

Kelly E. Wright
 LSA Department of Linguistics
 University of Michigan

Covert Segregation
 Dialect Discrimination in the Housing Market

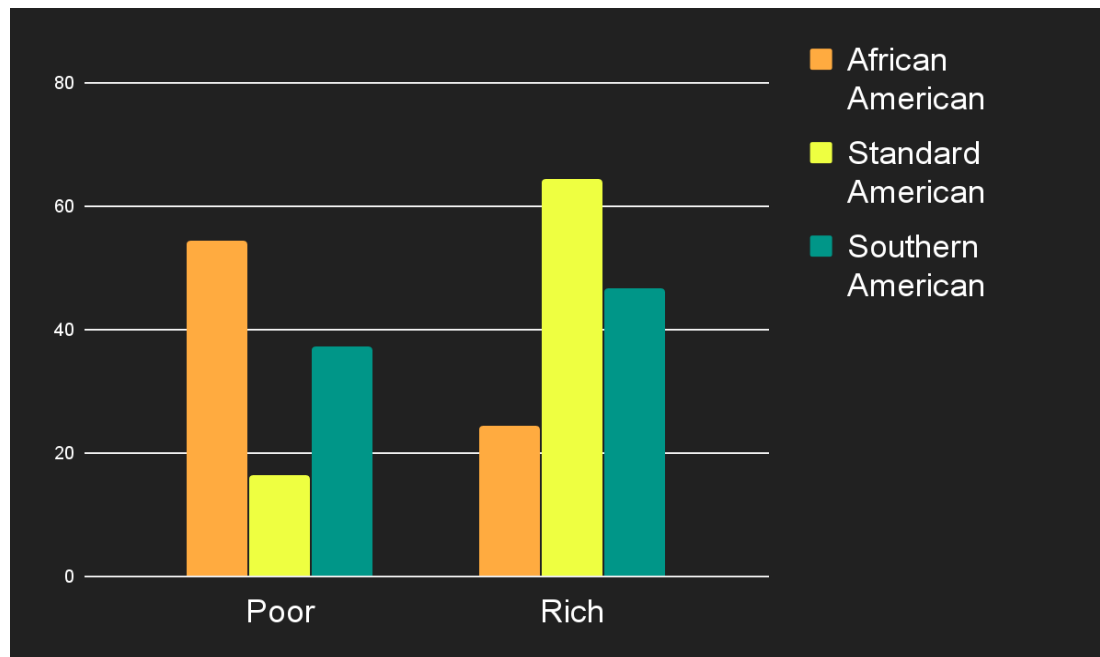
Since the Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, zero cases have been tried on dialect discrimination. Purnell et al. (1999), using a matched-guise approach, revealed solid evidence for dialect discrimination based on the correlation between racial demographics by neighborhood and the rate of returned appointment request calls by dialect.

Dialect	Woodside Neighborhood	Property Manager Callback Rate	East Palo Alto Neighborhood	Property Manager Callback Rate
AAL	0.3% Black	28.7%	42.9% Black	72.0%
MUSE	94.7% White	70.1%	31.7% White	68.7%

This auditory discrimination disproportionately effects racial minorities, who already suffer the color and class disparities of a historically and contemporarily segregated housing market. This revamped re-visitation of Purnell et al. (1999) brings together new methodology and new information about the discriminating listener to reveal the underlying language ideologies that covertly maintain the limitations on social mobility for victims of dialect discrimination.

Dialect is more than accent: it is a constellation of features—word choice, prosody, meaning—linked to recognizable social identities and personality types—Black woman, employed woman, lazy woman. Taking a step away from traditional matched-guise approaches to guisecraft—which typically allow variations only in the Phonological domain—this experiment used three true-to-dialect guises—varying in all Linguistic domains—of this author’s three native dialects—Standard American, African American, and Southern American. These guises were tested for accuracy of identification (N=34), and for ideological impressions (representative sample below) of the person behind the voice. This presentation will present the results of these identifications and ideological evaluations by guise, and will discuss their implications.

Accent	% Correct ID (John Baugh’s Voice)	% Correct ID (This Author’s Voice)
African American	84	88.6
Standard American	86	88.6
Hispanic American	91	-
Southern American	-	97.14



Purnell et al. (1999) does not detail the listeners in this experiment: property managers. Understanding the motivations and demands of this population is key to unpacking dialect discrimination from a perceptual, theoretical, biolinguistic standpoint. This presentation will report results from a national survey of rental professionals, which was focused on assessing their rootedness in the communities they rent in, and was geared to specifically reveal what qualities they prioritize in prospective tenants.

Taken together, these preliminary results show that language ideologies absolutely effect our impressions of the voices we hear *and the people who embody them*. The history of US housing and the shared experience of the African American community tell us that sounding Black closes doors. Purnell et al. (1999)'s results show that when an African American guise is heard, the prospective tenant's rate of received appointments with landlords drops dramatically. This presentation will share results showing that when this African American guise is heard, listeners conjure an image of a poor, untrustworthy, Black woman from the Rust Belt. Finally, this presentation will present a path forward, detailing updates to the phone call matched-guise experiment and a full segmental analysis of these uniquely crafted guises, the results of which are aimed at providing victims the evidence needed to satisfy a court's burden of proof.

Keywords:

Phonetics; Perception; Exemplar Models; Experimental Sociolinguistics; Dialect Discrimination; Social Cognition; Language Ideologies