

## Advancing African American Linguistics Symposium

### Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

10:00am	Talking College Crew: Anne H. Charity Hudley, Mary Bucholtz et al.
10:30am	Jamie Thomas
11:00am	Minnie Quartey
11:30am	John Baugh
12-1:30pm	Break
1:30pm	Michael Terry and Mako Hirotani
2:00pm	Aria Razfar, Joseph C. Rumenapp, Zayoni Torres
2:30pm	Break
3:00pm	Marlyse Baptista
3:30pm	Sonja Lanehart
4:00pm	Poster Session
4:30pm	Reflection and Conclusions

### Sunday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

9:00am	Black Linguist Celebration
9:40am	Angie Kortenhoven
10:00am	Advancing African American Linguists Through Help with Publication
11:00am	Advancing African American Linguists Through Help with Tenure and Promotion
12:00pm	Advancing African American Linguists Through Networking
1:30pm	Discussion of Future Meetings

## **Talking College**

Talking College Crew

Anne H. Charity Hudley, Mary Bucholtz, Jamaal Muwwakil, and deandre miles

This presentation highlights language as a central factor in student preparation and academic and social success in higher education, particularly for African-American students and others from underrepresented groups. African-American graduate students and undergraduates conducted over 50 interviews with African-American undergraduate students at several Minority-Serving, Historically Black, and Predominantly White Universities, located in California, Maryland, and Virginia. Based on information collected from the interviews, we show how African-American and other culturally and linguistically diverse students must be supported and guided to meet the complex and varied linguistic expectations of higher education. In addition, African-American students often face linguistic bias and may need additional support and guidance as they navigate the linguistic terrain of higher education. Critical knowledge about language and culture is therefore an integral part of the quest for educational equity and empowerment, not only in K-12 but also in higher education. As a result, we also highlight information shared from additional interviews with African-American students who have taken courses in linguistics with us demonstrate the impact of education about language and culture on students' academic opportunities and social lives. These findings serve to help us create a model of assessment for what linguistic information African-American students need in order to be successful in higher education and how faculty can help to establish pathways for students to access content about language, culture, and education within the collegiate curriculum.

## African American Linguists on Twitter

### Jamie A. Thomas, Swarthmore College

For some years now, Twitter has fostered a digital space where linguists come together, and share data and queries often under the hashtags #lingtwitter or #academictwitter. African American linguists, however, claim additional unique space for the sharing of research and perspectives on racial inequality, sometimes with tweets inflected both visually (e.g., racialized GIFs) and linguistically (e.g., lexically, morphosyntactically) to reflect the contours of African American Language (AAL) (e.g., Green 2002). African American linguists additionally use the ‘retweet’ and ‘retweet with quote’ functions to circulate insights from popular and scholarly sources beyond linguistics, with the goal of illuminating how these sources and voices hold value for language and communication studies.

Using an autoethnographic lens (Griffin 2012), I discuss my own participation within a network of African American and Black twitter users. Within a framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis (Yoon 2016), I analyze recent key examples of other African American linguists, as well as my own tweets, and responses to theirs (e.g., likes, retweets, comments). This illustrates how, in addition to #BlackTwitter, it may be understood that there is also a Black Linguist Twitter space (even if it is not popularly referred to as such) where AAL is formally and publicly celebrated by African American linguists. For example, note in (1) my use of “Dayum” as a way of casually approximating spoken inflection. Example (2) illustrates how another linguist offers a blistering critique of mainstream representations of AAL speech with a comment that describes major side-eye. Yet another linguist (example 3) draws upon insights from other fields of study to problematize the mainstreaming of Whiteness within linguistics.

Example (1)

Jamie A. Thomas @jamietsjames  
 "She's small, doesn't speak English...she's the bait." How linguistic inequality surfaces during zombie apocalypse. Dayum @BlkSummerNefix  
 4/25/19, 3:20 PM  
 View Tweet activity  
 2 Likes

Example (2)

Kendra Calhoun @kendraca · 3/29/19  
 every time I see [æks] represented as "axe" - with the quotes, as if it's not a real thing - I damage my eyes by rolling them too hard

Dictionary.com @Dictionarycom  
 Allow us to "axe" you a question. How do you feel about metathesis as the #WordOfTheDay?

This may help make up your mind:  
[dictionary.com/e/word-of-the-...](https://dictionary.com/e/word-of-the-...)

**metathesis**  
 noun [muh-tath-uh-sis]  
 the transposition of letters, syllables, or sounds in a word, as in the pronunciation aks for ask

Example (3)

Nicole Holliday @mixedlinguist · 3d  
 And I'll again jump on my soapbox about how linguistics papers MUST start specifying that their listeners are white and not just leaving readers to assume they are "by default". Also, we have the same prevalence of the WEIRD problem as other fields:

Social Science is WEIRD, and That's a Problem.  
[slate.com](https://slate.com)

**“It used to be Chocolate City:” Examining local identities and change narratives through complex stancetaking and positioning in African American residents of Washington, DC**  
**Minnie Quartey, Georgetown University**

*“Uh, city’s changing uh, gentrification. You know. It’s not Chocolate City...it’s Vanillaville. That’s what I call it now.”*

*--Vern, (61-year old community health worker and DC native)*

This paper examines how African Americans in Washington, DC construct complex multifaceted identities through their connectedness and disconnection to the shifting racial and cultural landscape of the city by examining various stances (DuBois 2007) and positions (Davies and Harré 1990) to the city in narratives collected in recent sociolinguistic interviews. In the late 1950s after the Great Migration, DC’s population shifted and became majority African American. However, within the last decade, there has been another shift in the demographics of the city with the African American population under 50% for the first time in nearly 60 years with speakers referring to the fact that the city is no longer referred to “Chocolate City” but now “Vanillaville” or “Cappuccino City.” While there are two main contributing factors to the shift, gentrification and the exodus of the Black middle class, most speakers attribute the changes mostly to gentrification, and there are various perspectives on the effects of gentrification on the city. For some speakers, they believe gentrification is the root cause for relocation, displacement, and marginalization of the African American community in DC. For other speakers, they believe that gentrification is an opportunity to beautify the city and provide better opportunities. Socioeconomic status and access to social mobility (or lack thereof) appear to correlate with speakers’ positive and negative evaluative stances. The small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) and narratives analyzed in this paper come from two corpora: the LCDC and CORAAL projects. The Language and Communication in Washington, DC project (LCDC) is a corpus of nearly 300 sociolinguistic interviews from residents in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The Corpus of Regional African American Language English project (CORAAL) is the first publicly accessible corpus of AAL, and it is comprised of sociolinguistic interviews from regional AAL speakers. Ultimately this project highlights the complex and multifaceted construction of local identities and how the effects of gentrification manifests itself through each speaker’s lived experience.

## **Situational Variation in African American English**

**John Baugh, Washington University in St. Louis**

Labov et. al. (1968) employed “contextual styles” to evaluate informal-to-formal varieties of African American vernacular English (AAVE), by comparing a combination of phonological and morphophonemic variables that were produced by consultants who recorded interviews, read short passages which included key linguistic features, they recorded word lists, and they also recorded lists of minimal pairs (e.g. cot and caught or merry and marry). Dillard (1972), evaluating somewhat similar evidence, concluded that older African Americans used vernacular dialect features much less frequently than did younger speakers; that is, typically as spoken by males (resulting in a strong gender bias) between the ages of eight to eighteen.

At that time, this age grading was interpreted as evidence of older African Americans gradually coming to adopt Standard English, whereas younger speakers were considered to be preserving the vernacular dialect, which, according to Bailey and Maynor (1988) and Labov and Harris (1983) resulted in a combination of linguistic and economic isolation that triggered greater linguistic divergence from Standard English. Bailey and Maynor (1985) also noticed linguistic innovations, particularly regarding the usage of habitual /be/, that was previously unattested.

These synchronic studies of AAVE were produced at a time when the historical legacy of the African slave trade was depicted by two camps: dialectologists, who emphasized the English origins of what was then depicted as “Nonstandard Negro English,” and the Creole hypothesis, which emphasized the African origins of the same dialect, which, in 1972, began to be referred to as “Black English (vernacular)” (Dillard, 1972; Labov, 1972).

Terminological adaptation continued, with linguists adopting the term “African American vernacular English” during the 1980’s (Rickford 1987, Baugh 1988,) while other African American social scientists favored the term “Ebonics” (Williams 1975, Smith 1975). Despite differences in the ethnolinguistic orientation of the pertinent linguistic nomenclature, all of these studies were devoted to evaluations of linguistic usage by United States Slave descendants.

Results for the current presentation consist largely of variable rule analyses of suffix /s/ variation based on situational contexts (i.e., plural /-s/, possessive /-s/ and third person singular /-s/), rather than Labov’s (1972) experimental contextual styles. The situations are defined based on social criteria, including familiarity of participants, and the insider-to-outsider status of individuals who are active participants in African American culture. Although the initial hypothesis presumed that racial similarities would influence vernacular usage, familiarity proved to be more important, where interlocutors who were well known to each other tended to produce greater vernacular usage than was the case for speakers who were either meeting for the first time, or who met infrequently, regardless of racial background.

These situational tendencies were also revealed for consonant cluster reduction of final /-t/ and /-d/ in monomorphemic and bimorphemic contexts. These data were collected longitudinally over a four-year period among African American adults residing in a major urban city, and they challenge Dillard’s (1972) assertion that African American adults tend to adopt Standard English. Britt and Weldon’s (2015) more recent studies of African American middle class adults reflect similar patterns, where African Americans who are well acquainted with each

other tend to use vernacular African American English, regardless of their educational status or ability to style shift toward mainstream Standard American English.

### **Effects of Dialectal Difference on Educational Achievement: African American English Speaking 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders and Verbal -s**

J. Michael Terry and Mako Hirovani

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Carleton College

Recent research suggests that in subtle and perhaps surprising ways differences between standard classroom English (SCE) and African-American English (AAE) can introduce obstacles to sentence processing that, in turn, can undermine young AAE speaking students' ability to do well in some standardized test situations. For example, Terry et. al. 2010 suggests that a large number of African-American English speaking 2<sup>nd</sup> graders might do as much as 9% better on certain commonly used mathematical reasoning tests if they could better cope with one seemingly small linguistic mismatch: in contrast to their experience at school, they seldom hear verbal -s – the s that turns *walk* into *walks* in *John walks to work* – at home. African-American English speakers themselves typically render this sentence *John walk to work*.

Although a topic of debate, since the early days of sociolinguistic research on AAE, some linguists, most notably William Labov, have argued that verbal -s is not simply used infrequently in AAE, but that it is not a part of the underlying grammar of the dialect (Labov 1968). More recent work has taken this same position with respect to child AAE specifically (Green 2010). In this talk, I offer support for the claim that verbal -s is not a part of the grammar of AAE speaking 2<sup>nd</sup> graders and argue that this is a key factor in its having the educational effect that it does. The primary evidence supporting this position stems from a recently conducted two-part study. Part 1 of the study consisted of a linguistically controlled math test. The AAE speaking 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who took the test performed 10% better on math questions that did not make use verbal -s than those that did. In the second part of the study, the same students showed EEG (brainwave) responses characteristic of encountering a morphosyntactic violation when they heard sentences that made use of verbal -s.

## **Administrating Language: The language ideological voices of urban school administrators**

**Aria Razfar<sup>1</sup>, Joseph C. Rumenapp<sup>2</sup>, Zayoni Torres<sup>1</sup>**

University of Illinois at Chicago<sup>1</sup>, Judson University<sup>2</sup>

Urban schools are becoming increasingly linguistically diverse. The current education system has not tackled the issue of language diversity head on, but rather has hid behind ambiguous mentions of “culture”. This approach has inadequately prepared educators for the language diversity in schools nationwide. Perhaps, even more concerning are the reports that speech pathologists and other specialists use speech diagnostics that are biased and even discriminatory to African Americans who speak African American Language (AAL) (Baugh, 2015) Administrators in urban schools, specifically the principal, bear a large portion of the burden in setting the policies and influencing the culture of a school. Therefore, the position of principal requires not only management abilities, but also an understanding of the linguistic and cultural contexts of their schools and communities. Specifically, knowledge of the specific linguistic practices and histories of African American students is essential in understand how linguistic racism continues to play a role in the marginalization, discrimination, and blatant killing of unarmed African Americans (Baugh, 2015) and, how language is vital to achieving not only educational equality, but specifically achieving an education system in which *Black Lives Matter* (see Garza, 2014).

The topic of African American Language (AAL), has been eclipsed by an overarching focus on bilingual education despite the pioneering works of John Rickford, Geneva Smitherman, Walter Wolfram, and many others who have argued that speakers of AAL deserve to be recognized with their full linguistic identities (Smitherman, 2001). The nation is attempting to come to terms with educating ELs, leading to a variety of practical, intellectual, and political debates that have masked the linguistic needs many of our African American students (and other dialect speakers). Only languages that have national names and national ties are generally discussed in these debates. Varieties of language are rarely mentioned. Bilingual education, for example, only refers to Spanish and English, not a variety of *Spanishes* and a variety of *Englishes*.

Furthermore, although the powerful position of administrator as a manager (e.g. Lortie, 2009) can set up school wide practices to promote an instructionally sound and socially just education, their views toward language varieties has not been deeply investigated. Therefore, this current study seeks to understand the views toward African American English held by urban school administrators. We seek to investigate the underlying assumptions and beliefs, or *language ideologies*, of urban school administrators, and therefore add to the existing knowledge about how urban education is dealing with linguistic complexities of dialect learners.

Principals, the managers and administrators in these schools, have little more knowledge to address these issues than teachers although their job demands a vast array of duties mediated by language. Therefore, this study sets out to explore the language ideological voices of urban school administrators. Focus group interviews were conducted of 15 administrators discussing the use of African American English in schools as they consider how AAL is used by different constituent groups. Discourse analysis served to analyze language practices around the topic of AAL during these focus group sessions. Participants demonstrated variation in views toward AAL and struggled to name the language. These

discussions were mediated by multiple, even competing, language ideologies as they attempted to converse about the use of AAL in schools.



## Talking Back Black: Linguistic Strategies for Constructing the Black Adolescent Female Identity and its Connection to the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Dominique Branson, University of Pittsburgh

The School-to-Prison Pipeline refers to zero-tolerance policies, increased police presence in schools, and regulations requiring intervention from law enforcement authorities for minor infractions, that work to funnel students out of public schools and into the justice system (Wald & Losen, 2003; Dancy, 2014). The proliferation and implementation of these policies contribute to a disproportionate number of racial minority students undergoing disciplinary actions in schools and in the juvenile justice system. While there is great disparity between Black boys and White boys, this is only a fraction of the disparity between Black girls and White girls (Crenshaw, Ocen & Nanda, 2015). For example, in 2012, while Black boys were three-times more likely than White boys to be suspended from school, the rate among Black girls was six-times that of their White counterparts (Crenshaw, Ocen & Nanda, 2015). Most strikingly, in New York City during the 2011-2012 school year, while Black boys were ten-times more likely to be expelled from school than White boys, Black girls were fifty-three-times more likely to be expelled than White girls (Crenshaw, Ocen & Nanda, 2015). Neither race nor gender alone explains these findings, rather, sociological investigation at the intersection of racial and gender categories begins to elucidate why the experiences of Black girls in schools differ so greatly from the experiences of White girls and Black boys.

Morris (2016) and others argue that society's "deeply entrenched expectations of Black girls,"—heavily influenced by racism and patriarchy—lead Black girls to be mischaracterized and mislabeled as 'criminal', or deviant and defiant, and 'adultified', or more sexually mature, less innocent, and less in need of protection than White girls of similar ages, because of how they look, dress, speak, and act. These mischaracterizations of Black girls ultimately work to increase their representation in the education-justice system. Morris's proposed link between Black girls' behaviors, speech in particular, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline urges sociolinguists to investigate African American Language (AAL) use among Black girls, specifically seeking explanations for how Black girls use language to construct their racial and gender identities.

Two notable Black girl identities are Bougie girls and Ghetto girls (Brown, 2006). While Bougie girls' behaviors more readily align with (White) adults' expectations of femininity, especially 'girliness', the Ghetto girl persona, in many ways, contradicts them. Behaviors associated with the Ghetto girl identity are more frequently assigned the labels 'criminal' and 'adultified'. This research explores the ways in which Black girls use language to construct their racial and gender identities, especially those that align with personas dubbed as deviant, and how linguistic practices associated with these personas work to mischaracterize and mislabel Black girls as 'criminal' and 'adultified'.

### References

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## **In search of the African founding populations in creole genesis: A collaboration between geneticists and linguists in Cape Verde islands**

**Marlyse Baptista**

**University of Michigan**

This paper coauthored by a team of linguists and geneticists reports the results of the first study of its kind exploring directly the connections between genetic and linguistic admixture by collecting both DNA samples and speech data from the same individuals within an admixed creole-speaking population. The targeted population is that of the island of Santiago in Cape Verde, populated in 1461 by a large population of slaves and Portuguese settlers. One of the core questions originally driving this study is whether it is possible to reconstruct the ancestry of Cape Verde islands combining linguistic and DNA data, given that each of the nine inhabited islands was populated at a different point in time by different populations. Due to its early history, Santiago is viewed as the oldest settlement with a basilectal variety of the language that still shows the imprints of the African languages spoken by the early slaves. Such imprints can be found in both the lexicon and grammar of the Santiago variety. There are split opinions regarding the origins of African slaves who first came to Santiago. Brasio (1962) and Carreira (1972) proposed that the original slaves came from the region of Modern-day Cacheu and Bissau and were composed of Jalofo, Peul, Bambara, Bolola, Manjaku, Banhun, Mandinga, Balante, Bijago and Feloupe people among others. Linguists such as Santos (1979), Lang (2009) and Quint (2008) have emphasized the role of Wolof (spoken in Senegal) in the genesis of Cape Verdean Creole, whereas others have emphasized the role of Mandenka. In our study, we used the DNA samples of 44 consultants to compare them to those of the Mandenka population, created a list of basilectal features and correlated the frequency rate of the basilectal features in our consultants' speech data to variables like consultants' birthplace vs. that of their parents and grand-parents. Our findings reveal parallel trajectories of both genes and basilectal features transmitted vertically from parents to children; the results are correlated to the birth place of our consultants' parents rather than to our consultants' birthplace. While the vertical transmission of genes is expected to be in accordance with Mendel's law, the vertical transmission of basilectal features is surprising: indeed, we would expect that the linguistic features inherited vertically from parents would be obliterated by the features resulting from horizontal or oblique transmission, and which are inherited through contact with other speech communities. This parallel transmission could be accounted for by the relative isolation of Santiago from the other islands until fairly recently or by social variables like identity marking. Ongoing data collection on other islands of Cape Verde will ultimately help us determine whether these parallels hold for other areas and which social variables can best account for them.

## Diversity and Inclusion in Language Variationist & Sociolinguistics Research Journals

Sonja Lanehart, UTSA

In the case of the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender in Language Variationist & Sociolinguistics (LVS) research journals, people of color (POC) have primarily been ignored, made invisible, and overlooked as research participants and sometimes as researchers (Lanehart, 2018). For example, in research on language uses in African American communities, most research focuses on young, urban African American males as the “authentic” users of African American Language (AAL), or specifically African American Vernacular Language (AAVL), which is a sub-variety of AAL (Lanehart and Malik, 2015). The dearth of research on African American women implies their language use, African American Women’s Language (Lanehart, 2002; Troutman, 2001) is inauthentic and inconsequential or, worse, the same as men’s. So even though AAL is the most studied language variety in the United States (Wolfram, 2001), more than half the population of speakers is omitted. This omission impacts the quality and quantity of research on language use in African American communities as it has implications beyond LVS. LVS scholars seem to have difficulty going beyond two variables from the “norm” of “White, heterosexual, and (cis-) male,” or WHAM (Lanehart, 2001, 2015). So, White cis-females, gay White cis-males, and African American cis-males are acceptable, but African American women and girls or African American lesbians are not, demonstrating daily that “All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave” (Hull, Bell Scott, and Smith, 1982).

I seek to disturb LVS scholarship by interrogating the articulation and use of three speaker variables – race, ethnicity, and gender – in LVS research methods and methodologies and the subjectivities, or researcher identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, and any stated or implied ideologies), of researchers (DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz, 2018) in several LVS journal publications. In most instances of the inclusion of race, ethnicity, and gender, the terminology is not defined, not interrogated, and not inclusive of the sociocultural and historical contexts that help to define and contextualize how these identities have and do exist in society and the impact of those realities on the language uses and identities of the individual or the group – or the researcher(s). None of these issues, unfortunately, are new (Lanehart, 2009, 2015). What I seek to do that is new is provide a meta-analysis of several LVS journals to demonstrate the history, slow progress, and currency of these issues as represented by not only what gets published but by also who gets to publish in areas related to race, ethnic, and gender in LVS journals.

In this presentation, I analyze race, ethnicity, and gender as well as researchers’ subjectivities as described in the methods and methodologies articulated in feature articles published in seven LVS journals from their inception until 2018 using a Critical Race Theory framework, especially the permanence of racism, interest convergence, essentialism, and colorblindness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Data reveal a dearth of research on and by scholars of color as well as little beyond the two-variable problem beyond WHAM. I conclude with suggestions for moving toward more inclusive and diverse scholarship

beyond WHAM for journal publications, professional organizations, and Linguistics Departments. [518 words]

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## Stylizing AY: Constructing Persona in Performance

Angie Kortenhoven

In this paper, I investigate the use of (ay) as a stylistic variable as realized by African American preaching woman, Dr. Claudette Copeland, in the well-known African American speech event, *having church*, a speech event that includes “a set of actions, attitudes, and expectations” described by DeBose (2015). This speech event is further analyzed in Kortenhoven 2017, which posits a rich variability throughout the speech event that includes shifting speech styles associated with iconic cultural personae, as well as embedded genres, integration of texts and ironic performances. By examining the continuum of possible realizations of (ay), as measured by Euclidean distance, I show the careful attunement of the variable at work in the construction of the speech event and, in particular, the construction of personae. A close analysis of stylistic variation through personae foregrounds the embedding of the social in language, as expressed by Eckert (2003) in the exploration of the meaning of style.

The variable realization of (ay) in the performance by Dr. Claudette frequently defies expectations in relation to constraints on duration and predicted phonetic context of diphthongization. In general, we expect the diphthong to be realized in longer segments. We also know that, for AAE speakers, diphthongization is more likely in the context of a following voiceless obstruent (Fasold 1975, Ash and Myhill 1986, Deser 1990, Bernstein and Gregory 1993 and 1994, Bailey, Wikle, Tillery and Sand 1996, Edwards 1997, Bailey and Thomas 1998, Gordon 2000, and Thomas 2007).<sup>1</sup> I argue that the speaker’s variable realization of (ay) is deployed as one of several tools that create contrastive social styles; the persona-specific patterning of (ay) underscores the discursive governance that make persona construction essential to bringing meaning to the message. The contradictory changeability of (ay) demonstrates the extent to which it is possible for a speaker not only to construct unique personae, but also use stylized realizations to move among them.

These data provide evidence that strategic variability is a powerful tool in the rendering of a performance that is successful in its rhetorical aims. Through varying the realization of (ay), among other features, Dr. Claudette proves authenticity and authoritativeness, earning the rapt attention, approval, and engagement of her audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson’s 2002 study of Detroit AAE is a notable exception, showing that monophthongization may be realized by AAE speakers in the all linguistic contexts, suggesting a possible change in progress in this region.

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