

“An Empirical View of Varieties of English in Appalachia”

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Varieties of English in Appalachia have received more public attention than scholarly scrutiny in the twentieth century. From comic strips to popular sitcoms and eventually the world-wide web, people from Appalachia were lampooned in public circles for their speech and other cultural traits. Early myths, such as the reference to an extant Elizabethan English in the mountains, were used as a defense for language variation; however, such myths only obscure the actual patterns of synchronic and diachronic variation in this area of the country. Working from foundational scholarship of Wolfram, Christian, Montgomery and others, this talk explores a sociolinguistically empirical perspective of language variation patterns in speakers from Appalachia. By examining traditional features like *a*-prefixing and (ING), along with regionally identified features such as /ay/-ungliding and the front-lax and low-back mergers, the audience should come to better understand the state of American English in Appalachia at the start of the twenty-first century.