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**REGIONALIZING RACE: EXPLORING SOUND CHANGE AND  
RACIAL IDENTITY**

Linguists have problematized the presentation of African American English (AAE) as a uniform variety (Wolfram 2007; Yaeger-Dror & Thomas 2010). Amid growing evidence of regional variation, linguists have cautioned against the homogenization of African Americans' linguistic practices and identities (Wolfram 2007; Childs 2005). Despite advances in our understanding of how the dialect varies, there is a dearth of research focusing on why African Americans' speech varies. My work advances the discussion by examining social and linguistic diversity across African Americans' speech. I examine how linguistic heterogeneity can arise from differences in identity constructions, which are informed by social changes in the community.

In this talk, I draw upon data from my dissertation, an ethnography of Rochester, New York. In order to study social and linguistic diversity in Rochester, I identify example personae particular to that social landscape (Eckert 2012). Specifically, I ask how sound change is enacted through local personae like the mobile black professional and the hood kid. Results indicate that in comparison to other community speakers, mobile black professionals produce significantly lower TRAP tokens and hood kids produce significantly backer BOUGHT tokens. The findings demonstrate that African American language and identity are not monolithic and encourage linguists to reconsider how we define African Americans English.

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Thursday, January 25th

12:30 - 2:00PM

Rush Rheese Library - Humanities Center Conference Room D

**LINGUISTICS COLLOQUIA SERIES**

