate an actual Barnsley pronunciation. Secondly, Ryan explicitly states that his pronunciation is not as ‘Barnsley’ as other speakers may be, as indicated in extracts 1 and 2. In 1 Ryan is discussing what accent he believes that he has, whereas in 2 he is discussing whether Barnsley has a distinctive accent to other areas in Yorkshire.

1. Ryan: definitely Yorkshire I think erm probably a bit more on the Barnsley side but I don’t think I’m as as broad Barnsley as what some people are
2. 1 Ryan: erm I I don’t think it I’m full on cos Barnsley is a bit different to some other areas I think anyway=

2 INT: =yeah

3 Ryan: erm certainly different to Sheffield

Ryan’s perception of his accent as being less ‘broad’ than a typical Barnsley accent is likely reflected in the fact that his pronunciations have a lower F2 than other speakers from Barnsley. I discuss the indexical links between Barnsley and broad in the following section.

Ultimately, the tokens of the Barnsley vowel variant in Figure 2 are examples of speakers demonstrating a pronunciation that is distinct from the one they would usually display. This distinction is also explicitly commented on by several informants, as shown in extracts 3 and 4. Ferragne and Pellegrino’s (2010: 28) study of 13 different accents of the British Isles yields an F2 of 1316Hz for START in East Yorkshire, so I have represented the first token in both extracts below as [ɑː] as my informants’ usual pronunciations of this vowel in ‘Barnsley’ have similar frequencies. They go on to note that [a] in *had* has an average F2 of 1463Hz. As the Barnsley vowel is being pronounced in a similar F2 range I have transcribed the Barnsley vowel as [aː].

1. Nora: if you ask somebody that comes from B[ɑː]nsley where they come from they’ll come from B[aː]nsley
2. Esme: We’d say B[ɑː]nsley they’d say B[aː]nsley

These extracts highlight that when demonstrating how they believe Barnsley speakers talk, both Esme and Nora consciously switch to the Barnsley vowel which has a higher F2. Alongside this we have people from Barnsley defined as a separate group as indicated by the use of ‘they’, as opposed to the dialects local to Nora and Esme. This is similar to the historical enregisterment of Northern English through discussion of and references to characterological stereotypes in semiotic opposition to an ‘other’ (often London English) as discussed by Beal (2017: 31-32). Furthermore, Esme also refers to speakers of her own (Sheffield) dialect as ‘we’ indicating group solidarity. Johnstone (2004: 137) notes the same tendency in Pittsburgh, illustrated in an online discussion forum about Pittsburghese where one commenter wrote ‘we worshed the cars and as kids we were given pop for a treat. We have gumbands in our desk, jeat jumbo, redd up[[5]](#footnote-5)’. This post highlights how Pittsburghese speakers are ideologically grouped together (‘we’) and includes descriptions of local pronunciations (*worshed* ‘washed’) and lexical items (*pop*, *gumbands*, *jumbo*, and *redd up*). As several other Yorkshire informants provided similar commentary we can infer that the ‘Barnsley vowel’ carries certain indexical meanings for these speakers just as Johnstone (2007: 20-21) found in relation to monophthongal /aw/, transcribed as [æː], in Pittsburghese. She notes that this feature is ‘quintessential’ in defining the variety and can index many different social meanings for different speakers. The Barnsley vowel was also so salient in defining Barnsley dialect for my speakers that we can describe it as being quintessential in distinguishing Barnsley from other areas in Yorkshire.

The association of this pronunciation with Barnsley can also be seen in other contexts. For example, in 2012 the website for the PR and media consultancy firm CapitalB Media reported on its news page that as part of the Queen’s diamond jubilee, a Royal Ascot-style race would take place in Barnsley, but with sheep instead of horses. This article ran with the headline ‘Sheep racing in Baaarnsley’, which appears to refer to both the local pronunciation of ‘Barnsley’ and the noise a sheep makes (CapitalB Media 2012). According to their site, this company is based in Yorkshire, which likely explains their awareness of this local pronunciation. Similarly, the Barnsley-based graphic design company Black Bee Creative posted a blog article in the run up to the 2014 Tour de France, some of which passed through Barnsley, which described how, in addition to the erection of a large sign that read ‘Bienvenue à Barnsley’, the word ‘Baaarnsley’ was written in large letters in a local field as ‘a pun on the local accent plus the noisy sheep in the field’ (Black Bee Creative 2014). Indeed, although such a pun could arguably have been made without the existence of a distinctive pronunciation of Barnsley (based solely on the noise made by sheep), the Black Bee Creative blog post explicitly makes reference to the Barnsley accent, highlighting that this pronunciation is something that local people are consciously aware of. This kind of metadiscursive activity is similar to that discussed by Johnstone et al. (2006: 96-97) in their study of Pittsburghese, where they record the practice of using nonstandard respellings to draw links with local pronunciations in both traditional print media like newspapers (analogous to the online posts above), and on websites that are specifically dedicated to Pittsburghese itself. We can therefore conclude that these representations of the ‘Barnsley vowel’ online perform a similar function to those recorded by Johnstone et al. for Pittsburghese in that they both demonstrate and reinforce the awareness and subsequent indexical linking of this pronunciation with Barnsley dialect.

**4.2 Barnsley dialect as ‘distinctive’ and ‘broad’**

The notion of the Barnsley dialect described by informants was frequently and consistently linked to certain social values other than just place, as is often the case with enregistered varieties. For example, Agha (2003: 233) illustrates that RP is indexical of upper class membership and high levels of education, and that speakers can associate these social values with a repertoire of language features linked very closely with a ‘taxonomically specific identity’. The social values discussed by my informants included the notion that Barnsley dialect is both distinctive and broader than other Yorkshire varieties. An example of commentary on Barnsley dialect as being distinctive is set out in extract 5 where we can see a female speaker from Sheffield, Nora, discussing Barnsley dialect in comparison to Sheffield. This distinctive quality is also mentioned by Esme, who describes Barnsley in a very similar way, as illustrated in extract 6.

1. Nora: yeah cos the Barnsley is the Barnsley accent’s totally different to t’ Sheffield
2. Esme: It’s true though innit because like from Barnsley and Barnsley’s still in Yorkshire but it’s still completely different to Sheffield

This description is similar to that noted by Remlinger (2009: 132) in her analysis of the enregisterment of the dialect in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. She notes that for many speakers, ‘the perceived use of certain dialect features symbolizes an authentic local identity, one that is typically defined in opposition to outsider identity.’ In extracts 5 and 6 the local identity being referred to is that of Sheffield, with the outsider identity being that of Barnsley. The main defining factor between these two identities is the perception that Sheffield and Barnsley have different accents to each other, which in turn indexes that Barnsley is distinct from Sheffield.

However, the social value most frequently associated with Barnsley dialect by informants was that it is broad, which was often accompanied by a discussion of how ‘traditional’ the variety is. This broad quality was described in two ways, as seen in extracts 7-9 below, where informants label the Barnsley variety as either ‘broad Yorkshire’ or ‘broad Barnsley’.

1. 1 Agnes: My sister used to go out with a lad from Barnsley

2 INT: ok yeah

3 Agnes: and that's a really distinctive sound

4 INT: yeah

5 Agnes: er the way they speak very to me very broad Yorkshire

1. 1 Pam: he was a Methodist local preacher=

2 INT: =yeah

3 Pam: but was also very very erm extremely Barns- proper what I would call broad Barnsley

1. 1 Scott: but if you want an interesting day out just go down Barnsley high street ((laughing)) erm you know /at about/ half past one

2 INT: /yeah/ yeah=

3 Scott: =in t’afternoon well and /in a morning as well/

4 INT: /yeah sure yeah/

5 Scott: you’ll hear some broad er broad Barnsley at half one in a morning

The concept of ‘broadness’ in relation to accent evaluation is discussed by Giles (1972: 264) who explains that speakers can evaluate accents in terms of how broad they perceive them to be, and states that ‘the broader the accent is perceived, the less favourable an evaluation it will receive – even by judges originating from such regions’. The characterisation of Barnsley dialect as broad by Yorkshire speakers illustrates a similarly negative evaluation, and also indexes the social values of ‘old fashioned’ and ‘unintelligible’, discussed further below.

The description of a variety as broad was also recorded by Pearce (2012: 21) in Tyne and Wear. He notes that where speakers employ the term ‘broad’ to describe another speaker’s accent, ‘this indicates that he or she is perceived as using more distinctively vernacular or ‘basilectal’ features than a less ‘broad’ speaker from the same place’. The Barnsley vowel is an example of such a distinctively vernacular feature of Yorkshire dialect. He goes on to note that broad is ‘an evaluative term, suggesting a continuum with neutral or unmarked speech at one end and maximally local speech at the other’ (ibid.). My interview respondents view Yorkshire dialect in a similar way, where ‘neutral’ Yorkshire dialect is their own ‘native’ variety, spoken in the areas where they are from, and they perceive ‘maximally local speech’ to be spoken by people from Barnsley. Cave (2001: 129) also discusses the ways in which Royston speakers position themselves in relation to ‘broad Barnsley’. He illustrates that ‘broad’ can be perceived in a negative way when Barnsley is compared to the relatively more ‘posh’ Royston accent, or it can be viewed positively when compared to ‘accents deemed nearer the standard English’, meaning that an association with broad can be accompanied by a sense of regional pride. Cave goes on to note that this discussion of broad has contributed to the perception that Barnsley and Royston are separate speech communities with distinct dialects.

The concept of ‘broad’ also has links with additional social values for Yorkshire speakers, as we see references to varieties associated with being broad as similarly being used by older speakers and more traditional speakers. Indeed, as Agha (2003: 243) goes on to note, enregistered repertoires become associated with ‘characterological figures and social personae’. This is highlighted in extracts 10-12 where we can also see informants describing Barnsley dialect as ‘old fashioned’. Such a description also seems to influence some speakers’ perceptions of additional Barnsley features as, when asked how Barnsley dialect sounds old fashioned, they responded by stating that Barnsley people use the archaic second person pronouns *thee* and *tha* for ‘you’ and ‘your’. These pronouns were found by Cooper (2013) to be part of the enregistered Yorkshire repertoire, but it is apparent that *thee* and *tha* also index Barnsley for Yorkshire speakers. As many informants described Barnsley dialect as being ‘broad’, ‘traditional’, and ‘old fashioned’, the archaic nature of these pronouns may explain their association with this specific localised variety despite their broader association with Yorkshire. Additionally, extract 13 indicates a link between Barnsley and the traditionally ‘Northern’ image of ‘flat caps and whippets[[6]](#footnote-6)’. This image is described as a stereotype by Wales (2006: 195), who notes that the wearing of cloth caps or the breeding of whippets are no longer representative of modern Northerners, despite the association of them with the North. The stigmatisation of this stereotype has also been illustrated by Watt (1998: 7), who alludes to the desire for young Tyneside speakers to avoid more traditional pronunciations because of their association with this ‘cloth cap and clogs’ image.

1. Pam: cos there is I think there’s still a small element of broad Barnsley amongst older people
2. Scott: old fashioned sort of you know erm yeah I would definitely say Barnsley less so Rotherham than Barnsley but still towards you know towards that sort of area where it’s old fashioned
3. 1 Ryan: I reckon if you went and spoke to like something like market traders on in Barnsley market or something=

2 INT: =yeah

3 Ryan: they’d have been that are I don’t know probably fifties or something who’s been doing that all their life they’ve got a a very broad=

4 INT: =yeah=

5 Ryan: =Barnsley accent

1. Donna: and I think flat caps and whippets which I know is so disrespectful but you know there’s nothing wrong wi’ flat caps and whippets but ((laughing)) it is what people equate wi’ Barnsley int it

The references to older speakers, market traders, and flat caps and whippets in extracts 10-13 also demonstrate indexical links to notions of working-class status for these speakers, and that this is likely associated with the description of Barnsley as broad. This is based on the findings of Finnegan (2015: 244), who found that her informants described working-class speakers as having ‘stronger, rougher, more extreme, harder, and broader accents’ than middle-class speakers. The correlation between traditionally working-class occupations and pursuits illustrated in these extracts is also indicative of Barnsley dialect being associated with lower class membership than other Yorkshire areas. Johnstone (2017: 287) discusses a much more advanced case of this phenomenon in relation to Pittsburghese and the existence of dolls which produce examples of Pittsburgh dialect called ‘Yappin’ Yinzers[[7]](#footnote-7)’. Johnstone argues that these dolls comprise a characterological type of working-class Pittsburghese speaker and that they ‘help focus and standardize not only what counts as Pittsburghese but who speaks it, what they say, and how they sound when they say it’. Although there is nothing so explicit for Barnsley speakers, the comments made by informants in extracts 10-13 illustrate that there is a similar characterological type for Barnsley dialect, but it is much less developed than the ‘Yappin’ Yinzer’.

Finally, there is one further social value associated with Barnsley dialect, which we can see in its description as being unintelligible. This indexical link is made in one of two ways. Firstly, it is indexed directly, as shown in extract 14, where Barnsley is described as a ‘thick’ accent. Secondly, it is indexed using the label ‘broad’ discussed above, as speakers also equate ‘broad Yorkshire’ with being difficult to understand, as illustrated in extract 15.

1. 1 Liam: personally I’d say that a Barnsley accent is is is a really really quite thick accent /whereas/ a Sheffield accent is you know it’s a lot easier to work

out

2 Elaine: /yeah/

1. 1 Alfred: years and years ago me dad once went to Spain fishing sea fishing=

2 INT: =mhm=

3 Alfred: =and on this boat me dad and me brother there were two Spaniards on the boat and they were speaking Spanish

4 INT: yeah=

5 Alfred: =so me dad and me brother started talking Yorkshire broad Yorkshire they couldn’t understand they come up to ’em and said what language is that we don’t understand it

6 INT: ((laughs))

7 Alfred: and they they’d no idea said can you talk in English because we can’t understand

The term ‘broad’ to describe Barnsley dialect can index the degree of difference from a speaker’s ‘native’ variety, ‘traditional’ and/or working-class status, and a degree of unintelligibility. It is also the case that the Barnsley vowel can index that Barnsley dialect is broad. However, the term ‘broad’ is not solely applied to Barnsley dialect, as illustrated in extract 15 and further illustrated in extract 16, where Esme and Carol are discussing which varieties of Yorkshire dialect sound broad.

1. 1 Carol: you think like farmers in t’ Yorkshire Dales /and stuff like that/

2 Esme: /yeah/

3 INT: /yeah/

4 Carol: /though you know/ you probably you can imagine them being more broad

In fact, where ‘broad’ was discussed, it was frequently accompanied by references to farmers, older speakers, unintelligible speech, and Yorkshire itself. As such, the concept of ‘broad’ indexes particular characterological figures in Yorkshire, including exemplar speakers and links to levels of intelligibility and geographical areas. Indeed, qualitative analysis of the interviews illustrated that ‘broad’ was not only associated with Barnsley dialect, as Hull, Sheffield, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire were also mentioned as areas which had broad speakers. Following Johnstone et al. (2006: 82) who state that enregistered features ‘become associated with a style of speech and can be used to create a context for that style’, we can see that in some areas certain Yorkshire features are more strongly associated with a broad speech style than others. This suggests that ‘broad’ is enregistered to Yorkshire speakers as being more or less broad appears to be an essential constituent of the Yorkshire identities discussed by my informants. ‘Broad’ can be seen as a distinct style of speech which is differentiable from ‘non-broad’ styles through the use of particular language features. Cole (2010: 16) makes a similar argument stating that speakers can demonstrate ‘multiregister voice performances’ that align with a diverse range of identities. She goes on to note that speaker agency in their choice of language features can contribute to the enregisterment of ‘diversity’, particularly when non-standard varieties are being performed in contrast to the standard. Although Cole is discussing Indonesian identities it appears that the same phenomenon applies to Yorkshire dialects and the concept of being broad, particularly considering Alfred’s comments in extract 15 where he demonstrates agency in switching to ‘broad Yorkshire’ for the purpose of being unintelligible to speakers unfamiliar with Yorkshire dialect.

**4.3 Theoretical implications of embedded enregistered repertoires**

The commentary on Barnsley dialect provided by my informants highlights that the Barnsley vowel is strongly associated with a stereotypical Barnsley identity. This follows Johnstone et al’s (2006: 93) explanation of the way in which second-order features become increasingly more salient and eventually align with ideologies about dialect and local identity, thus becoming available to do identity work at the third order of indexicality. However, studies of enregistered regional varieties tend to focus on the association of a single geographical location with a stereotypical identity such as Johnstone et al’s (2006) focus on Pittsburghese, Remlinger’s (2009) study of “Yoopanese” in the Upper Peninsula (UP) of Michigan, or Beal’s (2009) discussion of “Geordie” in Tyneside. Pittsburghese is not enregistered as being associated with Pennsylvania broadly, but with Pittsburgh specifically. The same can be said of “Yoopanese” and “Geordie” in that they are explicitly associated with Michigan’s UP and Newcastle-upon-Tyne respectively. This is not the case in Yorkshire where multiple geographical areas are simultaneously indexed by enregistered language features. Johnstone (2009: 160) states that the ‘same feature can be enregistered in multiple ways’, and with Yorkshire dialects we can see that a feature such as the Barnsley vowel may index both Barnsley and Yorkshire at the same time due to the fact that Barnsley is located within Yorkshire and Barnsley dialect is a variety of Yorkshire dialect. This can also be seen when we consider *thee/tha*, which are enregistered as Barnsley features to Yorkshire speakers yet simultaneously enregistered as Yorkshire features to a wider audience (Cooper 2013). Indeed, Barnsley dialect itself has indexical links to ‘broad Yorkshire’, highlighting how one geographical area can be enregistered as representative of another. Therefore, in order to fully explore the multiplex nature of enregistered Yorkshire dialects we must consider, as Montgomery (2010: 593) puts it, ‘the complicating factor of the county of Yorkshire.’

As Wells (1982: 9) states, ‘someone from Sheffield may insist that Rotherham speech is clearly distinguishable from Sheffield speech, and Barnsley speech absolutely different’, and explains that proximity to the varieties in question allows speakers to perceive the differences between them. These differences may not be perceptible to outsiders, as was also observed by Montgomery in relation to perception. Studying the enregisterment of Yorkshire dialects illustrates that Wells was correct in his statement as local speakers are indeed aware of these finer distinctions, indicated by my informants’ awareness of the Barnsley vowel, as well as the associated social values that are indexed by particular language features. Given that this awareness allowed informants to do identity work in both performing and describing a Barnsley identity, the Barnsley vowel is a third-order indexical feature which distinguishes Barnsley dialect from Yorkshire but simultaneously indexes Yorkshire dialect. This pattern is also highlighted in Beal’s (2009) study of Sheffiedish and Cooper’s (2017) discussion of Hullish, which both have features that distinguish them from other areas (*mardy* in the former case and GOAT-fronting in the latter) whilst retaining their perceptual status as Yorkshire dialects. Ultimately, we can expand on Beal’s (2009: 149-150) assertion that ‘the identity of Sheffield and the Sheffielder’ that are ‘at all times interchangeable with those of Yorkshire and the Yorkshireman’, as identities associated with other areas in Yorkshire (such as Barnsley, Sheffield, or Hull) are also subject to this relationship. The Yorkshire identity subsumes all sub-Yorkshire identities and their associated enregistered features, whilst existing both simultaneously and symbiotically alongside them.

**5. Conclusions**

Yorkshire speakers perceive the existence of a Barnsley dialect which includes the Barnsley vowel as a quintessential linguistic feature that distinguishes it from the general Yorkshire repertoire identified by Cooper (2013). This vowel is the only one not readily associated with other Yorkshire areas, despite it being recorded in other parts of the county and it being indexical of the geographical areas of Yorkshire and Barnsley simultaneously. It is also only salient for speakers when it is pronounced in the name of the town. This illustrates that while we can see an enregistered repertoire of general Yorkshire dialect that is recognisable to a wide audience, Barnsley dialect is enregistered to speakers at a much more local level. This is particularly the case when we consider speakers from South Yorkshire, as is the case for most of the speakers discussed here, and is likely influenced by the supralocal rivalries in the region recorded by Finnegan (2015).

The enregisterment of Yorkshire dialects is also observably more complex when we consider the concept ‘broad’, which indexes multiple social values simultaneously in relation to Yorkshire or particular sub-Yorkshire dialects. For Yorkshire speakers ‘broad’ can index the use of certain language features that are perceived to be regionally restricted, like the Barnsley vowel, or it can index certain characterological figures like ‘Yorkshire farmers’. However there are certain common social values that tend to be indexed by ‘broad’, as it generally indexes older speakers and the use of ‘traditional’ language features. Because of this, ‘broad’ is also enregistered to Yorkshire speakers and can be used to differentiate between different types of Yorkshire dialect.

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**Vitae**

The author is a lecturer in English Language at the University of Liverpool in the UK. His research interests lie in the fields of regional dialectology, variationist and historical sociolinguistics, with a particular focus on Yorkshire dialect. He is specifically interested in the enregisterment of “Yorkshire” dialect. That is, the study of how speakers associate language features with the geographical region of Yorkshire (as a whole and as smaller regions within Yorkshire), both in historical periods and today. He is also interested in what social values speakers attach to these language features (i.e. ‘friendliness’, ‘authenticity’, etc.), and whether these have changed over time.

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1. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2018). Contains National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Royston is a small urban town on the border between Barnsley and Wakefield (see Burland 2017 for additional details). Although Cave’s main focus was on Royston, he also interviewed small numbers of additional speakers from Darfield, Wombwell, Oakwell, Grimethorpe, and Shafton, which are all in the Barnsley metropolitan district. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I have not included Donna in this graph as she only produced a single token of ‘Barnsley’ with a normalised F2 of 1333Hz. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Millennium Memory Bank is an archive containing audio recordings of speakers from across the UK collected by the BBC between 1998 and 1999. See https://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/Millenium-memory-bank for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Where *pop* refers to fizzy drinks, *gumbands* are elastic bands, *jumbo* is bologna sausage, and *redd up* means to clean up. See Johnstone (2004) for a more extensive discussion of these features. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A medium-sized dog originally descended from greyhounds, stereotypically associated with people who live in the North of England (see Wales 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://yappinyinzers.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)