One of the most studied variables of English is the alveolar realization of the velar nasal in –ing. However, a number of L1 and L2 varieties of English also feature a ‘stopped’ variant ([ŋk] or [ŋg]) (Schleef et al. 2011; Wells 1982) that has received less attention. The alveolar and velar variants of –ing have been traced to different grammatical forms in Old English that fell together through sound change (Houston 1985), while the stopped variant may reflect an earlier status of the velar nasal as an allophone of the alveolar nasal derived through assimilation with the following context (Wells 1982). Although the histories and variable contexts of the alveolar and stopped variants are slightly different, they both target the same underlying segment. Do they represent a single phonological variable or intersecting variable processes?

To answer this question, I examine the distribution and sociolinguistic conditioning of the velar nasal in a recently constituted corpus of Toronto English (Hoffman & Walker 2010), defining all underlying velar nasals as the variable context. From sociolinguistic interviews with 28 speakers, I extracted 3,116 tokens and coded each for its phonetic realization (velar, alveolar, stopped) and for a series of social and linguistic factor groups: the individual speaker; ethnic background (British/Irish, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese); degree of ethnic orientation (EO); lexical item; following phonological context; and grammatical status (monomorphemic, verbal, gerundive). Preliminary results show that the alveolar variant is favored by verbal forms and Italian and Portuguese speakers but highly disfavored by Chinese speakers, while the stopped variant occurs only in Italian and Portuguese speakers (though at very low rates: 4-7%) and is favored by high EO speakers and following pause.