



On Race & Place

Investigating stylistic variation in Rochester, NY

Recent explorations of regional variation across African American speech communities have brought to the forefront the linguistic heterogeneity across African American Language (AAL). Having problematized the presentation of AAL as a *uniform* variety (Wolfram 2007; 2015), intra-group analyses highlight the diverse social and linguistic constructions among African American speakers. In this talk, I zoom in on three personae local to the African American community in Rochester, New York, contextualizing each style against the backdrop of a post-industrial city in the Rustbelt region. I investigate how the three personae, The Mobile Professional, The Hood Kid, and The Biker recruit or reject vocalic patterns of the Northern Cities Shift, as well as to construct identities relevant to their social landscape. The findings challenge how we define the dialect, while also complicating our understanding of the relationship between race and language. Further, this work imagines more ways to enact social justice in the study of variationism by expanding our representation of African Americans' multidimensional identities.

Sharese King

4th September 2020

1:00pm

Online via Zoom 

