

“Maybe Black Folk do got a Problem with bein’ Punctual”

A Phonetic Analysis of *Orange is the New Black*

ISABELL DERKSEN¹

Given the broader context of US-produced media, in which black women are vastly underrepresented (see Women's Media Center), the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* (*OITNB*) represents a comparatively racially diverse cast (see Brinkhurst-Cuff). In addition to racial diversity, each individual character has their own accent, style, and individual behavior. This is arguably part of why the series attracts such a large viewership and why it gathers so much media attention. While the series' portrayal of different racial groups and their corresponding accents might be notable from a representational standpoint, we can take a closer look at the linguistic behavior of individual characters and their specific linguistic representations from a sociolinguistic standpoint. In observing the actors' linguistic behavior outside the show impressionistically, for example, there is a remarkable difference between the actors' spontaneous speech production and their staged and stylized linguistic behavior in portraying characters on the show. Specifically, African American actresses Samira Wiley and Adrienne C. Moore both seem to use features commonly associated with African American English (AAE) in the show, but less so in spontaneous speech (e.g. youtube videos). This impressionistic observation is investigated more closely in this paper.

The major aim of this study is to examine the linguistic behavior of African American women in the Netflix series *OITNB* by focusing on the linguistic depiction, in order to find out how linguistic performances play a role in reproducing stereotypical African American personae. To do so, I analyze the use of three stereotypical phonological variables of AAE: interdental fricative in the onset position, rhoticity, and /ay/-monophthongization. The scope of this paper is,

¹ This essay was initially submitted as a Bachelor thesis and supervised by Dr. Teresa Pratt. I would like to thank Dr. Teresa Pratt and Dr. Yolandi Ribbens-Klein for their extraordinary mentoring and constructive criticism in revising this paper.

therefore, limited to linguistic patterns, and how they may reproduce language ideologies and thus racialized stereotypes.

In the course of this study, I argue that the mass media participates in the reproduction and perpetuation of racialized stereotypes by portraying African American characters not as distinguishable but as sufficiently alike to point out their ethnic affiliation. Hence, the first sections outlines the performance of racialized linguistic behavior in the mass media, including studies which focus on the representation of AAE in the media. In this context, I discuss the entanglement of common stereotypes, linguistic features, and extralinguistic variables. By doing *style*, defined as the *visible manifestation of social meaning*, the characters in *OITNB* seem alike, which contributes to racial stereotyping (see Eckert 43).

“I AIN’T SAYING I’M NO SCIENTIST OR NOTHING, BUT THE SHOES IN THE BUNK, CORRECT?”

“[P]erformance is always more than just language” (Bell and Gibson 566). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s concept of “acts of ethnoracial identity” describes how interlocutors actively create their ethnoracial identity through language by choosing from varied linguistic repertoires and thereby conveying specific (ethnoracial) meanings (see Chun and Lo 221).² This theory relies on the global deployment of the term *performance* as an everyday social practice, such that individuals are always constructing their identity in interaction. However, the boundary between staged performance and everyday, spontaneous speech must be defined. Coupland introduces the term *high performance* to refer to staged and framed communication.³ He lays out the relationship between performance and social meaning:

The (high) performance frame establishes a relationship between the meanings co-articulated in the performed event and the meanings that define the wider

-
- 2 This theory pays attention to the interlocutor who constructs their identity in a conscious and individual way. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that those acts are not exclusively based on individual choices but also language ideologies in society (see Chun and Lo 223).
 - 3 By relying on Richard Bauman, Coupland defines high performances as public and “scheduled events, typically pre-announced and planned, and therefore programmed” (147).

cultural or social formation. This relationship, and this duality of meaning, are laid open to scrutiny when social styles are performed. (149)

Framed performances are, thus, in general based on existing controlling and racial images which were apprehended beforehand in certain social contexts. Language ideologies emerge, therefore, not orientated to the perception of an objective linguistic reality but rather to “ways that we are socialized to recognize certain distinctions” (Chun and Lo 224).

Those ethnoracial language ideologies are closely connected to specific personae. Linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of a character need to be taken into account when creating a racialized persona on stage (see Bell and Gibson 566; see Rosa and Flores 629). In this way, (stereotypical) performances become linked to the actor’s linguistic representation and cause the establishment of “relationships of contiguity or co-occurrence between signs, linguistic or nonlinguistic, [which] are recognizable as socially meaningful events and enable the reading of performative acts as indicative of particular socially locatable identities” (Eisenlohr 18). Therefore, language and race become *co-naturalized* so that ideologies are constantly reproduced.⁴ Based on Agha’s theory of enregisterment, this process is called *raciolinguistic enregisterment* (see Rosa and Flores 631).⁵

Specific personae can, thus, index a set of stereotypical language ideologies and specific social categories. However, to understand how language ideologies are kept relevant, one must discuss the perspective of the audience. This shift of focus allows to understand to what extent “language ideologies associated with social categories produce the perception of linguistic signs” (Rosa and Flores 628).⁶ The audience is, thus, an important component regarding language ideologies. One could argue that viewers might be aware of language ideologies and racialized stereotypes in order to decode performances in a critical way. Yet, stylized language can only be noticed by “an acculturated audience [who is] able to read and predisposed to judge the semiotic value of a projected persona or genre” (Coupland 154). For example exaggerated performance must be able to be recognized as such,

4 Co-naturalization can be defined as “construction and naturalization of languages as bounded and separate objects associated with particular racial groups” (Rosa and Flores 621).

5 Enregisterment describes “the process whereby forms of language are endowed with cultural value as coherent sets” (Rosa and Flores 632).

6 Rosa and Flores call this concept indexical inversion.

and irony and parody must be properly conveyed so that the intentionally inauthentic linguistic depiction is in all cases perceived as provocation (see Morson 63). In the mass media, however, it is impossible to control the audience, which means that a stereotypical depiction of an African American character might fail to trigger a reflection of biased judgments and reinforce already enregistered racial indices instead. The media, especially television, has a major influence on people's judgment and can evoke such changes since "psychological engagement with a TV show can also help accelerate the propagation of rapidly diffusing linguistic change" (Stuart-Smith et al. 502).

If only a few marked features are used,⁷ audiences might consider the representation of an African American character as diverse and authentic. Yet, Black characters who are less stereotypical would likely be recognized as African American and assigned to one uniform ethnic group. Marlene G. Fine and Carolyn Anderson named this phenomenon "black but not too black" and criticize the homogenized representation of African American speakers (see 406). Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall expand this assumption with the concept of *adequation*:

The term adequation emphasizes the fact that in order for groups or individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not – and in any case cannot – be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes. (599)

Ultimately, the entertainment industry plays an important role in shaping and reproducing racialized stereotypes. Producers might decide on a diverse cast including the different use of AAE variables, but only as diverse as black characters are still identifiable with their racialized identity.

"YOU SAYING WE ALL LOOK ALIKE?"

The linguistic behavior of a character is pivotal in forming a character's image in the media (see Green 214). In other words, the representation of a marked language

⁷ The concept of markedness relies on the assumption that "all linguistic codes or varieties come to have a social and psychological associations in the speech communities in which they are used" (Myers-Scotton 22).

variety has an influence on the audience's judgment regarding the presented character.

AAE, though historically studied as a relatively homogenous variety (see Labov), has been more recently described as a complex linguistic system that has its own set of rules with a range of variations.⁸ Linguistic differences occur in all varieties and communities; AAE, like other varieties, is not homogenous and static, nor is it restricted to particular language rules (see Eberhardt and Freeman 304). For example, sound change, diachronic, diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variation influence the speaker's language (see Dury and Picton 60). But especially the concept of *doing stance* shapes variation in language use. According to Du Bois, the latter concept describes how speakers must always position themselves regarding the given context and present interlocutors:

Stance is public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field. (163)

Despite those findings, the media often reproduces the myth of AAE as one uniform variety and African Americans as one fixed ethnicity leading to a reduction of cultural diversity and ignorance of individuality within the group (see Anderson and Fine 397).⁹

Consequently, the goal of the (white-dominated) media industry is not to represent an authentic image of a language variety (see Coupland 150). For example, even though *OITNB* has a diverse cast, its producer Jenji Kohan decided to provide the first insight to the prison setting through the lens of “the wealthy, white, and college-educated character Piper Chapman [...] in order to sell the show to Netflix producers” (Scott 223). The first season focuses on how the main character struggles in accepting her new life in prison. Furthermore, her love life plays a central role

8 This assumption is closely connected to the idea of the ethnolinguistic repertoire which describes “a fluid set of linguistic resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably as they index their ethnic identities” (Benor 160). Sarah Bunin Benor incorporates the concept of indexicality which suggests that linguistic choices convey social meaning (see Silverstein).

9 Classifying African American English as one ethnolect should be regarded with caution. By grouping a language variety based on its ethnicity, the focus lays on a fixed, homogenous and non-standard variation thereby disregarding other relevant linguistic actions when establishing social identities (see Jaspers 100).

in the plotline. The prison staff often privileges Piper, the white female lead, by providing her with a furlough and lending her a phone for example. Although Piper's prison experience as a white woman is not representative, especially in comparison to the disproportionately black/latinx prison population,¹⁰ Jenji Kohan chose this perspective prioritizing the interests of a presumed white viewership. Thus, one should not forget that a series such as *OITNB* is a product of the television industry, written and produced by predominantly white Netflix producers who are able to decide what to portray and how to represent minority groups (see Bell and Gibson 557). The acclaimed diversity in shows might always then be neglected when the audience ratings count more than racial justice. As Lisa J. Green states, the accurate depiction of a non-stereotypical black character would not trigger the attention from the viewers and is therefore not likely to be seen (see 204).

The homogenized linguistic depiction in the media simultaneously aligns with the characteristics often ascribed stereotypically to black female characters: lack of intelligence and/or education and participation in criminal activities. Linking this linguistic behavior to black figures causes a prejudiced connection in the viewers' minds and participates thereby in the process of *raciolinguistic enregisterment*, since black speech is so readily associated with an image of an uneducated black person (see Rosa and Flores 631). The use of one single feature alone can impact the listener's judgment. Regarding this, a typical example is the *aks* variant, alternating /æks/-use. The /æks/-variant is associated with blackness on the one hand and carelessness and a lack of intelligence on the other hand (see Lippi-Green 191). This perpetuates the static standard/non-standard-binary, such that AAE, and other marginalized language varieties, come to be associated "with sloppiness and lack of intelligence, among other negative traits" (Rahman 143). This stereotype links the language behavior to a person's moral character and professional potential which has not only a negative influence on the white audience, but on speakers of marginalized varieties as well (see 165).

The observation that conscious linguistic choices lead to personal success aligns with the notion that speaking AAE prevents somebody from being able to achieve professional success. Many African Americans have articulated the impression that they are only able to pursue a career if they avoid the use of AAE

10 Based on Gabbidon and Greene's encyclopedia of race and crime, it can be stated that African Americans are often overrepresented in the prison system. .

features (see Smitherman 129). Consequentially, this language ideology ignores the structural and institutional racism that is present regardless of an individuals' actual language use. Sharese King analyzes one example of an African American persona, "the Mobile Black Professional" (King 33), in her study of black speakers in Rochester. These speakers create their linguistic style and identity by avoiding features which index their cultural background and ethnicity to pursue their career goals (see King 51). Racialized individuals are put under disproportionate pressure to change their linguistic behavior in order to meet normative standards of the system. Instead of a systemic change, individuals try to adapt to the existing norms to be successful.

In contrast to this concept, stands the "Hood Kid persona" (King 59), also described in King's Rochester study. In the entertainment industry, notions of the urban ghetto prevail in portrayals of black character who are stereotypically associated with drugs and violence (see Green 212). This is embodied by the "Hood Kid persona" and is associated with the usage of iconic AAE variables (see King 60). In addition to the environment and the linguistic behavior, further semiotic resources play a role in constructing the style of a "Hood Kid persona." Those include *inter alia* the style of dress and references to hip hop culture (see King 60, 63–64). Taken together, these personae are ideological constructs that I will investigate here in *OITNB*.

THE SPEAKERS AND SELECTED DATA SETS

In order to analyze the linguistic behavior of the speakers as accurately as possible, a specific "speech genre" (Bakthin 60) was chosen. Genre is the organization of utterances in a specific context based on three aspects: content, style and structure (see 60). Linguistic choices define the style of a particular genre. This style is proportionately stable and determines the way of communication in a certain context (see 65). For this research, the genre underlines the recurring theme of black criminality. More precisely, any scene including the context of drug dealing was selected and coded. Given the general discussion of the entertainment industry early, it could be expected that the analyzed characters style their language in a very similar way.

However, considering the “stance” of the characters, certain differences in language production could also emerge (see Du Bois 139). By taking stance, speakers index their position concerning the utterance on a linguistic level. This means that “[v]ia specific acts of stancetaking, value can be focused and directed at a precise target, as locally relevant values are activated to frame the significance of participant actions” (143). Therefore, it would be legitimate to assume that characters with different stances have distinct linguistic patterns, even though, both may be part of the same speech genre.

While racialized representations of minority groups in the media have been discussed to some extent (see Littlefield; Mastro; Bucholtz and Lopez; Haynes), the aim of this essay is to find out in how far individual characters in *OITNB* use diverse linguistic patterns. Therefore, the essay analyzes the linguistic performance of two African American characters: Cindy Hayes, played by Adrienne C. Moore, and Poussey Washington, performed by Samira Wiley. Both characters are present in the first season, but feature more prominently in the second season. Therefore, the second season serves as relevant data for the analysis.

Orange Is The New Black takes place in a women’s prison in Litchfield, New York. This dramedy, which was first released in July 2013, and at the time of this writing contains six seasons, is inspired by Piper Kerman’s memoir describing her experience during her fifteen months sentence in federal prison. The series begins with the arrival of the main character Piper Chapman, played by Taylor Schilling, in prison and through whose perspective life in jail is presented first. Piper, who led the perfect American life with a fiancé and a wealthy family, was involved in a drug smuggling business with a former college lover, for which she faces a fifteen months sentence. In prison, Piper is permanently confronted with racial segregation in prison as every character is categorized by race: all African American inmates belong to one group and all Latinx inmates to another. Thus, one could argue that in the Litchfield prison all “race-conscious laws have been formally dismantled” (Scott 230).

This study, however, concentrates on the portrayal of two African American characters: Cindy Hayes and Poussey Washington. A comparison of their language use promises to be particularly fruitful because both are part of the same speech genre, albeit not the same stance which sees Hayes participating and Washington rejecting the in-prison drug business.

Cindy Hayes is a black character who is known for her extravagant hairstyle and her loud voice. Her character is outspoken and funny. Before coming to prison, Hayes worked as an airport TSA agent in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She took advantage of her position by stealing passenger's valuables and food from the airport and spent a lot of time screening good-looking men. She is serving time at Litchfield for stealing from passengers at her work. In the second season, she is depicted as a somewhat unintelligent inmate who acts impetuously. For example, after first refusing to work for a drug business run from within the prison, she changes her mind just because the operation leader, Vee, shares a cake with her. Furthermore, rather than selling cigarettes for stamps, as it was requested by Vee, Hayes decides to benefit from the situation and has others work for her without thinking of the consequences.

Hayes does not mind making jokes at other people's expenses. Several times she mocks Suzanne Warren, an inmate who is mentally ill. Her self-confidence is also reflected in the way she deals with her body. She is proud of her (non-normative, large) body shape and does not hesitate to show this: "I don't wanna wear no sack. I got curves. I'm a plushious [sic] woman" (Kohan and Friedman 2.2). As is true for the other black characters in this series, Hayes is aware of the racism in prison (see Charlton). Hayes seems rather like a stereotypical character. Well-known TV tropes can be recognized when taking a closer look at this character. Her laziness and careless actions on the one hand and the outspoken and entertaining personality on the other hand serve as amusing counterpart to the injustice in prison.

Poussey Washington is known for her expressive smiles, an indication of her popularity as an inmate loved by everyone. Before coming to prison, Poussey had to live in several countries due to her father's job in the military. She stayed in France and Germany and is therefore able to speak three languages fluently. She was arrested for possessing Cannabis with intent to sell. In prison, she works in the library with her best friend Taystee. She knows a lot about literature and possesses vast general knowledge. She is very independent and remains true to her convictions even when others do not.

Poussey Washington cares about other people, especially the other black inmates. She calls them her family; she always protects, defends, and helps other inmates as if it was the most natural thing: "It's what you do for family" (Kohan and Friedman 2.2). Even in prison, she maintains her faith in the good of people and has

a clear moral compass. Therefore, she does not support the actions of Vee Parker, who, in many ways, takes on the role of the villain by leading the other black inmates in her attempt take over the prison. Poussey calls her “the criminal element” (Kohan and Friedman 2.12) and does not understand why her “family” becomes part of the drug dealing business in prison. She is the only black character who is immune to Vee’s manipulation. Despite all her effort, she is not able to persuade the other inmates. As a consequence of her failure, Washington’s usual positive character changes. She is sad, mad, and cannot comprehend the others’ behavior. Poussey seems to deviate from the stereotypical black in-mate at first sight. However, a closer look finds that she also voices typical TV tropes.

Washington’s and Hayes’ different personality supports the argument that they do not take the same stances. This is why it is extremely interesting to find out whether this is represented in the series. If this is the case, both characters would behave differently on a linguistic level and underline the *prima facie* diverse cast.

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

For the present analysis, a general listening to the selected data was necessary, especially in order to avoid following typical AAE patterns and provide an objective coding instead. Every element was thus a possible token. After having obtained a general overview, the data was more closely analyzed and a pattern of items which are stereotypically associated with AAE was recognized. The scope of the present analysis includes three phonological features: /th/ in word initial position, post-vocalic /r/ and /ay/- monophthongization. Earlier research has connected these features with black speakers and stereotypes (see Green, Hoover, King, Rahman, Wolfram and Schilling). In all, fifteen scenes with a duration between 40 seconds and two minutes, in which either one or both speakers occur, were phonetically coded.

Post-vocalic /r/	r ¹	rhotic
	r ²	non-rhotic
	r□	ambiguous tokens
<hr/>		
/ay/-realization	ay ¹	diphthongal
	ay ²	monophthongal
	ay□	ambiguous tokens

Interdental fricative	th ¹	ð or θ
	th ²	stopping
	th ³	labialization
	th ⁴	absence
	th□	ambiguous tokens

Figure 1: labels for analysis.

Since the focus of this quantitative analysis was on the sound realization and not onbody movement, the MP4 video files, which were purchased for this paper, were converted to MP3 files and then transcribed and coded in ELAN. In order to code as accurately as possible, single tokens were extracted in PRAAT for a separate listening in consideration of the depicted sound waves. For the purpose of inter-rater reliability, 20% of the data were also coded by Dr. Teresa Pratt. The inter-rater reliability was 77%.¹¹

The realization of the interdental fricative was examined in word initial position.¹² Th³ was originally used as label for the labialization of interdental fricatives. However, generally this does not occur in the word onset and was thus disregarded in the interpretation of the present study (see E. R. Thomas 454). Concerning /ay/-diphthongs, tokens which are situated before voiceless consonants were excluded in this study since it is in general less likely in this phonetic environment that a diphthong is monophthongal (see J. Thomas).

RESULTS

Reproducing linguistic features which are stereotypically associated with AAE contributes to creating clichéd personae and causes reification and maintenance of racial stereotypes. The analysis demonstrates that the analyzed characters use

11 To be more precise, the inter-rater reliability was 100% for /ay/-diphthongs, 71% for interdental fricatives in the onset position, and 76% for rhoticity. Especially, concerning /ay/-diphthongs, it is important to mention that the reliability coding may not hold with more data. In a further study with a larger data set, this should be looked at more closely.

12 The different labels derive from the Kara Becker's study of linguistic repertoire and ethnic identities in New York City.

stereotypical AAE features and reproduce language ideologies, albeit to different extents.

While Washington produces more than half (68%) of her occurrences of interdental fricative in word-initial position as fricative (as expected in Standard American English),¹³ Hayes produces a relatively high rate (63%) of *interdental stopping*, a more typical AAE feature. Function words such as *the* and *those* but also content words such as *thing* and *other* are therefore pronounced with the voiced or voiceless alveolar stops [d, t]. Furthermore, Hayes omits the first consonant repeatedly (17%) when it comes to the personal pronoun *them* which leads to a contraction of the item. In contrast to Hayes, Washington does not apply this realization. Even though th⁴ might only indicate colloquial language, Hayes' and Washington's linguistic behavior differ from each other. Comparing the usage of both speakers, the pattern seems straightforward: Hayes' way of talking embodies a stereotypical black persona and Washington represents the linguistic counterpart to that. The data shows a contrast between the characters: Washington's use of th¹ is approximately as high as Hayes' usage of th². Nevertheless, it should not be disregarded that Washington, too, reproduces the phonetic features connected to AAE, albeit to a lesser extent (24%). The linguistic performance of both speakers, thus, confirms stereotypes which are already reproduced by body language, sartorial style and content of the series.

13 I refer in this paper to the term Standard American English (SAE) for the sake of clarity. However, I agree with the argument that there is not such a phenomenon as the standard (as Lippi-Green calls it the Standard Language Myth).

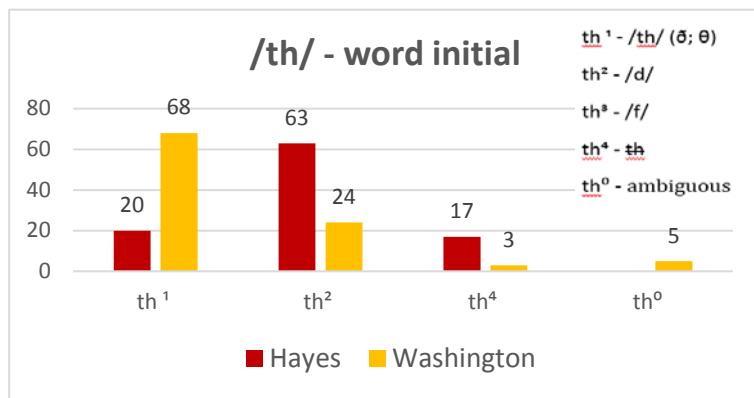


Figure 2: interdental fricatives in initial position, Cindy Hayes, Poussey Washington.

The second analyzed feature, *rhoticity*, seems to follow the same patterns. Derhotacization, deletion of vocalic or post-vocalic /r/, is a marked variation pattern regarding AAE. Similar to the interdental fricative, Hayes' linguistic behavior stands out clearly: 80% of her tokens are r-less. Items such as *holders* and *percent*, both clearly in the context of the relevant drug subject, are pronounced as follows: [houldəz] and [pə'sen]. A detailed look at the analysis provides further insight into her consistent linguistic behavior: 100% of the function words are realized /r/-less. In contrast to the interdental fricative, the linguistic behavior of both characters is similar. Washington shares a relatively high usage of the AAE-associated linguistic feature (60%). Her linguistic behavior, the /r/-lessness, can be argued with taking *stance* toward the dealing genre. For example, when Vee tries to convince Poussey Washington to start a business in prison, she does not agree:

- Washington: Oh, my hooch? That's just fo[r] fun. The[r]e's no cha[r]ge.
 Parker: The girls would pay for it.
 Washington: I mean, but that ain't the point. I make it fo[r] me and my friends. (Kohan and Friedman 2.4)

Even though she follows this pattern, the usage is not as consistent as Hayes' since rhoticity does only occur in nearly 40% of Washington's utterances. In general, this figure indicates that Washington and Hayes are both able to be recognized as AAE speakers due to their predominant and stereotypical realization of post-vocalic /r/.

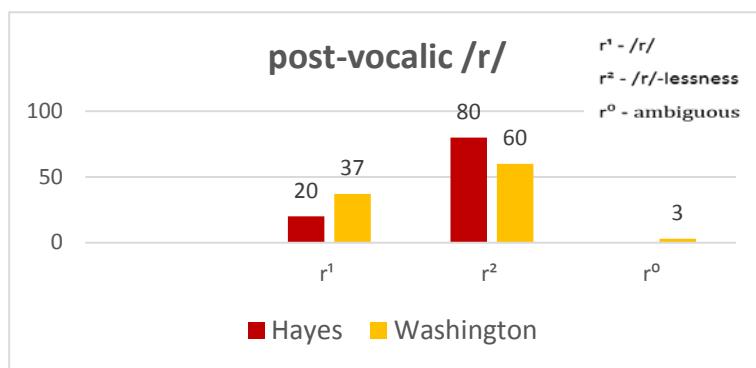


Figure 3: realization of /ay/-diphthong, Cindy Hayes and Poussey Washington.

The results discussed thus far indicate that both characters use patterns which are associated with AAE, yet Washington's linguistic behavior is not as stereotypical as Hayes'. Thus, it would be coherent if this pattern was reflected in the third analyzed phonetical feature, monophthongization of /ay/, as well. However, this is not the case. For example, the prototypical monophthong associated with AAE that clearly indexes ethnicity is the lexical item *time*. In Washington's performance, this item occurs twice. In both cases the realization is monophthongal [ta:m]. Other content words such as *smiling* and function words such as the personal pronoun *I* are mostly pronounced. In total, Washington realizes /ay/ as a monophthong at a rate of 63%.

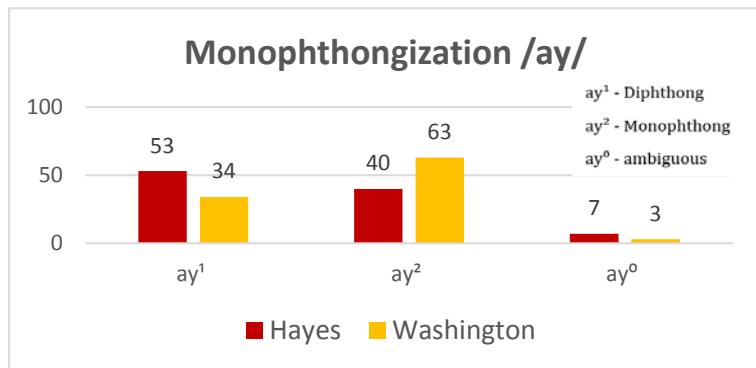


Figure 4: rhoticity, Cindy Hayes and Poussey Washington.

In Hayes' utterances, monophthongs (53%) and diphthongs (40%) occur nearly in the same amount whereas she does not monophthongize content words. If the audience would only be exposed to this phonological feature in order to judge whether Hayes uses AAE, the results would not be unambiguous. It is, however, dubious that the use of this common AAE pattern would have an influence on

perceiving Hayes as less black since both previously discussed linguistic features, along with extralinguistic aspects of her character's portrayal, highlight her clear depiction as stereotypical black character.

“YOU PEOPLE? YOU MEAN BLACK PEOPLE!”

Hayes' linguistic performance is characterized by a high use of AAE-aligned variables. Th-stopping as well as postvocalic r-lessness reinforce the representation of her character as stereotypically black. Those features, already register as racially marked, perpetuate and reinforce the association between this linguistic realization and racialized identity. Hayes' clichéd depiction, hence, evokes the creation of the “Hood Kid persona” (King 115). This persona is described as being part of a community which is clearly distinguishable from the white and mainstream society. Using marked linguistic variables is not the only way that Hayes expresses her group affiliation to this community. She does *hood* by styling her identity: her loud speech behavior, her singing, her dancing, and her involvement in the activity of drug dealing, all reinforce her depiction as a stereotypical African American character (see 81).

In contrast to Hayes, Washington produces those two stereotypical features to a lesser extent. Only a few interdental stoppings occur in her utterances. There is a clear discrepancy between Hayes' and Washington's use of this variable. Thus, both characters represent different personas. Similar to the “Mobile Black Professional,” Washington would like to focus on the future life (see 41). She is interested in pursuing a career and does not mind moving to a different state or country in order to do so. Her ability to speak three languages and her literary interests further portray Washington as an upwardly-mobile character within normative class stratification. This behavior suggests a linguistic production which approaches SAE, in particular because of the assumption that AAE speakers have no accessibility to this world (see Rahman 167).

While the analysis of the interdental fricative in the word onset position shows a high discrepancy between Hayes' and Washington's portrayal of the language variety, the rhoticity complicates the idea that both characters do not show the same group affiliation. Certainly, Washington uses more rhotic postvocalic /r/ than non-rhotic, but the amount of r-lessness in her speech

production is high enough to recognize her as an African American speaker. Thus, the linguistic performance of both characters is sufficiently similar to evoke categorizing the two to the same ethnic group, which reduces the individual to one homogenous group (see Bucholtz and Hall 599).

Yet, minor variations in the linguistic features suggests that both characters differ from each other. This is emphasized in their personality and attitude. As stated above, Washington does not support the drug industry in prison, in opposite to Hayes, who participates in making this business work, even if that means that she has to harm other inmates. One main reason for the different realization of the variables might be their stance towards the genre of “drug dealing in prison,” in particular since “any choice of linguistic form made by a speakers [sic] is based ultimately on the interpersonal or epistemic *stance* they wish to take with their various interlocutors at a particular time” (Kiesling 172). Thus, *OITNB* does not completely disregard possible variations of a speaker’s linguistic realization.

Interestingly, the amount of /ay/-monophthongization usage is reversed: Washington produces more than half of the tokens monophthongal whereas Hayes uses diphthongs, which are associated with SAE, to a greater extent. Although Washington uses the other linguistic variables to a lesser extent and does not participate in activities stereotypical ascribed to black characters, her (stereotypical) language production suggests that she still has a distinctive group affiliation. However, looking impressionistically at Washington’s performance, she uses other stereotypical AAE features, such as zero copula and negative concord, which were not included in the analysis. She aligns with the African American ‘group’ and is easily recognized as such through the stereotypical use of these features. Hayes’ more standard-oriented use of the feature on the other hand, indicates that AAE speakers do not use one uniform variety and may not realize all features aligned with the variation to the same extent. If this was the case, Hayes may have been perceived as inauthentic and even considered *too black* (see Fine and Anderson 406). Thus, both characters produce ‘just enough’ of the necessary phonological aspects to index a black persona. The performances and the African American identities are adequately stylized to index similarities and alikeness (see Bucholtz and Hall 599).

The persistent maintenance of these stereotypes in *OITNB* causes an ongoing *raciolinguistic enregisterment* which means that the link between cultural stereotypes, the depiction of the “Hood Kid persona,” and the linguistic behavior is

preserved and accessible to a mass audience through the media (see Pratt and D'Onofrio 309). Instead of maintaining controlling images and stereotypes, a series such as *OITNB* should avoid the constant reproduction of ideologies since those “[i]ndexical links between forms and meanings can be [...] changeable” (Johnstone 660).

“THIS IS SOME RACISM RIGHT HERE”

Over the course of this thesis, I have demonstrated that *OITNB* participates in the reproduction and perpetuation of racialized stereotypes and language ideologies by portraying African American characters as nearly alike. Nevertheless, it should not be disregarded that differences in one language variety are also performed. Portraying differences is of great importance in order to overcome the myth of a homogenous variety and to present African Americans as unique individuals. However, the range of varieties is kept narrow enough to recognize the speakers as adequately African American. Eventually, ethnicity constitutes one vital aspect in creating a social identity in *OITNB*.

Given the fact that the reproduction of racialized stereotypes in the mass media negatively influences speakers of the language variety, I emphasize the importance of ending the ongoing reproduction of monolithic and thus inauthentic portrayals of African Americans. Thus, it is not only crucial to omit the performance of stereotypes but also to break the indexical links between language variety and those prejudices. Only in this way, can the ongoing enregisterment of racialized stereotypes (i.e. the maintenance of association of the linguistic behavior and social practices) be ended or changed (see Agha).

The aim of the current study was to reveal whether the linguistic representations correspond to the first impression of diversity in *OITNB*. The phonetic analysis of the interdental fricative in the onset position, rhoticity, and /ay/-monophthongization, three variables that are typically associated with AAE, showed that both African American characters used variations which are considered to be stereotypically black. However, both speakers' linguistic behavior differs from each other. Hayes' high proportion of AAE features suggests that she depicts an stereotypical black speaker, the “Hood Kid persona.” Washington also uses the AAE variables, albeit to a lesser extent for which she might still be

recognized as “black but not too black.” The variation in both characters speak to their different *stance* which shows that *OITNB* does not depict characters of the same ethnicity as simply uniform. Yet, both personae depict stereotypical black speakers at the same time. Their performance is adequately stylized in order to classify them as African American. Once again, ethnicity seems to be the overarching aspect in creating a persona.

In conclusion, despite minor variations in the portrayal of African American characters, the analysis showed that the reproduction of racialized stereotypes continues even in TV shows with an explicit claim to diversity. The entertainment industry should be held accountable for portraying entrenched representation of black people, abandon the reproduction of stereotypes, and present a complex portrayal of language performance in order to end racial profiling in the media (see King 116; Scott 236).

WORKS CITED

- Agha, Asif. “Voice, Footing, Enregisterment.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2005, pp. 38–59.
- Anderson, Carolyn, and Marlene Fine. “Dialectical Features of Black Characters in Situation Comedies on Television.” *Phylon*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1980, pp. 396–409.
- Bakhtin, Michail. *Speech Genres and other late Essays*. Austin, Tex., Texas Pr., 1986.
- Bell, Allan, and Andy Gibson. “Staging Language: An introduction to the Sociolinguistics of Performance.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2011, pp. 555–572.
- Benor, Sarah Bunin. “Ethnolinguistic Repertoire: Shifting the Analytic Focus in Language and Ethnicity.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2010, pp. 159–183.
- Brinkhurst-Cuff, Charlie. “Orange Is the New Black stars: ‘I couldn’t watch. I had to turn away’.” *The Guardian*, 5 June 2017, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jun/05/orange-is-the-new-black-stars-taystee-crazy-eyes-sophia. Accessed 14 Jan. 2019.
- Bucholtz, Mary, and Kira Hall. “Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach.” *Discourse Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4–5, 2005, pp. 585–614.

- Bucholtz, Mary, and Qiuana Lopez. "Performing Blackness, Forming Whiteness: Linguistic Minstrelsy In Hollywood Film." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2011, pp. 680–706.
- Charlton, Tope Fadiran. "'Orange Is the New Black,' and How We Talk About Race and Identity." *Rewire.News*, 3 Sep. 2013, rewire.news/article/2013/09/03/orange-is-the-new-black-and-how-we-talk-about-race-and-identity/. Accessed 14 Jan. 2019.
- Chun, Elaine W., and Adrienne Lo. "Language and Racialization." *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 220–233.
- Coupland, Nikolas. *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Du Bois, John W. "The Stance Triangle." *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction*, edited by Robert Englebretson, Benjamins, 2007, pp. 139–181.
- Dury, Pascaline, and Aurélie Picton. "Diastratic Variation in Language for Specific Purposes." *Multiple Perspectives on Terminological Variation*, Benjamins, 2017, pp. 57–83.
- Eberhardt, Maeve, and Kara Freeman. "'First Things First, I'm The Realest': Linguistic Appropriation, White Privilege, and The Hip-Hop Persona of Iggy Azalea." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2015, pp. 303–327.
- Eckert, Penelope. "The Meaning of Style." *Texas Linguistic Forum*, vol. 47, summer, 2003, 41–53.
- Eisenlohr, Patrick. *Little India: Diaspora, Time, and Ethnolinguistic Belonging in Hindu Mauritius*, University of California Press, 2006.
- Gabbidon, Shaun L., and Helen Taylor Greene. *Encyclopedia of Race and Crime*. Sage Publications, 2009.
- Green, Lisa J. *African American English*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Haynes, Amanda. "Mass Media Re-Presentations of the Social World: Ethnicity and 'Race'." *Media studies: Key Issues and Debates*, Sage Publications Ltd, 2007, pp. 162–190.
- Hoover, Mary Rhodes. "Community Attitudes toward Black English." *Language in Society*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1978, pp. 65–87.
- Jaspers, Jürgen. "Problematizing Ethnolects: Naming Linguistic Practices in an Antwerp Secondary School." *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 12, no. 1–2, 2008, pp. 85–103.

- Johnstone, Barbara. "Dialect Enregisterment in Performance." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2011, pp. 657–679.
- Kiesling, Scott F. "Style as Stance: Stance as the Explanation for Patterns of Sociolinguistic Variation." *Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, edited by Alexandra M. Jaffe, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 171–194.
- King, Sharese. Exploring Social and Linguistic Diverstiy Across African Americans from Rochester. Stanford University, 2018.
- Kohan, Jenji and Liz Friedman, creators. *Orange is the New Black*. Season 2, Lionsgate Television and Tilted Productions, 2014.
- Labov, William. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.
- Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. Routledge, 2012.
- Littlefield, Marci Bounds. "The Media as a System of Racialization: Exploring Images of African American Women and the New Racism." *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 51, no. 5, 2008, pp. 675–685.
- Mastro, Dana. "Effects of Racial and Ethnic Stereotyping." *Media effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, edited by Jennings Bryant and Mary Beth Oliver, Routledge, 2009, pp. 325–341.
- Morson, Gary Saul. "Parody, History, and Metaparody." *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, edited by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, Northwestern University Press, 1989, pp. 63–87.
- Myers-Scotton, Carol. Introduction. *Codes and Consequences: Choosing Linguistic Varieties*, edited by Carol Myers-Scotton, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 3–17.
- Pratt, Teresa, and Annette D'Onofrio. "Jaw Setting and the California Vowel Shift in Parodic Performance." *Language in Society*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2017, pp. 283–312.
- Rahman, Jacquelyn. "Middle-Class African Americans: Reactions and Attitudes toward African American English." *American Speech*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2008, pp. 141–176.
- Rosa, Jonathan, and Nelson Flores. "Unsettling Race and Language: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective." *Language in Society*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2017, pp. 621–647.
- Schilling-Estes, Natalie, and Wolfram Walt. American English: Dialects and Variation. 3rd ed., Wiley Blackwell, 2016.

- Scott, Jessica. "Hillbilly Horror and the New Racism: Rural and Racial Politics in 'Orange Is the New Black.'" *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2017, pp. 221–238.
- Silverstein, Michael. "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life." *Language & Communication*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2003, pp. 193–229.
- Smitherman, Geneva. *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans*. Routledge, 2006.
- Stuart-Smith, Jane et al. "Television Can Also Be a Factor in Language Change: Evidence from an Urban Dialect." *Language: Journal of the Linguistic Society of America*, vol. 89, no. 3, 2013, pp. 501–536.
- Thomas, Erik R. "Phonological and Phonetic Characteristics of African American Vernacular English." *Language and Linguistics Compass*, vol. 1, no. 5, 2007, pp. 450–475.
- Thomas, Julia. "Gender and /ai/monophthongization in African American English." *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 2011, pp. 449–463.
- The Status of Women of Color in the U.S. News Media 2018*. Women's Media Center. 2018.

DuEPublico

Duisburg-Essen Publications online

UNIVERSITÄT
DUISBURG
ESSEN

Offen im Denken

ub | universitäts
bibliothek

Published in:

Student Journal of the Department of Anglophone Studies / 2 (2020), pp. 45-66

This text is made available via DuEPublico, the institutional repository of the University of Duisburg-Essen. This version may eventually differ from another version distributed by a commercial publisher.

DOI: 10.17185/duepublico/71246

URN: urn:nbn:de:hbz:464-20200121-152829-6

All rights reserved.