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## **What's in a grammar? Shared representations in contexts of dialect diversity**

Speakers of different dialects of the same language display substantial overlap in the types of sentences they produce, suggesting large areas of overlap in linguistic knowledge. However, some sentence types appear more dialect specific. For example, speakers of Appalachian English variably use sentences like *I didn't eat nothing* and *I didn't eat anything* to express that they skipped a meal, while speakers of Mainstream English tend to use only the *I didn't eat anything* variant. Do these different production patterns across groups reflect differing grammatical knowledge, or do they obscure larger areas of overlap across social dialects? This talk presents a series of studies with Mainstream American English speakers investigating this question, taking English negative sentences as a case study. Patterns of eye movement during reading illustrate participants' relative ease in obtaining the single negation (i.e., 'I skipped a meal') reading of sentences like *I didn't eat nothing*. This is unexpected if we assume a direct mapping between social representations—links between specific linguistic features and particular social groups—and grammatical representations, which include systematic knowledge of the relationships between structure and meaning. In this talk I will explain, using evidence from naturalistic production and experimental studies, how a more nuanced treatment of dialectal variation in language processing may be warranted, in which features are examined on a case-by-case basis, with careful consideration of both the social and the grammatical dimensions.