THE "SOUND" OF BLACKNESS: AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES, AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

By

Cynthia Hansberry Williams

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Interdisciplinary Studies: Language and Literacy and English Studies

May, 2007

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Professor David Bloome

Professor Lucius Outlaw, Jr.

Professor Dennis Dickerson

Professor Kevin Leander

Professor Sheila Smith-McKoy

To my husband Keith

and children Keathen, Deborah, Sydney, and Keanan;

and in memory of

Maggie Faye Williams, my mother-in-law, without whom this task

would have never been accomplished;

Lillie Mae Battles, my grandmother; and

Sarah Johnson, my teacher, mentor, and friend.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I am grateful to the Lord God for directing and guiding me through Vanderbilt University and this dissertation process. I was truly blessed to have met such a wonderful community of people. I owe special gratitude to my family: my husband, Keith, who defied traditions in my community and took care of our children while I lived in Nashville to further my educational goal. I am grateful to have such a supportive and loving spouse. I am also grateful for my children -- Keathen, Deborah, Sydney, and Keanan -- for their patience, encouragement, and for providing spaces that allowed me to accomplish this task. I am blessed to have such a loving and supportive family.

I am also grateful for the community of people that the Lord God placed in my path. My dissertation committee --David Bloome, Lucius Outlaw, Jr., Sheila Smith McKoy, Dennis Dickerson, and Kevin Leander --who provided guidance and support during my graduate studies and throughout the dissertation process. Their encouragement and assistance have been invaluable. Dave, you are a wonderful mentor, and Sheila, you are truly one of my greatest role models. A special thanks to Judith Green, my mentor and friend, who provided critical feedback throughout the dissertation process. Judith, I am indebted to you for your kindness and guidance.

I am equally thankful for the friendships established during my journey through Vanderbilt. I would like to especially thank Stephanie Power Carter for her untiring patience and encouragement. I would also like to thank fellow graduate students, Dannell Edwards, Ayanna Brown, and Kelly McKim Johnson for their critical insights and encouragement. Special recognition to the staff of the Teaching and Learning

Department of Peabody College at Vanderbilt University, particularly, Sandra Uti, Angela Saylor, Janet Roberts, and JJ Street: I am indebted to them for their service and innumerable acts of kindness. I would also like to thank the two classroom teachers and students for their willingness to participate in this research study, and my friend, Kevin Harper for assistance with the musical analysis section of my dissertation.

I extend a special thanks to my family members who helped me in remarkable ways: Maggie Faye Williams, Juanna Jackson, Candace Williams, Deborah and Beatrice Hansberry, Alecia, Brittany, and Cora Cloird, Irlisa Hammond, and Kizma Williams -- members of my family who combed my daughters' hair, ran school errands, attended special events, and performed numerous other responsibilities for my children that I was unable to perform. I am indebted to them for their assistance, patience, and encouragement. I also want to express gratitude to my parents, Charles and Beatrice Hansberry, for their support and encouragement. Daddy, thanks for the furniture you provided for my apartment, and Momma, thanks for babysitting Keanan and Syd during my writing spurts. I would also like to acknowledge the prayers and support of my spiritual community -- Carol and Eddie Watson, Melissa Thomas, Teretha Kelly, Ronald and Doris Poe, Darrell and Lynette Farmer, Michael and Mary Payne, and my classmates at Pilgrim: Jerald, Kim, and Camille Gardner, my husband, Keith, Wanda Parker, Redo Reed, Carol Jackson, Brenda Matthews, and Gina Lewis.

Special thanks to organizations that provided mentoring and financial support: Southern Regional Education Board, The Leymer Educational Trust Fund, Arkansas' Federation of Business and Professional Women, The National Council of Teachers of English Cultivating New Voices, Peabody College, and Vanderbilt University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study had its origins in my experiences as an African American Language speaker, as a language arts classroom teacher, and as a first-year college composition instructor. Prior to my study of African American Language as a systematic, rule-based language, I did not view it as such since I had no basis on which to view it as a language. Instead, I viewed African American Language as an informal way of speaking, a slang, an inferior way of communicating. I imagine that many educators, including African American educators, hold similar views. What is problematic is that such views can have negative consequences for African American Language speakers' educational experiences, social and cultural identities, and academic achievement. Thus, just as I have learned as a result of my study, it is increasingly important that educators challenge themselves to rethink their negative notions about African American Language and the potential it has to (a) support the social and cultural identities of some African American students, and (b) serve as a cultural resource in educating many African American Language student speakers.

The purpose of the dissertation research is to study the lived experiences of African American Language speakers in class environments and examine the relationship of African American Language to the social and cultural identities and academic achievement of students in educational context. Using sociolinguistic ethnography as a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach, I explore the ways in which

academic performance and identity are shaped by the use of African American Language in classroom settings. More specifically, the goal of this dissertation study is to explore the relationships among classroom interactions, curricula and instructional factors, the oral and written use of African American Language, social and cultural identities, and academic achievement of students in an eighth-grade Language Arts classroom.

Research Problem

Many African American students speak a variation of English called African American Language, also known as Black English, Black English Vernacular, African American English, Ebonics, or African American Vernacular English. As discussed in the review of research (Chapter II), some research suggests that teachers and students associate the use of African American Language with inferior intellectual and academic ability (despite evidence that suggests such is not the case). Nevertheless, there are few studies (and no recent studies or long-term observational studies at the middle school level) that actually examine the use of African American Language in classrooms and the consequences of such use for academic achievement. It has been presumed by Smitherman (1981, 2000), Rickford (1999), Labov (1995), and Gadsden & Wagner (1995) that the use of African American Language creates lower expectations among teachers and that it is the teachers' lower expectations that create academic difficulties for students. Another assumption by Farr (1981, 1985), Ball (1995, 1999), Troutman (1997), and Cook-Gumperz (1993) has been that the use of African American Language in written composition results in teachers misevaluating student written language ability. However, to date there is no research that provides a careful documentation or grounded

description of how the use of African American Language in middle school classrooms relates to the academic achievement of students, the responses of teachers and other students to such use, or how and what aspects of African American Language appear in students' written work or the responses of teachers to such uses in written work. Similarly, there have been no examinations of the use of African American Language in classrooms over time so that changes in the use and response to African American Language can be described. A search[1] on the ERIC, ProQuest, and Education Abstracts databases covering an unlimited time span yielded no research on the use of African American Language in middle school language arts environments.

Theoretical Frame

This dissertation study uses sociolinguistic ethnography (Gumperz, 1982a; Hymes, 1974) as a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach. Evolving out of a need to fill a gap between the fields of linguistics and anthropology, sociolinguistic ethnography attempts to capture the actual use of speech and "the personal choices of language uses" (Giglioli, 1972, p. 7) of members of a linguistic community. Methodologically, sociolinguistic ethnography attempts to capture culture through the use of language. That is, sociolinguistic ethnography attempts to provide a description of the cultural behavior of language use. However, providing that description of the use of language also means viewing the use of language in different social environments. Capturing the use of languageand the social consequences of such useis one of the

[1] Combined searches on studies in African American Language in schools utilized the following keywords: (a) African American Language, African American English, African American English, Ebonics, Black English or Ebonics; (b) African American identity or Black identity; (c) ethnographic or qualitative; (d) English language; (e) teaching or education; (f) academic achievement or academic success; and (g) middle school

research agendas of sociolinguistic research. Since the foundational writings of Gumperz (1982a) and Hymes (1974), there have been a series of theoretical discussions of sociolinguistic ethnography in general (e.g., J. Green & Wallat, 1981; Zaharlick & Green, 1991) and of the use of sociolinguistic ethnography in the study of classrooms (e.g., Bloome, 1989; Carter, 2001), and there has been a corpus of studies that have integrated sociolinguistic ethnography with discourse analysis, literary theory, cultural studies, and the New Literacy Studies (e.g., Carter, 2001, 2006; Foster, 1989, 1992; Moss, 1994, 2001; Street, 1993). This study builds on this tradition of integrative studies grounded in sociolinguistic ethnography, most closely following the theoretical and methodological framework outlined in Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris (2005) combined with sociolinguistic studies of African American Language (e.g., Baugh, 1999, 2000; Champion, 1998, 2000; Dillard, 1972; Farr, 1981; Fasold, 1999; L. Green, 2002; Labov, 1977; Labov & Harris, 1986; Michaels, 1981; Richardson, 2004; Rickford, 1999, 2000; Smith, 1998; Smitherman, 1977, 1994, 2000; Wolfram, 1991). Hereafter, I use the term *microethnographic* to refer to the theoretical and methodological frame adopted in this study.

In sum, a microethnographic frame and approach provides a way to investigate how African American Language is used in a classroom. More specifically, a microethnographic perspective can make visible how African American Language speakers are positioned in the classroom context, and how they act and interact, the significance of those interactions, and how the use of language helps create the contexts of situated interpretation used by people in interaction.

Research Question

Given the limited research on the experiences of African American Language student speakers, particularly in middle school classroom environments, the research examines the following two questions:

1. How, when, and where do African American students use African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms?

2. What social and academic consequences does the use of African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms have?

The two research questions are worded as if the research is seeking generalized knowledge. However, that is not the intent of the study. Rather, it is the intent of the study to generate grounded theoretical constructs about how, when, and where African American students use African American Language and about the social and academic consequences of such use. Future studies can build on the grounded theoretical constructs generated in this study in order to address questions about generalized patterns.

The two research questions above are divided into a series of more focused questions that, as shown below, are organized into three groups: (a) questions about the use of African American Language in spoken mode, (b) questions about the use of African American Language in written mode, and (c) questions about the use of African American Language across spoken and written modes. Questions about the use of African American Language in spoken mode are:

1. What features of African American Language in spoken mode are used in which classroom situations?

2. What influence does the formal curriculum have on students' use of African American Language in spoken mode and on how teachers respond to its use?

3. How do students' use of African American Language in spoken mode impact students' social identities?

4. How does students' use of African American Language in spoken mode influence their academic achievement in the classroom?

Questions about the use of African American Language in written mode are:

1. What features of African American Language in written mode are used in which classroom situations?

2. What influence does the formal curriculum have on students' use of African American Language in written mode and on how teachers respond to its use?

3. How do students' use of African American Language in written mode impact students' social/cultural identities?

4. How does students' use of African American Language in written mode influence their academic achievement in the classroom?

Questions about the use of African American Language across spoken and written modes are:

1. What relationship exists between the features of African American Language used in spoken mode and those used in written mode across classroom situations?

2. What attitudes do students hold about their use of African American Language across classroom and non-classroom situations?

3. What attitudes do teachers hold about their students' use of African American Language across classroom and non-classroom situations?

4. What factors external to the classroom influence the use of African American Language within the classroom?

As noted earlier, the goal of this research is to seek "grounded hypotheses" also known as "grounded theoretical constructs," which seek to develop theories "grounded in empirical data of cultural description" (Spradley, 1980, p. 15), a goal consistent with ethnographic research. The subquestions focus on the documentation of the changes in the use of African American Language over time to explore changes in societal views, the relation of African American Language's use to participants from varying social and economic background, regional and geographic locations, as well as across gender and generational lines. With regard to African American Language student speakers in classroom environments, using such an approach provides a descriptive model that shows how the uses of African American Language are related to achievement and social identity construction, such that there is identification of mediating factors (e.g., attitudes, situational factors, curriculum, teacher response) as well as *in situ* definitions of African American Language and achievement, and social identity.

Significance of the Study

Although there is a great deal of research on African American Language (see the recent bibliography by Rickford, Sweetland, & Rickford, 2004), there is little research that documents how African American Language speakers are positioned in classroom situations with regard to their academic achievement and social and cultural identities. It has been suggested that African American Language speakers might be positioned negatively in various ways in the classroom context. However, there has been no

documentation that focuses on both the spoken and written uses of African American Language tracked over time in a middle or high school classroom situation. This study begins to fill in that gap in the research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historically, some African American students have experienced difficulties with traditional classroom environments because of their communicative practices (Baugh, 1999, 2000; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Foster, 1992; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981, 2000). In as much as Standard English has been and is the dominant language widely accepted in educational contexts and greater society, and the communicative practices of some African American students have been and are different from those associated with Standard English, the communicative practices of some African American students have not been accepted in many traditional classroom environments (e.g., Foster, 1992; Heath, 1983). The difficulties that some African American students have experienced because of their communicative practices are also associated with the official and manifest policy of "Standard English Only" (i.e., English Only) as it marginalizes the use of other language varieties (Fairclough, 2001; Lippi-Green, 1997; Street, 1995), particularly in classroom settings (Baugh, 1999, 2000; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981, 2000). Students who are not Standard English speakers not only experience difficulties but also are often treated unjustly (Smitherman, 1981, 2000).

While over 30 years of linguistic and sociolinguistic research have shown the rule-governed system of communication distinct to approximately 85% of the African American population (Baugh, 2000; Dillard, 1972; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1977), dominant society and even members of the African American community do not

acknowledge African American Language as a valid form of communication (Lippi-Green, 1997). Rather, many regard African American Language as a broken form of English. Nevertheless, educational organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) adopted the language resolution, "Students' Right to Their Own Language," in efforts to dispel the negative stereotype attributed to the use of nonstandard communicative practices of students. In spite of these efforts, however, Labov (1995) points out that many teachers still have "no systematic knowledge of the nonstandard forms which oppose and contradict Standard English" (p. 3). Because of this lack of knowledge within the teaching community, African American students who choose not to speak Standard English or who are more apt to use African American communicative practices are often penalized and labeled as unintelligent (Baugh, 1999; Labov, 1972, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981). Further, some African American students who utilize African American Language in classroom environments are labeled as Limited English Proficient (LEP) students or placed in remediation classes (Smitherman, 1981, 2000). These labels have consequences because not only are students limited in the ways that they can engage in learning, but they are also limited in who they can become in educational environments.

Research has shown that members of a social community create ways of acting, speaking, and being which help them to make sense of their world through the use of language (Gee, 1996; Gumperz, 1982b; Purcell-Gates, 1993). Whereas language reflects one's social and cultural identity (Gee, 1996; Gumperz, 1982b; Ochs, 1993), for some African American students adopting the language of the schools reflects a social and/or

cultural identity oppositional to that of their community (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Thus, for some African Americans, the use of African American Language represents membership in and affinity with some African American communities (Balester, 1992; Labov, 1977). While the use of African American Language is a primary means of communication in many African American communities, nevertheless, its use can present challenges for some African American students in some educational contexts. Detrimental to some African American students' academic achievement are negative attitudes of educators who seek to rid students of their home language practices by consistent correction through the use of curricula and textbooks that only promote Standard English.

Disagreement exists among linguists regarding the history and evolution of African American Language. Whereas some linguists regard African American Language as a derivation of English and thus, a dialect of English, others view it as a language, arguing the retention of an African structure. Nevertheless, a consensus within the community of linguists supports the idea of African American Language as a sophisticated, rule-governed system of communication utilized by many African Americans.

This chapter reviews literature on African American Language, African American identity, and African American educational experiences. As a means to understand some of the complexities surrounding the use of African American Language, I have organized this chapter in three major sections. The first section, entitled "Complexities of African American Language," addresses arguments within the field of linguistics pertaining to the history, evolution, and naming of the system of communication utilized by many African

American people. I also attempt to reflect on some of the societal perceptions across many American communities that surround the use of this communication system.

As a follow up to the historical review of section one, the second section, "Distinct Features of African American Language," also examines linguistic research as a means to review some of the distinct features or qualities of African American Language. Both sections one and two begin to lay a foundation that legitimizes African American Language as a communication system, but also discuss some of the societal perceptions and challenges that African American Language speakers might encounter, which is important in terms of their academic achievement (Smitherman, 1981). The goal of section three, "African Americans, Education, and Academic Achievement," is to situate the experiences of African American Language student speakers in an educational context to better understand how their use of African American Language informs their social and cultural identities and academic achievement. I have used sections one, two, and three of this chapter to provide research to help understand the historical context of African American Language as a communication system as well as articulate some of the complexities surrounding African American Language speakers' social and cultural identities and academic achievement in educational settings.

Complexities of the Use of African American Language

Linguists (e.g., Baugh, 2000; Dillard, 1972; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1977) note that over 80% to 90% of African Americans use a discourse style that throughout the last 50 years has been variously referred to as Nonstandard Negro English (NNE), Black Dialect, Black English (BE), Black English Vernacular (BEV), African American

English (AAE), Ebonics, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), or African American Language (AAL). While all of these labels refer to a separate system of communication spoken to some extent by almost all African Americans, though mostly by the working class (L. Green, 2002), the use of the language varies according to age, social class, gender, and regional differences.

Two different perspectives by linguists frame the argument defining the communicative practices of African Americans: (a) the communicative practices of African Americans are a dialect of English, or (b) the communicative practices of African Americans are a separate language. In this section, I examine both the dialect and language arguments in this dissertation research as a means to (a) provide a more holistic view of the features of the communicative practices of African Americans, and (b) examine some of the societal perceptions surrounding the use of African American Language across American communities. Examining societal perceptions are important given that they tend to influence policies, specifically educational policies as they relate to the educational experiences of African American students.

Dialect Perspective

Proponents of the dialect perspective argue that the communicative practice of African Americans is a language variation of English since grammatical, lexical, and phonological features are shared with other varieties of English. While a substantial body of research exists examining the origin of the communicative practices of African Americans, several researchers utilize language diffusion arguments to substantiate the claim of an English foundation. One such view–known as the "Eurocentric" or

"dialectologist" view (cf. L. Green, 2002; Rickford, 1999)–argues that features purported to be distinct to African American speakers were most likely acquired as a direct result of contact with people of European descent. Several linguists (C.-J. N. Bailey, 1982; Farrison, 1970; Feagin, 1979; Poplack, 2000; Williamson, 1970) who support the Eurocentric and/or dialectologist view argue that features such as the habitual *be*, double modals[2], multiple negations, and the omission of final consonants, among other features, could be traced backed to earlier stages and/or other varieties of English and other European languages.

By contrast, while several linguists believe that the communicative practices of African Americans have some European/English influence, they also validate the influence of West African languages. Adopting the Creolist view[3], several linguists (Dillard, 1972; L. Green, 2002; Labov, 1977; Mufwene, 2000; Rickford, 1999; Wolfram, 1991) argue that enslaved Africans created a hybrid form of communication that included aspects of English and "African ingredients" (Wood, 1974, pp. 174-175). This mixed variety of English, strongly influenced by the native languages of their African ancestors, has undergone a process of pidginization and creolization and evolved into a distinct communicating system.

While there are various disputes among linguists who support the dialect perspective, many view dialects differently. As McWhorter (2000) notes, referring to the language of African Americans as a dialect or variation of English does not suggest it is a

[2] Labov (1977) notes double modals include terms such as *might could*.

[3] While there are differences in Mufwene's (2000) and Winford's (1997, 1998) arguments (refer to L. Green, 2002, for an extended discussion), for the purposes of this paper, both perspectives are positioned with the Creolist view due to the overlap in their arguments. Both Mufwene (2000) and Winford (1997, 1998) support the stance that African American Language developed as a hybrid language with influences from West Africa and English.

degradation of English since most languages exist in a variety of dialects that are comparable. Specifically as it relates to the communicative practices of African Americans, some linguists see the language of African Americans as a dialect comparable to any other dialect of English, including Standard English. Nevertheless, researchers (e.g., Fairclough, 2001; Fishman, 1980; among others) and African American scholars (e.g., Breitman, 1965; Smitherman, 2000) note that such views do not encompass the social positioning of Africans and African Americans in society. Thus, the power relations embedded in the use of African American Language are often neglected in these views postulating the evolution and history of African American Language. In other words, to not acknowledge the language of African Americans as a language is equivalent to not acknowledging African American people as an equal and legitimate racial group in the United States.

Language Perspective

Emphasizing the African structure of African American Language while de-emphasizing English similarities, language proponents (Asante, 1991; DeBose & Faraclas, 1993; Fasold, 1999; Holloway, 1991; Smith, 1998; Smitherman, 1977, 1981, 1985, 1994, 2000; R. Williams, 1997) argue that while the communicative practices of African Americans appear to resemble English, the differences are subtle and unnoticeable to hearers unfamiliar with African American Language and African languages. Referred to as the Afrocentrist perspective (cf. Asante, 1998; L. Green, 2002; Rickford, 1999) such language proponents argue the importance of understanding

African history, culture, and language in order to identify the distinct features of African American Language and its connectivity to African languages.

Smith (1998) and Holloway (1991) note that although the communicative practices of enslaved Africans did go through a hybridization process, nevertheless the foundation of the Niger-Congo African languages has been a dominant feature. Thus, the communicative practices of African Americans have a "base" derived from Niger-Congo African languages. For example, while dialect proponents argue that features such as the consonant cluster reduction proves the relation of the communicative practices of African Americans to other varieties of English and European languages, language proponents use the same feature as proof to verify the relation of African American Language to West African languages. Smith (1998) writes:

> Scholars who view African American speech as a dialect of English describe the absent final consonant clusters as being "lost," "reduced," "weakened," "simplified," "deleted," or "omitted" consonant phoneme. But viewed as an African Language System that has adopted European words, African American speech is described by Africologists as having retained the canonical form, or shape, of the syllable structure of the Niger-Congo languages. Thus, in Ebonics homogenous consonant clusters tend not to occur. This is not because the final phoneme has been "lost," "reduced," "weakened," "simplified," "deleted," or "omitted," but because *they never existed in the first place*. . . English words such as *west*, *best*, *test*, *last*, and *fast* become *wes*, *bes*, *tes*, *las* and *fas*; the words *land*, *band*, *sand*, and *hand*, become *lan*, *ban*, *san* and *han*; the words *left*, *lift*, *drift* and *swift* become *lef, lif, drif* and *swif* and so forth. (p. 56)

Isolation theories are also argued to perpetuate the evolution of African American Language. For example, consider the case of the Gullah dialect:

> Gullah is defined as a creolized form of English revealing survivals from many of the African languages spoken by the slaves who were brought to South Carolina and Georgia during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. These survivals are most numerous in the vocabulary of the dialect can be observed also in its sounds, syntax, morphology, and intonation; and there are many striking similarities between Gullah and the African languages in the methods used to form words. (Turner, 1949, p. xiii)

Turner (1949) argues that enslaved Africans residing on these coastal areas were able to retain significant features of their African dialect in the creolization of the language that developed. Little or no acquaintance with the English language, for various reasons, as well as "contact with the speech of native Africans who were coming direct from Africa and sharing with the older Gullahs in isolation" (Turner, 1949, p. 5) created and contributed to an isolated environment that was conducive to the maintenance of the various African language elements.

Politicians and sociologists, as well, have contributed to the discussion of the social isolation theory (Lemann, 1992; Wilson, 1980). Politician Moynihan (1969) and sociologists such as Wilson (1980) and Lemann (1992) have discussed how the poverty of many African American communities, along with the severe isolation from mainstream society and middle class African Americans, contribute to the reproduction of "deficit" language practices in inner city and other isolated environments. While some linguists do not view this reproduction of language as deficient, several view this language phenomenon as an expansion of African American Language. Commonly referred to as the divergence theory, linguists (Bailey & Maynor, 1989; Labov, 1995; Spears, 1982) have begun to examine how the language of African Americans has "chart[ed] a separate course of development" (Smitherman, 2000, p. 165) from Standard English, opposite to earlier views posited by linguists (e.g., Ash & Myhill, 1986; Labov & Harris, 1986; Vaughn-Cooke, 1987) who believed that at least some features of African American Language were taking on the structure of Standard English, commonly referred to as the convergence theory.

Similar to the process that generated the Gullah dialect spoken by residents of the islands off the coast of South Carolina, isolation is argued to perpetuate the formation of distinct language practices. However, Zeigler and Osinubi (2002) argue that the maintenance of African American Language receives so much resistance because it shows or proves that African Americans have not assimilated into American culture, one of the goals of the Civil Rights and Affirmative Action movements. Thus, the use of African American Language validates the separate stance of the African American community, particularly among the lower and working classes and primarily due to past social injustices imposed upon the African American community.

African American Language and Social Identity

According to Ochs (1993), acts and stances are recognized goals, behaviors, and point of views that are socially constructed by a community. These acts and stances reflect the values and beliefs of the particular group and further become the norm when individual members pass on the acts and stances of the group to future generations, establishing what Ochs (1993) refers to as a social identity. For an individual to reflect a group's social identity, he/she has to adopt/learn/display the group's particular ways of knowing, acting, and behaving through actions. One way the group's identity is revealed is through language. Ochs (1993) argues that an individual verbally performs and displays the group's social acts and stances through linguistic constructions and interactions. Ochs' (1993) argument on language and identity helps support the notion that it is possible that people of African descent created cultural norms that reflect

particular values and beliefs that have come to represent a shared system of communication currently known as African American Language.

Gumperz (1982b) offers a similar explanation for the development of African American Language; he writes:

> [E]thnic identities rely on linguistic symbols to establish speech conventions that are significantly different. These symbols are much more than mere markers of identity. Increasing participation in public affairs leads to the introduction of terminologies and discourse patterns modeled on those of the community at large which come to exist and be alongside more established forms. New communication strategies are created based on the juxtaposition of the two sets of forms which symbolize not only group membership but adherence to a set of values. (p. 6)

Several researchers (e.g., Rickford, 1999; Smith, 1998; Smitherman, 1971; Turner, 1949) discuss how enslaved Africans took elements of English words to create a shared system of communication. As Gumperz (1982b) notes, although this system of communication was created alongside the English of White slaveholders, significant aspects of the communicative practices of enslaved Africans came to take on significantly different meaning. As Fairclough (2001) writes: "Linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are determined socially and have social effects" (p. 19).

Historians note how songs by enslaved Africans, which have been historically interpreted as an indication of the contentment of their enslavement, were actually a means for enslaved Africans to communicate beyond the knowledge of White slaveowners. Thus, in their argument validating the communicative practices of African Americans as a language, language proponents Smith (1998) and Asante (1991) emphasize that the communicative practices of African Americans have different and significant meaning but also, as Gumperz (1982b), Fairclough (2001), and Ochs (1993)

note, a different purpose. One could argue that as enslaved Africans attempted to communicate beyond the knowledge of their white oppressors, different cultural acts and stances through rhetorical features, grammatical, lexical, and phonological uses of their communicative practices–a different language–developed out of a need to survive.

In exploring the research examining the language practices of African Americans, one could justify labeling the communicative practices of African Americans as a language or as a dialect of English. With respect to the dialect perspective, much linguistic research has documented that similar features do exist between other varieties of English and African American Language. As Afrocentric scholars (e.g., Asante, 1991; DeBose & Faraclas, 1993; Smith, 1998) note, English words are used to support the structural foundation of African American Language. However, with respect to the language perspective, the communicative practices of African Americans should also be deemed a language since other varieties of English with similar cognates have also achieved statuses as languages (cf. Zeigler & Osinubi, 2002). However, citing Weinreich (1931), as Smitherman (1981) notes, "The difference between a language and a dialect is who's got the army" (p. 46). In other words, "Since African Americans have no armies or navies, their language cannot be distinct in any positive sense" (Zeigler & Osinubi, 2002, p. 590). Thus, the power to determine whether the communicative practices of African Americans is considered a language lies in the hands of dominant society.

My understanding of the communicative practices of African Americans has led me to position it as a language, and therefore support arguments which suggest it has not achieved such status due to political reasoning and the social positioning of African Americans and Africans abroad. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this dissertation,

examining both arguments for the features of the communicative practices of African Americans will provide a more holistic view of the language of African Americans. Thus, the following section will highlight several of the less recognized features of African American Language.

Distinct Features of African American Language

Smitherman (1977, 1994) and Major (1994) document several distinct lexical features of African American Language, which also appeared in a pilot study I conducted examining the language practices of African American Language speakers in two developmental college courses. As noted in the pilot study (see Chapter III), students were positioned negatively for utilizing certain features of African American Language. It is important to recognize for which specific features or combination of features of African American Language students were labeled negatively and regarded as unintelligent in the opinion of some.

Lexical Features of African American Language

The lexical properties of African American Language refer to its vocabulary and the semantic meanings of the vocabulary. As L. Green (2002) notes, "Information about words and phrases in the AAE [African American English] lexicon is stored in the brains or mental dictionaries of African American speakers" (p. 19). While both dialect and language proponents agree that African American Language shares lexical properties with other varieties of English, differences in semantics seem to be one of the factors that contributes to the uniqueness of the language.

Smitherman (1994) and Major (1994) document some of the distinct lexical features characteristic of African American speakers. Such lexical features include terms that sound the same as words in the American English lexicon but have different meanings (L. Green, 2002). For example, the word "*kitchens*" is used by African Americans in the same way that it is used by other speakers but it is also used uniquely by African Americans to refer to the hair at the nape of the neck. Similarly, the word "*mannish*" is defined by American English as "resembling or suggesting a man rather than a woman" (L. Green, 2002, p. 21); however, in African American Language, the word "*mannish*" also refers to "boys and girls who are seen as behaving inappropriately for their young ages . . . [or] a boy who is particularly advanced or independent for his age" (L. Green, 2002, p. 21).

Syntactic Features of African American Language

The syntactic properties of African American Language are perhaps more recognizable features and often, according to linguists (L. Green, 2002; Smitherman, 1977), the topic of jokes and derogatory remarks. The syntactic features of African American Language include the grammar or the actual way words are put together to form sentences. Syntactic features of African American Language are argued as sharing similarities with features of other varieties of English; yet, differences in the use of the syntactic features of African American Language have been the source of much research. One such example involves the use of what is commonly referred to as the habitual or aspectual "*be*," which is frequently used systematically by African American Language speakers to signal recurring events. Research has shown that other varieties of English,

namely Hiberno English and the English among speakers in South Carolina, also use forms of "*be*" to express habitual action. However, L. Green (2002) and Labov (1977) note that there are differences in its use. Labov (1977) writes:

> Whereas the habitual invariant *be* in "He always *be* doing that" is found among some white speakers, it is much rarer to find recognition and understanding of "*bee'*" in "I *been* know your name," meaning "I have known for a long time and still do." (pp. 53-55)

Other differences in the syntactic properties of African American Language can be observed in examining the tense marking of the verb system. L. Green (2002) and Smitherman (1977) discuss the differences in the conjugation and use of stress with verbs among African American Language speakers. For example, some of the differences in African American Language from Standard English include:

1. The same verb form may be used with both singular and plural subjects (L. Green, 2002; Smitherman, 1977). Consider the verb *look* in the following examples: (a) He *look* happy. (For Standard English: He *looks* happy.); and (b) They *look* happy. For African American Language speakers, the verb is not marked for person. Thus, the verb *look* remains the same both for the singular subject, "He," and also for the plural subject, "They." The same verb form, as Smitherman (1977) notes, "serves for all subjects, whether singular or plural" (p. 26).

2. No observable distinction between the simple past and the present perfect verb forms (L. Green, 2002, p. 39). L. Green (2002) notes that in Standard English, although the past and present perfect verb forms are also identical, some verb forms take on the *en* ending in the present perfect verb tense. With African American Language, the verb forms for the simple past and present perfect are the same.

3. Differences in the use of marking future tense: "*gonna*" and "*gon*" often used.

4. Auxiliary verbs can appear in a reduced, contracted or zero form. The following examples, taken from Green's (2002) discussion, will be used to illustrate: (a) You should'**a** made your mind up before I called you ("should 'a" reduced to the standard English "should have"); (b) They walking too fast (for Standard English: "They are walking too fast."); and (c) "I'ma eat" or "I'm gon eat" (for the future tense).

Other differences in the verb system can be seen through the use of stress. For example, L. Green (2002) discusses how the use of *bin* and *BIN* (capitalized version indicates stress),[4] used by African American Language speakers to express that an event began a long time ago and continues (L. Green, 2002, p. 55), takes on entirely different meaning when a verb form is stressed. Thus, the verb in the sentence "She ***bin*** had him all day" differs from the verb in "She ***BIN*** running" due to the use of stress on the verb forms. As L. Green (2002) notes, the former sentence (the uncapitalized version of *bin*) takes on the meaning "She has had him all day," while the later sentence (the capitalized version of *BIN*) means "She has been running for a long time." Different stress patterns produce different meanings for verbs for African American Language speakers.

Phonological Features of African American Language

Phonological differences of African American Language, as Labov (1977) notes, are much more unnoticed by casual listeners but can indicate systematic differences between languages. Referring to the rules for pronouncing the words of a language (Farr & Daniels, 1986), phonological differences in African American Language can produce

[4] Chapter 2 of L. Green (2002) provides a detailed description of the verbal marker *BIN*. While Green notes that there is one *BIN*, she argues that there are three possible meanings for its use–*BIN* (stat), *BIN* (hab), and *BIN* (comp)–depending on the type of predicate with which *BIN* occurs. Refer to pp. 55 - 60 for further discussion.

entirely different meanings for African American Language speakers. Labov's (1977) scholarship examining the structural differences of African American Language[5] to African American students' reading achievement distinguishes significant phonological differences. One example highlighted includes the higher occurrence of the deletion of /r/ by African American Language speakers. Referred to as "r-lessness," Labov (1977, 1995) notes in pronunciation that "the *r* of spelling is not pronounced as a consonant before other consonants or at the ends of words" (p. 13). Thus, for most African American Language speakers, the /r/ is not pronounced in words such as *fou**r***, *th**r**ow*, *th**r**oat*, and intervocally[6] in words such as *Ca**r**ol* and *inte**r**esting*. A similar occurrence takes place with the pronunciation of the letter /l/. Labov (1977) notes the letter /l/ "disappears entirely" and is "much more marked among the black speakers interviewed" (pp. 14-15). As a result, some African American Language speakers will have a tendency to pronounce words such as *to**ll*** as *toe* and *a**ll*** as *awe*.

Other phonological differences include the simplification of consonant clusters where cluster consonants in words, primarily those which end in /t/, /d/, /s/ or /z/, are reduced to single consonants. Thus, the cluster /st/ in the word *pa**st*** is simplified to /s/ and is pronounced as *pa**ss***.

Rhetorical Features of African American Language

The rhetorical features of African American Language are by far the least recognized aspect of African American Language since, as Smitherman (1985) notes, some of the distinct features "do not so readily lend themselves to concrete

[5] Labov (1977) refers to the speech of African Americans as Black English Vernacular.

[6] Intervocalic pronunciations refer to sounds pronounced in the middle of words.

documentation" (p. 553). Many prominent African Americans who have either criticized African American Language or failed to acknowledge the existence of a separate Black system of communication have been cited using rhetorical features of African American Language. For example, Lippi-Green (1997) notes how prominent African Americans Oprah Winfrey and Jesse Jackson frequently (and perhaps unknowingly) utilize rhetorical features in their public conversations. In addition, Smitherman (2000) notes how Clarence Thomas, an African American Supreme Court judge who has been criticized for his lack of affiliation with African Americans, used rhetorical features of African American Language to establish solidarity.

Rhetorical features of African American Language include speech rhythms, voice inflections, tonal patterns and even the use of mannerisms. Tannen (1989) notes that the use of rhythm is a communication strategy that cultivates audience participation. However, Smitherman (1977), Herskovits (1941), and Asante (1998) argue that the use of rhythm in the language of African Americans has African origins and is believed to be important in capturing the sense and meaning of words, stemming from the African cultural belief that the power of the word, the concept of Nommo, was "necessary to actualize life and give man mastery over things" (Smitherman, 1977, p. 78).

Several researchers argue that some of the rhetorical strategies utilized by the oral traditions of African and enslaved Africans (Dorsey-Gaines & Garnett, 1996; Kochman, 1972; Smitherman, 1977; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) are still in use in the contemporary discourse practices of many African Americans and can be particularly seen among African American ministers, namely ministers in some African American

Baptist Churches. Examples of rhetorical features of African American Language include the following:

1. *Intonational contouring* refers to the specific use of stress and pitch in pronouncing words in the Black style. Some Black ministers typically employ this feature when the pronunciation of important words in sermons are deliberately halted, slowed, or exaggerated. For example, Smitherman (1977) notes that words such as "police" and "God" would be pronounced as "PO-lice" as "Godt!", respectively, by Black ministers employing intonational contouring.

2. *Call and response*, defined as "spontaneous verbal and nonverbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements (calls) are punctuated by expressions (responses) from the listener" (Smitherman, 1977, p. 104), is argued to have evolved from African drum ceremonies (Asante, 1991; Holt, 1972), and heavily characterized by the use of rhythm which Tannen (1989) argues is a communication strategy that cultivates audience participation. The call and response sequence is still utilized in the sermons of many African American ministers.

3. *Repetition* is an additional linguistic feature typically employed in the Black church discourse practices. Tannen (1989) discusses several functions of repetition in discourse, namely that it is a poetic aspect of language that is especially frequent in "highly formal or ritualized discourse" (p. 46), and it plays a key role in creating coherence and interpersonal involvement in conversation. Repetition of key words and phrases is often used for emphasis, effect and also as a cohesive device. While other cultures, according to Tannen (1989), use "a lot of repetition," African American

Language speakers make use of repetition in "characteristic ways" (p. 79). Foster (1989) refers to a similar aspect of repetition as "cross-speaker anaphora" (p. 13).

Researchers (e.g., Labov, 1977; Rickford, 1995; Smitherman, 1977) have documented the distinct structural aspects of the communicative practices of African American speakers in efforts to address some of the educational problems experienced by such speakers. Thus, the next section will highlight some of the difficulties experienced by African American Language speakers and the implications for student achievement in many traditional American educational environments.

African Americans, Education, and Academic Achievement

Proponents of education argue that education is a tool that could liberate the oppressed from social, civil, and economic stagnation and establish them as productive citizens and important contributors to society. Black scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois (1903), Booker T. Washington (1901), Mary McLeod Bethune (Holt, 1964), Nelson Mandela (1994), and Malcolm X (Breitman, 1965), among other scholars, advocate education as a tool of deliverance, assuming it would liberate the Black race from repressive socioeconomic conditions, and develop inherent leadership abilities to fight against oppression and social injustices. Similarly, in South Africa Nelson Mandela also advocated education to promote awareness and combat socioeconomic conditions. Mandela (1994) writes:

> Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another. (p. 166)

Education continues to be viewed by many as a way to transform or change one's social and economic circumstances and also a means to promote awareness of the societal systems that have maintained the oppressive conditions of Blacks. As early as 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois believed that education must not simply teach work; it must teach life (Du Bois, 1986b, p. 420). His scholarship and educational philosophy for the Negro race[7] have been the foundation of many scholarly debates concerning the educational needs of Blacks. In an attempt to establish a sense of hope within the Negro community during a volatile period of oppression, Du Bois proposed an educational agenda that would rescue the Negro from social, civil, and economic stagnation and establish them as productive citizens and important contributors to American society. Du Bois' educational philosophy heralds the transformational effects of education.

However, Du Bois, like many other Black scholars, recognized the racial inequalities and consequences inherent in an educational system saturated with White ideology. Some contemporary scholars have suggested that educational systems that serve Blacks continue the cycle of oppression by teaching the Black man of his own inferiority (e.g., Biko, 1979; Woodson, 1933).

More generally, researchers have noted how educational systems that primarily serve African American children in the United States fail to acknowledge and validate African American culture. Beavers (1995) notes how educational systems fail to "first deliver equitable educational resources, and second, to find ways to validate cultural differences even as it enables students to straddle the necessities of different social arenas" (p. 14). Nevertheless, when considering the current educational systems and their

[7] Refer to Aptheker (1973) for a discussion of Du Bois' educational philosophy.

impact on African American identity and academic achievement, it is important to contextualize the African American experience in education.

When speaking about literacy in African American communities, Qualls (2001) notes that many African Americans view literacy "as a requisite for human existence and successful survival" and that it is "powerful- it unifies, separates, [and] liberates" (p. 3). Her notion of literacy provides an alternative lens beyond reading, writing and arithmetic that helps to explore some of the social and cultural challenges that African American Language speakers experience in an educational context. Her critique continues to provide an alternative lens to explore the African American experience in an educational context. Like Woodson (1933) and Du Bois (1986b), Qualls (2001) argued that education for some is not always liberating but rather oppressive.

Of equal importance, public educational systems that developed for African Americans in the South during the 20th century further complicated the notion of education for African Americans and other nonmainstream cultures. Anderson (1995) and Lemann (1992) both document how "universal literacy was never favored by southern whites who believed that illiteracy among the slaves and free persons of color was essential to the well-being of society" (Anderson, 1995, p. 30).

> The dominant white South mounted a campaign of massive resistance to the educational progress of black southerners. As with slavery when literate black persons were presumed to be discontented laborers or worse, potential trouble makers, southern whites regarded educated African Americans as a threat to the region's social order. (Anderson, 1995, p. 32)

Taken together, education for African Americans served to socialize them to become productive members of society with functional literacy skills but also served to reinforce their intellectual and racial inferiority. While Anderson (1995) notes that Civil Rights

legislation has had some effect on this oppressive view of education, nevertheless, many aspects of this historical educational foundation still influences current educational systems. For example, many educational systems that serve predominantly students of color populations continue to receive inadequate and inequitable educational resources. Thus, current systems of education are even more problematic for people of color since they still continue to value Eurocentric culture while subtly devaluing other cultures. Further, language is another way to promote European culture in educational systems. In this regard, African Americans are taught that in order to achieve success in greater society, they must eliminate their cultural ways of speaking, knowing, and being through persistent correction and the assimilation of dominant cultural norms established through society's institutions.

In 1996, as a means to address inequalities associated with the communicative practices of African American students, the Oakland School Board in California approved a "Black Language" resolution that advocated the use of Ebonics as an instructional device to help African American Language speaking students acquire the literacy practices of the schools (Perry & Delpit, 1998; Rickford, 1999). Rickford (1999) writes, "The point [of the Oakland School Board's proposal] was not to teach Ebonics as a distinct language but to use it as a tool to increase mastery of Standard English among Ebonic speakers" (p. 328). This decision to utilize the native language of some African American students suggests that they would be given an instructional tool to comprehend and make their education more relevant and meaningful as a means to affirm their culture and ways of knowing and being. Nevertheless, public endorsement of African American Language by the Oakland School Board had significant implications. The angry reactions

from the media, politicians, prominent African American scholars and educators (Baugh, 2000; Perry & Delpit, 1998) reflected the idea that Standard English was the only acceptable language to be used to communicate in mainstream society.

The angry response to the Oakland School Board's decision helps to illustrate some of the complexities surrounding African American Language in America's educational systems. Linguistic and sociolinguistic research have provided significant evidence that the use of African American Language by some African American students may be a significant factor that contributes to their academic success (Baugh, 1999, 2000; Labov, 1977, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981, 2000). Research on African American students in schools suggests that speaking African American Language may be an issue in their academic success in schools (Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981).

As Labov (1977, 1995), Rickford (1999), and others note, while extensive linguistic and sociolinguistic research have been carried out examining the distinct features of African American Language to resolve some of the educational problems facing some African American students, little progress has been made primarily due to social and political reasons. Several studies (e.g., Gadsden & Wagner et al., 1995; Labov, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981, 2000) document the detrimental effect of schooling on some African American students' self-confidence, self-esteem, and their pride and solidarity to one's culture.

African American Social and Cultural Identities and Education

One concern of many African American educators and researchers centers on the issue of identity of African American students and the systematic annihilating role of

education. Balester (1992) discusses how some African American students feel they have to use African American Language to show solidarity. Balester (1992) documents an interview with an African American male student who was "frustrated with the fact that to show solidarity with other African Americans and to show black identity he must speak a dialect he looks down upon" (p. 79). Balester (1992) writes:

> Not every person who is BLACK can actually go intellectually and SPEAK with a Standard English that is, really is, the King's English and PROPER and all that, and actually USE the words that constitute proper English. And phrases and all THAT kinda thing. There not that many blacks here who like even a lot of the intellectual ones that I've met like to go to BLACK English as compared to Standard English when communicating with other blacks. And it's HARD. Because I don't always wanna do that. I don't LIKE to at all. But it's just I'm being kinda force fed the idea because I'm mingling with blacks, and . . . if I come off where there's FIFTY people speaking BLACK English and I'm tryna speak STANDARD English, that, you know, is naturally just gonna be a lot of misunderstanding about what I'm tryna do to them and what I'm tryna not to be and I just don't wanna . . . FIGHT it anymore. (original emphases; p. 79)

As the above excerpt notes, some African Americans struggle with the complex issue of identity within the African American community. Many researchers question the notion of an "African American community." Fordham (1996) suggests in her discussion of "fictive kinship" that since African Americans share the same sociohistorical and political existence in America, there is an assumption that the communal relationship that was created as a result of the oppression among enslaved Africans continues to exist within the broader African American community still today. Other African American scholars argue that the communal relationships that resulted out of Black oppression continue to exist in the African American community. Perhaps when thinking about African American identity one might ask how these two paradigms play out for African Americans, particularly African American youth, when a segment of the African American community does not believe that systematic oppression continues to create

communal bonds while another portion of it does. Perhaps, one could argue that it is the case that the African American community is more complex than ever because of these two perspectives. In other words, by what appears to be a widening schism within the African American community, which further problematizes issues of identity and language for African American youth. For example, African Americans who do not believe that a communal bond continues to exist around African American oppression may not completely understand the political and social relations of the communicative practices of African Americans since it was conceived out of–and situated in–Black oppression. Thus, it is possible that if they fail to see the communal bonds in the African American community, it is also possible that they will not fully understand the evolution of a language born out of Black oppression. Of particular importance, African American Language continues to be used by many African Americans, particularly African American youth in music, formal and informal conversations, etc.

The point of discussing this schism is to provide a lens to better understand identity and language among and between African Americans and to make visible at least two perspectives that complicate language and identity for some African Americans. How people speak often determines who they are and who they can become (Gee, 1996). When examining the schism and the issue of language and identity, homogenization is an important construct to be explored.

Du Bois (1973), an earlier African American researcher, expressed similar concerns about homogenization in his article, "Whither Now and Why." He states:

> Are we to assume that we will simply adopt the ideals of Americans and become what they are or want to be and that we will have in this process no ideals of our own? That would mean that we would cease to be Negroes as such and become

> white in action if not completely in color. We should take on the culture of white Americans doing as they do and thinking as they think. (Du Bois, 1973, p. 149)

Du Bois begins to address some of the challenges facing African Americans. The issue of identity and language becomes significant, especially for African American youth, when many of America's schools have Eurocentric curricula that focus on predominately White culture (Woodson, 1933). Some African American students may feel that the social costs and risks of buying into the standard are too costly since they have to "give up" who they are as African Americans in order to be successful in dominant society. Findings from a pilot study examining the use of African American Language emphasized this point and noted that some African American students felt pressured to adopt the cultural stance of the school while rejecting the culture of their home. In the context of a classroom that upholds traditional language views, speaking Standard English for some linguistically and culturally diverse students mean a rejection of one's cultural identity. To not acknowledge the language of African American students as a language is equivalent to not acknowledging who they are and the resources that they bring to the classroom. For some African American students, the use of African American Language is equated to their identity as African Americans (Gumperz, 1982b; Lippi-Green, 1997; Zeigler & Osinubi, 2002). Thus, the use of Standard English, even in classroom environments, may present an uncomfortable or negative identity that conflicts with the students' home culture (Balester, 1992; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

The issue of choosing African and African American identity and language in relation to success is also a common theme in African American and African literature. For example, Mathabane (1986) deals with the issue of language and cultural identity in an autobiography. In *Kaffir Boy*, Mathabane (1986) details the complexities of

maintaining his cultural identity in South Africa's educational system. His decision to adopt the language of the oppressor also had consequences for his family's identity. One example of this is his negotiation of language. Mathabane is constantly forced to negotiate his identity in terms of language because South African's schools only used Tsonga and English languages as media of instruction, whereas Vende was his father's native language. This language negotiation created tension between Mathabane and his father, among his peers and community, as well as internal conflicts. Mathabane, because of his use of the English language and social affiliations, was perceived as one who rejected the cultural identity of his family and community by taking on the values of White society.

Other African American authors chronicle similar types of experiences of being disconnected from their families and heritage. Wade-Gayles (1993), McCall (1994), Cary (1991), Richburg (1998), Steele (1991) and Staples (1994) all, to some degree, deal with the complex issue of African American identity and struggled with the cost of adapting to the culture of mainstream society. A common theme in their arguments dealt with the schism within African American communities that sometimes resulted from the adoption of mainstream cultural values. Thus, some African American members of the lower and/or working classes sometimes view successful upper and middle class African Americans cautiously.

Cary (1991) documents a similar identity issue in lieu of her educational experience integrating a traditionally male, prestigious, New Hampshire boarding school. In examining Cary's (1991) *Black Ice*, acceptance to St. Paul, a traditionally male, prestigious New Hampshire boarding school during her high school years, illuminated a

new existence. Cary discusses the struggles she and other African American students encountered as a result of cultural and socioeconomic differences. For example, adapting to the rigor and culture of an exclusive prep school, negotiating the use of African American Language, as well as countering the low expectations of course instructors were some of the anxieties Cary documented. In addition to negotiating her identity within a predominantly white environment, Cary also addressed a more complex issue of identity. On a return visit to her Philadelphia home community, Cary (1991) writes:

> My new friends and I knew each other's daily routines, but we had no history and no future, I thought, when we all went back to our real lives. But back in real life, Karen and Ruthie and I, once past the memories, had to work hard just to keep talking. At my own house I felt as if I were fighting for a new position in the family order, while Mama pretended not to notice and Dad maybe didn't notice for real. Everywhere I went I felt out of place. The fact was that I had left home in September gleeful and smug. I took it as divine justice that now I felt as if I no longer belonged anywhere. (pp. 98-100)

Cary's experience embodies the schism that exists in the African American community. Success and leadership at St. Paul came at a price for Cary. Prompted by a leadership opportunity, Cary experienced the fear of social rejection from African American peers who assumed this position was received in exchange for her ethnicity. For many African American students, this negative identity tension is a reality. Termed "acting white" by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), African American students who experience academic success at the expense of their "cultural and psycho-social well-being" (p.179) are often ostracized by peers and family members.

Many researchers have argued language is symbolic of one's social and cultural identity, and a vehicle of communication members use to make sense of their world (Gee, 1991; Gumperz, 1982b). Hence, for some African Americans, the use of African American Language represents membership and affinity with other African American

communities. In the context of a classroom that upholds traditional language views, speaking Standard English for some African American students can mean a rejection of their cultural identity. Thus, instead of education being a tool of deliverance, it becomes a tool of alienation.

African American Language and Reading

Labov (1977, 1995) offers insights regarding assumptions many teachers have about all students entering the school system. He notes there is an assumption that every child attends schools with the same ability to understand the spoken Standard English of a classroom teacher. However, when examining the phonological, grammatical, and semantic aspects of African American Language, obvious differences can present serious problems for African American Language speakers. Labov (1977) writes: "Structural conflicts of standard and nonstandard English [interfere] with learning ability stemming from a mismatch of linguistic structures" (p. 6). He notes how phonetic differences usually unidentified by the casual listener may contribute significantly to reading problems and problems of being understood by African American Language speakers. The existence of a large number of homonyms in the speech of African American children, which may differ from those of Standard English, may cause reading and comprehension problems.

For example, recently I completed a reading assignment with my 8-year-old daughter, Sydney, who would be considered an African American Language speaker by the standards several linguists have proposed. In this reading assignment, there was a sentence that referred to the term "scrub" and required Sydney to use context clues to

determine the meaning of words within the paragraph. However, Sydney had difficulty interpreting the meaning of the sentence in which the word occurred in the paragraph due to the different meanings of the term "scrub" she had adopted from home. For Sydney, the term "scrub" meant a no-good male, based on its usage in a popular song. The point that Labov (1977, 1995) makes is that such differences can have dire consequences on the academic achievement of some African American children, particularly when teachers are "inflexibly monocultural and predisposed to a deficit model of language" (D. Bloome, personal correspondence, 2007).

Other reading and spelling problems that some African American Language student speakers experience include spelling problems that result for African American Language speakers since the /r/ is not pronounced in the pronunciation of words. Such use of homonyms may present spelling problems for some African American children. They may look up words under the wrong spellings in dictionaries and are sometimes unable to distinguish words that are plainly different for the teacher (Labov, 1995, p. 20). For example, when my 7-year old son, Keanan, writes "*foe*" for "*four*" it reflects the deletion of the /r/ in the word *four* due to his language use.

Many educational systems incorporate phonic-based reading initiatives in their elementary reading curricula. Such phonic-based reading programs, which rely heavily on the pronunciation/sounds of letters in the alphabet, may create additional reading difficulties for some African American Language speakers since certain sounds are omitted in their speech. Examples of omitted sounds in the speech of African American Language speakers include contractions such as *you'**ll*** can be realized as *you, he'**ll*** as *he*, and so forth since the final /l/ is dropped. Labov (1977, 1995) notes that in addition, some

African American Language children speakers can experience problems identifying the past tense of words since phonetically no difference exists in the pronunciation of the past and present tense of words. While Labov notes that such structural differences can and do present reading problems for some African American Language speaking children, such problems can be easily remedied since they are specific and easily identified.

Much of the research regarding the language of African American Language speakers focuses on the reading aspect of academic achievement. While some research (e.g., Ball, 1995; Cook-Gumperz, 1993; Farr, 1985; Troutman, 1997) has focused on the writing of African American Language speaking students at the college level (basic and remediation writing programs), limited research focuses on the language and writing practices of African American Language speaking students in elementary and secondary classroom environments. Thus, the next section will explore the relationship of language to writing.

African American Language and Composition

In this section, I explore composition research and some of the challenges regarding the teaching of writing to African American Language speakers. I begin with an overview of the process approach to writing followed by a discussion of contemporary writing research, which examines some of the difficulties cultural and linguistic diverse students such as African American Language speakers may encounter in their writing.

Much research has been accomplished in composition studies, particularly in first year college composition courses. As Villanueva (1997) notes, much of the focus of composition research has been to examine what writers do when they write. Several

theories of writing (e.g., Britton, 1971; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1997) "model themselves on speech" (Sommers, 1997, p. 43) and thus "follows the 'linear model' of the relation of thought and language in speech" (Sommers, 1997, p. 43) proposed by language theorists such as Vygotsky's (1962) *Thought and Language* and Jakobson's (1960) "Linguistics and Poetics." One popular model of writing, often referred to as the process approach or the writing process (Murray, 1997; Elbow, 1973), has been advocated in classroom environments to teach students "the process of discovery through language" (Murray, 1997, p. 4). Emphasis on getting students to translate their thoughts to text has been approached or argued to involve three stages: prewriting, writing and rewriting. According to Murray (1997), prewriting is "everything that takes place before the first draft" (p. 4). Considered the first stage of effective writing and the most time-consuming aspect of the writing process, it includes the planning process of writing, focusing in and narrowing down a topic, determining an audience, and choosing a form or style to communicate the meaning of the writer to the audience. The next step, referred to as the writing stage, requires a writer to document his/her thoughts in written form, producing what has been commonly termed as a first draft. This first-draft stage, according to Murray (1997), often reveals the strengths and weaknesses in the writer's subject. As a result, a writer is able to determine what must be added or taken away once this stage in the writing process has been completed. After the evaluation of the first draft, a third stage–often referenced as rewriting or revision–is usually recommended. Described as the second most time-consuming step and recursive since it involves the development and clarification of ideas, the reflection on ideas which leads to changes and sometimes a further development (Perl, 1997), this stage requires a writer to rethink, redesign, and,

finally, to edit their written thoughts line-by-line. This process of prewriting, writing, and rewriting is thought to be an adequate explanation of the writing process and one that even novice writers, if followed, can use to effectively communicate ideas through language and produce standard forms of text. In an article primarily addressed to English teachers, Murray (1997) writes:

> This process of discovery through language we call writing can be introduced to your classroom as soon as you have a very simple understanding of that process, and as soon as you accept the full implications of teaching process, not product. (p. 4)

Recently, this process-approach to writing has come under fire from post-process theories of composition (Breuch, 2003). Criticisms of the process approach to writing range from arguments disputing the reduction of the act of writing to "a series of codified phases that can be taught" to "a process that has come to represent Theory with a capital 'T'" (Breuch, 2003, p. 97). The problem with the generalizations of writing, as Breuch notes, is that the writing process, or steps in the writing process, has come to represent the act of writing universally. Olson (1999) writes:

> The problem with process theory, then, is not so much that scholars are attempting to theorize various aspects of composing as it is that they are endeavoring (consciously or not) to construct a model of the composing process, thereby constructing a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time. (as quoted in Breuch, 2003, p. 97)

Breuch (2003) notes how other arguments against "the process" approach to writing (e.g., McComiskey, 2000; Russell, 1999) include the limitations imposed by viewing writing as a process rather than as several processes.

The results of such generalizations in writing can have devastating effects on composition instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students. For example,

one of the premier proponents of a process approach to writing instruction, Atwell (1987, 1998), has been criticized for not addressing the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds and the diversity of teaching situations. Atwell (1987, 1998) chronicles her successful teacher-as-researcher experience teaching writing-as-process to rural middle school students in Maine. Influenced by the works of composition researchers, Graves, Murray, Macrorie, and Calkins, Atwell (1987, 1998) espouses the benefits of utilizing a process approach, which advocates reading and writing workshops, to teach writing in elementary and secondary language arts environments. Atwell (1987) modeled her approach to teaching writing from a National Institute of Education project[8] where:

> [Students] learn to write by exercising the options available to real-world authors, including daily time for writing, conferences with teachers and peers during drafting, pacing set by the writer, and opportunities to publish what they had written. Most significantly, students decided what they would write. They wrote on a range of topics and in a variety of modes wider than their teachers had dreamed of assigning. They cared about content and correctness. And their teachers had come out from behind their big desks to write with, listen to, and learn from young writers. (p. 12)

Few resources have documented the writing experiences of African American Language speakers in elementary and secondary language arts environments. As a result, Atwell (1987) has been heralded as a practical resource for elementary and secondary language arts programs. For example, Atwell's (1987, 1998) has been one of several main texts in graduate composition courses at Vanderbilt and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. In addition, during the 2000-2001 school year, a school district in Arkansas modeled Atwell's reading and writing workshops in their language arts curriculum. Yet,

[8] In 1980, Donald Graves, Susan Sowers, and Lucy Calkins conducted a 2-year writing project in a public elementary school in rural New Hampshire, under a grant from the National Institute of Education (NIE), in order to discover how children develop as writers. Atwell (1987) notes how the results of this report can be found in Graves's (1983) *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* and how she developed her language arts curriculum from the NIE report.

Atwell (1987) has received much criticism for the generalizations made in utilizing such an approach. One aspect for which Atwell has been criticized concerns the generalization of the writing process that she advocates as a result of her teacher-as-researcher findings from her rural middle school experiences in Maine. Many of the criticisms of Atwell were from teachers who stated that Atwell's method did not work in their classrooms. Atwell (1998) writes:

> I also encountered teachers from across the country with problems I had never come up against, from a teacher in a budget-strapped urban setting trying to teach writing to thirty-five students at a time, six periods a day, to a teacher so upset that *In the Middle* "didn't work" in her classroom that she sent me four pages of questions she wanted answers to by Monday. (p. 19)

Furthermore, in a writing conference for teachers in Nashville, Tennessee during the spring semester of 2002, at the beginning of a writing workshop Atwell noted that her research was not intended for diverse students.

One criticism of the writing-as-process model can be viewed from the perspective of language. The generalization of the process model of writing excluded the complexities of language that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds perhaps encounter in translating their ideas from mind to page. In other words, culturally and linguistically diverse students may encounter more problems related to the use of their home language in learning to write using Standard English. Such research, in generalizing the writing process, assumed language-related issues could be addressed quickly during the revision and editing stages of writing. In his criticism of the traditional views of institutionalized language, Rose (1997) writes:

> The trouble, of course, is that such work is built on a set of highly questionable assumptions: that a writer has a relatively fixed repository of linguistic blunders that can be pinpointed and then corrected through drill, that repetitive drill on specific linguistic features represented in isolated sentences will result in mastery

> of linguistic (or stylistic or rhetorical) principles, that bits of discourse bereft of rhetorical or conceptual context can form the basis of curriculum and assessment, that good writing is correct writing, and that correctness has to do with pronoun choice, verb forms, and the like. (p. 530)

More contemporary composition research has begun to examine the relationship of oral language to the writing of culturally and linguistically diverse students. According to Farr and Daniels (1986) dialect interference in writing, coined to refer to "the use of nonstandard dialect features in written compositions . . . that sometimes occurs . . . when a person knows two languages" (p. 36), is one issue that linguistically diverse speakers encounter in their writing. While Farr and Daniels argue that the intellectual capacity for learning to write is the same for all students, they nevertheless advise a different approach to writing instruction for linguistically diverse students. Farr and Daniels (1986) write:

> Speakers of all languages and dialects employ the same fundamental linguistic processes and capabilities. Given this principle, there is no reason to believe that the task of learning to write is different in kind for a student who speaks a nonstandard, as opposed to a prestige, dialect of English. . . . However, this does not mean that writing instruction in ethnic urban and other linguistically nonmainstream schools can or should be identical to that offered in linguistically homogenous, mainstream suburban schools. (p. 43).

Most of the composition research that has examined the oral and written use of language among African American Language speakers has mostly occurred in college classroom environments. Research (e.g., Ball, 1995, 1999; Cook-Gumperz, 1993; Farr, 1981, 1985; Troutman, 1997, Ball and Lardner, 2005) examining the use of African American Language in students' writing notes that "oral dialect patterns account for some . . . problems in writing standard English" (Farr, 1985, p. 68). Farr (1981), Smitherman (2000), and Ball (1999) found that several features of African American Language were typically employed in the writings of some African American Language students. For

example, Farr (1981), in her exploration of an African American Language speaking student, found that grammatical patterns (e.g., inflectional suffixes such as the past tense /ed/, the possessive /s/, and the plural /s/ suffix, among others) appeared in the student's writing.

Likewise, Ball (1999) also identified grammatical characteristics of African American Language in students' writings, including the use of the verb "be," double negatives, and repetition. Ball (1999) argues that African American Language speakers employ the use of the verb form *be*–referred to as the "habitual 'be'"–to indicate ongoing activity. For example, "The world *be* trying to clog up our minds" (Troutman, 1997, p. 29) seems to indicate a continuing action which is typically expressed using the Standard English present participle verb form. Although use of the habitual *be* varies according to context, Ball (1999) argues that typically the use of the verb form *be* in the writings of African American Language student speakers is synonymous to the Standard English use of adverbs (Ball, 1999, p. 233).

While research notes the use of grammatical features of African American Language in students' writing, Smitherman's (2000) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report[9] found that grammatical features of African American Language (e.g., the use of the copula, /ed/ morpheme, /s/ morpheme and the /it/ expletive, among others) declined in the writing of 17-year-old African American students. Moreover, Smitherman (2000) reported that some features of African American Language (e.g., irregular verbs, subject-verb agreement) were reproduced in students' writing according to genre. For example, though features of African American Language were used less in

[9] Chapter 10 of Smitherman (2000) reports findings of a major study of writing by 17-year-old African American students in the National Assessment of Educational Progress from 1969 to 1988/1989.

imaginative/narrative essays, such features were used more in descriptive/informative essay writing (Smitherman, 2000, p. 168).

Research (e.g., Farr, 1981, 1985; Smitherman, 2000) suggests that grammatical features of African American Language are reproduced in the writing of some African American Language student speakers. Nonetheless, other research (e.g., Ball, 1999; Campbell, 1997; Cook-Gumperz, 1993; Troutman, 1997) suggests that stylistic features or African American discourse[10] patterns also impact the writing of some African American students.

Repetition is one stylistic feature of African American Language found in students' writing that has been argued used for emphasis. Repetition employs the use of key words and sounds; an example is illustrated in an excerpt of a student's text:

> Here, Emerson is saying that *man* is not willing to trust himself, in fact, that he is afraid to trust himself . . . *Man* will show society an "acceptable" personality, even though he may be "unacceptable" . . . *Man* is afraid to disappoint society. (Ball, 1995, p. 267)

Ball (1995) suggests that the use of repetition in African American students' writing serves to create a rhythmic pattern in students' text, which stems from the rhythmic use of oral language within the discourse practices of African Americans. In addition, Ball (1995) also identifies lexical features of African American Language, which tend to stem from the "creative use of vocabulary that has direct African origins" (Ball, 1995, p. 258). These features include the use of double meanings of words and colloquial phrases.

---

[10] Smitherman (2000) refers to African American discourse patterns as "African American Verbal Traditions" (p. 180). Such features of African American discourse analyzed for the study included: (a) rhythmic, dramatic, evocative language; (b) use of proverbs, aphorisms, and Biblical verses; (c) sermonic tone reminiscent of traditional Black Church; (d) direct address-conversational tone; (e) cultural references; and, among others (f) verbal inventiveness and unique nomenclature. Refer to Smitherman (2000), Chapter 10, "American Student Writers and the NAEP," for further examples of African American Verbal Traditions.

Colloquial phrases, referred to as "coherence strategies" by Erickson (as quoted in Ball, 1999, p. 258), rely heavily on shared understandings in African American communities. African American students using such phrases assume the receiver will understand the underlying message. For example, the following excerpt illustrates the use of colloquial phrases (in italics) in an African American student's writing:

> I've been looking forward to it for three years and that's why I'm so disappointed that we can't go. It's just that I know that we're gonna have to be *shelling out the big bucks* for our senior year. . . . *Speaking of learning to drive*, when are we going to get our licenses? *I thought I was bad* because I took safety ed. and drivers training in November 1988. But you're worse. (Ball, 1995, p. 268)

The italicized phrases in the excerpt are reflective of shared knowledge the student uses phrases with the assumption that readers will understand the particular meaning. Such ways of communicating is perhaps reflective of the forms of talk derived from the student's home community. The point that Ball (1995) makes is that such communicative strategies are often employed in the writing of some African American Language speakers.

One criticism that has been made against the process model of writing is that it assumes that the language used in writing will only be Standard English. As a result, language-related issues such as features of African American Language that appear in the writing of linguistically diverse students are not addressed. Consequently, teachers are not able to address the language differences of linguistically diverse students such as those who employ African American Language in their writing.

This language/writing concern surfaced in the pilot study. In the writing classroom, the professor focused on grammatical aspects of African American Language in Ace's writing, but was unable to help him address the more complex and stylistic

issues of language in his writing; that is, writing in a top-centered, linear fashion when his language style–and thus his writing style–was characteristic of what Michaels (1981) refers to as top associating narrative discourse (cf. Cook-Gumperz, 1993; Michaels, 1981). Though it is important to note that some features of African American Language can contribute to the writing success of some African American students, research (e.g., Baugh, 1999, 2000; Labov, 1977, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1981, 2000) emphasizes the consequences of negative social attributions to African American Language student speakers.

In the next section, I discuss findings from a pilot study examining the use of African American Language in two developmental college classrooms as utilized by an African American classroom teacher and discuss the implications of student participation.

Pilot Study on African American Language

During the spring semester of 2002, I explored the use of African American Language by African American students during a pilot study of two undergraduate developmental writing classes (C. Williams, 2003)[11] examining the use of African American Language of African American students enrolled at an urban community college in Tennessee. Ethnographic research methods were employed including participant observations, field notes, audio and videotaped data, and interviews. The course was observed each time it met during the semester. The classroom observations of the African American professor and her 22 students (Class A consisted of 14 students

[11] A final report of the pilot study was submitted to meet the requirement of a year-long ethnographic course. Findings from the pilot study have been presented at NCTE and several international conferences. Copies of the conference presentation papers and/or the final ethnographic project are available upon request.

while Class B consisted of 8 students) led to a more focused study of the experiences of five African American students who spoke African American Language.

One issue from the study was the negative attitude of some of the students and the professor concerning the use of African American Language in the classroom. Several students in the classroom acknowledged speaking African American Language in their home environment but emphasized how they made efforts not to use the language in the classroom environment. Students stated that African Americans who used the language in certain environments (i.e., classrooms, businesses, etc.) were usually perceived as unintelligent. Because of this negative perception of the use of African American Language, the African American course professor established a language intensive environment where she attempted to eradicate students' use of African American Language by constant correction. However, observations revealed that students nonetheless used African American Language in certain activities in the classroom. For example, Cathy, who was an African American female student, stated that she and her peers utilized African American Language during small group activities while avoiding the use of the language during whole group discussion. For Cathy, this use of African American Language was "safe" because it didn't position her negatively given the context and use of the Standard English in the classroom. While some of the students made efforts not to use African American Language in the classroom, they still unknowingly utilized features of the language. Observations revealed that generally all the African American students–and even the course professor–utilized some features of African American Language in the classroom.

A second finding from the study suggests that the use of certain features of African American Language positioned students negatively in the classroom by their peers and the professor; other uses of African American Language did not position the students negatively. Observations revealed that grammatical, lexical, and phonological features of African American Language typically positioned students negatively in the classroom. For example, during an interview discussion on the topic of code switching, the professor referenced the negative stigma attached to the pronunciation and subject and verb agreement of words:

Professor:	. . .environment has a lot to do with language. I guess as African Americans you have to have that ability to make that to make that change
Cynthia:	that switch?
Professor:	Yes and it's hard it's really hard and also um even young children it's just hard to break a pattern if you've been accustomed to talkin one way then all of a sudden you're being asked to make this switch and–it's a lot of our students say "talk proper" and we're not askin you to talk proper we just want you to talk correctly. As I always mention to my uh speech students, you come in, *(line 155)* you go into an interview talkin about I wanna "ax" you a question and they're just gonna "ax" you right on out to the door. And so we have to work on uh pronunciation/ enunciation–big big problem subject-verb agreement and often times we have those rules in English and we can't always go by sound and our students will say "well, it sounds right."

Observations revealed that lexical features of African American Language in students' writing also positioned them negatively and labeled them as African American Language speakers. For example, one African American male student, Ace, wrote several essays that typically featured lexical aspects of African American Language, which Rickford (1999) and Smith (1998) refer to as double meanings of words. The literacy

event in reference was a narrative essay assignment in which the students were required to write a narrative essay, utilizing their own topic, but one that included a topic sentence, supporting paragraphs and a concluding sentence. In examining Ace's 10-page, hand-written narrative essay, it appears he had an audience in mind–the professor–when he wrote this essay since he provided a 3-page detailed lexicon, which he refers to as an "index," that defined specific uses of his language in the essay. The professor's response to Ace's use of language perhaps reflects her views about African American Language when she refers to Ace's use of language as "slang." She wrote: "Mr. Phelps, Thank you for the 'dictionary' of slang." In examining the professor's response to Ace's essay, it appears that she did not understand his use of language in the essay since relatively few comments that identified other errors were noted. In addition, Ace's other essays (illustrative, classification, and comparison/contrast) had comments that primarily addressed language issues (such as his use and definition of terms such as "crunk" and "refa") and other grammatical errors like sentence combining, pronoun antecedent usage, and spelling ("*a lot"* instead of "*alot"*).

Linguists note that although double meanings of words occur in other language varieties, the use occurs more frequently among African American Language speakers. Moreover, researchers argue that teachers who are unfamiliar with nonstandard languages are usually unable to identify language related issues in students' writing.

The third finding from the pilot study raised questions about the relationship of African American identity to the use of language in the classroom. Ace, an African American male student, intentionally used lexical features of African American Language in his speech in the classroom and also in his written essays. Though he took

the stance that his use of language signaled his identity, he was still pressured by the negative perceptions of his peers and the course professor as a result of the composition requirements of the institution.

While several African American male students attributed their identity to their use of African American Language, they also attached a negative African American identity to peers who were Standard English speakers in the classroom. As a result, students who were proficient in Standard English were sometimes reluctant to display their language proficiencies in the classroom.

It is important to note that the 2-year community college mandated a curriculum that required the use of Standard English in the classroom. Instruction in the developmental writing program, according to the course objectives, emphasized structured essay writing "utilizing different rhetorical modes" and "the usage of the conventions of standard written and spoken English" (C. Williams, 2002, p. 20). Although the professor supported the use of African American Language in certain audiences, the standards dictated her classroom instruction and contributed to tension in the classroom. The institutional standards and curriculum of the 2-year community college prevented instructional spaces for discussing African American Language and its relationship to identity, dominant society, composition, and so forth.

In an interview, the professor expressed the significance of African American Language to her African American culture. She stated how she surrounded her children with Black literature[12] that celebrated African American culture and language. Nevertheless, in the context of the classroom, the professor never shared this more

[12] Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar were authors the professor specifically referenced during an interview.

positive dimension of African American Language with the students. Her objective was to "help" the students conquer some of their language obstacles by helping them eradicate features of their language that would penalize them in society. The course professor stated she took this stance to help the students achieve linguistic competence in Standard English and understand the reality of language use and the perception of African American Language by dominant society. Nevertheless, the problem that some students experienced with this stance is that the course professor never had any real discussion in the class that allowed them to use their language (other than the first assignment which she did not grade but allowed the students to share ideas from a letter assignment with peers) and she never discussed why she adopted the rigid language stance in the classroom. In addition, the course professor never provided space in the classroom for the students to discuss the issue of their language in class. As a result, she appeared to be an African American teacher who had assimilated and adopted the ways of white or dominant society. Thus, one could conclude that the three African American male students' perception of her as "uppity" perhaps suggests that she was perceived to have forgotten her attachment to the community through the use or acceptance of the language in the classroom.

This dissertation study extends the pilot study. This pilot study raised three issues regarding African American Language explored in the classroom context that I will further examine in my dissertation. The three issues are:

1. African American Language speakers created spaces in the classroom for the use of African American Language due to the negative stigma and attitude of some students and teachers.

2. Not all features of African American Language positioned African American Language speakers negatively by peers and teachers in the classroom environment.

3. The relation of identity to the use of Standard English and/or African American Language by African Americans in classroom environments.

Given the issues raised from the pilot study and the lack of ethnographic research that documents the experiences of African American Language-speaking students in classroom environments, this research will examine the relationship between the uses of African American Language, social and cultural identity, and student achievement. It is important to note that the pilot study informed the dissertation research. In particular, the pilot study began to illustrate the importance of using analysis that captures how, when, and where African American students use African American Language in secondary language arts classrooms and of exploring what social and academic consequences such language use have. This research seeks to highlight the complexities surrounding the academic achievement of some African American Language speaking students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I provide an overview of the methodology used in the study. A brief description of the study will be provided first, followed by discussions of the research method and theoretical frame, definitions, research setting, phases of the study, and finally the data collection and analysis.

This 7-month ethnographic study examines the language practices of African American middle school students in classroom settings. Specifically, the research focused on: (a) how the use of African American Language in middle school classrooms is related to the academic achievement of students, (b) the responses of teachers and other students to the use of African American Language, (c) how and what aspects of African American Language appear in students' written work, and (d) the responses of teachers to such uses in written work.

Ethnographic Inquiry

This research uses ethnographic research methods. Grounded in anthropology, ethnography is a "theoretically driven, systematic approach" (Zaharlick & Green, 1991, p. 205) used to examine human culture. The ultimate goal of ethnography is to provide a description of the shared cultural knowledge of a social group from an "emic" or native's perspective. Documenting the "emic" perspective of a culture or cultural phenomena over time can provide an avenue for generating "grounded theory," a hypothesis of cultural

phenomena generated by empirical data of cultural description (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003; Spradley, 1979, 1980; Strauss, 1998). The benefits of providing such cultural knowledge, as Egan-Robertson and Willet (1998) note, "contribute(s) to [the] general knowledge about the kinds of life worlds humans create . . . and help [other] people imagine and create better worlds" (p. 5).

Definitions

As there are often multiple definitions to terms used in research studies, in this section I define key terms as I use them in this study:

African American Language–This refers to a rule-governed system of communication spoken to some extent by almost all African Americans. Though disagreement exists among linguists regarding its history and evolution, African American Language is a hybrid language that formed as a result of the linguistic interactions of enslaved Africans with people of European descent and among African people. African American Language continues to evolve as a separate system of communication. Throughout the last 50 years, this system of communication has been variously referred to as Nonstandard Negro English (NNE), Black Dialect, Black English (BE), Black English Vernacular (BEV), African American English (AAE), Ebonics, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), or African American Language (AAL). In this study, students were identified as African American Language speakers based on discussions of African American Language as identified by Baugh (1999, 2000), Dillard (1972), L. Green (2002), Labov (1977, 1986), Richardson (2004), Rickford (1999, 2000), Smith (1998), Smitherman (1977, 1994), and Wolfram (1991).

Critical discourse analysis–As defined by Fairclough (2001), critical discourse analysis seeks to show connections between language, power, and ideology. Critical discourse analysis provides a way to deconstruct themes and power relations across everyday talk and written text. Critical discourse analysis is important since it helps to make visible power relations around issues of language as it relates to African American identity and academic achievement in schools. Additionally, it also helps to reveal tensions surrounding African American Language in curriculum and classroom interactions.

Cultural analysis of discourse–Quinn (2005) refers to cultural analysis as "efforts to tease out, from discourse, the cultural meanings that underlie it" (p. 4).

Culture–While various meanings are attributed to the term, in general *culture* means the shared, acquired knowledge members use in order to function within a social group. Cultural knowledge of a social group is both explicit and tacit. Explicit cultural knowledge is easily communicable through language and interactions, while a large portion of cultural knowledge is tacit and thus lies beyond the realm of awareness. As defined by Geertz (1983), culture is located "in the meaningfulness of the material world, which includes people's interactions, language, and the social and natural environment" (as quoted in Egan-Robertson & Willet, 1998, p. 10). From this perspective, culture can be viewed based on the action-reaction relationship of participants.

Linguistic analysis–Linguistic analysis provides a way to identify features and characteristics of African American Language in students' spoken and written uses of language. Exploring linguistic research (e.g., Baugh, 1999, 2000; Champion, 1998, 2000; Dillard, 1972; Farr, 1981; Fasold, 1999; L. Green, 2002; Labov, 1977, 1986; Michaels,

1981; Richardson, 2004; Smith, 1998; Smitherman, 1977, 1994, 2000; Rickford 1999, 2000; Wolfram, 1991) provides a lens that allows one the ability to recognize features of African American Language as a way to more thoroughly examine its use by students in an educational context.

Microethnographic analysis–This is a social interactional approach that explores how people use language to construct meaning, with an emphasis on the analysis of social, cultural, and political processes of language use in classroom environments (cf. Bloome, 1989; Bloome et al., 2005).

Mimicry–Smitherman (1977) defines mimicry as "a deliberate imitation of the speech and mannerisms of someone else [which] may be used for authenticity, ridicule, or rhetorical effect" (p. 94). Smitherman notes that often when one uses mimicry, "they attempt to quote in the tone of voice, gestures, and particular idiom and language characteristic of that person" (p. 94).

Prosody–Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor (1984) define *prosody* as "intonation, stress, tone of voice, and other paralinguistic signals" (p. 5); they further note that prosody is used in spoken interaction as a way to "accomplish cohesion," "crucial to the interpretation of what is intended in a message," and is "culturally specific" (pp. 5-6).

Social situation–Spradley (1980) defines a social situation as "the stream of behavior carried out by people in a particular location" (p. 86). In relation to classroom environments, it is important to note that a classroom environment is a dynamic and complex social situation. Within this social situation are multifaceted events/scenes that occur in the classroom, which can be examined for cultural meanings.

Demographic Data

School District

The study was conducted at a metropolitan public school district in the South. Situated in the city's capital and commonly referred to as the state's largest and most progressive educational system, the school district operates 49 schools and has an enrollment of approximately 26,000 students. One of the issues the district has historically faced regards the integration/desegregation of its schools in which case the district is currently trying to fulfill the requirements of court-ordered desegregation initiatives in order to be released from court-supervised desegregation monitoring. One of the problems the district has encountered with regard to desegregation involves the achievement of its African American students, and like many other school districts in more "urban" areas, the flight of Whites to more suburban areas has resulted in a school district serving a predominantly African American student population.

In addition to the desegregation issues the district has been involved in for over four decades, administrative difficulties have hindered the district's success in focusing on the achievement of its students. During this study, an interim superintendent was serving while candidates were interviewing for the superintendent's position. The interim superintendent took office due to the impetuous resignation of a superintendent, who resigned shortly before an impending desegregation court hearing (Artifact, 11-23-04).

In lieu of all the challenges the district has encountered, current literature promoting the district notes it successes, including the educational qualifications and merits of its teachers: More than half of the districts' teachers hold a master's degree or

higher, and many of the district's educators have been honored with prestigious state and national awards. In addition, the district offers more advanced placement courses to students than any other district in the state.

The School

Denmark Middle School (pseudonym) is a public magnet school with an emphasis in the health sciences. Situated between two diverse neighborhoods in terms of socioeconomic status (working class and middle/upper class), desegregation efforts, however, have failed since many of the upper/middle class parents (both African American and White) whose children are assigned to attend Denmark have either enrolled their children in private schools or request alternate school assignments inside and/or outside the district. The children from the African American working class neighborhood, nonetheless, attend Denmark resulting in a predominantly African American and working class population.

During the course of the study, Denmark's student population (see Appendix A) consisted of approximately 650 students, with a majority of the student population consisting of African Americans (80%). The remaining 20% were a combination of White (9%) and "Other" students (11% percent, with many of the students being of Hispanic origin). Denmark serves grades sixth through eight, and has a 93-member faculty and staff (see Appendix B) including 54 full-time certified teachers (28 White and 26 African Americans), 3 administrators (an African American principal and assistant principal, as well as a White assistant principal), a professional staff (7 White and 4 African American) that includes a nurse, two counselors, a speech therapist as well

as day-treatment coordinators, a resource officer from the local police department, and a librarian, among others. In addition, staff members (21 African Americans and 4 White) include secretaries (attendance and principal's), a bookkeeper, registrar, as well as custodians, child nutrition workers, a building engineer, paraprofessionals, and security officers.

Denmark operates on a block schedule and has eight 90-minute classes. Four classes are offered per day and are grouped into "A" and "B" days. Denmark also utilizes a team teaching approach where core subject-area teachers (e.g., social studies, math, science, and language arts) are grouped to serve the same students. This team-teaching approach is a community building initiative adopted with hopes of improving the academic achievement of its student population.

Classrooms

Two eighth-grade language arts classrooms provided the setting for this 7-month study, which took place from October 2003 to May 2004. Although this 7-month ethnographic study took place in two language arts classrooms, the foci of the dissertation were mainly derived from participants in Classroom B. With 23 participants (including the African American teacher), Classroom B occurred during the third block of each day, and was considered a regular language arts class that was designed to serve the needs of average learners. Demographic data about the students in Classroom B are shown in Table 1. The race and ethnicity of the students were determined based upon their classification of themselves or of other students during informal conversations in the classroom.

Table 1

Student Demographics (Classroom B)

Race	Male	Female	Total
African American	7	9	16
White	2	2	4
Biracial	2	0	2
Total	11	11	22

Of the 22 student participants in Ms. Kent's classroom, 16 were African American, 4 were White, and 2 were Biracial (1 African American/White and 1 African American/ Hispanic). There were 11 male and 11 female students in the classroom. One hundred percent of the students in Ms. Kent's classroom participated in the study as indicated by signed permission slips.

The classroom teacher, Mrs. Brittany Kent (pseudonym), is an African American who was approximately 30 years of age at the time of the study. Mrs. Kent had 8 years of teaching experience, with 4 of them occurring at the elementary level teaching fifth- and sixth-grade students. The 2003-2004 school year marked Mrs. Kent's 4th year as an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Denmark (Interview, 01-16-04). Recently married, Mrs. Kent is often addressed by her maiden name, and has a good reputation among the faculty. Many of them refer to her as "a good teacher" and as "someone who teaches the kids well" (Interview, 05-03). In addition to being a "good" teacher, Ms. Kent is also a basketball and volleyball coach at a neighboring high school, also apart of the school district. Many of the students (and several of the faculty) refer to her as "Coach Kent." As

a result of her dual role as a basketball/volleyball coach and teacher, Mrs. Kent often dresses in coaching attire, frequently wearing warm-up suits, t-shirts, and sneakers (coordinated to match her outfit). While her attire is often quite casual in nature, her appearance nonetheless is more proper. Ms. Kent considers herself a product "of the hood" in which a majority of the African American student population at Denmark reside (Interview, 01-16-04).

Gaining Access

Access to the School

After permission was granted by the school district's research office, my ties to Denmark as a former language arts teacher facilitated my access to the school. Mr. Orange (pseudonym), Denmark's principal during the 2002-2003 school year, was also a language arts teacher at Denmark during my tenure. Mr. Orange spoke with the current school principal, Mr. Brown (pseudonym), on my behalf and assisted with other administrative aspects required from the district.

Access to the Language Arts Teachers

Access to the language arts teachers was also less of challenge given my former connections as a language arts teacher at Denmark. During initial visits prior to the study, conversations with former friends and faculty members resulted in recommendations of language arts teachers for the study. Consequently, during the spring semester of 2003, I approached two language arts teachers, explained my research interests and solicited their

participation in the study. Both teachers agreed to be apart of the study and also assisted with obtaining the administrative approval from the district.

Access to the Students

After gaining the approval of the principal and teachers at Denmark, the district's Research and Evaluation Administrator, and Vanderbilt University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), whole group classroom presentations were scheduled with the language arts teachers and their classes during the first week of October, 2003. During the presentations, it was made clear to the students and their parents that (a) participation was voluntary, (b) participants could withdraw without penalty, (c) confidentiality would be respected, and (d) pseudonyms would be used to protect participants' identities. My role as researcher within the classroom and use of the data in published reports and/or at conferences with other educators interested in the research topic were also discussed with the participants. During fall semester of 2003, all parents and students consented to the study. I received 100% participation from students in Mrs. Kent's classroom. After acquiring permission, gaining access to the students was a gradual process. Interacting with students on a personal nature and assisting with classroom assignments (with the teacher's approval) provided opportunities to forge friendships with the students. The classroom teacher graciously allowed the students to utilize me as a resource in the language arts classroom. While I often assisted them with their assignments, they, too, played a crucial role in teaching me and helping me to understand the dynamics of language use and its relations to social and cultural identities.

Methodological Concerns from the Inside

When I entered Denmark's community as a researcher in October 2003, the identity that I thought I projected was one very similar to the African American participants, given the commonalities that I believed I shared with many of them. Like many of the African American students, I, too, lived in a working class African American community and was an African American Language speaker. I was also once a part of Denmark's learning community though my role was that of a language arts teacher. While serving in that role, I often forged friendships with many of the African American students in my classroom. Nevertheless, one of the tensions that occurred in the classroom with the students in this research study surfaced as a result of my use of language that was greatly influenced by an academic discourse acquired as a result of attending a predominantly White university. Many of the African American students perceived me as someone who very much "looked" African American, but who nonetheless did not speak like African Americans "from the hood" should speak. As a result, many of the African American students at Denmark found my African American identity problematic and sought to challenge it. For example, several African American students often teased and critiqued my use of African American Language while commenting about my inability to communicate effectively with other members of my African American community (Field note, 02-11-04). Yet, in the challenging of my use of African American Language, I gained a new perspective from the student participants regarding African American Language and its social and cultural relevance in the context of a classroom and school community. Thus, this dissertation is a reflection of those

challenges and lessons learned from student participants in an eighth-grade language arts classroom.

Data Collection

Data collection began in October 2003 and lasted through May 2004. I used several methods to collect data. Data were generated through participant observations, field notes, audio and videotapes, ethnographic interviews, and student artifacts (see Table 2).

Table 2

Corpus of Audio tape, Video tape, and Field Note Data

Data type	Data composition
Field notes	105 days, 100-paged notebooks (3); extended notes over 170 typed, single-spaced pages.
Formal interviews	6 teacher interviews (1 hour each; audio taped) and 26 students interviews (20 audio and 6 video)
Classroom audiotapes	150 classroom audiotapes: Classroom A (80) and Classroom B (70)
Classroom videotapes	19 videotapes: Teacher A (1) and Teacher B (18)

Participant Observations

During the first 2 weeks of the study, I participated in the classroom events for the entire school day. After selecting two classrooms, one from each teacher, my

observations covered 3 hours and 20 minutes per day. When directed by the classroom teachers, I assisted students with classroom assignments.

Since both teachers taught several classes, the first few weeks of the study involved general observations (and the taking of field notes) of classroom activity in order to develop a general picture of the organization of activities in the classroom. After 2 weeks of observations, I consulted with each teacher and selected two classrooms for extended observations. I observed Ms. Bennett's (Teacher A) first block, preadvanced language arts class from 11:05 a.m. to 12:35 p.m., and Ms. Kent's (Teacher B) third block, regular language arts class from 12:40 to 2:05 p.m. for a total of 105 days.

One phase of the study involved the focused observations of key classroom events, which occurred in Classroom B. After consulting with the teacher, Mrs. Kent, I selected key classroom activities for intensive focus. The key classroom activities identified were videotaped. Part of the focused observations also involved the selection of focal students for extended observations and interviews. As a participant observer, I participated in several of the classroom activities, providing assistance to the students upon the teachers' and/or students' requests.

Field Notes, Methodological Notes, Theoretical Notes, and Personal Notes

Throughout the study, I recorded field notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes, and personal notes. Table 3 gives a description of these notes. Typically, brief field notes were written in class, when possible, followed by more detailed notes upon leaving the field. The detailed notes included theoretical, methodological, and personal

Table 3

Types of Notes

Note type	Description
Field	Field notes are recorded during class and attempt to capture the social and interactional processes across a range of events that occur during a class period.
Theoretical	Theoretical notes attempt to capture the theoretical significance of field notes. They are also used to generate theoretical hypothesis. Notes are generally recorded shortly after exiting the field.
Methodological	Methodological notes involve the evaluation of the collection of data. Such notes include informal discussions with students and teachers.
Personal	Personal notes attempt to capture the personal insights, feelings, and reflections of the observer to particular events that occur during an observation. Such notes may also incorporate reactions to other interactions that occur during the day.

assessments of the classroom events and interactions, and were used to guide further observations. The four types of notes are a usual practice in many ethnographic studies.

Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviews are designed to understand the experiences and perspectives of other people and the meaning that they make from those experiences. In this research, I used an interview approach similar to discussions of interviewing in Quinn (2005). During this research, interviews consisted of both formal and informal

interviews. Initial interviews were conducted with students and teachers, followed by more focused interviews that explored keywords and concepts that emerged from classroom observations. Many of the students in the classroom were interviewed at least once, while focal students were interviewed on several occasions. In most cases, interviews occurred after the language arts class, usually in the same classroom since it was an empty classroom. Several initial interviews, however, were also conducted in a small room in the library. Interviews were important in obtaining the student's perspectives and triangulating data.

Audio and Video Taping

Several tape recorders and a video camera were used to tape classroom interactions. The purpose of taping was to capture the verbal and nonverbal interactions of the participants in the research setting. Classes were audio taped after the initial observations almost daily while videotaped sessions were conducted during key language events. Audio- and videotaping were significant in capturing the language interactions that occurred in the classroom and across the participants' interviews.

Collecting Artifacts

The collection of artifacts was another method of data collection used in the study. Resources such as student and teacher products and resources including handouts, student journals, and students' returned assignments were several of the artifacts collected in this study. All artifacts were photocopied and returned, with the exception of student handouts when the teacher had extra copies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the study builds on the works of theoretical discussions about language and literacy derived from sociolinguistic ethnography (cf. Gumperz, 1982a; Hymes, 1974), the New Literacy studies (cf. Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Bloome, 1994; Gee, 1996; Street, 1993), and African American Language (cf. Champion, 1998, 2000; Farr, 1981; L. Green, 2002; Michaels, 1981; Richardson, 2004; Rickford, 1999; Smith, 1998; Smitherman, 1977, 1993). The study also uses microethnographic analysis (Bloome, 1989; Bloome et al., 2005; J. Green & Wallat, 1981), critical discourse analysis (Bloome et al., 2005), and cultural analysis (cf. Quinn, 2005) as methods of data analysis. Table 4 lists research questions, the corresponding method of data collection used, type of data collected, and method of data analysis.

This research used Spradley's (1980) "funneling" design to examine the cultural events surrounding the use of African American Language in the classroom (and in some cases, outside of the classroom). Initial observations of the use of language in the events in the classroom led to more focused observations of the students' interactions centered on African American Language use in the classroom. In my study, while analysis occurred as a recursive process throughout all stages of the study, the focus of analysis was narrowed as I studied and indexed recorded data of students' interactions in the classroom. In the process of narrowing my focus, I identified key events of classroom interactions, looked for patterns that related these events with others, and selected key segments of taped social interaction for detailed microanalysis. As in my identification of key events, I looked for patterns and keywords in the students' conversations pertaining to language. These keywords were further explored in interviews with students. I used

Table 4

Data Analysis

Research question	Method of collection	Type of data collected	Method of analysis
What features of African American Language in spoken mode are used in which classroom situations?	Participant observation Audio taping and videotaping of classroom events.	Field notes Audiotapes Videotapes	Linguistic features analysis
What influence does the formal curriculum have on students' use of African American Language in spoken mode and on how teachers respond to its use?	Collection of curriculum documents Participant observation Audio/videotaping Teacher interviews	Curriculum documents. Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Critical discourse analysis
How does students' use of African American Language in spoken mode impact students' social identities?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Microethnographic analysis Critical discourse analysis Cultural analysis
How does students' use of African American Language in spoken mode influence their academic achievement in the classroom?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews Teacher interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Linguistic features analysis Microethnographic analysis Cultural analysis
What features of African American Language in written mode are used in which classroom situations?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews Student documents Classroom artifacts	Field notes Audio/videotapes Student artifacts	Linguistic features analysis Critical discourse analysis
What influence does the formal curriculum have on students' use of African American Language in written mode and on how teachers respond to its use?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Students' graded artifacts Student/teacher interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Critical discourse analysis

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Research question	Method of collection	Type of data collected	Method of analysis
How does students' use of African American Language in written mode impact students' social identities?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews Student artifacts	Field notes Audio/videotapes. Interview tapes	Microethnographic analysis Critical discourse analysis
How does students' use of African American Language in written mode influence their academic achievement in the classroom?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student/teacher interviews Student artifacts	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Linguistic features analysis Microethnographic analysis Critical discourse analysis
What relationship exists between the features of African American Language used in spoken mode and those used in written mode across classroom situations?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Critical discourse analysis
What attitudes do students hold about their use of African American Language across classroom and non-classroom situations?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Microethnographic analysis Critical discourse analysis
What attitudes do teachers hold about their students' use of African American Language across classroom and nonclassroom situations?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Teacher interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes Interview tapes	Microethnographic analysis Thematic analysis Critical discourse analysis
What factors external to the classroom influence the use of African American Language within the classroom?	Participant observation Audio/videotaping Student/teacher interviews	Field notes Audio/videotapes. Interview tapes	Microethnographic analysis Critical discourse analysis

thematic analysis, microethnographic analysis, and cultural analysis of discourse as three primary methods of data analysis.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis provides a way to identify patterns that surface across key classroom interactions. This phase of analysis involved a close reading of my data as a way to identify key events of students' interactions around issues of African American Language. I examined field notes, taped interviews, audiotapes, and videotapes of the classroom and students' artifacts. Through repeated readings of field notes, I identified recurring themes, topics, and interactions within events that centered on the students and their use or discussions of African American Language. I looked for events that illustrated the various ways students interacted in the classroom with their teacher, peers, and me, as well as surrounding African American Language. I also looked at how students positioned others as a result of their use of African American Language. By keeping a log in my field notes, which indexed and summarized daily classroom activities, I was able to find specific audio- and videotapes for further review and analysis.

Microethnographic Analysis

I approached the process of microanalysis by drawing on sociolinguistic theory (Gumperz, 1982a; Hymes, 1974). Microanalysis was useful in examining African American Language speakers in the classroom because it focuses on how people interact with each other to construct an event and emphasizes social and cultural processes.

Selected classroom events and student interviews that supported recurring themes (e.g., talking and sounding Black and White) were analyzed based on sociolinguistic theory. A microanalysis of selected transcripts made visible certain power relations. It also made visible how students positioned themselves as well as others with regard to language, in particular, issues of prosody and social and cultural identities. I adapted methodological tools used in Bloome et al. (2005) to give a detailed microanalysis.

Cultural Analysis of Discourse

As Quinn (2005) notes, the cultural analysis of discourse provides a way to discover the hidden, tacit meaning underlying talk. In the students' interviews, common topics and themes were identified similar to cultural analysis procedures described in Quinn (2005). During this analytical phase, after reviewing field notes for recurring themes, patterns, and interactions, I looked for keywords and phrases that the students used in their discussions and interactions around African American Language issues in the classroom. During interviews, the students were asked to share their views pertaining to such keywords and concepts as a means to better understand the cultural meaning students had assigned to them. Students' interviews were then transcribed, read several times in order to gain an understanding of what was said, and then segments of talk were categorized according to what appeared to be the focus of the students' conversations. Cultural models were created as a way to reflect or illustrate the students' views. I further compared and contrasted the students' views for overlapping themes and patterns and constructed a shared cultural model.

Transcription

As J. Green and Wallat (1981) note, a transcript is an important theoretical document that can be used to capture interactions in a classroom. The conventions for transcription shown in Table 5 are used for representing students' and the teacher's communication within the classroom and during interviews.

Table 5

Transcription Key

Transcription symbol	Meaning
"xxx"	Student's use of mimicry
[ ]	Speech overlap in conversation
[*italics*]	Information inserted for clarity
Wo-o-o-r-r-d	Syllable or vowel elongation
(*italics*)	Additional information
(.00)	Pause in seconds
(.)	Brief pause
+word+	Extremely high pitch
»word«	Tempo speeds up
CAPITALS ↑ ↓	Emphasis or accentuation on syllables or words Increase/decrease in voice pitch or tone
Word-word-word	Rhythmic and lyrical use of language; stated in a song-like fashion.

All speech that is represented in the transcripts was recorded on audio- or videotape, and the context of each situation accompanies each transcription.

Limitations

This research study attempts to obtain the perspectives of African American Language student speakers in situated classroom environments. Navigating my position as an African American adult researcher while attempting to obtain the emic perspective of adolescents and peer culture, as well as moving beyond established boundaries and negotiating tensions between adult/students' use of language, particularly students' use of language around adults, presented some challenges with regards to this research. In addition, the negotiation of my role as a researcher at Denmark Middle School (formerly a junior high school during my 5 years of employment as a ninth-grade language arts teacher) was also a variable since many of the same faculty and staff were still employed at the research site.

One of the limitations of ethnographic research is that it is not generalizable. That is, because participants are believed to be active agents and coconstructors of contextualized events/situations, no two social events/situations are identical. Thus, this research cannot suggest that the same event and/or responses of African American Language participants will occur identically in other environments. However, this research can be used to inform or provide insights with regard to the use of African American Language and the mediating factors attributed to academic achievement and social and cultural identities to other interested researchers and/or policy makers.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to provide a thick description of the classroom contexts pertaining to this study. The description aids in contextualizing the findings that emerged from the research. Second, the chapter presents findings and analyses that are related to the following research questions:

1. How, when, and where do African American students use African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms?

2. What social and academic consequences does the use of African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms have?

I will describe the findings related to these questions by examining them as they unfold during three classroom events: "Ms. Scans tries to sound Black," "You sound like a nappy-headed honkie," and "I ain't neva sca'ed." These events capture the experiences of focal African American Language student speakers in an eighth-grade language arts classroom. I base my findings on: (a) microethnographic analyses of transcript segments drawn from key events, field notes, and interviews; and (b) thematic and cultural analyses of selected interviews.

I group the findings under two parts. Part I of the chapter will present representative events that capture/contextualize the experiences and perspectives of focal students and an African American teacher. Then, in Part II, I will draw from these events in order to discuss the complex findings surrounding issues of prosody in African

American Language use and social and cultural identity formation. Field notes, interview transcripts, and audio- and videotapes were reviewed as a means to construct a thorough picture of the experiences of African American Language student speakers in the classroom. During the review of field notes, interview transcripts, and audio- and videotape data, the following findings emerged:

1. How the role of prosody impacts one's social and cultural identities: (a) how some African American students made distinctions between speaking Standard English, "talking/sounding" Black, and "talking proper/White"; (b) how "talking/sounding" Black was the expected norm for some African American Language Speakers (particularly those of African American descent) during nonlanguage learning situations in the classroom; and (c) how regional and generational differences in the use of African American Language positioned some African Americans negatively.

2. How students used African American Language (i.e., talking/sounding Black) as a way to "fit in" or navigate Denmark's predominantly working class, African American environment.

3. How prosodic features of African American Language (i.e., "talking/sounding" Black) are important in affirming African American culture and identity and in positioning one as an African American Language speaker (related to grounded theoretical construct).

4. How when some African American Students communicate with other African Americans, even in professional environments, some African American students still expect African Americans to at least understand and/or acknowledge their use of African American Language (related to grounded theoretical construct).

Part I

This section seeks to examine the significance of prosody and its relation to social and cultural identity formation. Throughout the data, a recurring topic in the students' classroom and peer discussions was that of "talking" and/or "sounding" Black. For many of the students and teacher participants, "talking" and/or "sounding Black" were important markers of African American culture and identity. In this section, I begin with samples of data followed by explanations which illustrate how the issue of "talking" and/or "sounding Black" surfaces in the language arts classroom as well as discuss how both African American and White students began to articulate its meaning. The following section will discuss three events: (a) Event 1, "Ms. Scans *tries* to sound Black"; (b) Event 2, "You sound like a nappy-headed honkie"; and (c) Event 3, "I ain't neva sca'ed." These events contextualize the experiences of African American Language speakers within a school environment.

Introducing Event 1: "Ms. Scans tries to sound Black"

The following field note documents a conversation that occurred in the language arts classroom during a poetry assignment. The field note begins with a discussion of the classroom events, which consisted of a daily journal assignment followed by a continuation of a poetry unit. After attempting to gain the interest of her students by connecting the poetry lesson to a form of music familiar to the African American students' culture, the African American teacher engages the students in an extended discussion of Acrostic and Cinquain poems. Definitions, characteristics, and examples of poems are provided through mini-lessons, followed by opportunities for students to

compose individual examples. As the teacher moves among the students to ensure their comprehension of the task, the students work on composing their individual poems, in which case they engage in informal conversations amongst themselves. The following excerpt from the field note documents this exchange. Pseudonyms are used for the participants.

Event 1: (Field note) "Ms. Scans tries to sound Black"

October 29, 2003

As students work on their Cinquain poems, an interesting conversation surfaces in reference to language use. As the students work on composing their individual poems, they also talk amongst themselves in the classroom. During one of the discussions, Trevor, a biracial (i.e., African American and Hispani(c) male student, provides an example of how a foreign language teacher, Ms. Scans, greets him upon entering her classroom. Trevor stated that Ms. Scans often said, "Hey Sweet T" as he enters her classroom. This is when the discussion about Ms. Scans began. In response, Devin, an African American male student states that the foreign language teacher "tries to talk Black." When I question the two male students about how the teacher tries to talk Black, other students and even Mrs. Kent, the African American teacher, join in on the conversation. Kendrick, yet another African American male student, comments that the teacher "mixes Ebonics with White language" when she talks.

After class, I questioned Mrs. Kent about the foreign language teacher's use of language in which Mrs. Kent stated that the teacher did try to "talk Black." Mrs. Kent commented with an expression on her face which indicated to me disagreement. She stated, "Yeah, she *tries* to talk Black" with a frown on her face and then provided examples of the "slang" that the teacher used. Mrs. Kent stated that she told the teacher that her use of slang was "so outdated!" in which Mrs. Kent then stated that Ms. Scans's response to her comment was, "I'm still trying to catch up." Mrs. Kent also commented about the teacher's use of mannerism in which she stated that the teacher would often "over do" head movements or finger snapping when talking.

I think what is interesting to me about this conversation is how the students and Mrs. Kent respond to this teacher and I am assuming Ms. Scans is White. The students seem to talk about Ms. Scans' use of language as if they do not approve of her use of what they call "Ebonics" or "talking Black." One of the African American male students, Kendrick, stated with a frown on his face, "yeah, she *tries* to sound Black" and stated how he did not like her.

> I questioned Ms. T and Ms. E, two teachers who were close colleagues when I taught at Denmark, about the foreign language teacher's use of language. Both were able to identify the teacher when I made the comment, "The kids told me that a White teacher around her sounds Black." Ms. E. stated with a frown, "You're talking about Ms. Scans." When I questioned Ms. E. and asked why she thought Ms. Scans spoke that way, Ms. E. stated, "I think she does it to try to fit in." My understanding of this was because Denmark is a predominantly African American school, Ms. Scans tries to "fit in" by "talking Black."

Contextualizing Event 1

In the above field note, during one of the discussions, the issue of "talking" and/or "sounding" Black surfaces when a biracial male student provides an example of how a foreign language teacher greets him upon entering her classroom. He notes that the teacher addresses him as "Sweet T"–"Hey Sweet T!" In response, an African American male student, Devin, remarks that the teacher "tries to talk Black." Partly due to my questioning about how the teacher "tries to talk Black," other students and even the African American teacher contributes to the conversation. In the discussion, it appears that the African American participants emphasize the foreign language teacher's word choices and characterize one element of "talking Black" as using certain words such as "slang" and "Ebonics." A biracial male student attempts to provide an example of the teacher's greeting, while an African American male student suggests the foreign language teacher "mixes Ebonics with White language." The African American teacher also notes the foreign language teacher's "outdated" usages of slang.

The point that needs to be examined more carefully in this event centers on Trevor's mimicry which may perhaps suggest that the White foreign language teacher's use of language was problematic to the African American participants due to a difference in the use of prosody. Smitherman (1977) suggests that in mimicry, the speaker attempts

to take on the voice of the person mimicked as a way to illustrate or capture the person's use of language. In the event, the discussion concerning the White teacher's use of Black language is initiated immediately following Trevor's mimicry of her talk.

This field note illustrates how the African American participants attribute a distinct use of language to African American identity. What is also important in this discussion is the emphasis on the foreign language teacher's efforts at "talking Black" which perhaps suggests to the African American participants that there is a "way" to "talk Black" which extends beyond mere word choice and/or mannerisms. The next event provides another perspective concerning the same issue.

Introducing Event 2: "You sound like a nappy-headed honkie"

It is picture day at the school and consequently an informal class session where students are completing existing assignments while chatting with peers. Some of the students are working on the computers, typing assignments that will be placed in their portfolios, while others are completing novel evaluations or working on journal entries since several are due the next class. Given that several of the students have already completed journals and updated portfolios, those students are working on their research projects, writing factual and interpretative questions from their resources as a part of developing a topic sentence for their research essays.

On this day, I am sitting beside three male students (one White and two African American), trying to defend myself from the signifying (cf. Smitherman, 1977) made by the African American males pertaining to my natural hair. At some point in the conversation, an African American female student comes over and asks for assistance

with her research assignment. I follow the student to her desk and attempt to further explain the assignment. However, to assist my efforts at explaining the lesson to her, I solicit a handout from one of the African American male students to use as an aide. The following field note provides a detailed account of this exchange.

Event 2: (Field note) "You sound like a nappy-headed honkie"

> <u>February 3, 2004</u>
>
> This particular day is Wednesday, February 3, 2004. It is picture day and students are basically working solo on various assignments. Some of the students are on the computer typing past assignments for their portfolios, while others are working on journals, attempting to catch up since several entries (numbers 86-95) are due tomorrow. Several of the students are also completing novel evaluations and developing research questions for their research projects. The classroom teacher, Mrs. Kent, is seated at a table toward the back of the classroom organizing students' portfolios and providing feedback on the students' research questions as they are brought to her.
>
> Another interesting conversation is occurring today among several African American students specifically concerning my "talking proper." The conversation occurs as I sit beside three male students while joking with two of them–Malcolm and Kendrick who are African American males. Today–like most days–a lot of teasing and "roasting[13]" about my "nappy hair" is occurring, especially from Kendrick. Kendrick is projecting a tough man image. As we are chatting and joking, Karolyn, an African American female student, comes over and asks for help with developing her research questions. As I attempt to assists Karolyn with the assignment, I solicit a handout[14] from Kendrick to aide in explaining the task to Karolyn. I say, "Kendrick. Kendrick! Bring me your handout." Kendrick's response to my calls is playful, but a bit rude. As he continues typing on the computer with his back towards me, he states, "What!" and "What you want!" to my requests. In an effort to "save face" among Malcolm and Felix who are both

[13] Smitherman (1977) refers to this phenomenon as "signifying."

[14] I had recently given several students handouts pertaining to their research topic that day in class. Given that the students' research projects emphasized historical African American people, events, or culture, I was able to share several resources (i.e., poems and copies from books used in African American literature and/or history courses taken at Vanderbilt) with many of the students. As a note, the handout given to Kendrick contained notes (e.g., questions and comments) that I had written in response to reading the selection during a history course. Given that the teacher was requiring a similar response from the students, my goal was to use my written notes as a way to better help Karolyn understand the assignment for the research project.

avidly watching and laughing at our interaction, I retort with a muttered voice, "Bring your Black ass[15] here!" which as a result prompts a roar of laughter from both Kendrick and Malcolm. Malcolm states, "You can't even cuss right!" and asks, "why do you sound so proper!?" He then attempts to mimic me and say that I said, "Bring your Black ass here!" like a White person would say it. I laugh but also have him to tell me more in which case Malcolm states that I "sound White." Then he says, "No, not White but proper." I say, "Well, what do you mean by proper?" And he says, "well, you don't use fragments and stuff when you talk. You talk correct." My response to Malcolm is, "Well how do you think you talk when you're talking to Mrs. Kent in the classroom?" Malcolm responds, "But that's different! Now you're talking to me and you talk like that [proper] all the time!" Malcolm states that he talks "regular" and I talk proper. Then I question him about how Felix (a White student) talks and he says, "Felix talk regular like us." Kendrick even comments that both Felix and I are "honkies," but notes that I am a "nappy-headed honkie."

After class, Kendrick and Malcolm have me to share with Mrs. Kent my "cussing," after which they laugh and say that I said, "Bring your Black ass here!" like a White person. Mrs. Kent laughs too, but says, "you can tell she's not from the hood" in which case both Kendrick and Malcolm respond, "She show ain't!" Mrs. Kent then asks the students, "how I sound?" and they affirm that she sounds like she is from the hood. This "sounding Black" phenomenon is rather interesting but complex. What is meant by "sounding Black?" Question the other students more to get their thoughts on this matter.

Contextualizing Event 2

In this field note, two African American male students shed an interesting perspective concerning the use of African American Language and reveal a complexity pertaining to the issue of "talking" and/or "sounding" Black. In the discussion, the issue of "talking proper" emerges as a result of a retort made to one of the African American

[15] Some may question my professionalism and/or the validity of using profanity among the students in a classroom and/or school environment. Nevertheless, my use of profanity in this context was intentional and used as a linguistic experiment to further investigate the issue of prosody in African American Language. It is also important to note that it was not uncommon for the students to use such language in communicating with their peers and me as well. As Smitherman (1977) notes, such profanity is sometimes used in African American communication as "a filler with no meaning at all" (p. 60). Nevertheless, given the classroom context and the rapport I had established with both the students and the classroom teacher, I knew that using such language would not defame the students' nor teacher's characters nor violate the classroom environment given the nature of my research study. However, I acknowledge the potential controversy surrounding such language use among students in a classroom environment and reiterate the fact that the use was purely experimental, not my expected norm in communicating in a classroom with students– particularly African American students, and would not otherwise be sanctioned in a classroom environment without appropriate literary context which would also include parental and/or administrative permission.

male students. As described above, in the retort, the expression, "Bring your Black Ass here!" is used as a way to "save face" among the African American students. While my comment in turn prompts extensive laughter and conversation from the African American participants regarding my language use, what is important about the African American participants' reaction to my comment is that similar to Event 1, it seems to reveal a complexity pertaining to the issue of "sounding Black" in African American Language use and its relation to African American identity.

In examining the responses of the two African American male students, one of the African American males, Malcolm, provides an interesting critique of my use of profanity. In his critique, Malcolm explains that I "can't even cuss right!" and then notes in his assessment that my use of profanity "sound so proper." Also in his assessment, he mimics my use of language, compares it to that of a White person, and provides a more detailed description of the "proper" qualities of my language use in the classroom upon further questioning. It is important to note Malcolm's expectation of my ability to code switch to more appropriate or rather less "proper" uses of language during non-language learning opportunities in the classroom. Additionally, while there seems to be some confusion in Malcolm's assessment of my cussing from saying it like "a White person," to saying it "proper," nevertheless, he reiterates that fact that my cussing more resembles that of a White person in his after-class conversation with Kendrick and the African American teacher.

In his response, Kendrick, the other African American male student, consequently positions me as a "nappy-headed honkie," and concurs with the idea in the discussion

with the classroom teacher that I "cuss . . . like a White person" rather than someone "from the hood."

In examining my use of "Bring your Black ass here" in the above event, one could argue that the African American male students were perhaps correct in asserting that my use of language was not reflective of a Black language style. As linguistic research suggests, lexical, syntactic, phonological, and rhetorical differences exists among African American Language speakers. In the above event, features such as exaggerated pronunciations of words by employing the use of stress, pitch, and a rhythmic song-like voice quality perhaps could have been utilized to produce a more Black style of language. Thus, terms pronounced in their entirety such as "Bring your," would be pronounced as "Bring *yo*'" when utilizing a Black style. In addition, the word structure of the phrase could have also been problematic for some of the African American male students. Hence, the phrase, "Bring your Black ass here" perhaps could have been pronounced as, "Git 'yo Black ass o'va he-ah!" Moreover, Smitherman (1977) talks about the use of tonal semantics, specifically, intonational contouring in the Black language style (she used the term, Po-Lice as an example). Again, in assessing the profanity phrase above, aspects of the word "Black" and certainly the term "ass" would have incorporated this style, being pronounced as "B-L-L-ACK," with emphasis on "ck," while "ass" would have been pronounced, "A-s-s-S," with emphasis on the "s" ending. Thus the phrase, 'Git yo BLACK a-s-s-s o'VA HEah!, could perhaps have been more appropriately expressed.

One could also argue that even in terms of my use of mannerisms in employing the expression, such use could have incorporated a tone or air of seriousness by pronouncing the expression through clenched teeth and also with pauses in between

words as a way to emphasis my authority. From the perspective of gender, given I am an African American female who hurled this statement at an African American male, there could have also been additional aspects of mannerisms involved, where I would have utilized other bodily movements (e.g., a particular stance involving my head and upper torso as well as a hand/hip posture). These are at least some of the ways in which I recall the expression being used within my own African American community.

What is important in the above field note is that the African American participants seem to suggest that there is a "way" or a "sound" to using African American Language in particular African American communities. Given that I did not "cuss" and use language in the classroom in general as expected or according to their cultural expectations, I was positioned as someone "not from the hood," and therefore someone who in essence could not communicate as other African Americans from similar communities. This example also begins to illuminate the findings: (a) prosodic features of African American Language (i.e., "talking/sounding" Black) are important in affirming African American culture and identity and in positioning one as an African American Language speaker; and (b) "Talking/sounding" Black was the expected norm for some African American Language speakers, particularly those of African American descent, during nonlanguage learning situations in the classroom. Event 3 provides additional students' perspectives concerning particular "ways" or styles of talk in African American Language use.

Introducing Event 3:"I ain't neva sca'ed!"

It is the beginning of class and Mrs. Kent has rearranged[16] the classroom. The students are all standing at the back of the classroom, waiting to receive new seating assignments. As the students continue their wait, a conversation regarding language use emerges when Malcolm, an African American male student, complains about the temperature in the classroom. He states, "It's hot back here!" While contemplating students' new seating arrangements, Mrs. Kent flippantly responds, "Don't breathe!" Laughter is prompted from the other students in response to Mrs. Kent' comment in which case I also laugh but respond, "Malcolm, even I caught that one!"

Irritated with my response, Malcolm replies, "(*suckteeth*) even I caught that one!" (*mimicking me while utilizing a higher-pitched voice*) "with yo' White soundin' butt!" As the other students roar with laughter, both Mrs. Kent and I take the opportunity to question Malcolm more about his obvious irritation with my use of language. This questioning in turn leads to a detailed conversation among the students, which is illustrated below in the following transcript.

Event 3: (Field note) "I ain't neva sca'ed!"

February 10, 2004

Transcription Key

"xxx"= student's use of mimicry
[ ] = speech overlap in conversation
[*italics*] = information inserted for clarity
(*italics*) = additional information
Wo-o-o-r-r-d = syllable or vowel elongation
(.00) = pause in seconds
(.) = brief pause

[16] Mrs. Kent periodically rearranged the students' seating as a form of classroom management and also as a means to accommodate video taped class sessions.

»word« = tempo speeds up
+word+ = extremely high pitch
CAPITALS = emphasis or accentuation on syllables or words
↑ = increase in voice pitch or tone
↓ = decrease in voice pitch or tone
Word-word-word = rhythmic and lyrical use of language; stated in a song-like fashion.

KD: Brittany Kent, African American female teacher
CW: Cynthia Williams, African American female researcher
CT: Deidra Twain, African American female student
KM: Kendrick Moon, African American male student
RW: Raelon Watkins, African American male student
MW: Malcolm Wells, African American male student

Tape Count 20

1. CW: How am I suppose to say it Malcolm?

2. KD: I think it's just the sound of your voice. . . Malcolm, now tell-us-WHY does-she-[sound-like she White to you? (*lyrical, song-like quality*)

3. CW: Yeah, how- why] do I sound like that (.) to you Malcolm?

4. MW: (*unintelligible*) cause she just talk, just talk it's N-A-A-Gg-in'!

5. RW: Proper!

6. KD: It's NAGgin'? Cause you not use to it?

7. MW: Her voice, it's nag-gin'.

8. CW: My voice is nagging you?

9. MW: (*whispere(d)* She sound like my (*unintelligible*) gran'mamma.

10. KD: Now wait a minute! She does not sound like your gran'mamma!

11. SS: (*laughter and talk*)

12. DT: Yo' gran mamma sounds proper then! (*laughs*)

13. SS: (*Everyone talking; laughter*)

14. MW: (*unintelligible*) but you just it's just like N-A-A-G-g-in'!

15. CW: Ok (*others talking*) (.01) s-o-o (.) when I talk proper, I'm nagging you?

16. DT: (*burst of laughter!)*

17. CW: +WHA-A-AT!+, WHAT Deidra!

18. SS: (*a lot of laughter!*)

19. MW: " ↑ I'm nagging you! ↓ " (*mimicking Cynthia's speech; emphasis in pronunciation and appears to be utilizing a different voice*)

20. KD: Deidra, does she talk proper to you?

21. MW: Y[ou need to listen to her!

22. DT: She talk regular to me.]

23. KD: She talk regular to me, too. Kendrick say you don't.

24. SS: (*more talk; Mrs. Kent also talking*.)

25. KM: (*unintelligible*) to have a contest.

26. KD: ok, we'll give it to you but WHY does she talk proper?–I mean, she talk proper to you or she doesn't?

27. KM: She do.

28. KD: [WHY do you say that?

29. CW: DEFINE that?] »Whad ja' mean« (.02) when you say I talk proper?

30. KM: The way she talk! She like, "define this!" and "look up this!" *(mimicry)*

31. KD: Wh- was she (*stuttering*)–I me-e-a-an?

32. KM: "look up"

33. CW: Is it the WA-AY I pronounce [my wo-o-o-o-r-rds? (*song-like*)

34. KD: Oh it's the way, the way she pronounce

35. SS: (*several students commenting*)

36. RW: it's the word AND the way she pronounce her words!

37. CW: how, how do I pronounce] my words?

38. KD: [He say most of the words (*laughs*)

39. KM: We can give,] we can give you a slang word and you'll still say it proper.

40. CW: Ok. Give me a slang word; let me see.

41. RW: We'll give you something negative and you *(unintelligible*)

42. CW: WHAT! (*laughter*)

43. SS: (*laughter: additional talk: footsteps are heard as Ms. Kent walks away from the interaction*)

44. CW: (*laughter*)

45. KD: (*from a distance: unintelligible*) I don't think so, ya'll need ta read . . . tell 'em, say "I-ain't-NE'VA-SCA'E-E-E-D!" (*rhythmic and lyrical*).

46. CW: (*laughter*)

47. KM: See LOOK! See [say it!

48. SS: Say it!]

49. CW: (*laughter*) say, "I ain't ne'va-sca'ed" *("ne'va sca'ed" stated song-like*)

50. KM: "I ain't neva sca'ed! I ain't never scared!" (*mimicking Cynthia but taking on a different tone of voice; Student has made the mimicry into a song*).

51. SS: (*a lot of laughter!*)

52. DT: (*burst of laughter*)

53. KM: Then she look retarded when she tryin' to say it. º"I am never sca'ed!"º

(*whispers mimicry but taking on a very different, more serious voice*); "I (.) am (.) never (.) sca'ed!"(*change in voice, seems to be imitating a stereotypical voice of a White person*)

54. CW: Now I KNOW I didn't say it like that!

55. KM: ["Dude, I am NE-Ver sca'ed!" WOOO! (mimicry continues; *seems to utilize a stereotypical voice of a White male beach surfer*)

56. MW: "I am never scare-ERD"] (*mimicking Cynthia*). YEAH! (*mimicking and teasing continues; different voice/tone*).

57. RW: (*unintelligible*)

58. CW: Ok but wait a minute! THAT'S what you in here learning, right?

59. KM: Yeah DUDE! Ha Ha Ha Ha (*laughter and voice are stereotypical of a White male beach surfer*) ["I am NE-VER sca'ed!" (*teasing Cynthia; keep utilizing stereotypical voice.)*

60. CW: Right Malcolm?

61. KM: that's] with a bone crusher! (*still taking on the stereotypical voice of a White male beach surfer*) "I ain't never sca'ed" (*continuing to tease Cynthia*)

62. SS: (*a lot of talk and laughter, unintelligible; conversation moves to Language use and identification of "hood" areas in the community.)*

Table 6 presents a chart of the transcript segment from Event 3, "I ain't neva sca'ed!"

Contextualizing Event 3

In this field note, the students are standing and waiting to receive new seating assignments from the classroom teacher. As noted above, while waiting, a revealing conversation evolves when Malcolm, an African American male student, provides a retort to my teasing. Given that the issue of "sounding" White and "sounding" Black had surfaced on several occasions during conversations and interactions with students in the

Table 6

Event 3:"I ain't neva sca'ed" Identity Analysis

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity position-ing: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
1	Cynthia	How am I suppose to say it, Malcolm?	Malcolm, an African American male student, challenges Cynthia's use of language.		Cynthia positions Malcolm as an authority on AAL
2	Mrs. Kent	I think it's just the sound of your voice. . . Malcolm, now tell us why does she sound like she White?	The teacher responds saying that it is an issue of sound.	Also in her response, she echoes Malcolm's earlier comment about my sound, which positioned me as not Black.	The teacher positioning herself and Malcolm as an authority
3	Cynthia	Yeah, how- why do I sound like that to you Malcolm?	Again, questions Malcolm about sound.		Cynthia positions Malcolm as authority
4	Malcolm	(*unintelligible*) cause she just talk, just talk – it's nagging!	Malcolm not only refers to the way that Cynthia sounds as not Black, but also as "nagging."	Malcolm signals White identity and suggest that sounding White is "nagging."	Malcolm positions himself as an authority on AAL
5	Raelon	Proper!		Raelon also suggests that sounding White is proper. Signaling White identity.	Raelon also positions himself as an authority on AAL

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
6	Mrs. Kent	It's nagging? Cause you not use to it?		The teacher reiterates Malcolm's nagging claim in reference to sounding White. It is inferred that by posing the questions, the teacher asks students to make a comparison between Black and White sounds. She might also raise a question of exposure and infer that perhaps these students, or Malcolm in particular, have not interacted with a Black person who sounds White.	Teacher defers to students
7	Malcolm	Her voice, it's nagging.		Malcolm now identifies Cynthia's voice as nagging which signals a White identity and positions Cynthia as someone who sounds White and not Black.	Malcolm positions himself as an authority
8	Cynthia	My voice is nagging to you?		Cynthia challenges Malcolm's positioning of her voice as nagging and sounding White.	

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
9	Malcolm	She sound like my (*unintelligible*) gran'mamma.	Malcolm appears to have a standard for a Black sound which he uses as a way to measure who does or does not have a Black sound (i.e., me and his grandmother).	Again a comparison of Black and White sounds. Malcolm suggests Cynthia sounds like his grandmother, who also sounds White.	Malcolm
10	Mrs. Kent	Now wait a minute! She does not sound like your gran'mamma!	The teacher uses a Black language style to make her comment.	Teacher contests Malcolm's comparison to his grandmother and suggests that Cynthia's "sound" does not sound like Malcolm's grandmother. Teacher further positions Cynthia as someone who sounds White.	Teacher positions herself again as authority
11	Several Students	(*laughter and talk*)	The teacher's use of a Black sound causes the students to laugh in agreement		
12	Deidra	Yo' gran mamma sounds proper then! (*laughs*)		Deidra who has never heard Malcolm's grandmother suggests that Malcolm's grandmother sounds proper if she sounds like Cynthia.	
13	Several Students	(*Everyone talking; laughter*)			

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
14	Malcolm	(*unintelligible*) but you just–it's just like NAGging!		Malcolm again reiterates the fact that Cynthia's voice sounds nagging and therefore White to him.	Malcolm again positioned as an authority
15	Cynthia	Ok (*others talking*), so when I talk proper, I'm nagging you?		Cynthia continues her questioning as a means to challenge Malcolm's assessment of her language and her identity as sounding White.	Cynthia defers to Malcolm as authority
16	Deidra	(*burst of laughter!)*		Deidra laughs in response to Cynthia's use of language. Deidra's laughter signals that Cynthia immediately used language that has a White sound. Deidra's laughter appears to validate Malcolm's claim of Cynthia sounding White.	Deidra positions herself as an authority. She also reiterates Malcolm's claim and authority
17	Cynthia	What, what Deidra!		Cynthia trying to get Deidra's to explain her laughter.	Cynthia positions Deidra as authority
18	Several Students	(*a lot of laughter!*)		Students' laughter further validates Malcolm's claim.	Students validate Malcolm's position as authority on AAL

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
19	Malcolm	"I'm nagging you!" (*mimicking Cynthia's speech; emphasis in pronunciation and appears to be utilizing a higher-pitched voice*)		Malcolm mimics Cynthia's use of White language as a means to support his claim that Cynthia's voice has a White sound.	
20	Mrs. Kent	Deidra, does she talk proper to you?		Teacher now solicits Deidra's opinion on how Cynthia sounds, perhaps as a result of Deidra's laughter which appears to validate Malcolm's claim.	Deidra positioned as an authority with Malcolm by the teacher
21	Malcolm	Y[ou need to listen to her!		Malcolm affirms his position by saying the way Cynthia's voice sounds is evidence of her sounding White.	
22	Deidra	She talk regular to me.]	One might infer that regular means sounding Black.	Deidra offers an alternative perspective to Malcolm's suggesting that Cynthia sounds regular.	Deidra again positioned as an authority.
23	Mrs. Kent	She talk regular to me, too. Kendrick say you don't.	The teacher agrees with Deidra's assessment of Cynthia's sound as regular which might also infer that by doing so, signals Black identity.	The teacher inserts that Kendrick disagrees.	Teacher, Deidra, and Kendrick positioned as authority

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
24	Several Students	(*more talk; Mrs. Kent also talking*.)		The students have a debate over Cynthia's sound. By doing so, they also debate if her sound signals Black identity or White identity.	
25	Kendrick	(*unintelligible*) to have a contest.	Kendrick asks for a contest as a means to test his and Malcolm's argument regarding Cynthia's sound which signals a Black or White identity.		Kendrick and Malcolm
26	Mrs. Kent	ok, we'll give it to you but WHY does she talk proper? I mean, she talk proper to you or she doesn't?	Teacher agrees to Kendrick's request but also requests him to support his stance pertaining to Cynthia's proper language use.	By doing so, the teacher is asking Kendrick to justify his positioning of Cynthia as sounding White.	Teacher defers to Kendrick as authority
27	Kendrick	She DO.		Kendrick continues to assert without support that Cynthia sounds proper which signals White identity.	Kendrick positions himself as an authority on distinguishing between White and Black sounds.
28	Mrs. Kent	[Why do you say that?		Teacher again asks Kendrick to support his argument that Cynthia sounds proper.	Mrs. Kent affirms Kendrick's position as an authority on sounding Black.

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
29	Cynthia	DEFINE that?] What do you mean (.02) when you say I talk proper?		Cynthia also request Kendrick to support his stance that she sounds White.	Cynthia affirms Kendrick's position as well.
30	Kendrick	The way she talks! She like, "define this!" and "look up this!" *(mimicry)*		Kendrick mimics Cynthia's use of White language as a means to support his claim that Cynthia's voice has a White sound which signals White identity.	Kendrick again positions himself as authority.
31	Mrs. Kent	Wh- was she (*stuttering*) -- I me-e-a-a-n?		The teacher does not understand Kendrick's use of mimicry to position Cynthia as sounding White.	Teacher affirms Kendrick's position as an authority
32	Kendrick	"look up"		Kendrick repeats "look up" to continue to substantiate his claim that Cynthia sounds White.	
33	Cynthia	Is it the WAY I pronounce [my w-o-o-r-r-ds?		Given Kendrick's use of mimicry, Cynthia asks for clarity to better understand how she is positioned as sounding White.	Cynthia too affirms Kendrick's positioning as authority

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
34	Mrs. Kent	Oh–it's the way, the way she pronounce		The teacher begins to understand how Kendrick is positioning Cynthia as sounding White.	
35	Several Students	(*several students commenting*)			
36	Raelon	it's the word AND the way she pronounce her words!		Raelon comments that it is the words that Cynthia uses but also the way that Cynthia pronounces her words which causes her to sound White, therefore signaling White identity.	Raelon positions himself as an authority
37	Cynthia	how, how do I pronounce] my words?		Cynthia continues to seek clarity as to how she is positioned as someone sounding White.	Cynthia affirms Raelon's position as an authority on sounding Black
38	Mrs. Kent	[He say most of the words (*laughs*)			
39	Kendrick	We can give,] we can give you a slang word and you'll still say it proper.	Kendrick associates slang words with having a Black sound.	Kendrick responds that because Cynthia talks proper and White, she is not able to speak slang. Kendrick states that she messes up slang words.	Kendrick positions himself as an authority

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
40	Cynthia	Ok, give me a slang word; let me see.		Cynthia still trying to contest sounding White	Cynthia positions Kendrick and other students as authority figures on sounding Black
41	Raelon	We'll give you something negative and you *(unintelligible*)	Students attempt to challenge Cynthia's sound by giving her a slang term to see if she can sound Black.		Students are positioned as authority
42	Cynthia	WHAT! (*laughter*)	Cynthia contest being given negative and hard core "slang" to test her competence.		
43	Several Students	(*laughter: additional talk:*)			
44	Cynthia	(*laughter*)			
45	Mrs. Kent	(*walking away: unintelligible*) I don't think so, ya'll need ta read. . .tell 'em, say "I ain't NEVA SCA'E-E-E-D!" (*rhythmic and lyrical*).	Teacher attempts to move students to a different task by sounding Black.	Teacher validates her identity as a Black person by sounding Black.	
46	Cynthia	(*laughter*)			
47	Kendrick	See LOOK! See– [say it!	Kendrick challenge Cynthia to say the term using a Black sound		Kendrick positions self as authority

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
48	Several Students	Say it!]	Students reiterate challenge		
49	Cynthia	(*laughter*) say, "I ain't neva sca'ed?"	Cynthia tries to sound Black while stating the phrase. In doing so, Cynthia tries to signal her Black identity.		
50	Kendrick	"I ain't neva sca'ed! I ain't never scared!" (*mimicking Cynthia but taking on a different tone of voice; Student has made the mimicry into a song*).		Kendrick mimics Cynthia expression as a way to affirm that she did not say the expression using a Black sound but a White one which does not signal Black identity.	
51	Several Students	(*a lot of laughter!*)		Students laughter support Kendrick's stance.	Students position Kendrick as authority
52	Deidra	(*burst of laughter*)			
53	Kendrick	Then she look retarded when she tryin' to say it. "I am never sca'ed!" (*whispers mimicry but taking on a very different, more serious voice*); "I (*pause*) am (*pause*) never (*pause*) sca'ed!" (*change in voice, seems to be imitating a stereotypical voice of a White person*)		Kendrick uses mimicry to continue to position Cynthia as someone who sounds White and not Black.	

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
54	Cynthia	Now I know I didn't say it like that!		Cynthia continues to try to claim her Black identity and contest the White identity that is being thrust upon her by Kendrick and the other students.	
55	Kendrick	["Dude, I am NE-Ver sca'ed!" WOOO! (*mimicry continues; seems to utilize a stereotypical voice of a White male beach surfer*)		Kendrick further reiterates his point of Cynthia sounding White by mimicking Cynthia. He uses language and a sound which he associates with White identity.	
56	Malcolm	"I am never scared"] (*mimicking Cynthia*). YEAH! (*mimicking and teasing continues; different voice/tone*).		Malcolm joins in on the mimicry as a way to further validate his and Kendrick's point that Cynthia sounds White.	
57	Raelon	(*unintelligible*)			
58	Cynthia	Ok but wait a minute! That's what you in here learning, right?		Cynthia still continues to contest the White identity. While she is focused on words and Standard English, she is unable to grasp that the students are instead talking about sound.	

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Sounding Black	Identity positioning: Who is Black versus who is not Black	Authority: Who is positioning
59	Kendrick	Yeah DUDE! Ha Ha Ha Ha (*laughter and voice are stereotypical of a White male beach surfer*) ["I am NEVER sca'ed!" (*teasing Cynthia; keep utilizing stereotypical voice.)*		Kendrick continues to insert his claim by using a sound that he associates with White identity.	

classroom, Mrs. Kent, the African American teacher, and I had previously discussed engaging the students in a whole class conversation surrounding the issue of talking Black and talking White. Nevertheless, with Malcolm's comment, "with yo' White sounding butt," both the teacher and I decide to use this opportunity to see if the students would clarify their previous comments concerning the issue of "talking and/or sounding" Black or White. This conversation with the African American teacher and students is important given that it reveals the role of prosody in African American Language and its relation in signaling membership with an African American community.

One of the more interesting aspects of this interview involves the students' use of indexicality (cf. Scollon and Scollon, 2003) to substantiate claims of Whiteness in my language use. As Scollon and Scollon (2003) note, indexicality involves the various ways in which people can signal meaning to others (p. 25). For example, while Scollon and Scollon (2003) discuss the use of signs in society which "point to actions in the social

order using visual semiotics to relate these actions to places on earth" (p.25), they also discuss the role of language and how it can index "sociopolitical" (p. 25) and "sociocultural conception[s] of the spaces we live in" (p. 36). Thus, in examining the above transcript from the perspective of indexicality, several African American students point to or index concepts of Whiteness in my language. The following analysis examines the students' views.

Line-by-line analysis. To begin the conversation, in lines 1-3 the classroom teacher and I ask Malcolm to clarify his statement concerning the issue of "sounding" White. Upon offering an initial assessment, "I think it's just the sound of your voice," Mrs. Kent, the African American teacher questions Malcolm about his assessment. She states, "Malcolm, now tell us why does she [Cynthia] sound like she White to you?" In examining both the classroom teacher's and my questions, it would appear that we both position Malcolm as someone who has the authority to determine who sounds Black and who does not. My use of the term "suppose" in line 1 indicates that there is some obligation that I have neglected in my use of "sounding Black." In line 2, the teacher appears to agree that I have not met my obligation with regard to "sound" in using African American Language and then quickly assesses that "the sound" of my voice is the problem. The teacher's response indicates that she also positions herself also as an authority in determining who is or is not an African American Language speaker.

In offering an assessment of the "White" qualities of my voice, Malcolm provides several reasons. In lines 4 and 7, he states that my "talk" and "voice" is "nagging" and notes in line 9 that it is reminiscent of his grandmother's. In examining Malcolm's comparison of my language use to that of his grandmother's, several inferences can be

made. One would imagine that Malcolm's grandmother was more than likely an authority figure in his life. In one of his interviews, he discussed how his grandmother frequently corrected his use of slang language during their interactions (Interview, 02-04-04). The fact that he mentions that my use of language sounds "White," is "nagging" and a reminder of his grandmother's perhaps says a lot about how he views his grandmother's use of language in her interactions with him. Given that she was an authority figure, I would imagine that Malcolm's grandmother utilized language and reinforced more standard usages of language in her interactions with Malcolm as a way to increase his mastery of Standard English and thus promote his academic success in school. However, in her correcting Malcolm's slang language while reinforcing a proper, White language style, Malcolm's grandmother perhaps unintentionally placed a higher value on what Malcolm sees as a White "sound" or style of language. Interestingly, Malcolm's resentment to these "White" qualities reflect historical tensions in American society embedded in issues of racism.

As reflected throughout the transcript, both Mrs. Kent and I attempt to get Malcolm and several of the students to articulate the specific qualities of my voice that contribute to the "White" sound. Three other students are also questioned by Mrs. Kent about the properness of my voice as a result of their laughter or comments in response to Malcolm's argument. In both Raelon's (line 5) and Deidra's (line 12) assessments, they note that the problem occurs due to the "proper" sound of my voice. Raelon, an African American male, notes that my talk is "proper" (line 5), and that the words that I use and the way that I pronounce such words (line 36) also contribute to my voice taking on a "White" sound. Deidra, an African American female, latterly comments that I "talk

regular" (line 22) though she remarks earlier when the comparison to Malcolm's grandmother is made, "Yo' gran'mamma sounds proper then!" in line 12. In the comparison to Malcolm's grandmother, Deidra's comment though she has never heard Malcolm's grandmother suggests that Malcolm's grandmother must sound "proper" if she sounds like me (Cynthia). Deidra's frequent bursts of laughter (lines 16 and 52) were also important given they appear to supplement Malcolm's argument pertaining to the "White" sound or qualities of my voice.

In examining the students' other assessments pertaining to the White "sound" or qualities of my voice, they provide a powerful example through the use of mimicry, beginning in line 19 of the transcript. The use of mimicry by Malcolm and Kendrick, another African American male student, sheds an interesting perspective pertaining to the complexity and role of prosody in signaling a White or Black identity.

One of the challenges the students experienced in their assessment of my language involved articulating the specific features of my voice that in their opinion emphasized a White sound. Though the students did cite broad features such as my "talk" and "voice," they still were unable to pinpoint the exact characteristics or qualities of my voice that emanated a White style. However, in their use of mimicry, the students were able to illustrate their perception of my language use. In line 19 of the transcript, Malcolm mimics my use of the expression "I'm nagging you" as a way to illustrate my White voice. In his mimicry, he adapts a different tone of voice and appears to pronounce the sounds and syllables of words such as "nagging" and "you." Malcolm provides this example as a means to support his claim that my voice has a White sound. In lines 25-62, Kendrick, another African American male student in the classroom, enters the

conversation and attempts to provide even more evidence to the White sound of my voice. After concurring with many of the other student's statements regarding the properness of my voice (line 27), Kendrick further explains that the problem results due to the way that I talk (line 30), in which case he then provides an example. Through mimicry, he states, "She like, 'define this!' and 'look up this!'" In examining Kendrick comments in lines 30 and 32, one could argue that perhaps my use of a researcher's discourse (i.e., "define this"), which I used in an attempt to get the students to explicitly state some of their ideas, caused Kendrick to assess a White quality to my voice. However, one could also argue that like Malcolm, Kendrick's use of mimicry highlights an underlying sound system of prosody. In his mimicry, Kendrick also utilizes a different tone of voice to illustrate my use of White language. In line 33, he appears to emphasize my pronunciation of "define this!" and "look up this!" Whereas it may be unclear whether Kendrick's assessment in line 30 emphasized the actual words that I used or the manner in which I used such words, nonetheless his comments in lines 39-62 makes clear his attention to issues of sound in my voice. In line 39, Kendrick states, "we [the African American students] can give you [Cynthia] a slang word and you [Cynthia] will still say it proper," suggesting that "slang" and "proper" usages of language are pronounced differently. In line 40, I ask the students to provide a slang word as a means to see whether they were referring to the sound of my voice or the actual words that I used. All of the students were listening in and, as a result in lines 41-43, attempt to come up with a word or phrase that would illustrate their point. After realizing the students were actually referring to the way that I pronounce my words (see line 34), Mrs. Kent blurts out, "I

ain't neva sca'eed!" (line 45), utilizing what the students perceive as a Black language style and sound.

In examining Mrs. Kent's use of "I ain't NE-VA SCA'E-E-E-D," it would appear that she utilized several features of African American Language. As Smitherman (1977) suggests, African Americans use features such as "voice rhythm and vocal inflection to convey meaning in Black communication" (p. 134). Mrs. Kent's exaggerated pronunciation of "NE-VA" and "SCA'E-E-E-D" by employing the use of stress, pitch, and a rhythmic song-like voice perhaps positioned her as someone who could sound Black which consequently validated her identity as a Black person among the students. In lines 47-48, the students validate Mrs. Kent's use of the phrase and then challenge me to articulate the phrase similar to a manner in which Mrs. Kent had just articulated it. In line 49, in an effort to sound Black and thus also signal my Black identity, I take the challenge and say, "I ain't neva sca'ed." However, unlike the African American teacher, given that I fail saying the expression as the African American participants expected me to say it, both Kendrick and Malcolm immediately mimic my use of language in lines 50-59 as a means to position me as someone who sounds White and not Black. In lines 51-52, the students' laughter further substantiates Malcolm and Kendrick's claims that I sound White, which therefore means I am projecting what they believe to be a White identity. Throughout the remaining transcript, Kendrick and Malcolm continue their teasing of my language use, mimicking my speech style and tone of voice while using a sound that they associate with Whiteness.

This event illustrates or is a further finding of: (a) the central role of prosody and its relation to one's social and cultural identities, and (b) the prosodic features of African

American Language and its relations to identity formation. Moreover, this example also illustrates that "talking and/or sounding Black" was the expected norm for many of the African American student participants. Equally important, this field note illustrates that the African American teacher is very aware of the prosodic features of African American Language, in which case she provides an example as a means to signal her affiliation and/or affinity with the African American students' culture.

Part I Summary

The three aforementioned field notes reveal a complexity pertaining to the issue of prosody in African American Language use. While word choices and the use of nonverbal cues and expression are important markers in communicating in many African American communities, these field notes perhaps illuminate the significance of other important contributing factors with regard to African American Language use and identity formation, more specifically, a particular African American identity. Clearly the African American participants expected African Americans to be able to utilize terms and expression while incorporating a Black language style or "sound."

It is also important to note the significance of the students' use of mimicry throughout the three events. In all of the events, the African American participants utilized mimicry as a way to illustrate and/or critique cultural language expectations.

Given the use of mimicry and the relation of prosody in African American Language use to social and cultural identity formation, the purpose of Part II of this chapter will be to explore student's definitions concerning the issue of talking and/or sounding Black and White as well as discuss their perspective with regard to the

significance of adopting a Black language style within the classroom and/or school environment.

Part II: The "Sound" of Blackness

In Part I, given that the issue of prosody and its relation to African American Language use surfaced from the three aforementioned events, the purpose of Part II is to further explore the issue of prosody in African American Language and its relation to students' social and cultural identities.

One of the views that are commonly believed about many African American students and academic achievement is that such students create an oppositional identity (cf. Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004) to dominant White culture that in effect impacts their academic success in many traditional school environments. One of the major premises of this theory argues that many African American Language student speakers–particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are against speaking proper Standard English (Ogbu, 2004, p. 22) given that it disaffirms Black culture and signals assimilation into a dominant White society. This study provides a different perspective of what students mean when referring to terms and expressions such as "talking and/or sounding White" and "talking and/or sounding Black." Additionally, findings from these data show contradictions and complexities with regard to Ogbu's (1986, 2004) argument concerning the issue of oppositional identity among some African American students, and cultural language frames of reference or the premises of "acting White" or "acting Black." Given that many of the students in this study articulated that it was literally the "sound" of one's voice (i.e., prosody and intonation) which signaled or

affirmed Black identity, the purpose of this section is to present the students' definitions concerning this issue of "sounding Black" as well as discuss its social and cultural relevance within the classroom and school environment as articulated by the participants in this research study.

Examining Prosody in African American Language

In this section I discuss issues related to the complexity of prosody in positioning one as an African American Language speaker. One of the findings from this study revealed that the students attributed a "sound" or a "tone of voice" with what they identified as "talking Black." As noted in the previous events, many of the African American participants problematized the use of African American Language by certain speakers, including myself. As discussed above, some of the African American participants questioned the use of African American Language by others due to word choices, slang, usages of mannerisms, and/or elements of prosody. In an effort to further explicate how the students used prosody, this section will document five focal students' perspectives concerning "talking/sounding" Black and White and discuss its relations with students' social identities within the context of the classroom and school environments.

In an effort to capture the students' perspectives, illustrations were created as a means to represent individually held models of students' conceptions of language variation and identity. The models illustrate the perspectives of focal students who were interviewed as a result of their discussions and/or participation in classroom events where discussions of Black and/or White usages of language occurred.

The Cultural Models

In examining figures 1 through 4, the models present an overview of the students' definitions and descriptions of Black and White uses of language as well as identity as documented over field notes and interviews. In creating these models, Quinn's (2005) concept of cultural analysis of talk was used. As noted in the three events in Part I, cultural keywords (i.e., "sounding Black," "sounding White," "proper," and "slang") emerged from the student's conversations in the classroom. During separate interviews with focal students, I questioned them about the meanings of these keywords. The models attempt to reflect the students' discussion of these cultural concepts and are helpful in examining the differences in the students' descriptions and documenting how they were defining "acting" and "talking" Black and/or White. The five students were selected based upon their participation in discussions of language in the classroom. As is also noted in the models, the students discussed people's ability to both "act" and "talk" Black and/or White.

With regard to the presentation style of the models, they are reduced in order to present them in their entirety while relevant sections of the illustrations are enlarged and discussed more fully in relation to the issue of prosody and social and cultural identities on subsequent pages. In interpreting the models, the categories–are presented as the students discussed the issues–are intended to be read in a top-downward fashion rather than across. For example, in Figure 1, Deidra characterizes a person's ability to "act Black." In her interview, one of the first things that she mentioned was that "White kids"

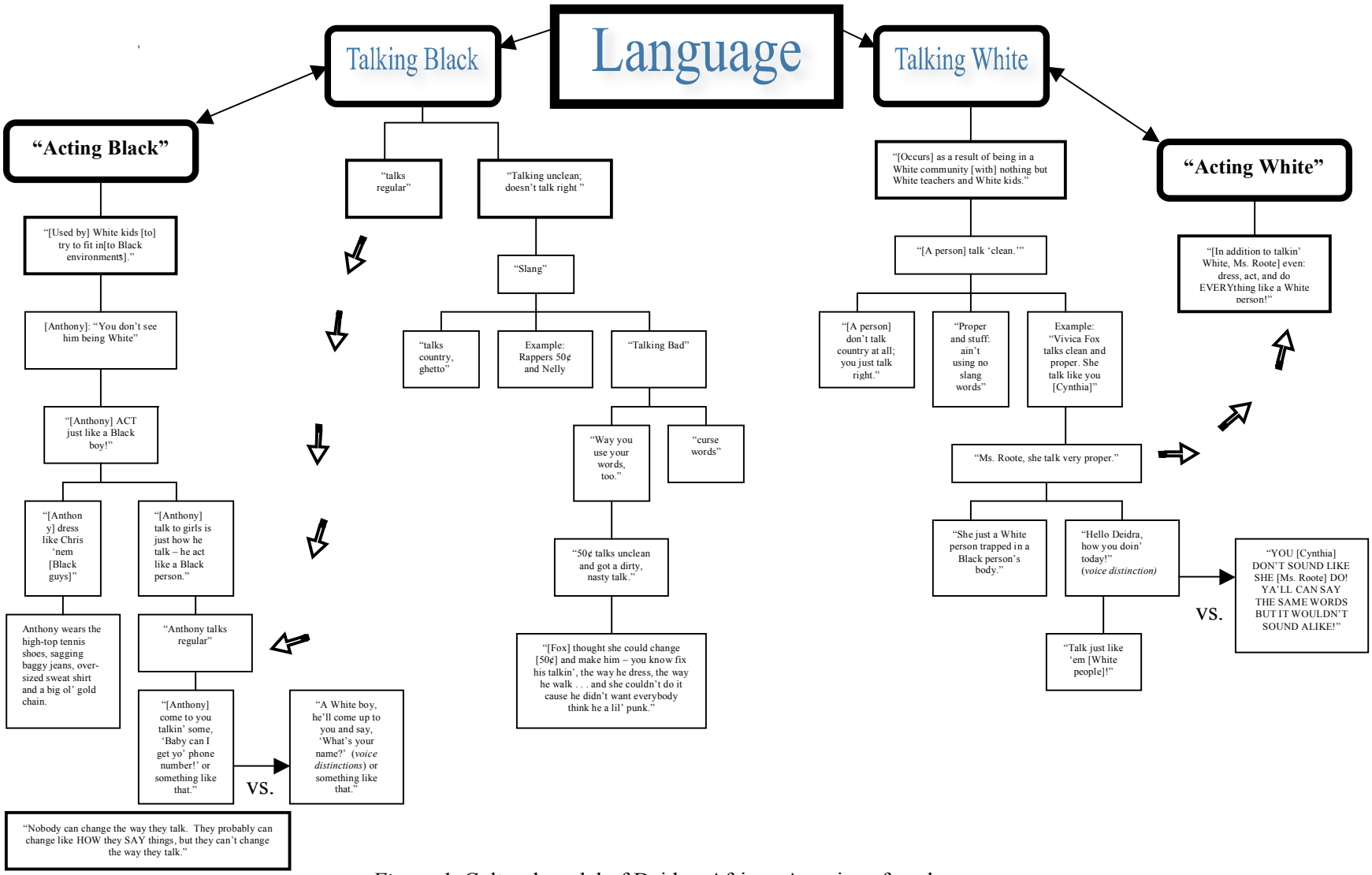

Figure 1. Cultural model of Deidra, African American female.

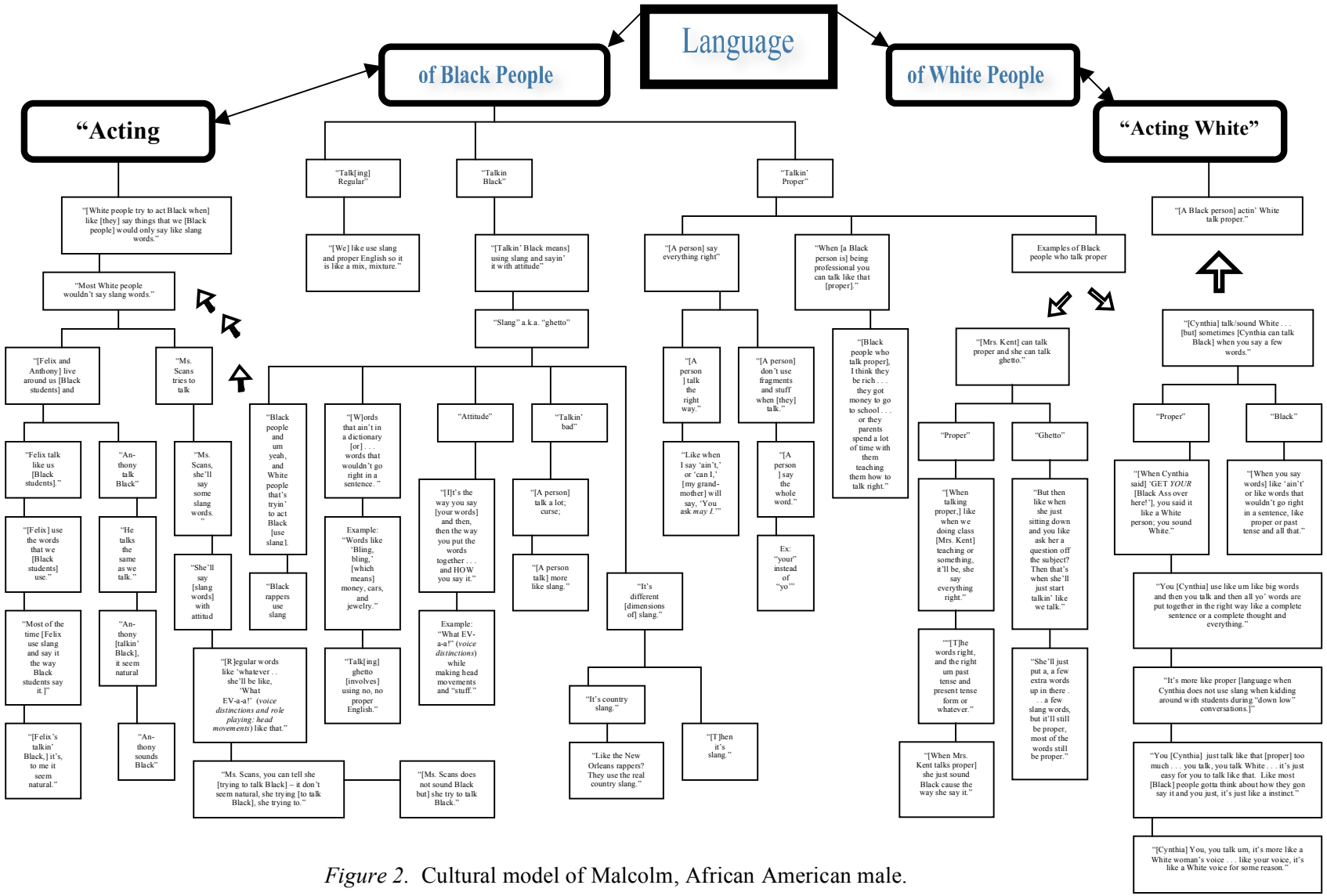

Figure 2. Cultural model of Malcolm, African American male.

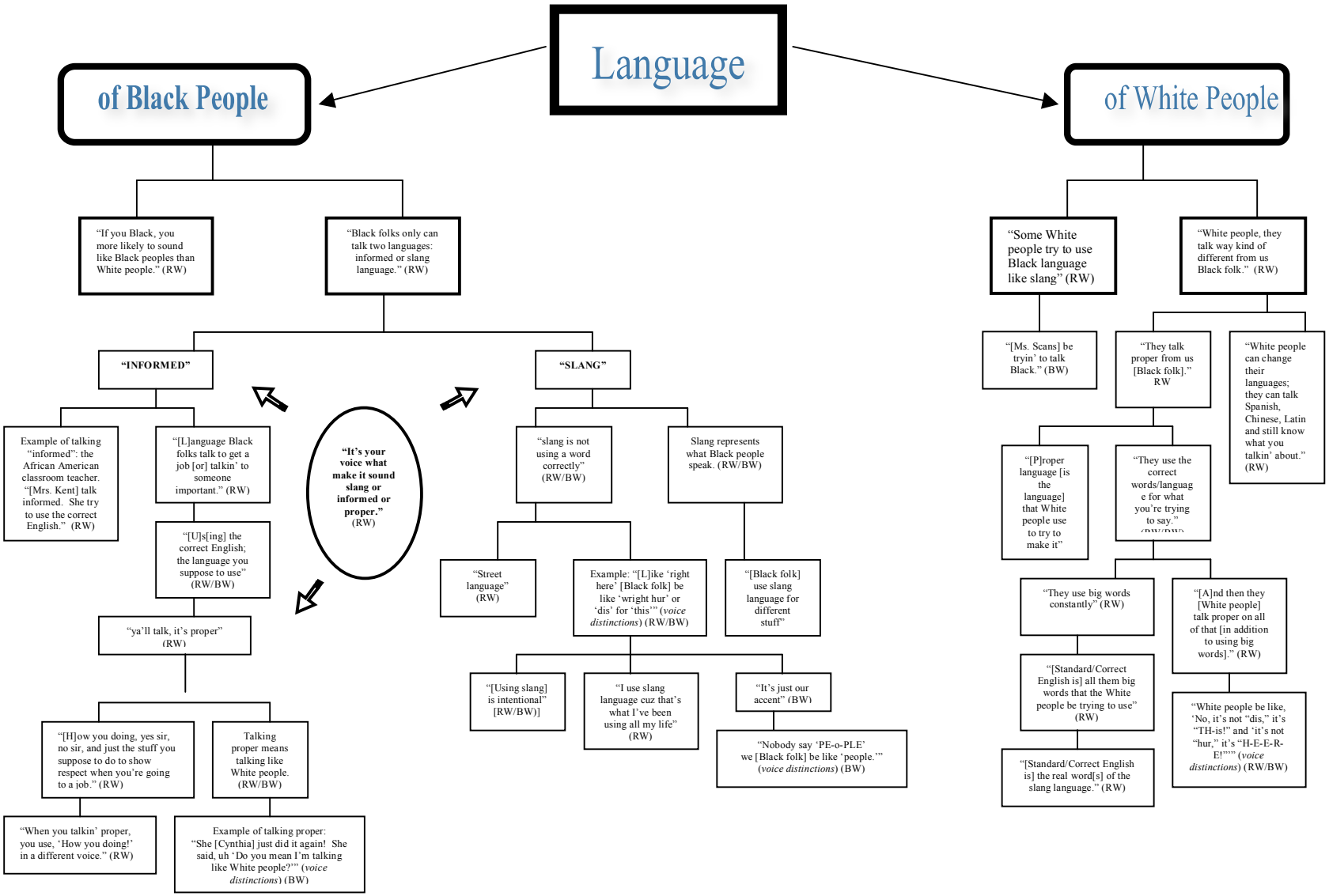

Figure 3. Cultural model of Raelon and Braelon, African American males.

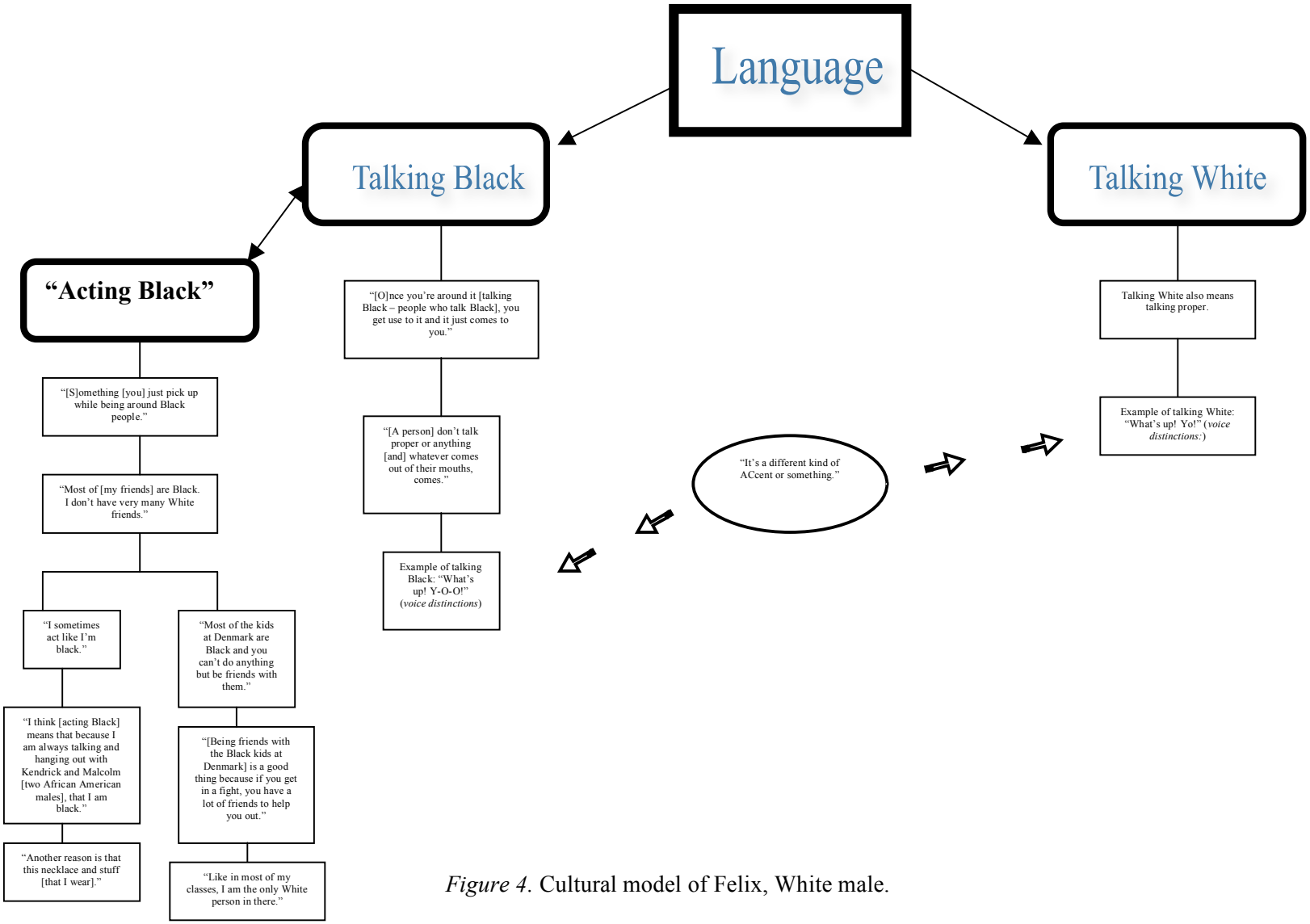

Figure 4. Cultural model of Felix, White male.

used their ability to "act Black" as a way to adapt or navigate predominantly African American environments. Further in the interview, Deidra then discusses a White male student at the school in which case she identifies several characteristics that he utilizes when "acting Black." In the model, under the category of "acting Black," Deidra's perspective is reflected and displayed in relation to her discussion throughout her interview.

Deidra, African American Female

Figure 1 represents the cultural model derived from interviews with Deidra, an African American female student. Deidra was an eighth-grade student who entered Denmark Middle School during the third term of her seventh-grade year upon moving to Popular City from a rural, predominantly White community. In an interview, Deidra noted that the move was prompted as a result of her parent's divorce, in which she and several siblings remained under the custody of her father, who was also a local minister in the community. Though Deidra would perhaps be considered a popular student among her peers, she was also prone to constant teasing by many of the African American students, particularly several African American male students in the language arts classroom. An office monitor, she was often referred to as a "good" student (Interview, 05-28-04) by the classroom teacher and office staff, but labeled among peers as someone who was "loud" (cf. Carter, 2001; Fordham, 1993) and often talked "a lot of trash" (Interview, 02-23-04). During several incidents in the language arts classroom, Deidra was sanctioned by the classroom teacher for her loud talking during disputes with several African American male students. In an interview, Deidra stated that she got along well

with the students at Denmark although at times she felt that the students there "just talk[ed] too much stuff" (Interview, 02-11-04).

Deidra was selected as a focal student given that she was privy to many of the discussions in the classroom concerning issues of "talking proper," and talking "White" and "Black" (see Event 3 in Part I). In addition, often during discussions, as the students teased me about the "proper" or "White" qualities of my language, Deidra would often laugh at some of my responses. In reviewing the transcripts, I learned that her laughter frequently signaled that I had utilized language adopting what she and other African American students considered a White cultural frame. Additionally, during interviews Deidra appeared to have some experience dealing with issues of language use across both Black and White environments. Deidra discussed how tensions regarding issues of talking "Black" or talking "White" was something that she felt she could relate to given she had lived in both predominantly White and Black environments. She also expressed concerns over the speech-related disabilities suffered by several family members, and stated that her daddy and brother both have "talking problems" like "they know how to say words but they just can't say certain words right" (Interview, 02-11-04). As a result, Deidra notes that she does not tease people "about the way that they talk."

Analysis. As Figure 1 illustrates, in Deidra characterizes language use as taking on two cultural frames. One she identifies as "White" and the other as "Black." In one of her discussions pertaining to African American adults' perceptions of African American Language and "proper" Standard English, Deidra addresses issues of prosody in her description of an African American office worker whom she notes speaks "very proper" (Figure 5 illustrates Deidra's perspective). Also in the discussion, Deidra reveals some of

the cultural language expectations she has of other African Americans; the excerpt following Figure 5 reflects Deidra's views.

To contextualize the Deidra's interview segment, prior to Deidra's discussion of Ms. Clasky (line 24), she discusses an observation that she makes while serving as an office monitor. Deidra discusses how another African American adult office worker responded to an African American students' use of African American Language in the school's main office. She noted that when the African American student used "slang" that the office staff told the African American student, "you need to watch how you talk up here at the office." Deidra criticized the African American office staff for sanctioning the African American student due to her use of "slang," particularly given the student did not use profanity.

In examining Deidra's conversation, she appears to espouse the belief that some African American adults perceive African American students negatively because of their use of African American Language. In Deidra's interview (02-11-04), she discusses some of the challenges of navigating both "slang" and "clean" usages of language across the social environment of the school. She notes that "slang" language was required as a way to prevent peers from "run[ning] over" a person, while "clean," proper language was more appropriate when communicating with adults since such use by African American students appears to impress and thus position students favorably.

Examining Prosody:"Ms.Clasky is just a White person trapped in a Black person's body." In Figure 5, the issue of prosody can be examined in Deidra's description of African Americans who "talk White." As reflected in the illustration, during the interview Deidra notes that the ability to talk "White" occurs as a result of

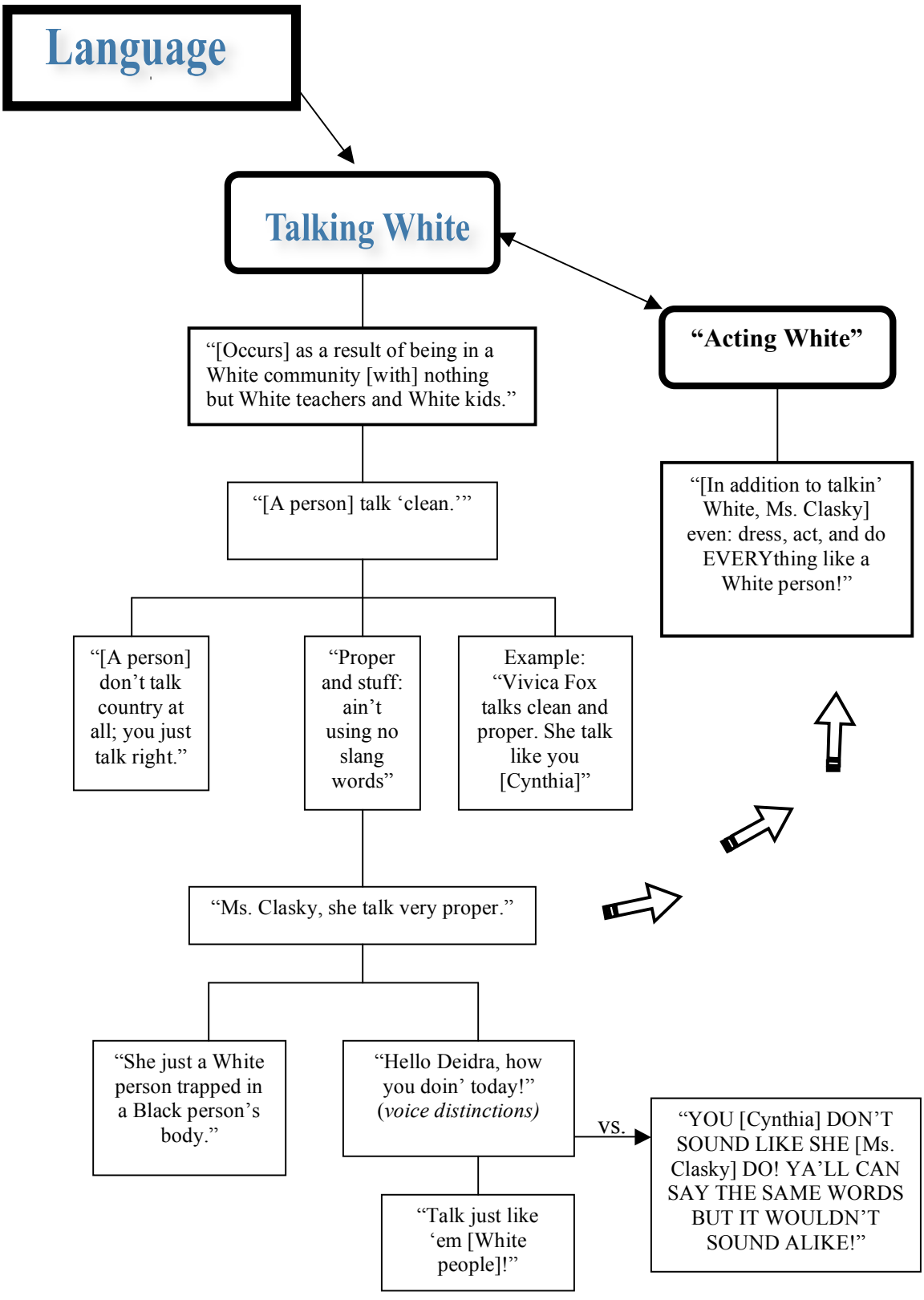

Figure 5. Deidra's language perspective.

Deidra's Excerpt (February 11, 2004)

Tape Count 153

1. CW: You said something about the adults say that, "ow, she talk so clean." Do you hear that?

2. DT: proper and stuff. I hear that sometimes.

3. CW: where do you hear it?

4. DT: everywhere I go.

5. CW: you hear it here at school?

6. DT: (*silence*) (.07)

7. CW: but you [hear it (.) when

8. DT: but I know teachers be payin' attention about a way a child talk cause I see–cause I'm an office monitor

9. CW: ok

10. DT: and I believe cause this child, she said something,

11. CW: mm hmm

12. DT: you know very–you know (*suckteeth*) and Ms. Laurence said something to her about her sayin' that.

13. CW: ok

14. DT: so I know adults be payin' attention to a way a child talk.

15. CW: ok, so what did she [*the child*] say? Did she just use slang or

16. DT: SLANG and she ain't use no cuss words!

17. CW: and what did Ms. Laurence do?

18. DT: (*suckteeth*) talk some, um, (*suckteeth*) "you need to watch how you talk up here at the office," but I don't like her anyway.

19. CW: so, Ms. Laurence got onto a student because she [used slang?

20. DT: YES! Yeah!]

21. CW: and you and it wasn't curse words?

22. DT: umm mmm (*no*)

23. CW: and you didn't think and you think Ms. Laurence you think she maybe thought bad of the girl because of the way she used?

24. DT: I guess so, LIKE MS. CLASKY, SHE TALK, she talk very proper.

25. CW: who is Ms. Clasky?

26. DT: she work in the office [(*unintelligible*).

27. CW: +AW!+] OH, OH, OH -- YEAH! Ok. I know her! Ok and, -- a-a-and (*stuttering*) so what do you think about her?

28. DT: Why they sayin' you talk, I think she talk (*laughs*) I on' know (*laughs*). She just a White person trapped in a Black person's body.

29. CW: (*laughs*) O-O-OH! +WAIT A MINUTE+! (*laughs*)! Define that! WHY do you say that about her?

30. DT: about who, she White?

31. CW: She a White person trapped in a Black person's body: now, you said you don't see it with me but you see it [with her?

32. DT: yes!

33. CW: What is] it that what *(stuttering)* how does she speak differently from me?

(.05)

34. CW: (*taps pencil on notebook*)

35. DT: (*laughs*)

36. CW: you gon have ta tell me–I wanna know that! (*laughs*)

37. DT: (.07) Ca-a-u-u-se she just u-u-u-h! (.09) she more highly than proper she way up there. I don't know how she [get it, but

38. CW: ok, what does] she do?

39. DT: but–what does she do?

40. CW: give me–how does she talk–give me an example?

41. DT: (.08) (*laughs*)

42. CW: (*laughs*) ok, you're gigglin'.

43. DT: (.11) she even dress, act, and do EVERYthang like a White [person

44. CW: ok but

45. DT: BUT I'M] JUST SAY-I-I-N-N! You know!

46. CW: But, but how does she talk–she dress like a White person? Well, what do you mean, "she dress like a White person?"

47. DT: (.06) like, " ↑ HelLO Deidra, how you doin' ta-day! ↓ " (mimicking *Ms. Clasky utilizing a very different, high-pitched tone of voice*). Stuff like that!

48. CW: (*laughing)*

49. DT: Talk just like 'em!

50. CW: And I don't say, "Hello Deidra, how-ya-doin'-tadae?" (*song-like with "how ya do'in tadae"*)

51. DT: +BUT YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE SHE DO! YA'LL CAN SAY THE SAME WORDS BUT IT WOULDN'T SOUND ALIKE!!+ (*yelling*)

52. CW: it wouldn't sound [alright

53. DT: No!]

54. CW: it wouldn't sound alike. OK

being submerged in a predominantly White environment. An element of "talking White," Deidra's definition of "talking proper," falls under the identification of a person who "talk[s] clean," in which case she notes that one "don't talk country at all" and "just talk

right." Also in her description of "talking clean," Deidra notes that a person talks "proper and stuff," which means they do not use "slang words." What is important about the illustration–and as reflected in the above excerpt–is that Deidra attributes a distinct "sound" to "very proper" usages of language.

In line 24 of the excerpt, Deidra notes that Ms. Clasky, an African American office worker at the school, "talk very proper" in which case she labels her as "a White person trapped in a Black person's body" (line 28). In ascribing a White identity to Ms. Clasky, while Deidra notes in line 43 that she also "even dress, act, and do everything like a White person," she seems to particularly emphasize Ms. Clasky's use of language as a defining factor. In line 47, Deidra mimics Ms. Clasky as a way to illustrate how she speaks and then notes in line 49 that she "talks just like 'em"–White people. Upon questioning Deidra further, she notes in lines 51-53 that while Ms. Clasky utilized the same words, the distinction however occurred in how she "sound."

It is important to recognize that as Deidra discusses the issue of sound that she also discusses other factors such as Ms. Clasky's clothing style. She also begins to cite other factors and begins challenging Ms. Clasky's affinity to Black identity. In challenging the office worker's Black identity, she begins ascribing a White identity to her because of her actions and clothing. She states that Ms. Clasky "acts more highly than proper" in which case Deidra notes that she did not understand how the office worker attained such status. One could argue that in discussing Ms. Clasky's style of clothing and actions, Deidra is also hinting at her socioeconomic status and/or educational attainment. In addition, one could also argue that generational issues are perhaps a factor in Deidra's assessment as well. Given that Ms. Clasky was an African American who

appeared to be in her late 20s, there could have been or rather she could have held different beliefs or views about her use of African American Language and Standard English across formal and informal spaces.

Although Deidra uses language, actions, and dress to discuss the office worker, she does not always use these factors. For example, in Event 3 of Part I, Deidra positions me as an African American who talks "proper" though she vacillates in her opinion when she notes to the African American teacher that I [Cynthia] also "talk regular" (see Event 3 in Part I). While Deidra never outwardly positions me–at least in my presence–as someone who "acts White" as she did with the African American office worker, one could perhaps argue that this is due to extended interactions with me daily and my appearance, as I wore an African American hairstyle (natural hairstyle).

Deidra's perspective regarding the African American office worker, Ms. Clasky, is reminiscent of a previously discussed exchange that I had with an African American male student Malcolm (see Event 2 in Part I). Malcolm, on occasions, questioned me about my language use. He asked, "Why you [Cynthia] sound so proper?" His questioning of my language became more apparent not during class session but during "off subject" moments in the classroom (see events 2 and 3 in Part I) when I was speaking to him one-on-one. Like Deidra, Malcolm suggests that there are hidden rules among some African Americans regarding African American Language use. Further they suggest that in spaces where African Americans interact solely with each other outside of larger more formal/White contexts that the prosodic/sound features of language become a means to ascribe "Black" or "White" identities.

One could argue that Deidra's negative positioning of the African American office worker's African American identity occurred given she crossed an invisible line by not using African American Language in an one-on-one context. That is, in line 24, Deidra talks about how the African American office worker talks "very proper" in which case in line 47, Deidra then uses a different voice to mimic how the office worker personally greets her. Deidra's use of mimicry captures the issue of prosody and sound. As noted earlier, when describing the office worker's use of language, Deidra emphasizes that the African American office worker lacks a Black "sound" and appears to position her as someone who does not affirm Black culture in the school's office. Deidra appears to have language expectations of African Americans even in the context of professional environments. In the next section, Deidra's social and cultural language expectations are briefly explored.

Deidra's views toward "talking and/or sounding" Black in relation to African American cultural identity. Deidra's discussions of language reveals her belief that there are language differences between Black and White speakers and that African American Language speakers have language expectations when communicating with other African Americans. During an interview, Deidra discussed how she did not "have no problem with Black people talkin' White" since she and her younger siblings had to adjust their Black styles of language in order to be socially accepted in predominantly White environments (Interview, 02-11-04). Perhaps as a result of her exposure to these distinct environments, Deidra recognizes a cultural difference in Black and White language and appears to understand the social and cultural relevance of adapting a particular language style according to or within a particular context or environment. However, what also

surfaces is that Deidra seems to have additional language expectations of African Americans. As a result of the language style that they adapt in a particular context, she ascribes "White" or "Black" qualities to African Americans.

One of the dilemmas that many African American students seem to cope with involves navigating both usages of "proper" Standard English and African American Language. What is perhaps significant about navigating such usages of language across varying social and cultural contexts are the mixed messages that many African American students seem to receive, especially from individuals from their own African American communities. In many African American communities, it is commonly expected for African Americans to use African American Language when communicating within their communities and then code switch to more standard usages of language in environments where standard usages of language are expected. However, as suggested by the findings discussed above, it may be the case that in environments where standard usages of language are required, many African American students still expect other African Americans to communicate with them, utilizing African American Language. This finding is one of the grounded theoretical constructs generated from the research study. Additionally, while the use of African American Language may validate and/or acknowledge affinity to the African American culture of the students in this research study, this dissertation does not provide evidence as to the exclusivity of it's use. That is, given the various ways that culture is validated (i.e., clothing and hair style, mannerism, paralinguistic features, etc.), this dissertation does not suggest that the use of prosody and/or African American Language are the *only* ways in which African Americans validate African American cultural identity. Further, some African American students

also express additional language expectations of African Americans. That is, when some African American students communicate with other African Americans, even in professional environments, some African American students still expect African Americans to at least *understand* and/or *acknowledge* their use of African American Language. This is another grounded theoretical construct generated from the research study. African American students may feel that while they understand that they have to utilize a White language style (i.e., "proper") when communicating with White individuals; nevertheless, African American students perhaps believe that they can switch to their own language style, particularly when communicating with other African Americans in professional environments since it is not their "natural" style of communicating (see discussions of Malcolm in Event 2, Part I, and his later section in Part II). Given this language expectation that some African American students might have, examining Deidra's responses to the two African American adults in the above excerpt provides an interesting perspective regarding African American Language use and its relation to affirming African American culture and identity.

"He a punk cause he ain't using no slang words!": Navigating a social existence within a predominantly African American school environment. During interviews and conversations with students such as Deidra what surfaced as important about adopting a culture-specific language style was students' ability to navigate their social existence among African American peers. As noted earlier in discussions concerning her background, Deidra frequently utilized African American Language in communicating with the other African American students. In class when teased by some of the African American male students, she would loud talk (cf. Carter, 2001; Fordham, 1993) and

signify during the "talkin' bad" retorts aimed at the male students (Field note, 10-28-03). In discussions pertaining to issues of "talkin' Black," Deidra discusses the significance of incorporating a Black style within Denmark's predominantly African American environment. The following excerpt from Deidra's interview documents her perspective.

Deidra Twain (February 11, 2004)

Tape Count 120

1. CW: ok, so you say, "it's ok [*if Black people talk White*],"–you don't care how people talk? Ok, so explain to me here and some of the kids told this to me, ok? Now let me back up. I don't understand how they because of the way I speak? They label me as a nice person, or as a good person, like for example, 'member Malcolm Malcolm? He said, "boy, I, I bet yo' kids don't even listen to you. I bet you don't even cuss 'em out right!" (*attempting to mimic Malcolm's prior comment*). And then he thought, he thought that maybe I was real nice. Did you hear him when he said that (.) he bet I, he bet I grew up (.03) he bet when I was born, my mom use to read books to me (*laughing*) when I was inside of her? I mean, but (*stuttering*)–why did–he got (*stuttering*) he based all of that on HOW I speak. S-o-o, (.02) help me out. I mean you know cause basically they [*other African American students*] told me they can speak a certain way in the classroom, but then when they go outside of the classroom, they have to "talk bad." What–I– (*stuttering*) I mean do YOU see that do they TALK? WHY do they have to "talk bad" around here?

2. DT: Like if a lil' boy, he talkin' all proper, they'll think, "he a punk! He can't do nothing!" just cause he ain't using no slang words.

3. CW: because he ain't using no slang words. So because I don't use a slang word, they see me as a wuss or pushover?

4. DT: (*nods head in affirmation*)

5. CW: So I have to, in order for me to, to say ok, "I'm bad" I have to use slang?

6. DT: (*nods head in affirmation*)

As noted above, one of the findings of this dissertation study suggests that student's ability to communicate and interact with other African Americans utilizing features of African American Language affirmed African American culture and showed affinity with an African American community. It is important that the students are able to communicate utilizing language and a language style that are characteristic of their African American communities. In the above excerpt, one of the African American students, Malcolm, expressed concerns about my ability to communicate effectively with my African American children (Field note, 02-03-04). He noted that I should be able to "cuss 'em out" a particular way, perhaps as a way to discipline them. As a note, "cussing" in some African American communities involve utilizing a Black "way" and/or "sound" (refer to Event 2 of Part I). What was interesting about Malcolm's assessment of my White style of language is that he also positioned me socioeconomically and assumed that my parents adopted middle class values (i.e., "reading to me before birth") in my upbringing since I had mastered "proper" Standard English. However, in Malcolm's discussion (which will be discussed later), while he notes that the ability to communicate "in the classroom" utilizing a "White style" was acceptable, nonetheless, adopting a similar language style in an African American context such as Denmark's produced very different results with regard to one's social identity. In the above excerpt, Deidra is asked to share her perspective concerning the adaptation of Black and White styles of language across Denmark's predominantly African American peer culture.

In line 1, Deidra is questioned about the ability to "talk bad," and asked to explain its significance in communicating with other African American students outside of the classroom. In line 2, Deidra shares what she believes will happen to a person who utilizes

"proper" usages of language outside of the classroom environment. In her assessment, she states that if a person "a lil'boy"–talks proper, other African American students will position the person as a "punk" and thus as a weakling. Deidra's assessment suggests that a person should be able to appropriately utilize slang usages of African American Language as a way to solidify their social standings among their African American peers. Both Labov (1977) and Smitherman (1977) note the importance of being able to use African American Language effectively when communicating with other African Americans as a way to navigate the cultural environment of many African American communities. Deidra, in her depiction, reiterates the ability of one being able to utilize African American Language effectively among Denmark's peer culture.

In sum, Deidra's assessment provides a glimpse of the cultural language expectation that some African American students have of African American people in general. Her discussions also reveal complexities in code switching between African American and standard usages of language. The data derived from interviews with Deidra suggest that some African American students expect African American people to utilize a cultural language style that differs drastically from that of dominant White society and to use that language style even in professional environments as a way to affirm and/or signal affinity with an African American community. The data also suggest the central role of prosody in marking language as African American.

Malcolm, African American Male

Figure 2 is a model of the perspective of a 13-year-old African American male student named Malcolm. Malcolm was an active participant in the study and was often

very vocal in expressing his opinion about "sounding" White and "talking proper" as noted in events 2 and 3 in Part I of this chapter.

Originally from the "Westside" of Chicago, Malcolm discussed his move from "the hood" to a "slower" Popular City at the age of 11 and during his sixth-grade year. Malcolm stated that this was not the first time that he moved to Popular City but nevertheless noted that this move was more permanent as a result of an act from Chicago's Child Protective Services. During an interview, he stated that while living in Chicago, since his mother worked, he had to "stay in a house by myself . . . so I had to move down here with my dad so somebody could watch me all the time" (Interview, 02-04-03). One of the things that was emphasized by the classroom teacher and appeared to be a defining factor in Malcolm's life was the presence of his dad. As a disciplinary measure, Mrs. Kent would often threaten to call Malcolm's father whenever he stumbled into minor trouble in the language arts classroom. Mrs. Kent would announce boldly in the presence of his peers, "Malcolm, you don't want me to call Rodney!"–in which case Malcolm would immediately adjust his behavior while exhibiting a look of embarrassment. When questioned about his father, Malcolm noted that his father was "educated," had a "good job," and was considered a strong disciplinarian. Malcolm also noted that his father's presence ultimately prevented his participation in the gang culture at Denmark. He stated the following during an interview:

> MW: But just, like they'll [*other African American students]* be like, "where you from" and all that like "what set [*gang*] you from?" I'm like, "I ain't nuttin'." So then they like, "all well, you cool then." But if I–I hang with Braelon and Raelon, I hang with everybody from everybody so they really can't, they really can't say nuttin' to me [*with regard to a particular gang affiliation*].
>
> CW: Does your dad have a lot to do with that?

MW: Yeah cause I can't fight here, I can't fight at school, I can't get in trouble, and umm and I can't be in no gangs; if I, if he found out that I was in a gang or som'thin' (.02) (*suckteeth*) gon be some trouble!

Malcolm was positioned by his peers as a student who was concerned about his academic success in school. In class, he frequently participated in class discussions and regularly submitted class assignments on time (Field notes, 10-06-03, 10-27-03). He considered himself to be a "B" level student and was consequently very competitive with some of the other high achieving African American students in the language arts classroom. He noted in informal discussions that he planned to attend college. The classroom teacher frequently called upon him in class to share his insights during literary assignments and noted that Malcolm was an "average learner" whom she considered a "hard worker." The classroom teacher also noted that she believed that he could "handle" more advanced classes given his "work ethics."

As noted in the aforementioned events, Malcolm was selected as a focal student given that he was very vocal in discussing the issue of "sounding White," "talking proper," and "talking Black" in the classroom. When questioned, he was often very descriptive in his discussions concerning language use among/between African Americans (see events 2 and 3 in Part I).

Analysis. In Figure 2, the issue of prosody is revealed across Malcolm's description of language use among White participants who "act Black," and also in his discussion of African Americans who "talk proper." This section nonetheless will focus on Malcolm's discussion of African Americans who "talk proper" since it provides a more thorough description of prosody issues in relation to African American social and cultural identity.

Examining prosody: "I think you [Cynthia] just got a White woman's voice!"

The issue of prosody began to come clear when I noticed how the students classified Mrs. Kent, the African American classroom teacher. Although several African American students identified her as someone who "talked proper," they seldom questioned her affiliation with their African American culture and/or communities. By contrast, the same students frequently questioned my African American identity and affiliation with a particular African American community primarily as a result of my "proper" use of language. Malcolm was one of those students and in his discussion concerning "proper" uses of language among African Americans, he provides an interesting perspective which reveals a complexity pertaining to the issue of "talking proper." Figure 6 documents his perspective.

In Figure 2, in Malcolm's discussion concerning language use among African Americans, he characterizes language use as taking on three cultural frames. One he identifies as "talking regular," while the others are identified as "talkin' Black" and "talkin' proper." In providing a definition of "talking proper," Malcolm notes that it is language use in which a person "say[s] everything right" and "talk the correct way." He additionally suggests in Event 2 that "talking proper" also does not involve the use of "fragments and stuff" when one talks. As Figure 6 illustrates, his discussion concerning issues of prosody falls under his description of "talkin' proper" in which case language comparisons are indirectly made between the African American classroom teacher and myself.

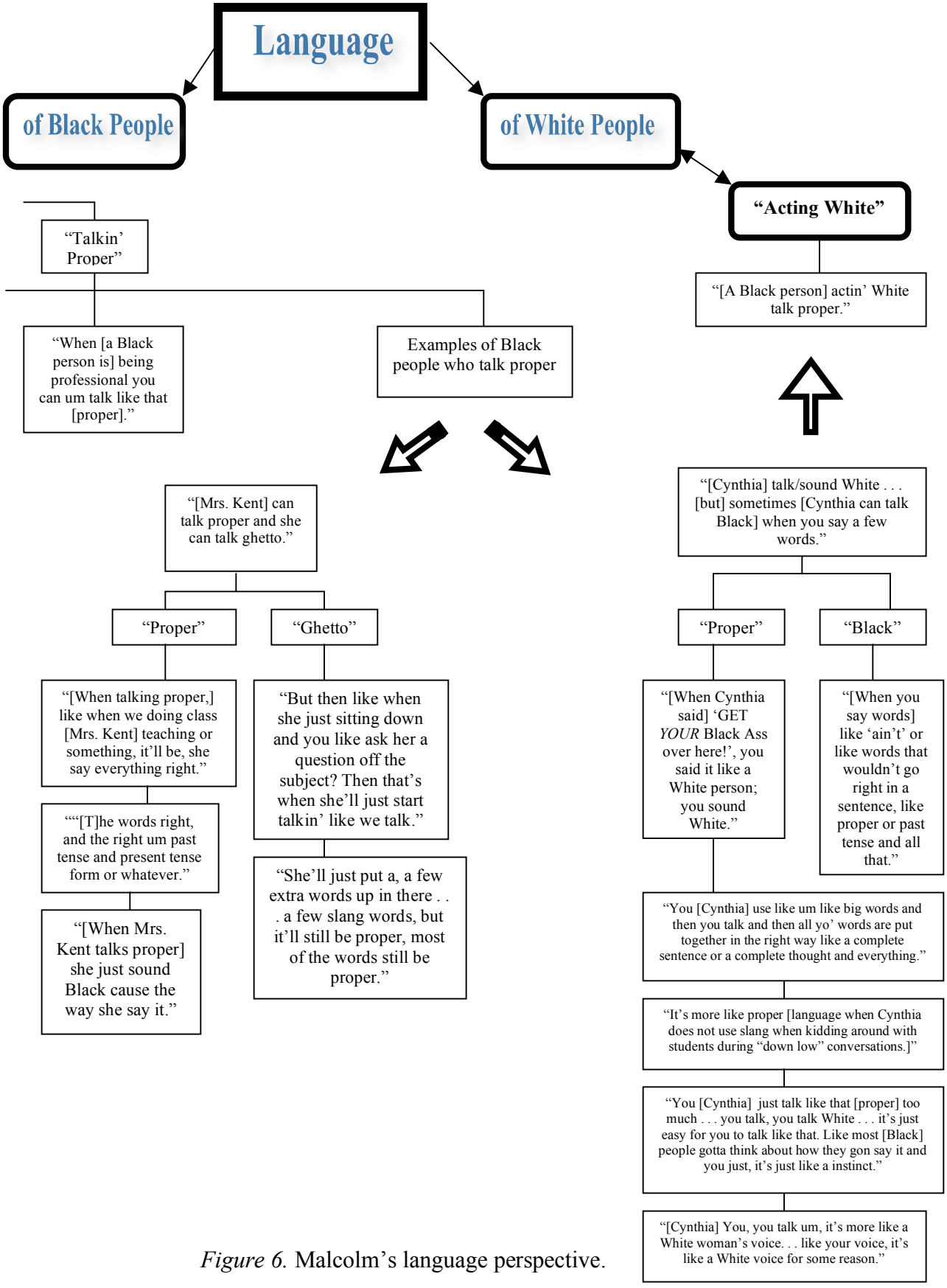

Figure 6. Malcolm's language perspective.

In describing the language use of the African American classroom teacher, Malcolm notes that she is able to use both "proper" and "ghetto" aspects of language. His description of the "ghetto" aspects of the classroom teacher's language emphasized her ability to "talk as we [Black students/people] talk" and use "slang words" during discussions outside of formal instruction in the classroom (see Event 3 in Part I). In his description of how the African American teacher used "proper" language, Malcolm noted that she "say[s] everything right," including utilizing the "right" words and "past and present tenses" of words and phrases during formal language instruction. However, what is important about his description of her "proper" usages of language is that he still attributes a Black "sound" to her language use.

Malcolm's perspective concerning my use of "proper" language, however, varies drastically in which case he identifies my use as having a White "sound." In his assessment of my language use, he notes that I have the ability to "talk" and even "sound" White although he notices that I occasionally use Black words. Also in his description of my "proper" language use, Malcolm seems to indicate that there is more of a complexity concerning my word choices and sentence structure. During interview when targeting other aspects of my "proper" language use, Malcolm specifies that I use "big words" and notes that "all of my words" are "put together in the right way like a complete sentence or a complete thought and everything." More importantly, he mentions that my use of "proper" language was something that I did effortlessly (i.e., "instinct") unlike other African Americans whom he noted had to "think" about using proper language. It is also important to note that unlike the African American classroom teacher, Malcolm notes that when conversing with students during "down low" moments in the

classroom, I frequently used proper language rather than talking as other African American students and participants. Consequently, he assesses that I use proper language "too much" when communicating with him in the classroom. However, one of the more interesting aspects of Malcolm's assessment involves elements of "voice" in which case he also notes that my "voice" is reminiscent of a White woman's. Consider the following excerpt from his interview:

Malcolm Wells (February 24, 2004)

Tape Count 210

1. CW: . . . [O]ne time you told me that sounding Black, [*was when*] you [*a person*] said the word with an attitude [*and*] it was the WAY you said it (.) [so
2. MW: yeah], it's the way you [*a person*] said it and then, then the way you put the WORDS together [(.02)
3. CW: ok
4. MW: and HOW] you say it.
5. CW: it's the way] I [*a person*] say it, the way I put the words together and how I say it. So but when Mrs. Kent talks proper? Does she SOUND White?
6. MW: No, she just sound (.) Black 'cause the way she say it.
7. CW: ok
8. MW: like you, you talk (.03) um po (*stuttering*) it's more like a White woman's voice.
9. CW: ok
10. MW: I think you just got a White woman's voice.
11. CW: ok
12. MW: that's what I think.

13. CW: ok, you think I just got a White woman's voice.

Tape Count 369

14. CW: Ok, alright. Now, one thing you said I wanna question you more about. (.02) You said no ok, you said that there was no White person [*at this school*] who, who [sound

15. MW: White.

16. CW: who have] a pure White–who sound? Why not?

17. MW: I on' know. I guess cause (.06) I ON' KNOW WHY! I don't know no White person.

18. CW: not even TEACHERS?

19. MW: (.06) No, not even teachers.

20. CW: NONE of the teachers SOUND like White people? Do they sound –do any of the teachers sound like me?

21. MW: Nope!

22. CW: None of them sound like me. NONE of your White teachers SOUND like me? Do I sound more White than them?

23. MW: (*laughs*) hmmph–yeaup!

24. CW: I DO? I do sound more White than them? Is it because of the words that I use? Are we talking about big words? Or is it the sound of my [voice

25. MW: It's the sound!

26. CW: cause you] told me, you told me, you said, "Ow! That!" you told me that sound was irritating one time.

27. MW: Aw, it was just like (.03) just like your voice, it's just like, it's like a White voice for some reason.

To contextualize this interview segment, frequently student interviewees were questioned about their prior comments. In this interview, while questioning Malcolm about "talking proper," he reveals a complexity pertaining to its use. In the discussion,

Malcolm notes that while he does not know how to "talk proper," he nevertheless knows how to use "the correct words" and/or "the proper English." When questioned about how his use of "proper" language differed from mine, he appears to emphasize the complexity of my language use. As noted previously, Malcolm states that my "proper" usages of language involve "using big words," in which case he notes that additionally, my "talk" involves all of my words "being put together in the right way like a complete sentence or a complete thought and everything." He further states that my talk does not utilize "no fragments or nuttin'."

What is important about the discussion is that Malcolm identifies the African American teacher's use of "proper" language as having a "Black sound" in which case he states in line 5 that it has more to do with "the way" she says it. By contrast, Malcolm notes that maybe the distinction in my proper use of language occurs due to "voice" issues (lines 8-13), in which case he notes that I just have "a White woman's voice" (lines 8 and 10).

During the interview, I continue to question Malcolm more concerning the issue of "a White sound" in an effort to get him to clarify his point. Given that he had identified my voice as being similar to that of a White woman's, I question him about utilizing "a White sound" within Denmark's predominantly African American environment. In the discussion, Malcolm notes that there was no White person at the school who had a "pure White sound," and notes in lines 17-21 that even the White teachers at the school did not have "a White sound." He further indicates that, contrastingly, I am the only person at the school with a "pure White sound," in which he

pinpoints that it is the sound of my "White" voice (lines 25 and 27) rather than the actual words that I use.

In examining Malcolm's assessment concerning my use of "proper" language, he provides an interesting perspective concerning my African American identity. One could argue that he perhaps problematizes my affiliation with African American culture and African American Language use, given that I did not initially code switch like the African American classroom teacher when talking to students during "off subject" moments in the classroom. Additionally, one could also argue that maybe my facility with what he considers "proper" usages of language possibly also caused him to question my African American identity given that Malcolm suggested that I, unlike other African Americans, seem to have a "natural" or instinctive use of "proper" language, which was not a norm for other African Americans. In discussions of language use among White participants who were African American Language speakers, this issue of "naturalness" or being able to utilize language naturally was a significant aspect of Malcolm's language assessment. As Figure 2 documents, in Malcolm's evaluation of White users of African American Language, he characterized White students who seem to utilize Black language "natural[ly]" as having a "Black sound." Another point to consider is that I was a visitor at the school and therefore perhaps considered an outsider to Malcolm. As a result, Malcolm could have "heard" my use of language differently. While these variables are all valid points and perhaps significant factors in Malcolm's assessment of my identity, his attention to "voice" and "sound" differences causes one to question whether the issue of prosody was more of a factor in his assessment of my language use and African American identity.

What is important about Malcolm's assessment of "proper" usages of language between the African American teacher and myself is that he seems to reveal cultural distinctions in "proper" usages of Standard English. His characterization of the African American teacher's use of "proper" Standard English involved a Black cultural language style whereas my use of "proper" Standard English involved a White one. Malcolm's assessment illuminates the finding that suggests that some African American students make distinctions between speaking Standard English, "talking/sounding" Black, and "talking proper/White."

Malcolm's language views in relation to African American social and cultural identities. As previously discussed, Malcolm was a student who recognized the importance of learning "proper" Standard English and utilizing it across professional environments. However, like Deidra, he too appears to express social and cultural language expectations of African Americans with regard to African American Language use.

As noted in events 2 and 3 (see Part I), Malcolm's reactions to my "proper" usages of language illuminated some of his views regarding the relation of African American Language use to African American identity. For example, during informal spaces in the classroom, Malcolm expressed annoyance with my use of "proper" language, particularly when used during "down low" moments in the classroom or rather when he felt that I should have utilized a more Black style of language. Consequently, Malcolm would criticize and often mock my use of "proper" language (see events 2 and 3 in Part I). What is interesting about Malcolm's reactions to my use of "proper" language

is his questioning of my African American identity. Consider the following excerpt taken from his first interview:

Malcolm Wells (February 4, 2004)

Tape Count 360

1. CW: . . .Kendrick told me that I was a "nappy-headed honky." What does that mean?
2. MW: That you Black (.) you know honky is White so you Black but you actin' White.
3. CW: ok so, how, how would you act White?
4. MW: talk proper.
5. CW: ok s-o-o talking proper would be (.02) defined as "acting White?"
6. MW: Yeaup.

In the above excerpt, Malcolm attributes or associates a White identity to my use of "proper" language. To contextualize the above excerpt, Malcolm is asked to provide his perspective concerning a statement another African American male student made about me during a previous class. Given that Malcolm was a part of the conversation, I ask him to explain what is meant by the term, "nappy headed Honky." As reflected in line 2 of the excerpt, Malcolm explains that the expression symbolizes my rejection of African American cultural values. He states that I am "Black," suggesting that he expects me to exhibit "Black" styles of talk and ways of interacting. He further suggests that White individuals also have a "White" language style, which seems to be the style that I have adopted during my interactions with him and the other African American male student, Kendrick. Malcolm's assessment is important since it shows that some African American students see or view some usages of Standard English as taking on different

cultural styles. As noted earlier, it would appear that student's definition of talking proper could be viewed as reflecting two different cultural styles, which seem to have a direct relation to issues of prosody. In Malcolm's above assessment, my talking proper utilized a White cultural language style that consequently caused him to characterize or position me as an African American who "act White," and consequently reject African American styles of language and thus my African American cultural identity.

One of the findings from this study suggests "talking and/or sounding Black" was important in affirming African American identity and also in helping the students navigate their existence among a predominantly African American environment. In Malcolm discussions, he provides an interesting perspective concerning one's ability to utilize prosodic features of African American Language as a way to effectively interact across both home and school communities.

As noted in Event 2 (see Part I), Malcolm reveals that there are both "Black" and White" "sounds" to "cussing." During another incident concerning this topic, Malcolm provides a perspective regarding the significance of adopting a Black "sound" across some African American communities. In the discussion, Malcolm questions me about my ability to communicate effectively with my African American children. He states, "boy, I bet yo' kids don't even listen to you. I bet you don't even cuss 'em out right!" In assessing this statement, it would appear that Malcolm infers that my children must "run over me" given I lack the ability to utilize a Black "sound" during my use of profanity with my children. While Malcolm's comments indicate his perception that "cussing" is a communication norm in some African American communities, his comments again appears to suggest that "cussing" involves a "sound" or voice tone, and more importantly,

has a purpose, particularly with regard to the disciplining of some African American children. Malcolm suggests that my adaptation of a White "sound" or language style limits my ability to "handle" or communicate effectively with my African American children and thus other members from similar African American communities. Malcolm's depiction suggests the cultural significance of utilizing prosodic features of African American Language across some African American home environments.

Malcolm also discusses the social significance of "talking and/or sounding Black" across Denmark's predominantly African American peer environment. The following excerpt from this second interview documents his perspective concerning switching between usages of language on the "down low" across classroom spaces:

Malcolm Wells (February 24, 2004)

Tape Count 021

1. CW: This is the second conversation you and I have had. You told me I s-s-ound [White.

2. MW: yeah, you talk White.

3. CW: AND you've gotten on] to me, you said, ok, it is ok for me to sound White like when I'm teaching or something. You said but when I'm in a conversation with you (.), just on the s-i-i-de, on down low–now, I'm, I'm going by what I remember–and you shaking yo' head yeah. You tell me if I'm on the right track or not. Help me understand. (.02) WHEN is it ok for me to talk? Number one, [HOW do I talk?

4. MW: When] you being professional you can, you can talk like that.

5. CW: ok wha-, what do you mean by "when I'm being professional?"

6. MW: like doing stuff, like (.) an interview [or talking to somebody
7. CW: ok

8. MW: that's] your age or you trying to explain something. But if you just talkin' to somebody like on the STREETS?

9. CW: ok

10. MW: you would'en want to talk like that.

11. CW: so even in the class–NOW WE IN THE CLASSROOM! I'm suppose to be in a professional environment.

12. MW: Yeah, but (.03) but on the DOWN, BUT WE'RE ON THE DOWN LOW [and you just talkin'

13. CW: ok so when] me and you talkin' on the side?

14. MW: yeah you can

15. CW: I don't need to come to you talking like that?

16. MW: YOU CAN! I ain't said you, you, you don't need to but, you just say you just talk like that TOO much.

The above excerpt illuminates Malcolm's perspective concerning African American Language. As noted earlier (see page 127 of Deidra's discussion), in the discussion, Malcolm notes that "proper" usages of language are expected of African American people in appropriate environments, more specifically when one seeks to "be professional." However, while he commends the use of "proper" language in such environments, he notes that even in professional spaces, African American people are expected to use African American Language as a way to show affinity to their African American communities. Interestingly, Malcolm further notes that "proper" usages of Standard English are not acceptable or appropriate on "the Streets" (see line 8). Like Deidra, Malcolm also reveals that there are appropriate contexts or environments to use both African American Language and "proper" Standard English. More importantly, both Malcolm and Deidra seem to indicate that there are consequences or repercussions for utilizing either language inappropriately or out of a cultural-specific context. In the

following interview excerpt, Malcolm discusses such consequences and reiterates the significance of adopting a "Black" language style across Denmark's predominantly African American environment:

Malcolm Wells (February 24, 2004)

Tape Count 250

1. CW: [T]hat voice that you always talk to me about "you sound like a White woman?" What if you use, that, that, that voice and Mrs. Kent is lecturing to you, what kind of a response would you get from Mrs. Kent?

2. MW: (.07) I on' know, she probably think, (*stuttering*)–you–I talk proper.

3. CW: How do you think she would treat you?

4. MW: like I'm smart!

5. CW: ok, like you smart. Now, did Charlotte do that? You and Charlotte were pretty competitive. Do you think Charlotte did that? Did she try'da talk proper?

6. MW: Only when she answering or talking to Mrs. Kent or talking to the teacher.

7. CW: ok, but she didn't do that around [ya'll?

8. MW: naw

9. CW: but], but she did it around the teacher, she would put on a different voice?

10. MW: (*nods head in affirmation*)

11. CW: Ok so what if Ms.–ok before you met Mrs. Kent–what if you stepped in THIS classroom sounding like I sound?

12. MW: She'll think I was smart!
13. CW: She would think you were smart right away. How would [the students?

14. MW: think I was] smart.

15. CW: they would think you were smart. Ok, what if you went (.) outside and you hung in the gym and you used that [same voice?

16. MW: think I'm] a punk (*laughs*)!

17. CW: they would think you a punk? Why?

18. MW: cause you, you talk White.

19. CW: ok

20. MW: that's just about it.

21. CW: ok, s-o-o-o-o when you sound like that, that means yo-o-u-u (.02) [a punk?

22. MW: well–

23. CW: –and] so what would happen if you sound like that?

24. MW: you'll get talked about then somebody probably'll try ta fight you– just to see if you really are?

25. CW: because of the way you TALK!? Oh shit! I need to kinda watch it then hunh? (*laughs*)

26. MW: (*laughs*)

27. CW: s-o-o-o–no, serious, no, are you S-E-R-I-O-U-S!

28. MW: u-n-n hunh (*yes*; *laughs*)

29. CW: would you get jumped because of the way you sound?

30. MW: yeaup, like Taurence–they thought he–cause he talked like (.03) like Taurence, he–they thought he was GAY just the way he talked. Then people use to think he a punk and like push on him and bully him.

31. CW: ok, really? Because of the way he talked?

32. MW: yeaup

33. CW: ok, um. So, Ma-Ma- (*stuttering*) Malcolm, that's kinda–so what does that mean for me in here no, YOU! What does gon, gon,

going back to you. So now YOU were to step out in the gym talking like that, they would think you were a punk. So ok, I'm gon move that even further, even farther. Before school, after school, um when ya'll out, out outside with all your buddies, when ya'll hanging out before school, what would happen if you talked like that? Could you talk like that? Would you talk like that?

34. MW: I would'en!

35. CW: No, but what if you couldn't change! That's the only voice you had.

36. MW: Then most of the time you, you'll–the person, they'll get use to it but, but before they get use to it, they'll be like, "(*suckteeth*) look at this dude!" or they'll just talk about you. Then everytime you say somethin' they'll like look at you and then like laugh or somethin'. They wouldn't really be serious about what you sayin'

37. CW: ok, they wouldn't be serious about what you were sayin. [So is that

38. MW: until you] get in class or something, and then they'll listen.

39. CW: so, it's a no-no to talk about, to talk like [that [*proper*] (.) OUT

40. MW: (*stated simultaneously*) OUT–yeah.]

41. CW: ok

To contextualize this interview excerpt, in previous discussions, Malcolm made prosody or "voice" distinctions in my "proper" use of Standard English and, in his assessment, attributes a "White voice/sound" to my language use (see events 2 and 3 in Part I, and his "Examining Prosody" section beginning on page 136). In the above discussion, Malcolm is asked to provide his perspective concerning the use of utilizing a similar "White voice" across varying or different environments at Denmark.

In lines 1-14, Malcolm discusses utilizing a "proper White voice" in the classroom during language-learning interactions with the African American classroom teacher. Malcolm notes that adopting a "White sound" during language-learning activities

with the classroom teacher would position him as someone who "talk proper." He also notes that both the classroom teacher and his peers would consequently perceive him as a "smart" or intelligent individual.

Although Malcolm does recognize the academic significance of utilizing a "proper White voice" in particular spaces inside the classroom, in lines 15-42 he nonetheless emphasizes the detriment of such use outside the classroom when interacting with other African American peers. In line 15, Malcolm explains that utilizing the same "White" voice when interacting with African American peers in the gym would position one as "a punk" (line 16) and further discusses how other African American students would provoke fights (line 24) as a way to determine a person's social abilities in relation to their language use.

What is revealing in the discussion is Malcolm's depiction of two African American students who utilized "proper White voices" across social spaces at the school with African American peers. One of the African American students, Charlotte, "talked proper" as a means to impress the teacher and project an intelligent identity. Deidra expressed a similar view of "proper" language use among adults in her assessment (see page 127). However, in lines 6-8, Malcolm notes how Charlotte talked proper "only when answering or talking to the teacher" but not when conversing with students in the classroom. By contrast, the other African American student, Taurence, did not code switch when communicating in informal spaces with African American peers in which case Malcolm consequently discusses how he was negatively positioned as a "punk," "gay," and bullied by other African American students. Malcolm's depictions of these two African American students based on their language use appears to reiterate the social

and cultural consequences and/or relevance of code switching between Black and White "voices" and/or styles of language according to context.

Raelon and Braelon, *African American Male Brothers*

Figure 3, unlike the other figures, represents the perspectives of two 14-year-old African American male brothers named Raelon and Braelon. In discussing the circumstances of this interview, it was unplanned and granted due to an extenuating event that occurred at the school. Briefly, on this day of January 15, 2004, both Braelon and Raelon were involved in a big fight against 10 other African American male students at the school. Given that they were considered focal students in my research study and the fact that their actions might warrant expulsion from Denmark, the administrators graciously allowed a 30-minute interview prior to their exit. Further, while the boys were eventually reinstated with strict prohibitions, nonetheless shortly after their return, Braelon received a long-term expulsion due to his involvement in another incident at the school. Consequently, I was only able to conduct a follow-up interview with Raelon.

Unlike the other cultural models that represent the perspectives of individual students, this interview reflects the views of both Raelon and Braelon due to unforeseen circumstances. However, it is important to note that Raelon was also interviewed separately on another occasion in which his views are also reflected in this cultural model. In the model, I use Braelon and Raelon's initials to represent their individual comments.

Having moved recently to Popular City from a more rural area during their eighth-grade year, Braelon and Raelon maintained a troubled existence at Denmark,

perhaps as a result of their language differences. During interview, Braelon and Raelon noted that they were from a more rural area of the state and discussed the circumstances surrounding their move to Popular City with their mother as a way to escape a bad situation with their stepfather. When describing their family life, both Braelon and Raelon emphasized the complexity of their social environment. While difficult and extenuating circumstances were a reality, they nevertheless expressed a desire to become productive African American citizens in society and noted the importance of school in accomplishing this objective. The following interview excerpt highlights their desire to make positive contributions to society:

RW: But if they [*the African American male students they had recently fought with at the school*] come down my street talking that head, it's over (.03) tell-ya-just like-that-there (*stated rhythmically and lyrical*). But when I come back to school, I'm saying, umma get back on my work.

CW: So work, ok, so school IS important to you?

RW: Oh yeah, school is important to me; that's why I really didn't wanna fight.

BW: I GOTTA get a education, I GOT TO cuz if I don't, I can't be like these other broke-Black-men (*stated rhythmically and lyrical*) out here.

CW: Explain what you mean by that?

RW: [Cuz my momma raised us too good

BW: ain't-got-no H-OME-S-S, (*stated rhythmically and lyrical*) D-U-U-M (*dumb*). Tryin-ta-be-players and stuff; (*suckteeth*) I can't be like that.

RW: my momma raised us too good,
BW: My momma, she didn't raise no dummies].

RW: Trust me!

Raelon and Braelon's uses of African American Language presented challenges to their social existence among Denmark's predominantly African American peer culture.

Additionally, unlike many of the other African American Language student speakers, Raelon and Braelon in general did not code switch to more standard usages of English during language learning activities in the classroom. In their discussions about African American Language use in the school, many of the students during interviews often characterized Raelon and Braelon's use of "slang" language as being different from that of the other African American students. For example, one White female student, in her characterization, described their language use as being reminiscent of language "from the hood" (Interview, 03-02-04). Perhaps as a result of their rural dialect and differences in "slang," Raelon and Braelon were often teased in the classroom upon using language and positioned by many of the students as "ghetto" and "dumb" (Field note, 10-21-03).

As noted in the aforementioned events, Raelon was selected as a focal student since he participated in many of the discussions concerning Black and White usages of language in the classroom (see Event 3 in Part I). Like Malcolm, Raelon had strong opinions concerning language use among both African Americans and Whites. While Braelon was also initially a focal student, his untimely expulsion midway through the study limited his participation. Thus, in examining Figure 3, which represents the perspectives of both Raelon and Braelon, nonetheless Raelon's perspective will be discussed more fully due to his extended participation. As a note, Raelon and Braelon's initials will be used to represent their individual comments.

Analysis. In their discussions, Braelon and Raelon characterize language use among White and African Americans as taking on two distinct cultural frames, the language "of Black people" and the language "of White people." In their description of

"Black" usages of language, Raelon and Braelon identify "sound" differences and discuss it in relation to African American cultural identity.

Examining prosody: "White people, they use different language from us Black folk." In Figure 3, the issue of prosody is revealed across Braelon and Raelon's discussion of language use among African Americans who talk "proper" and in their assessment of White speakers. One of the most revealing aspects of this research regards the students' use of mimicry, in which the African American students often utilized it as a way to illustrate or clarify their arguments (see events 1, 2, and 3 in Part I). In their discussion, Raelon and Braelon frequently used mimicry as a way to distinguish "sound" differences between Black and White usages of language. The following interview excerpt illustrates their perspective:

Raelon and Braelon (January 15, 2004)

Tape Count 176

1. RW: I ain't tryin' to be no racists, I ain't tryin to be racists or nuttin but you know what I'm sayin but she *[Ms. Scans is]* WHITE and you know White people, they use different language from us Black folk.

2. CW: What do you mean by that?

3. RW: They talk PROPer from us, [they use

4. CW: What do you mean by proper?]

5. RW: (*talking simultaneously*) They use [the–

6. BW: words that

7. RW: the correct la-language] for uh what you tryin' to say, what you [tryin' to say,

8. BW: Yeah like

9. RW: we use slang language for different stuff.

10. BW: yeah, like we be like]

11. CW: ok so slang is NOT using a word correctly?

12. RW: [(*in unison*) Yes! Like

13. BW: Yes! it is!]

14. CW: ok, alright it would be like what?

15. BW: like, like "right here" right? We be like "wright hur" (*mimicry*)

16. RW: or ["Dis" for "THis"

17. BW: "Dis!"] (*in unision*)

18. BW: White people be like, "No it's not "dis," it's " ↑ TH-is-s! ↓ " (*mimicry*; *emphasis in pronunication and a change in voice*) and uh, [and, and then they,

19. RW: and they say be like

20. BW: and they be like it's not, it's not "hur," it's " ↑ H-e-e-RE!!!! ↓ " (*mimicry; other comments unintelligible*)

21. RW: and they be like

22. CW: But this [*use of slang language]* is intentional?

23. BW: YEAH! *(condescendingly*) we just talk like this!

24. CW: I'm sayin' though, the way we [*Black people*] talk, is that intentional?

25. RW: yeah.

26. CW: You can talk standard langu- uh Standard English if you want to?

27. BW: [(*in unison*) Yeah, if I want to, yeah! But I don't want to!

Table 7 presents a transcript segment from Raelon and Braelon's interview. In the interview segment, Raelon and Braelon share their perspective on Black and White usages of language. To contextualize this excerpt, since several African American

students had previously identified a White foreign language teacher at the school as having the ability to "talk Black" (see Event 1 in Part I), I ask Raelon and Braelon to share their perspective. In the discussion, Raelon notes that "White people use language different from us Black folk" (line 1) and then identifies that they "talk proper" from Black people (line 3). In his assessment of "talking proper," he explains that White people "use the correct language for what you [a Black person/people] are tryin' to say" (line 7). In the discussion, Raelon and Braelon also characterize "Black folks' language," that they reference as "slang" (lines 9 and 11). In describing "slang," they explain that it is the opposite of "White" language, meaning that words and or language therefore is not correctly used.

In the discussion, Raelon and Braelon's views about White and Black usages of language mirror some of the macro racial tensions reflected in American society. In line 1 Raelon begins to hint at racial tensions when he notes his opinion about the language of the White teacher. He uses her to raise larger issues about White people and how they talk. Raelon notes, "they use different language than us Black folks." Also in his statement, Raelon asserts, "I ain't tryin to be no racists." This statement signals macro tension and a narrative that has existed in society about the differences between Black and White people throughout history.

Table 7

Racial Tension in Language Analysis

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Language	Racial tensions emerging in language
1	Raelon	I ain't tryin' to be no racists, I ain't tryin to be racists or nuttin but you know what I'm sayin but she *[Ms. Scans is]* White and you know White people, they use different language from us Black folk.	Black people have a language. White people also have a language.	Raelon is responding to questioning pertaining to Ms. Scan's ability to "talk Black." Raelon suggests that Ms. Scans should use White language because she is White. He also inserts a disclaimer about him not being racist when he suggests that she should not use his language. This comment hints at racial tensions that exist in larger society –as a result, Raelon defends himself. If what he is saying sounds racist, he is not trying intentionally.
2	Cynthia	What do you mean by that?	Cynthia asks Raelon to explain what he means about White people using different language from Black people	
3	Raelon	They talk proper from us, [they use	Raelon explains that White people talk proper from Black people.	Raelon uses "us" and "they" to continue to set up the difference between how Black people talk differently than White people.
4	Cynthia	What do you mean by proper?]	Cynthia asks Raelon to explain how White people talk proper from Black people.	
5	Raelon	(*talking simultaneously*) They use [the--	Raelon begins his explanation about how White people talk proper	Raelon continues using "they" to refer to Whites -- again separating the language styles of Blacks and Whites.

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Language	Racial tensions emerging in language
6	Braelon	words that	Braelon, another African American male student, joins in on the discussion in support of Raelon's argument	
7	Raelon	the correct language] for uh what you trying to say, what you [trying to say.	Raelon moves from using the term "proper" to "correct."	
8	Braelon	Yeah like	Braelon agrees.	
9	Raelon	We use slang language for different stuff.	Black people speak slang language. Slang language has different functions.	Raelon uses the term, "we" to show affinity to Blacks and begins to suggest that Black people's language is more flexible and is used for different things. In doing so, he also implies that White language is not flexible and White people don't use slang.
10	Braelon	yeah, like we be like]	Braelon agrees with Raelon.	Braelon's use of "we" also shows affinity to Blacks.
11	Cynthia	ok so slang is not using a word correctly?	Cynthia asks for clarity concerning Raelon and Braelon's positioning of slang language as using words incorrectly.	Slang is not White language because it is not using a word correctly. Continues to position White language as correct and slang as not correct. The language that Black people speak is not correct while the language of White people is correct. Again continues to signal historical tensions from larger society about Black and White relationships.

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Language	Racial tensions emerging in language
12	Raelon	[(*in unison*) Yes! Like	Raelon affirms Cynthia's statement and begins to provide examples.	Students respond and make distinctions. Slang is not correct, suggesting that Black people don't speak correct but speak slang
13	Braelon	Yes! it is!]	Braelon also affirms Cynthia's statement.	
14	Cynthia	ok, alright it would be like what?	Cynthia asks Raelon to go ahead with his example.	
15	Braelon	like, like "right here" right? We be like "wright hur" (*mimicry*)	Braelon contrasts pronunciations of White language to that of slang language. Braelon's comparison appears to further position slang language as inferior to White language. Braelon recognizes pronunciation differences between White and Black languages. Braelon suggests that slang language is used intentionally.	Braelon uses mimicry to model the differences between the language of Whites and the language of Blacks. Braelon's example shows that he is aware of correct or White English and also knows how to use it.
16	Raelon	or ["Dis" for "THis"	Raelon gives an example that slang language has a different sound by pronouncing words.	Raelon provides an alternate example of correct language. Raelon shows that he also knows how to speak correct or "White" language.
17	Braelon	"Dis!"] (*in unison*)		
18	Braelon	White people be like, "No it's not "dis," it's " ↑ TH-is-s! ↓ " (*mimicry*; *emphasis in pronunciation and a change in voice*) and uh, [and, and then they,	White people view Black slang language as a deviation of their English.	Braelon suggests that White people position themselves as experts of language as they try to correct those who speak slang

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Line	Speaker	Turns of talk	Language	Racial tensions emerging in language
19	Raelon	and they say be like		
20	Braelon	and they be like it's not, it's not "hur," it's " ↑ H-e-e-RE!!!! ↓ " (*mimicry; other comments unintelligible*)		Braelon provides another example of how White people see themselves as experts.
21	Raelon	and they be like		
22	Cynthia	But this [*use of slang language]* is intentional?		
23	Braelon	Yeah! *(condescendingly*) we just talk like this!	troubled by Cynthia's comment pertaining to their intentional use of Black language.	Braelon's use of "we" signals affinity to Blacks who talk like him, suggesting that it is normal for him to talk the way that he does. Braelon suggests it is who he is.
24	Cynthia	I'm sayin' though, the way we [*Black people*] talk, is that intentional?		
25	Raelon	yeah.		Agreeing
26	Cynthia	You can talk standard langu- uh Standard English if you want to?		
27	Braelon	[(*in unison*) Yeah, if I want to, yeah! But I don't want to!		Braelon acknowledges that he has a choice and chooses not to use proper correct or standard language but slang instead.
28	Raelon	yeah I] can talk.		

Throughout the transcript, both Raelon and Braelon use pronouns such as "they," "us," and "them" to make distinctions between Blacks and Whites. In line 3, Raelon begins supporting his argument about how White people speak. He states, "they talk

proper," suggesting that Black people do not. In line 6, Braelon joins in the discussion and affirms Raelon's statement. As Raelon continues his argument concerning White and Black usages of language, in line 7 he uses the term "correct" to define "proper." Then in line 9, he suggests that unlike White people, Black people use slang and they use it differently. In lines 15-20, Braelon and Raelon continue providing support for their argument about how White and Black people use language differently. They also note in lines 19-21 that White people try to influence how Black people talk by telling them how to use language their way. Again, their statement suggests a tension between how White people and Black people talk, in which case Raelon and Braelon appear to suggest that White people feel as if they can tell Black people how to talk since they have the "correct" way of speaking language. What also emerges out of this conversation is that while they discuss "proper" and "correct" language, the fact that they choose not to speak it suggests that correct language has a meaning beyond correctness for them and hence one which appears to contradict their Blackness. One could argue that perhaps correct for Raelon and Braelon is not thought of in a traditional way as a value placed on something –for example as "right" or "good"–but rather something that represents White people's language. At no time do they say Black people speak incorrectly; they just say Black people use slang. One could also argue that their ideas about not speaking "correct" could be part of the larger context of racial tensions that exists in America. Raelon and Braelon's choosing not to speak "correct," "proper" White language could be seen as resistance to White culture and authority given they note White people try to change how they talk. Raelon and Braelon perhaps view this "change" of language as one way of changing who they are as Black members of society.

As mentioned earlier, Raelon and Braelon's use of mimicry played an integral role in differentiating their perspective on issues of prosody as it relates to White and Black usages of language (see events 1, 2, and 3 in Part I). In Raelon and Braelon's description of "slang" language, while they characterize it as being the opposite of White language (lines 1-7), nonetheless, they also appear to address specific features of prosody through their use of mimicry. In lines 15-20, Raelon and Braelon differentiate the "sound" of Black and White usages of language. For example, they use the slang terms "hur" and "dis" for what they consider White pronunciations of "here" and "TH-is." In their comparisons of "dis" to "TH-is" and "hur" and "H-e-e-RE," Braelon and Raelon appear to emphasize different intonational patterns between White and Black speakers. In line 18, Braelon stresses particular sounds in his depiction of White language and appears to punctuate initial and ending sounds. However, in his depiction of the same terms from a Black perspective, the initial and ending stress patterns are not punctuated.

Raelon's perspective. In a separate interview, Raelon further explores how he thinks about prosody in relation to African American Language. In doing so, he begins to make clear how mimicry informs his understanding of Black and White usages of language. Moreover, in his discussion of language use among African Americans, Raelon also notes that Black people engage in conversations employing language with different sounds. Figure 7 and an interview excerpt document Raelon's perspective.

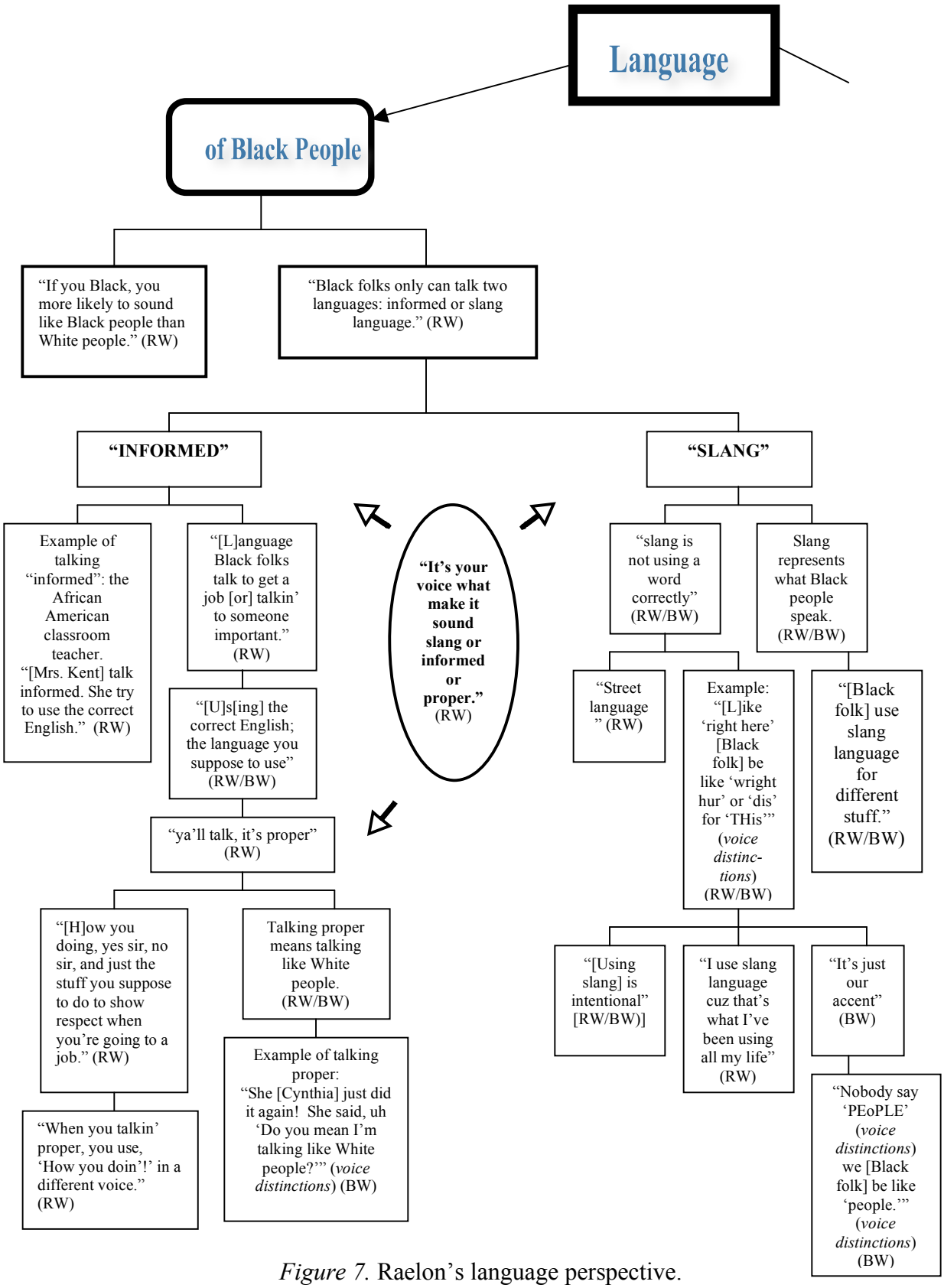

Figure 7. Raelon's language perspective.

Raelon Watkins (March 8, 2004)

Tape Count 560

1. CW: So wh-why do you change then? Why would you say you need to Change and talk the correct way?

2. RW: Cuz you know White folks, they own just about EVERYthing that you go to and they ain't familiar with our [language

3. CW: ok

4. RW: so] ya gotta talk THEY LANGUAGE.

5. CW: ok

6. RW: You can't use all that slang language to White folk.

7. CW: ok, so help me understand. Talking the correct way?

8. RW: Exactly.

9. CW: Is that White folk language, is [that

10. RW: it's, it's really] nobody language cause White folk they talk uh way kind of different from us; cause they use big words, big words, big words, big words; we use little SIMPLE words and then a lil' big words and then every now and then; but they use big words, big words, big words, constantly then they talk proper on all of that.

11. CW: Ok, s-oo, wait-wait-wait! (.02) S-o-o-o (.) help me understand. Is talking proper (.03) and using big words because it seem to me, you, you, you talkin' and, and (*stuttering*) maybe I'm not getting it, maybe–sound like you talkin' about two different things?

12. RW: [I'm talking' about the same thing.

13. CW: When you say, "talking proper,"] explain to me what do you mean When you say talking proper?

14. RW: When you talking proper you use, how you, HOW YOU DOIN'! You know what I'm saying in a different voice, (.) because your voice really what make it sound SLANG or anything else.

15. CW: So yo-yo-your voice changes when you, [you talk proper?

16. RW: yeah.]

17. CW: So show me; talk proper. Say something and say it proper.

18. RW: um, " ↑ How ya doin' ↓ ?" (*mimicry*; *appears to be utilizing a high pitched voice*) stuff like that.

19. CW: Ok so how would you say that slang?

20. RW: "how-ya-DO-in'" (*lyrical*, *rhythmi(c)* or something like that.

21. CW: So it's a difference in the way–when you say–so when people say, "You talk proper," is it words that you u-u-u-s-se?

22. RW: It's the voice. It's your voice.

23. CW: (*barely audible; surprise(d)* a-a-a-w!

24. RW: Ok.

25. CW: It's your voice.

26. RW: It's your voice what make it, what make it sound (.) [either slang or informed

27. CW: alright

28. RW: or proper.]

29. CW: So in here in Mrs. Kent' classroom?

30. RW: Yeah.

31. CW: How does she talk?

32. RW: She talk informed, she try to use the correct English. Except when she joking with you, she might use a little slang.

33. CW: Ok, I have a question. (.02) Does she talk proper? When you say, when you say she use informal language, now you said Black folks have two different languages–the informal and the slang?

34. RW: Yeah.

35. CW: Ok. Is that the sa–the Black folk's informal language–and I'm (*stuttering*)–now I'm taking (.)–is that the same as talking proper?

36. RW: (.05) Not really.

37. CW: It's different?

38. RW: It's different.

39. CW: Ok. So when you say Black folks talk informal that doesn't me-a-an they talk proper?

40. RW: Exactly.

41. CW: [a-w-w-w! (*whispered; surprised*)

42. RW: It just mean they voice. Your voice CHANGES when you talk different languages.

43. CW: Ok so you, you still keep your same voice?]

44. RW: exactly but you [just ch-

45. CW: but you just gon say the words

46. RW: yeah] in a–the words. When you say the words gon make your voice sound d-d-different.

47. CW: Ok.

48. RW: A kind of different than what it is.

49. CW: ok ok so when you, when (*stuttering*) B-B-Black, when you using the Black folks informal language? (.02) You (.) are not quote unquote talking proper, [right?

50. RW: right (*spoken simultaneously*)]

51. CW: But you just using the different–you saying, you say, "You talk the correct way?"

52. RW: Exactly.

53. CW: ok.

As noted earlier, Raelon characterizes Black usages of language as having a different "voice" from White usages. However, in this interview excerpt, he further

complicates “Black” usages of language by utilizing a lens of sound. To contextualize this interview excerpt, Raelon discusses the language expectations of African Americans across employment spaces. Prior to this discussion and as illustrated in Figure 3, Raelon characterizes the language use of African Americans as reflecting two different language styles in which he terms “two different languages.” In discussing the two languages of African Americans, he references one as “informed” and defines it as the language that Black people use “to get a job.” He also states that when African Americans talk “informed,” they “talk different[ly]” and sometimes “proper.” In describing the other language style of African Americans, Raelon refers to it as “slang” and characterize it as being different from the “informed.” Figure 7 attempts to illustrate Raelons’ language perspective.

In examining Raelon’s comments, it would appear that he equates the “informed” language of African Americans to Standard English and the “slang” to African American Language. Nonetheless, in the above interview segment, Raelon provides a deeper assessment of Black languages in relation to prosody.

One of the things that appear to be very revealing concerning Raelon’s characterization of language use among African Americans concerns the issue of sound. The mimicry illustrates throughout that he does have a sound and that he also associates a sound with the way that he, as an African American, talks. What is interesting is the value that he places on “White” language, in which case he seems to assign more to White language than Black language.

In line 18, Raelon again assesses the language use of White people in relation to

prosody and establishes that "White folk . . . talk way kind of different" from Black people in which case "voice" distinctions in their "proper" usages of language (line 14) are noted. While Raelon states that proper language has a sound, he also shows that all of the languages have different sounds. What is important about the sound distinctions that Raelon establishes across Black usages of language is that one of the sounds used by African Americans seems to reverberate with a White style that, in some cases, may have African American cultural identity implications.

In line 14, Raelon contrasts the "White" sound of talking proper to "slang" in which case he notes that there are voice differences. Further, in the discussion, he utilizes mimicry to distinguish the differences. In lines 18 and 20, he illustrates the phrase, "How ya doin'," utilizing both "proper" and "slang" language styles. In comparing the two depictions, Raelon appears to highlight several vocal elements. With the White example, he utilizes a higher-pitched tone of voice, where as his "slang" representation is more rhythmic and lyrical.

As Smitherman (1977) notes, capturing the rhythm and sound of African American Language is often difficult to conceptualize on paper. Even with the advancement of sophisticated linguistic software, capturing voice quality and aspects of prosody in language use has presented some challenges for language researchers. However, perhaps one alternate method of exploring elements of voice and prosody is through the use of music. Figure 8 provides an example.

Musical notation provides one avenue to capture the sound of language in a different way by actually illustrating how the sound changes and how the students made

distinctions between their regular voices and the voices of the people in their mimicries. In Figure 8, several examples of the students' usages of mimicry are portrayed to better understand how students made distinctions between sounding White and Black. Nonetheless, Raelon's example will be the focus of this analysis given the drastic differences in voice pitch in his portrayal of White and Black usages of languages.

In examining the musical scale, as mentioned earlier, several student examples are presented. The first example in the chart represents line 47 of Deidra's transcript (see page 126) where she mimics the voice of an African American office worker, while the second example reflects the mimicry of Kendrick, the African American male from event 3 (see page 89). Example three represents line 20 of the exchange with Braelon and example four reflects Raelon's use of mimicry in his discussion of proper and slang languages in lines 18 and 20 of the above transcript.

In reading the musical staff from the perspective of voice pitch, the rows in the students' examples represent an increase in voice pitch. For example, in Deidra's example, the first 10 notes reflect the voice pitch utilized in her mimicry of the African American office worker. The last three notes of Deidra's example represent her natural speaking voice. As noted in the example, a difference of pitch variation occurs between her mimicking and normal voice.

Raelon's example shows a more drastic difference in pitch between his mimicry of a White voice in notes one through four, to that of his slang voice which is reflected in notes five through eight of example four. In assessing Raelon's example, his mimicry of a White voice or language style is at least an octave register higher than his depiction of a

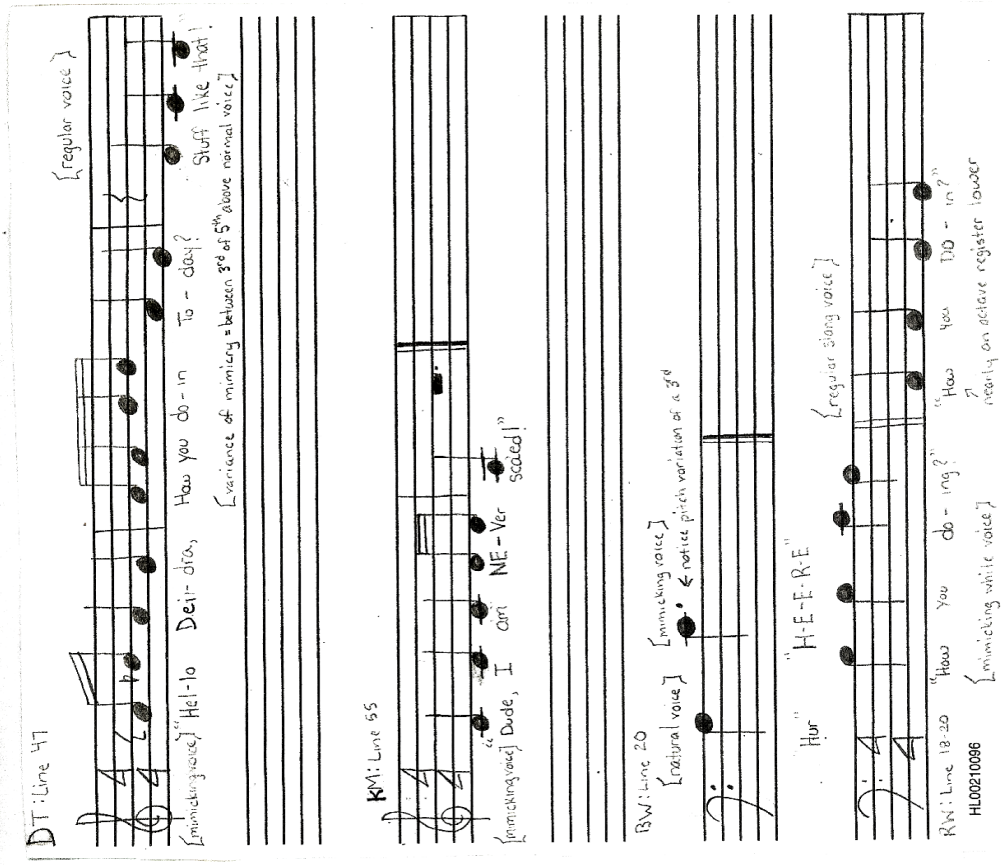

Figure 8. Musical notation of voice pitch.

Black language style. This example shows that Raelon perceives voice pitch differences in White and Black styles of language.

One of the points that need to be emphasized in this study is the role of prosody in the students' assessments of one's social and cultural identities. As Raelon notes in lines 29-53 in the above transcript, African Americans can utilize correct English by employing a Black or White voice or sound. Raelon makes this point clear in his discussion of the language style of the African American classroom teacher. He notes in line 32 that the African American classroom "talk informed, she try to use the correct English" opposed to speaking "proper." He further notes in line 36 that informed usages of correct English differs from "proper" usages (line 38) in which case voice distinctions (lines 42, 48, and 50) are reiterated. Like several of the African American students, Raelon also appears to establish voice differences in Black and White usages of language, but Raelon further complicates the notion of language use across African American communities. By suggesting that African Americans can speak slang, Standard English, and "proper" Standard English, Raelon provides an interesting perspective pertaining to issues of prosody and social and cultural identity association.

African American cultural identity. Similar to several of the other African American students, Raelon and Braelon used elements of prosody and voice quality to assess a person's social and cultural identity. The following transcript illustrates their perspective:

Raelon and Braelon (January 15, 2004)

Tape Count 200

1. CW: so are you telling me that slang represent what Black people speak?

2. RW: [Yes

3. BW: Yeah!

4. RW: pretty much,] that's exactly what that mean!

5. CW: So does that mean–you say I *[Cynthia]* talk proper; does that mean I'm talking like White people?

6. BW: Yeah! *(laughs*)

7. RW: Yeah, [where you from!

8. BW: (*laughing*) yeah,] like she just did it again! She said, uh, she said, "do you mean I'm talking 'bout ↑ White people!" ↓ (*laughing while mimicking me; also a change in pitch and intonation, particularly with "White people"*). Nobody, nobody say ↑ "PEoPle!" ↓ (*mimicry, appears to be utilizing a higher-pitched voice*). We be like "pe-ople" (*mimicry*, *appears to be utilizing a lower pitched, rhythmical voice; both Raelon and Braelon are also laughing!!!)*

9. RW: I'm tryin not to say that much you know what I'm saying cuz she probably from (*unintelligible*) rich people.

10. CW: OK! Alright, ok! (*laughing*)

11. (*Cynthia, Braelon, and Raelon are laughing*)

In the above transcript, Raelon and Braelon also question my affiliation with a particular African American community as a result of my "proper" language style. As noted in previous discussions (see page 162), Raelon and Braelon appear to hold language expectations of Black people, as noted in lines 1-4 of the transcript. Similar to Raelon's criticism of a White teachers' use of a Black language style, Braelon criticizes my use of a White language style since I am Black. In line 8, Braelon uses mimicry to compare my White style of language to an expected Black style. His comment, "Nobody, nobody say "PEoPle" means that Black people do not use language in the manner that I

have used it which therefore perhaps means that I am not a normal Black person. Like Malcolm, Raelon and Braelon appear to raise questions about my solidarity with African American culture as a result of my proper style of language. The Raelon and Braelon discussions reiterate the significance of "sounding Black" in social interactions with other African Americans within the school environment.

"It's about different sets:" Navigating a social existence in a predominantly African American environment. Like Deidra and Malcolm, the use of a Black language style was important for Raelon and Braelon who also experienced additional social dilemmas due to differences in their use of African American Language. In the language arts classroom, tension was always created around Raelon and Braelon's use of language. Perhaps considered more frequent users of African American Language due to their rural dialect, Raelon and Braelon pronounced and used double meanings of words differently than the other African American students in the classroom (Field note, 10-21-03). During interview, Raelon and Braelon talked about their language use being "different" from "the Popular City kids" and one source of their tension at the school. Raelon and Braelon discuss this dilemma in the following interview, which occurred immediately following their encounter with several African American male students at the school:

Raelon and Braelon (January 15, 2004)

Tape Count 023

1. RW: Well, like the fact of the matter of me and my brothers is in a–a part of a different gang naw part of a different gang from them [*the other African American students at Denmark*]. They [*other African American male students*] talk, they talk, uh all they stuff towards us you know what I'm saying, we like, "man, gon about yo' business," you know what I'm sayin. We ain't goin' no where (*unintelligible*) but then when they come talkin' stuff to us, then that's where it really mess up at. That's just how it is.

Tape Count 110

2. CW: Ok, I have a question . . . (.02) do you remember you told me how you, ok we were talking about intellect?

3. BW: mmm hmm (*yes*)

4. CW: you and I were talking about who's smart and who's not smart and you were telling me that you felt Charlotte was smart. But you also told me you said that Raelon was [smart

5. BW: yeah

6. CW: and] you said that but ya'll talk a certain [way (.)

7. BW: y-e-e-ah

8. CW: intentionally]

9. BW: Yeah, we talk different from these Popular City kids, ≫you know what I'm sayin?≪ We the Bluff and uh really that's where most of the trouble go down, at the Bluff.

10. CW: ok. What do you mean you talk differently?

11. BW: [like

12. RW: Well, we] got slang language. Like when they say they "roastin' you" we were "they, they joneing on you." See we got different language for what they call different [people.

13. BW: "MUFF!"= (*sarcastically; the term "muff" is used to illustrate their point.*)

14. RW: like, "MUFF!"]

15. BW: we just say, "that's DUM-M!"

16. RW: man, what's that? That's dumb or somethin' like that; there is no muff! So we got different language from these lil' Populars.

17. CW: Alright so I have a question. Was that an issue when you came was that a problem?

18. BW: That made me mad. YEAH, it was a problem!

19. CW: ok, why was it a problem when you came here that you had different languages?

20. RW: well because the fact of the matter that they use different languages to try da' disrespect you in a way we [woud'en know.

21. CW: what do you mean? ok]

22. RW: like they call us like a "doughnut" or somethin'. They can use it in different, like a, a circle with a–you know what I'm sayin'–just talk stuff that can refer to a, to uh the "d" word. So they use different language to try to disrespect us.

23. BW: and it ain't gon be no, cuz-umma-disrespectin'-them (*rhythmic*).

24. RW: ain't gonna be no disrespect, you know what I'm sayin!

25. CW: ok

Although they were from a different city and also a part of a different gang, nevertheless, Raelon and Braelon believed that many of their difficulties at Denmark stemmed from the regional differences in their language use given that their gang affiliation was not antagonistic to the gang culture prevalent at the school (Field note, 01-07-04). Moreover, Raelon and Braelon noted that other African American students nonetheless often used language to "disrespect" them and their way of being.

In the above discussion, Braelon and Raelon identify differences in their use of language but appear to particularly focus on double meanings of words in African American Language use. For example, in lines 13-14, Braelon and Raelon references the term, "muff," in which many of the African American students would typically use as a way to indicate that a stupid comment or statement was made. In the language arts classroom, the African American students frequently characterized several of Braelon's comments as "muff" statements (Field note, 10-21-03). What is interesting about Braelon

and his reaction to the students' initial use of the term in the class is that he did not understand the meaning of the term, which further positioned him negatively with several of the other African American students. One African American female student noted that both Raelon and Braelon even "mess up slang" (Interview, 01-12-04).

While Raelon and Braelon encountered differences due to the regional usages of African American Language, several of the students noted that they projected a different "sound" due to their rural dialect. The above example more so exemplifies their perspective regarding the problems that they encountered at the school because of their language differences. However, from the perspective of prosody, some of the students also characterized their use of slang language as having a "sound from the hood." To further complicate matters, several students (Interviews, 03-02-04, 02-23-04) suggested that Raelon and Braelon entered the school environment and tried to use African American Language (i.e., "talkin' head," Interview 06-04) as a way to position themselves as "hard" or "gangsta" students (Interviews, 03-02-04, 02-23-04) among the African American peer and gang population at Denmark. Consequently, Raelon and Braelon were positioned or referred to by the other students as "ganstas." The problem with this social positioning, however, is that some of the other African American male students challenged Raelon and Braelon's hardcore image, which alternatively resulted in several bouts at the school. For Raelon and Braelon, the issue of "sounding" a particular way, or in their case, sounding as if they were "from the hood" resulted in negative repercussions given that they often had to prove themselves.

Raelon and Braelon, like many of the other African American students in this study, appeared to have understood the social and cultural significance of utilizing Black

and White styles of language across the varying social and cultural environments of the school. For many of the African American students, while White usages of language was valued in the classroom, nevertheless, Black usages of language were more valued in spaces of interactions with African American peers. With Raelon and Braelon, one of the things that became apparent in the study was the role of African American Language and having a Black "sound" involved their ability to successfully navigate their social existence among the gang culture at the school. As Raelon notes above in line 1 of the discussion, "talking stuff" was a reality in communicating with some of the students, in which case incorporating a Black "sound" or style of language was an asset. Navigating both usages of Black and White styles of language was a complicated reality for many of the African American students.

In many instances, several African American students were apt to shed their perspectives concerning the different language styles of African Americans and Whites. The students' discussions of language were often very complex while revealing sophistication with regard to their ability to articulate intricate issues. One could argue that their sophistication and readiness to discuss such cultural language variations reflect situations and circumstances from their daily interactions. That being said, the issue of adopting different language styles was also a reality for several of the White students at Denmark. While similarities overlapped their arguments, they, too, discussed issues of prosody (i.e., "accent," and "tone of voice") in distinguishing differences in language use across both White and Black spaces. Thus, Figure 4 represents the perspective of one of the White students–Felix, a 14-year-old male student–who was privy to many of the discussions concerning language in the language arts classroom.

Felix, White American Male

Figure 4 represents the perspective of Felix, a White 14-year-old male student. Having entered Denmark at the beginning of the school year, Felix was one of four White students in the language arts classroom. As noted earlier, the language arts classroom and the school itself had a predominantly African American student population. Nonetheless, like several of the other White students at the school, Felix appeared to have adjusted well to the peer culture of the African American students perhaps as a result of his ability to utilize African American Language. In a discussion of the White students and their use of language at the school, the African American classroom teacher noted that Felix had a cultural "norm" similar to that of African American students at Denmark and thus noted it as being the reason that he "fit in" well with many of the African American students (Interview, 05-28-04).

Frequently sporting an oversized gold chain with a circular gold medallion, Felix was characterized by many of the African American students as someone who had adopted African American cultural values. In interviews and informal classroom conversations, several African American male students noted that Felix "talked" and "act[ed]" liked "us" in which case one African American male student even noted that Felix "had a Black heart" (Field note, 02-03-04; Interview, 02-03-04). When questioned about the African American student's comments regarding his cultural capabilities, Felix stated that it was something that he "just picked up" while hanging around his "Black" friends (Interview, 03-05-04). Felix also stated that his "acting Black" created tensions in interactions with other White students; tensions which ultimately resulted in his move

from a more affluent and racially diverse magnet school to Denmark's predominantly African American environment (Field note, 02-06-04).

In describing his background and family life, Felix's portrayal was perhaps that of an upper middle class background. Having moved to Popular City several years ago as a result of his father's career change, Felix explained how his family resided in a home in a more affluent area, which consequently had been paid for by his father's previous employer. The younger of two children, Felix lived with his parents and 17-year-old sister whom he noted he did not get along with very well.

Academically, the classroom teacher considered Felix to be a "capable" student although she noted that he did not seem to have much interest in attaining high academic standards. During language learning activities in the classroom, Felix participated in classroom discussions, responding to questions or reading selections only when called upon and frequently submitting incomplete assignments (Field note, 02-03-04).

Felix was selected as a focal student since he, like many of the other focal students, was privy to many of the discussions in the language arts classroom concerning issues of talk. In Event 1 (see Part I), Felix was present in the classroom as several African American students criticized a White teacher, Ms. Scan's, ability to talk "Black" and, as noted in Event 2 (see Part I), was also one of the participants in the discussion with Kendrick and Malcolm, two African American male students, regarding issues of "Black" and "White" language differences. In addition, like Deidra, Felix also appeared to have experienced navigating uses of language across both Black and White spaces.

Analysis. Figure 4 documents Felix's brief discussion concerning Black and White language. Similar to several of the African American students, Felix also identifies

prosodic differences in language use between White and Black speakers. Interestingly, Felix utilizes prosodic features of African American Language as a way to navigate the social environment of a predominantly African American school. Figure 9 represents his perspective pertaining to “talking Black,” as documented in a second interview, in which an excerpt is provided as well.

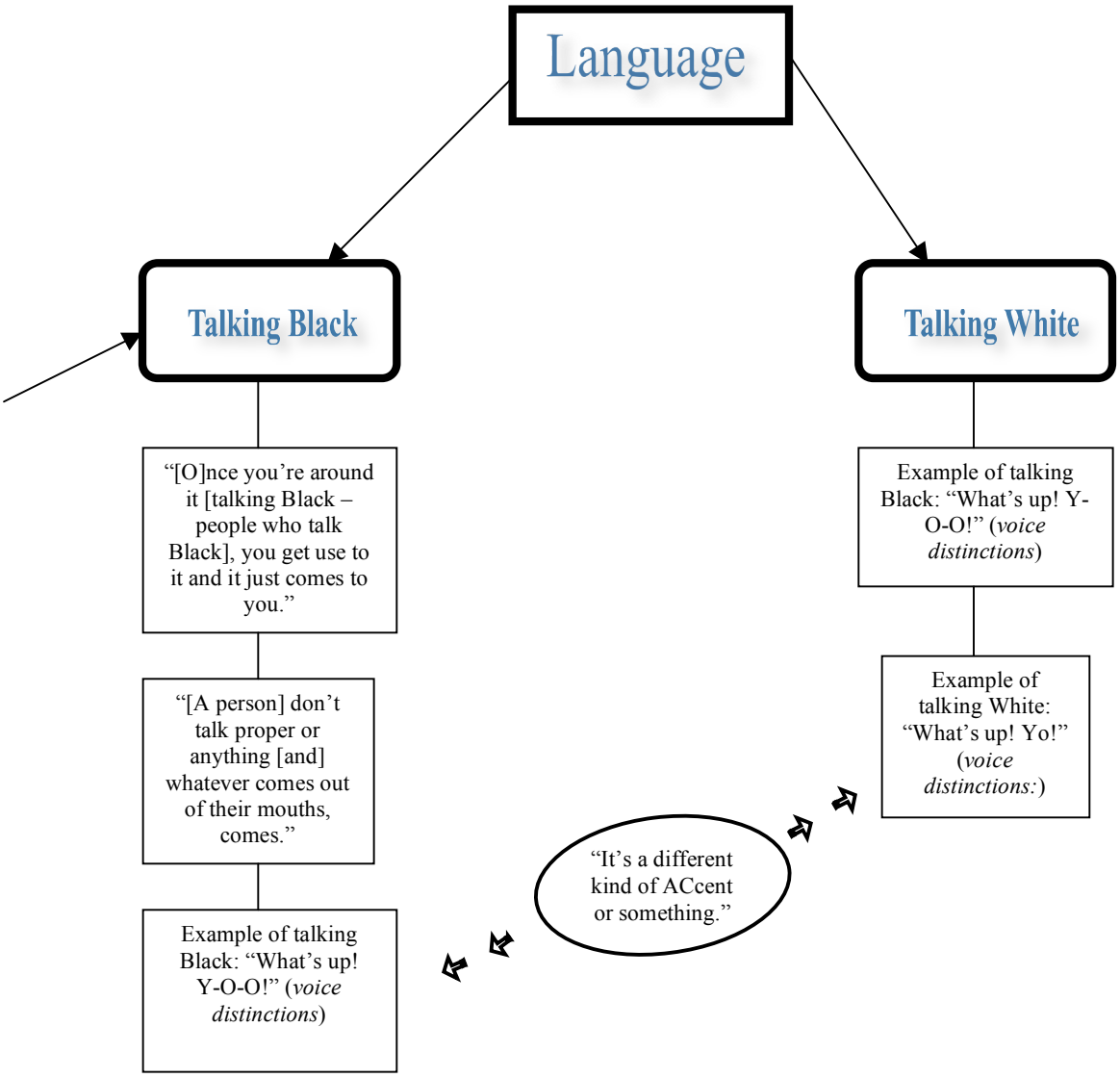

Figure 9. Felix's language perspective.

Felix's Interview (March 5, 2004)

Tape Count 41

1. CW: Ok. You were a part of that conversation that day with me and Malcolm and we got on the subject of talking Black and talking White?

2. PH: (.04) mm hmm (*yes*)

3. CW: You [remember?

4. PH: ye-e-ah . . . mm hmm

5. CW: ok, um, what does it mean for a student to talk Black?

6. PH: like they don't (.) like they don't talk proper or anything, like they just (.02) whatever comes out of their mouth comes and (.03) I mean it's like, once you're around it?

7. CW: mm hmm

8. PH: you, you get use to it and it just comes to you.

9. CW: ok, s-o-o do YOU talk Black? (.04) you're [shaking your head yeah?

10. PH: (*unintelligible*) sometimes]

11. CW: sometimes you do? S-o, so it's not–say that again, now? Talking Black means wh-a-at? Whatever comes out of your mouth? S-o-o, tell me more about that.

12. PH: like (.04) (*inhales*) we just, we just talk to each other and then (.03) it's just it like (.) goes into your mind and then it just comes out (.02) when you're talking.

13. CW: ok. S-o-o-o how does this is (*stuttering*) does this occur because you're a-r-o-o-u-n-d the people whose talking [that way

14. PH: Yes-s-s.

15. CW: or]–ok, s-o-o-o, ok so help me understand. Now your parents, do your parents talk Black?

16. PH: No

17. CW: ok so, are you around them a lot?

18. PH: Not really.

19. CW: not really? So t-t-ell me about your friends?

20. PH: here at Denmark?

21. CW: period.

22. PH: All. Most of ‘em are Black. I don’t, I don’t think I have very many White friends.

23. CW: You don’t have very many White friends. Now, I read in one of your journals you were talking about um some OLDER friends. You got some OLDER [friends

24. PH: un hunh (*yes*)

25. CW: that you] hang around at home? They Black too?

26. PH: un hunh (*yes*).

27. CW: ok, [so

28. PH: well] one of ’em’s White.

29. CW: One of ‘em is White?

30. PH: Karen is White.

31. CW: Who?

32. PH: Karen.

33. CW: Karen?

34. PH: the girl I was (*unintelligible*)

35. CW: ok, so she’s White but most of your friends are Black?

36. PH: mm hmm

37. CW: but do they LIVE where you live too?

38. PH: Yeah, they live uh right next to me.

39. CW: they live right next to you. Ok. S-o-o (.04) so if (.)–how would you describe the way you talk at home?

40. PH: Same way I do at school.

41. CW: Meaning?

42. PH: Black.

43. CW: ok, s-o-o-o, (.) are you talking Black NOW o-o-o-r?

44. PH: (.08) not really.

45. CW: not really? Ok. So give me an example of talkin' Black. Show me how you talk Black.

46. PH: Like, "What's up! Y-O-O!" Like, it's something like that.

47. CW: ok, "What's up, YO" that's talking Black? (.02) And so how would you say that same thing talking White?

48. PH: " ↑ What's up! YO! ↓ " (*appears to be stated in a higher pitched voice*)

49. CW: (*laughing*) So, what's the difference?

50. PH: I don't know it's like a different, (.03) it's a different (.01) kinda ACcent or somethin', I don't know.

51. CW: Ok, it's a different kind of accent or something.

In the above interview excerpt, Felix's discussion provides a similar perspective pertaining to the issue of prosody expressed by several of the African American students. To contextualize this interview segment, Felix is asked to share his perspective concerning the issue of "talking Black" given he was a part of the discussion with the two African American male students (see Event 2 in Part I). In his description of people who "talk Black," he notes in line 6 that one does not "talk proper" and "whatever comes out of their mouth, comes." He additionally notes that a person acquires the ability to talk "Black" as a result of being "around it," in which case he notes, "it just comes to you."

What is interesting about this particular characterization is that Felix seems to provide an interesting view of African American Language. In lines 12-14 of the transcript, he contrasts "talking Black" to that of "talking proper," suggesting that such forms of talk are opposites. In a subsequent interview[17], Felix also equates talking proper with White usages of language (cf. Field note, 02-06-04). Though his characterization of people who "talk Black" also seems to suggest that such an ability does not involve much thought or attention to one's use of language (line 12), he nevertheless suggests that "talking Black" results from exposure to African Americans or friends who utilize a Black style of language (lines 16-26).

One of the more revealing aspects of Felix's description of Black and White language use can be seen in lines 46-48, where he contrasts the sound of both languages through mimicry upon my request. Utilizing the same phrase, "What's up, yo," Felix provides examples of "talking Black" and "talking White." Similar to several of the African American students, Felix also identified issues of prosody and voice quality differences between White and Black speakers. His characterization of White language in line 48 utilized a higher voice pitch, whereas his Black characterization in line 46 incorporated a lower voice tone and elongated sound. While it is difficult to capture the exact sound that Felix used to distinguish between White and Black voice styles, when questioned about the differences between the two, he identified differences in voice quality or accent–"it's different kind of accent or something" in line 51 of the transcript. Felix also identified differences in Black and White styles of language on the basis of

[17] One of the limitations of this study involved complications with the audio and video recording equipment. Felix's first interview occurred on February 6, 2004 via audio recording but was lost due to equipment malfunction.

voice. In the next section, he discusses the social significance of utilizing a Black "sound" in a predominantly African American school environment.

"I'm the only White Person": Fitting into a predominantly African American school environment. In many traditional school environments, the issue of code switching has traditionally been discussed in which students from cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds have historically code switched to more standard usages of English in traditional classrooms. Though not explicitly discussed in this study, however, one of the findings of this study found that the issue of code switching is more complicated than traditionally discussed in some environments (cf. Wheeler & Swords, 2006) given the language expectations and hidden rules of several African American students. Stated from the perspective of this study, one of the findings revealed that some African American students expected other African Americans to utilize African American Language, even across professional spaces, as a way to affirm African American culture. Thus, the issue of navigating the hidden rules or adopting a particular or appropriate language style was also a reality for some of the White students at Denmark. In a journal entry, Felix shares several challenges of utilizing Black culture (i.e., "talking Black" and "acting Black") as a way to establish affinity with Denmark's predominantly African American peer community.

To contextualize the below journal entry, during Event 2 (see Part I), some of the students were completing old journal assignments during the informal class session in the language arts classroom given that several of the journal entries were due the next class session. In some cases, Mrs. Kent, the African American teacher, would allow the students to "free write" journal entries, replacing required entries with topics of their

choices. Felix was one of the students who decided to pursue this option and given that I was positioned next to him, solicited me for topic ideas. One of the topics that I recommended was for him to respond to comments made by several African American students concerning his ability to "act Black," in which case he documents his perspective in the following journal entry, a typed version of which is:

> Entry 86 Free Write
>
> See Kendrick Moon and Malcolm Wells are always telling people that I am not white and that I am black. I have really never understood what that meant. I think it means that because I am always talking and hanging out with them that I am black and another reason is I sometimes act like i'm black. Another reason is is that I this necklace and stuff and I mean most of my friends are blacks & Mexicans. Most of the kids at [Denmark] are Black and you can't do anything but be friends with them. That is a good thing because If you get in a fight you have a lot of friends to help you out. Like in most of my classes I am the only white person in there except for my Reading class when there are two.

In this journal entry, Felix provides explanations concerning his perceived African American identity. He explains that several of the African American males students consider him "Black" perhaps as a result of his friendship and his ability to imitate or utilize African American Language and other perceived African American ways of interacting. Felix references the heavy gold chain he typically wears, which is more so stereotypically associated with African American rappers. What is important about Felix's discussion is that he appears to suggest that utilizing a Black language style provides a way for him to relate to or affiliate with the African American students. For example, Felix notes in the discussion that he "sometimes act Black" and that "most of the kids at Denmark are Black and you can't help but be friends with them," perhaps suggesting that friendship with the African American students also involves adopting their language and cultural styles of interaction. Like Deidra, Felix also appears to

espouse the significance of adopting a particular language style according to a particular context. His comments, "I sometimes act Black," "my friends are Black," and "most of the kids at Denmark are Black" seem to reinforce his prior statement concerning his acculturation or adaptation of African American culture as a result of his continued exposure. Such comments also seem to illuminate Felix's belief that he needs to "act" or project African American values in order to be accepted. He states in the last sentence of the journal that he "is the only White person" in most of his classes, perhaps suggesting that adopting Black language and interactional styles provides a way to establish friendship and/or affinity with his African American peers.

A Shared Conceptual Cultural Model of Language and Social Identity

As noted earlier, the student's cultural models reflect their individual perspective regarding language use and social and cultural identities. Nonetheless, in reviewing the models, several overlapping themes occur in the students' discussions. In this section, I examine several of those themes. Figure 10 provides a model of the students' themes that arose across race and gender in the classroom. This shared cultural model reflects the themes of both male and female student participants from White and Black cultural backgrounds.

In examining the students' shared cultural model from the perspective of language, all of the student participants expressed language expectations of White and Black speakers. The students assumed that all Black people spoke slang language while all White people spoke correct English. The students also noted that both White and

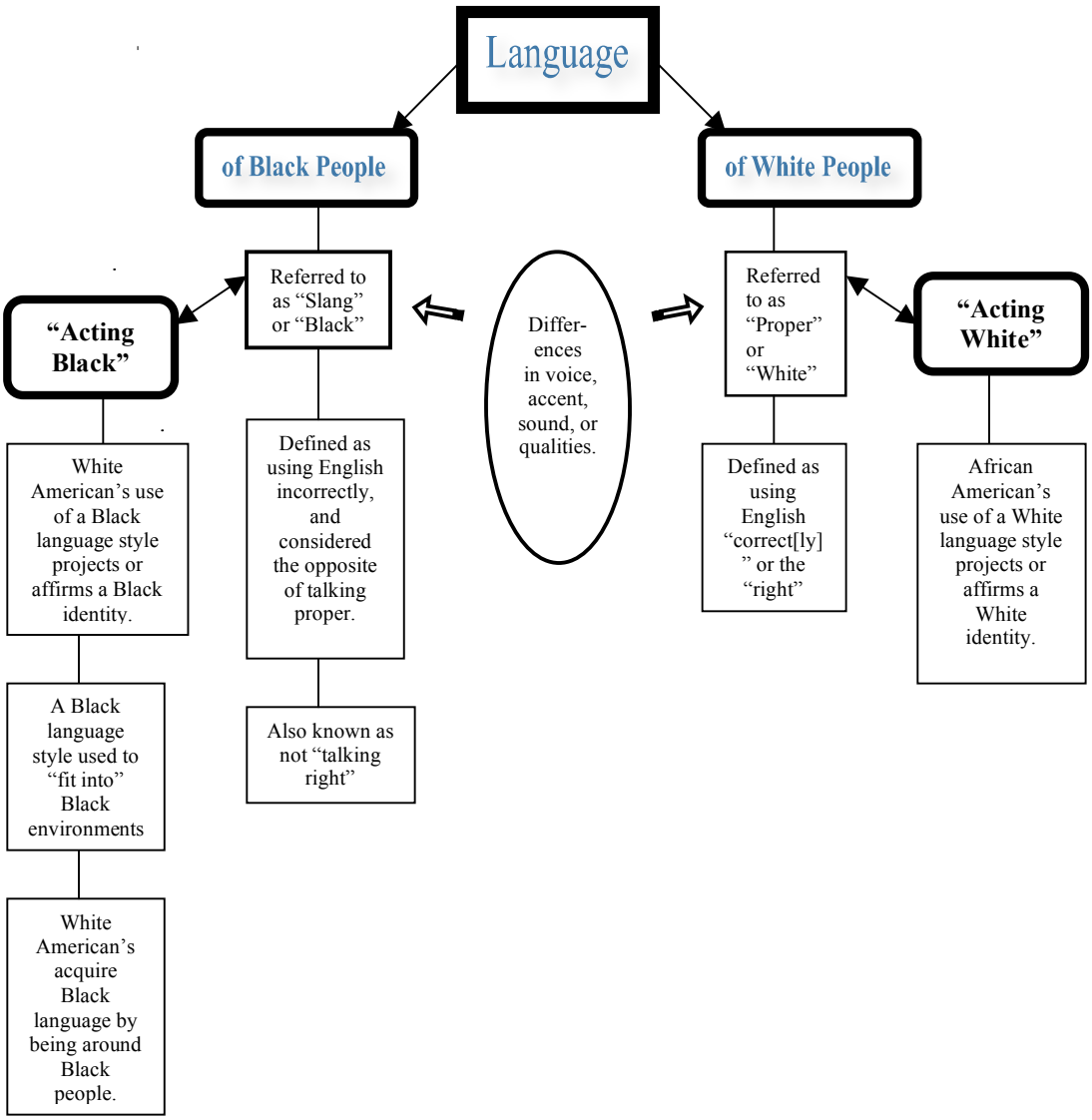

Figure 10. Students' shared cultural model.

Black languages are acquired as a result of exposure to a predominate environment. In discussing the language of Black Americans, the students appeared to characterize it as a sub language of White language. Usually referred to as "slang," the students defined this language as using English incorrectly and thus, the opposite of Standard English. Interestingly, while the students often referred to slang language in more negative ways, they all seemed to appreciate its social value in communicating with African American peers in particular spaces and context. By contrast, in their discussions of White usages of language, students shared a notion of the talk of White people as proper and the correct usage of English.

One of the things that emerged across the student participants' discussion of language involved the role of language in affirming a particular cultural identity. In terms of African American cultural identity, the students expected other African Americans to "talk Black" as a way to affirm African American identity. In their discussion of the concept of "acting Black," the students supported the idea that a White person who talks Black as having an affinity toward African American culture. Interestingly, White students also defined acting Black in this way. Similarly, the students also discussed "acting White" in terms of identity as a Black person who talks White as having an affinity toward White culture.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will provide a summary of the study. Section two will examine research questions and summaries of the findings. Section three will discuss theoretical considerations derived from the study while section four will discuss educational implications.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the lived experiences of African American Language speakers and examine the relationship of African American Language to the social and cultural identities and academic achievement of students in educational environments. In Chapter II, a review of literature discussed the history of African American Language, examined several distinct features as well as some of the issues related to African American social and cultural identities. Moreover, some of the educational complexities surrounding African American Language use by students in traditional classroom environments were also addressed.

Data were collected on interactions surrounding the use of African American Language in an eighth-grade language arts classroom over a 7-month period. Key classroom events and student interviews were examined utilizing thematic and microethnographic analysis. In addition, student interviews were also examined utilizing the cultural analysis of discourse. In particular, this study focused upon the experiences

and perspectives of five focal African American Language student speakers. The study examined the central role of prosody in signaling particular social and cultural identities and explored the significance of students adopting such identities across varying spaces in and outside of the classroom as a means to navigate social existences in a predominantly African American school community.

Research Questions and Summary of Findings

Two research questions were the emphasis of this study. The first research question focused on the ways in which students use African American Language in classrooms, while the second focused on the social and academic consequences of such use in classrooms. The research questions were as follows:

1. How, when, and where do African American students use African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms?

2. What social and academic consequences does the use of African American Language in middle school language arts classrooms have?

After a thorough review of the corpus of data on interactions surrounding students' usages of African American Language, several interrelated findings pertaining to issues of prosody and social and cultural identities emerged from the study. A discussion of these finding will be provided below.

1. *How the role of prosody impacts one's social and cultural identities: (a) how some African American students made distinctions between speaking Standard English, "talking/sounding" Black, and "talking proper/White"; (b) how "talking/sounding" Black was the expected norm for some African American Language Speakers*

(particularly those of African American descent) during nonlanguage learning situations in the classroom; and (c) how regional and generational differences in the use of African American Language positioned some African Americans negatively.

The findings related to prosody in this research suggest that aspects of prosody are important markers in African American Language use. As noted throughout the students' discussions in the previous chapter, prosodic features such as intonation, voice pitch, stress, and rhythmic qualities were some of the characteristics the students emphasized in their discussions and mimicries of Black and White language styles. Interestingly, even when participants' utilized words or expressions stereotypically affiliated with African American culture, several of the students illuminated issues of "sound" and elements of prosody as a way to validate or dismiss affiliation with particular African American communities. The issue of prosody was important in marking ethnic boundaries across language.

One significant finding from this study pertaining to prosody complicates traditional views or definitions of Standard English. For example, numerous research studies (e.g., Becknell, 1987; Ogbu, 1999) define or discuss Standard English from the perspective of using language correctly. Historically, Standard English has also been associated with White usages of language. As also documented throughout the students' discussions in the previous chapter, the students also defined Standard English in this manner. Nevertheless, elements of prosody also became a further distinguishing factor in terms of ascribing a White or Black "sound." As mentioned previously, while all of the students distinguished voice differences between Black and White language styles in general, two African American male students (see discussions of Malcolm and Raelon in the previous

chapter) further complicated this notion of Standard English by revealing cultural distinctions in its use. Thus, in their discussions pertaining to Standard usages of English, both differentiated voice elements in Black and White usages of proper Standard English. Furthermore, students did not necessarily associate African American Language as having grammatically incorrect features; instead they stressed the sound that they heard. The sound was what made the language a person spoke proper or not. In lieu of the common belief that some African American students are against speaking and learning Standard English, the data from this study suggests otherwise that students often used Standard English during language learning activities in the classroom and also attempted to learn it. As documented throughout the students' interviews (see discussions of Malcolm and Deidra), utilizing Standard English provided cultural capital in their classroom interactions with teachers and with other African American adults.

2. *How students used African American Language (i.e., talking/sounding Black) as a way to "fit in" or navigate Denmark's predominantly working class, African American environment.*

As noted throughout the various cultural models of the focal students, adopting a "Black" or "White" sound or language style according to a particular context was significant for many of the student participants given that it allowed them the ability to navigate their social existence amidst a predominantly African American school environment. Additionally, adopting a "Black" sound during appropriate formal spaces at Denmark also proved to be significant in affirming African American cultural identity. Research studies (see a review of literature in Chapter II) document the detrimental effect

of schooling on some African Americans' social and cultural identities. As research on the educational experiences of African Americans and even African American literature documents, navigating different cultural identities -- a Black identity which includes Black ways of acting, behaving and talking across Black communities while navigating expected White ways of talking and behaving for social and economic reasons -- are some of the tensions and realities that many African Americans encounter. One of the findings from this study illuminated the social and cultural relevance of students being able to adopt a "Black" style of language during interactions with peers. Several of the African American students discussed using sounding and "talking Black" as a way to effectively communicate with other African American peers. Several African American students discussed the negative social consequences of utilizing a White "sound" in language encounters with other African American peers. Several White students also discussed the reality of using African American Language at Denmark as a way to fit in or be socially accepted among African American peers.

3. *How prosodic features of African American Language (i.e., "talking/sounding" Black) are important in affirming African American culture and identity and in positioning one as an African American Language speaker (related to grounded theoretical construct).*

Another finding from the study pertaining to elements of prosody highlights the significance of prosodic features in affirming particular social and cultural identities. One of the ways in which some of the students in this study assigned or determined Black identity were based on prosodic features of African American Language. The three

classroom events particularly speak to these issues. As noted in discussions across all three events, the African American participants utilized a Black "sound" as a means to affirm African American identity. For example, in event 2 and event 3 (see Part I for further discussions), the African American students questioned my affiliation with a particular African American community (i.e., "the hood") given I lacked, in their opinion, a Black "sound" or voice. In event 2, several African American male students and the African American classroom teacher concluded that my use of profanity was reminiscent of a White language style, and consequently, as a means to validate my affiliation with African American culture, attempted to test my use of African American Language (see Event 3) utilizing a phrase from a popular song. Interestingly, given that I failed stating the expression, "I ain't neva sca'ed" while incorporating a Black language style that was similar in manner to the African American teacher's, the African American students perceived me as one who sounded White and consequently an outsider who was not in touch with the Black community. The issue of prosody in positioning one as an African American Language speaker and thus affirming African American culture was a reality for several of the White students at Denmark as well who utilized elements of prosody in African American Language as a way to fit into a predominantly African American school environment.

4. *How when some African American Students communicate with other African Americans, even in professional environments, some African American students still expect African Americans to at least understand and/or acknowledge their use of African American Language (related to grounded theoretical construct).*

In the study, tensions were created as a result of my use of a White language style. The African American students and even the African American teacher expected me to be able to talk Black given I was Black. In addition, several African American students expected me to instantly understand the hidden rules of engagement during more personal, one-on-one "down low moments" in the classroom. As noted in the previous chapter, Malcolm was one of those students. In his discussion, Malcolm notes that "proper" usages of language are expected of African American people in appropriate environments, more specifically when one seeks to "be professional." However, he noted that even in professional spaces, African American people are expected to use African American Language as a way to show affinity to their African American communities. Deidra also expressed similar views with regards to the language expectations of an African American office worker. Both Malcolm and Deidra reveal that there are appropriate contexts or environments to use both African American Language and "proper" Standard English. Additionally, Malcolm and Deidra seem to indicate that there are consequences or repercussions for utilizing either language inappropriately or out of a cultural-specific context. Deidra and Malcolm suggests that there are hidden rules among some African Americans regarding African American Language use. Further they suggest that in spaces where African Americans interact solely with each other outside of larger more formal/White context that the prosodic/sound features of language become a means to ascribe "Black" or "White" identities.

Significant Themes and Theoretical Considerations

In this section, I will examine several interesting and overlapping themes that surfaced from the students' discussions. Some of these themes have theoretical implications which will also be briefly addressed.

The issue of authority regarding who sounds Black and who does not was a theme that evolved out of this research study. Several of the African American students utilized features of prosody as a way to validate African American cultural identity. For example, as noted in students' discussions throughout Parts I and II, several African American students criticized my use of African American Language. Additionally, they indexed views of Whiteness based on characteristics and features of my language use. One of the questions this study raises centers on the issue of authority. That is, who has the authority to determine Blackness? As discussed in the study, the African American students often tested my use of African American Language as a way to challenge my affiliation with African American culture. However, what is interesting about their challenging is that it seems to reveal static notions or views of African American identity. One could argue that this view of Blackness is limiting. As Sharpley-Whiting (2006) notes in her discussion of young Black women and hip hop culture, some of the hip hop culture "highlighted by the media" (p. 58) perpetuates negative views and stereotypes of African American females, particularly from the perspective of promoting misogynistic views in American youth culture. Similarly, one could argue that static notions of Blackness and stereotypical views of African American Language perhaps derived from ideologies perpetuated through media venues are also influencing the views of some African American students. What is problematic is that such a view of Blackness or

African American identity is only one of many views. This issue of authority and determining Blackness was a highly contested and unresolved tension in the study among several African American participants.

Another interesting and interrelated theme involving African American social and cultural identities highlight the central role of prosody in signaling a particular social and cultural identity. One of the findings suggests that students made distinctions in Black and White styles of language based on issues of prosody. Additionally, while the students also viewed Standard English as using language correctly, several of the African American students further differentiated between Black and White usages. Thus, in their discussions, several African American students emphasized how one could utilize Standard English while having either a Black or White "sound." This finding contradicts Ogbu's (2004) controversial argument concerning African American oppositional identity, specifically with regard to African Americans' resistance to using and learning Standard English.

In his discussion, Ogbu (2004) provides a historical context to African Americans' opposition of identity toward perceived White ways of acting, behaving, and talking. Termed "acting White," he argues that as a result of the long historical racial discrimination against African Americans, some African Americans have adapted White ways of interacting as a means to gain social acceptance and upward social mobility, particularly in White controlled institutions. Ogbu (2004) further notes that this opposition of identity among many African Americans is particularly realized "in language use or communication" (p. 19).

In discussing the role of language in projecting an opposition of identity, Ogbu (2004) argues how some African Americans[18] have resisted learning "Standard English" or either fail to use it in their communities given that such use "dissociate oneself from the Black race" (p. 23), and projects an "abandonment of Black identity" (p. 24). Moreover, in his discussion, Ogbu (2004) uses several labels to capture the use of Standard English, including "talking proper," "speaking White," "speaking Standard English," and "proper Standard English." He additionally cites studies in addition to his own which appears to support African Americans' resistance to Standard English (i.e., Becknell, 1978; Kochman, 1987; Labov, 1977; Luster, 1992) particularly across their home communities. However, as noted throughout several of the discussions in the previous chapter, many of the students complicated this definition or notion of Standard English and made "voice" or "sound" distinctions, thus characterizing both Black and White usages of Standard English. For example, in both Malcolm and Raelon's discussions, they distinguish elements of voice in their discussions of proper Standard English. As Malcolm notes in his comparison of the proper Standard English of the African American classroom teacher and myself, the African American teacher spoke "proper" Standard English utilizing what Malcolm perceived as a Black "sound," while my proper Standard English, in his opinion, projected a White one. As expressed in several of the students' discussion throughout Chapter 4, similar arguments are made with regard to elements of prosody or issues of "voice." Hence, one could argue that with regard to Ogbu's (2004) theory of opposition pertaining to African Americans'

[18] Ogbu (2004) discusses several "coping strategies" African Americans adopt as a means of coping with the demands that they "act according to White frames of reference, rather than the Black frames of reference, in situations controlled by White people" (p. 15). As he notes, some African Americans are not against adapting perceived White ways of behaving and speaking while other African Americans develop other forms or strategies of navigating social interactions across White controlled spaces.

resistance to using and/or attaining Standard English, findings from this study suggest that the students did not resist attaining Standard English, moreso they resisted the prosodic and intonational features characteristic of a White language style. This finding is in accord with Spears's (1988) and Thomas and Reser's (2004) research studies that suggest that features such as "vowel quality, intonation, and voice quality variations [are] . . . most likely to be retained by African Americans who style shift into Standard English" (Thomas and Reaser, 2004, p. 63). Such retentions in the language of African Americans distinguish African American Language speakers from White Americans (L. Green, 2002; Spears, 1988; Wolfram and Thomas, 2002; Thomas & Reser, 2004).

An equally important finding, the African American participants were not opposed to using or learning Standard English. As Malcolm and Raelon both emphasize in their discussions, Standard English is the expected language in many institutions. As also documented in several of the students' discussions, many of the African American students at least understood the value of using Standard English in particular environments. Both Malcolm and Deidra in their discussions highlight how Standard usages of English provided cultural capital to students with regard to teachers who appeared to have a higher expectation or positive perception of students who utilized it in classroom situations and interactions. Nonetheless, such students also created or maintained spaces in the language arts classroom where African American Language use was also appropriate, acceptable, and expected. The students discussed the limitations of utilizing a White "sound" across their communities and thus the social and cultural benefits of adapting a Black language "sound" or style as a way to effectively navigate interactions with other African Americans.

Educational Implications

One of the things that the students in this study helped me to understand is the significance of the "sound" of African American Language in establishing meaning and affirming African American culture. The sound of African American Language provides significant meaning to language use within particular African American communities. Given that language is very much a part of how people engage in learning and how they construct knowledge, it is not surprising that students such as African Americans and Latino/a are the ones who are struggling in the educational systems since many educators do not truly understand how students use their languages as social and cultural resources. Thus, perhaps one implication regarding teaching and learning is understanding how students' home languages can be used as cultural resources in classrooms. Perhaps it could help us address the achievement gap of African American and Latino/a students by opening spaces that allow them to insert their language into broader curriculum spaces. While not discussed extensively in this study, the African American teacher utilized African American Language in the language arts classroom as a way to help some of the African American students scaffold over to more standard usages of English (cf. Williams, 2006). The African American teacher provided a space for the African American students to achieve. By doing so, one could argue that she opened up spaces for them to learn in ways that affirmed their African American culture. As educators, we have the responsibility of figuring out ways to value students' home languages in classrooms and other educational context. In doing so could have implications for the achievement gap of many cultural and linguistic diverse students, perhaps even closing

achievement gaps that have historically marginalized or negatively positioned African American and other students of color.

APPENDIX A

STUDY SCHOOL'S STUDENT POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

Table A1

Study School's Student Population: April 2004

	Race			
Gender	African American	White	"Other"	Total
Male	253	32	43	328
Female	259	28	28	315
Total	512	60	71	643

APPENDIX B

STUDY SCHOOL'S FACULTY AND STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

Table B1

Study School's Faculty and Staff Population

Position	Gender		Race		
	Male	Female	African American	White	Other
			Faculty		
Administrators					
Principal	1	--	1	--	--
Assistant principal	1	1	1	1	--
Teachers	12	42	26	28	--
Professionals					
Technical specialist	--	1	--	1	--
Counselor	--	1	--	1	--
Nurse	--	2	1	1	--
Librarian	--	1	--	1	--
Resource officer	1	--	1	--	--
Day treatment	--	2	--	2	--
Title I coordinator	--	2	2	--	--
			Staff		
Secretary	--	2	2	--	--
Registrar	--	1	1	--	--
Bookkeeper	--	1	1	--	--
Media clerk	--	1	1	--	--
Building engineer	1	--	1	--	--
Custodian	4	2	5	1	--
Child nutrition	--	5	4	1	--
Paraprofessional	2	4	4	2	--
Security officer	2	--	2	--	--
			Summary		
Total	24	68	53	39	--

REFERENCES

Anderson, J. (1995). Literacy and education in the African American experience. In V. Gadsden & D. Wagner (Eds.), *Literacy among African American youth: Issues in learning, teaching, and schooling* (pp. 19 – 37). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Aptheker, H. (Ed.). (1973). *The education of Black people: Ten critiques by W. E. B. Du Bois.* Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts.

Asante, M. (1991). African elements in African American English. In J. Holloway (Ed.), *Africanisms in American culture* (pp. 65-81). Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

Asante, M. (1998). *The Afrocentric idea*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple Univ. Press.

Ash, S., & Myhill, J. (1986). Linguistic correlates of inter-ethnic contact. In D. Sankoff (Ed.), *Diversity and diachrony* (pp. 33-44). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bailey, C.-J. N. (1982). Irish English and Caribbean black English: Another joinder. *American Speech, 57,* 237-9.

Bailey, G., & Maynor, N. (1989). The divergence controversy. *American Speech*, *64,* 12-39.

Balester, V. (1992). A reexamination of attitudes towards black English vernacular. In M. Secor & D. Charney (Eds.), *Constructing rhetorical education* (pp. 63-85). Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press.

Ball, A. (1995). Text design patterns in the writing of urban African American students: Teaching to the cultural strengths of students in multicultural settings. *Urban Education*, *30*(3), 253-289.

Ball, A. (1999). Evaluating the writing of culturally and linguistically diverse students: The case of the African American vernacular English speaker. In C. Cooper & L. Odell (Eds.), *Evaluating writing* (pp. 225-248). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Ball, A. & Lardner, T. (2005). *African American literacies unleashed: Vernacular English and the composition classroom*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies*. London: Routledge.

Baugh, J. (1999). *Out of the mouth of slaves: African American language and educational malpractice*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Baugh, J. (2000). *Beyond Ebonics*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Beavers, H. (1995). Introduction. In V. Gadsen & D. Wagner (Eds.), *Literacy among African American youth: Issues in learning, teaching, and schooling.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Becknell, C.F. (1987). *Blacks in the Work-force: A Black Manager's Perspective*. Albuquerque, NM: Horizon Communications.

Biko, S. (1979). *Black consciousness in South Africa*. New York: Vintage Press.

Bloome, D. (1989a). Beyond access: An ethnographic study of reading and writing in a seventh grade classroom. In D. Bloome (Ed.), *Classrooms and literacy* (pp. 53-107). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bloome, D., Puro, P., & Theodorou, E. (1989b). Procedural display and classroom lessons. *Curriculum Inquiry, 19*(3), 265-291.

Breitman, G. (1965). *Malcolm X speaks*. New York: Merrit.

Breuch, L.-A. (2003). Post process pedagogy: A philosophical exercise. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (2nd ed.; pp. 97-125). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Britton, J. (1971). *Language and learning*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Press.

Campbell, K. (1997). "Real niggaz's don't die": African American students speaking themselves into their writing. In C. Severino, J. Guerra, & J. Butler (Eds.), *Writings in multicultural settings* (pp. 67-78). New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Carter, S.P. (2001). *The possibilities of silence: African-American female cultural identity and secondary English classrooms*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University.

Carter, S.P. (2006). "She would've still made that face expression": The use of Multiple Literacies by two African American young women. *Theory Into Practice*, 45 (4), pp. 352-358.

Cary, L. (1991). *Black Ice*. New York: Vintage Press.

Champion, T. (1998). "Tell me somethin'good": A description of narrative structures among African American children. *Linguistic and Education*, 9, pp. 251-286.

Champion, T. (2002). *Understanding storytelling among African American children: A journey from Africa to America.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum associates.

Cook-Gumperz, J. (1993). Dilemmas of identity: Oral and written literacies in the making of a basic writing student. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *24*(4), 336-356.

DeBose, C., & Faraclas, N. (1993). An Africanist approach to the linguistic study of black English: Getting to the roots to tense-aspect modality and copula systems in Afro-American. In S. S. Mufwene (Ed.), *Africanisms in Afro-American language varieties* (pp. 364-387). Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press.

Delpit, L. & Dowdy, J. (2002). *The skin we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom.* New York: New York Press.

Dillard, J. (1972). *Black English.* New York: Random House.

Dorsey-Gaines, C., & Garnett, C. (1996). The role of the Black church in growing up literate: Implications for literacy research. In D. Hicks (Ed.), *Discourse learning and schooling.* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). The talented tenth. In N. Huggins (Ed.), *Du Bois writings* (pp. 842-861). New York: The Library of America.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1935). Does the Negro Need Separate Schools? *Journal of Negro Education, 4*, 328-335.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1973). Whither now and why. In H. Apthekar (Ed.), *The education of black people: Ten critiques by W. E. B. Du Bois* (pp. 149-158. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1986a). Of the meaning of progress. In N. Huggins (Ed.), *Du Bois writings* (pp. 405-414). New York: The Library of America.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1986b). Of the wings of Atlanta. In N. Huggins (Ed.), *Du Bois writings* (pp. 415-423). New York: The Library of America.

Egan-Robertson, A. & Bloome, D. (Eds.). (1998). *Students as Researchers of culture and language*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Egan-Robertson & Willet (1998). Students as ethnographers. In Egan-Robertson, A. & Bloome, D. (Eds.). *Students as Researchers of culture and language* (pp. 1-32). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Farr, M. (1981). Dialect influence in writing. In M. Farr Whiteman (Ed.), *Variation in writing: Functional and linguistic-cultural differences* (pp. 156-166). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Farr, M. (1985). Basic writing students: Investigating oral and written language. *Research in the Teaching of English, 19*(1), 62-83.

Farr, M., & Daniels, H. (1986). *Language diversity and writing instruction.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.

Farrison, W. E. (1970). Dialectology versus Negro dialect. *CLA Journal, 13,* 21-27.

Fasold, R. W. (1999). *Ebonics need not be English*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 438 984)

Feagin, C. (1979). *Variation and change in Alabama English.* Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press.

Fishman, J.A. (1980). Bilingual education, language planning, and English. *English World Wide: A Journal of Varieties of English, 1*, 11-24.

Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out: Dilemmas of race, identity, and success at capital high.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' success: Coping with the burden of acting white. *Urban Review*, *18*(3), 176-206.

Foster, M. (1989). "It's cooking now": A performance analysis of the speech events of a black teacher in an urban community college. *Language in Society, 18,* 1-29.

Foster, M. (1992). Sociolinguistics and the African American community: Implications for literacy. *Theory Into Practice*, *31*(4), 303-311.

Gadsden, V. L., & Wagner, D.A. (Eds.). (1995). *Literacy among African American youth: Issues in learning, teaching, and schooling.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Gee, J. (1996). *Social linguisitics and literacies* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge*. New York: Basic Books.

Giglioli, P. (Ed.). (1972). *Language and Social Context*.

Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Green, J., & Wallat, C. (Eds.). (1981). *Ethnography and language in educational settings.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Green, L. (2002). *African American English*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Gumperz, J. (1982a). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Gumperz, J. (1982b). *Language and social identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Gumperz, J., Kaltman, H., & O'Connor, M. C. (1984). Cohesion in spoken and written discourse: Ethnic style and the transition to literacy. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Coherence in written discourse* (pp. 3-19). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Heath, S. (1983). *Ways with words.* New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Herskovits, M. (1941). *The myth of the Negro past*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Holloway, J. (Ed.). (1991). *Africanisms in American culture.* Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

Holt, G. S. (1972). Stylin' outta the black pulpit. In T. Kochman (Ed.), *Rappin' and stylin' out: Communication in urban black America* . Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.

Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations of sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.

Jakobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and poetics. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

Kochman, T. (Ed.). (1972). *Rappin' and stylin' out: Communication in urban black America.* Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.

Kochman, (1987). The ethnic component in Black language and culture. In J.S. Phinney and M.J. Rotheram (Eds.), *Children's Ethnic Socialization: Pluralism and Development* (pp. 117-133). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Labov, W. (1977). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W. (1995). Can reading failure be reversed: A linguistic approach to the question. In V. Gadsden & D. A. Wagner (Eds.), *Literacy among African American youth:*

Issues in learning, teaching, and schooling (pp. 39-68). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Labov, W., & Harris, W. A. (1986). De facto segregation of black and white vernaculars. In D. Sankoff (Ed.), *Diversity and diachrony* (pp. 45-58). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Lemann, N. (1992). *The promised land.* New York: Vintage Press.

Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. London: Routledge.

Luster, L. (1992). *Schooling, survival, and struggles, Black women and the GED.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University.

Major, C. (1994). *Juba to jive: A dictionary of African American slang*. New York: Penguin Books.

Mandela, N. (1994). *Long walk to freedom*. Toronto: Little, Brown & Co.

Mathabane, M. (1986). *Kaffir boy*. New York: Touchstone.

McCall, N. (1994). Makes *me wanna holla: A young black man in America.* New York: Random House.

McComiskey, B. (2000). The post-process movement in Composition studies. In R. Wallace, A. Jackson & S. Wallace (Eds.), *Reforming College Composition: Writing the Wrongs* (pp. 37-53). London: Greenwood.

McWhorter, J. (2000). *Spreading the word: Language and dialect in America*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Michaels, S. (1981). Sharing time: Children's narrative styles and differential access to literacy. *Language in Society, 10,* 423-442.

Moss, B. (Ed.). (1994). *Literacy across communities*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Moynihan, D. P. (1969). *Maximum feasible misunderstanding: Community action in the war on poverty.* New York: Free Press.

Mufwene, S. (2000). Some sociohistorical inferences about the development of African American English. In S. Poplack (Ed.), *The English History of African American English,* (pp. 233-263). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Murray, D. (1997). Teaching writing as process not product. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (pp. 3-6). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Ochs, E. (1993). Constructing social identity: A language socialization perspective. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, *26*(3), 287-306.

Ogbu, J. (2004). Collective Identity and the Burden of "Acting White" in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review*, 36 (1), pp. 1 – 35.

Olson, G. (1999). Toward a post-process composition: Abandoning the rhetoric of assertion. In T. Kent (Ed.), *Post process theory: Beyond the writing process paradigm* (pp. 7-15). Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press.

Perl, S. (1997). The composing process of unskilled college writers. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (pp. 17-42). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Perry, T., & Delpit, L. (Eds.). (1998). *The real Ebonics debate*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Poplack, S. (Ed.). (2000). *The English history of African American English*. New York: Blackwell.

Purcell-Gates, V. (1993). I ain't never read my own words before. *Journal of Reading*, *37(*3), 210-219.

Qualls, C. (2001). Public and personal meanings of literacy. In Harris, J., Kamhi, A., & Pollock, K. (Eds.), *Literacy in African American Communities*, (pp. 1 – 19). NJ: Erlbaum.

Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Richburg, K. (1998). *Out of America: A black man confronts Africa*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Richardson, E. (2003). *African American literacies.*New York: Routledge.

Rickford, J. (1999). *African American vernacular English*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Rickford, J. (2000). Holding on to a language of our own: An interview with linguist John Rickford. In T. Perry & L. Delpit (Eds.), *The real Ebonics debate* (pp. 59-66). Boston: Beacon Press.

Rickford, J., Sweetland, J., & A. Rickford. (2004). African American English and other vernaculars in education. *Journal of English Linguistics,* 32(3), pp. 230-320.

Rose, M. (1997). The language of exclusion: Writing instruction at the university. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (pp. 525-548). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Russell, D. (1999). Activity theory and process approaches: Writing in school and society. *Process Approach*, pp. 49-64.

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. (2003). *Discourses in place.* New York: Routledge.

Sharpley-Whiting, T. D. (2007). *Pimps up, ho's down: Hip hop's hold on young Black women.* New York: New York University Press.

Smith, E. (1998). What is black English? What is Ebonics? In T. Perry & L. Delpit (Eds.), *The real Ebonics debate* (pp. 49-58). Boston: Beacon Press.

Smitherman, G. (1977). *Talkin and testifying: The language of black America.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Smitherman, G. (1981). "What go around come round": King in perspective. *Harvard Educational Review*, *51*(1), 40-56.

Smitherman, G. (1985). "It bees dat way sometime": Sounds and structure of present-day black English. In V. Clark, P. Eschnolz, & A. Rosa (Eds.), *Language* (pp. 552-567). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Smitherman, G. (1994). *Black talk*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Smitherman, G. (2000). *Talkin that talk: Language, culture and education in African America*. New York: Routledge.

Sommers, N. (1997). Revision strategies of student writers and experienced adult writers. In V. Villanueva (Ed.), *Cross-talk in comp theory* (pp. 43-54). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Spears, A. (1982). The Black English semi auxillary *come. Language,* 58, pp. 850-872.

Spradley, J. (1979*). The ethnographic interview*. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Spring, J. (1998). *Education and the rise of the global economy*. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Staples, B. (1994). *Parallel time*. New York: HarperCollins.

Steele, S. (1991). *The content of our character*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Street, B. (Ed.). (1993). *Cross-cultural studies of literacy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Street, B. (1995). *Social literacies.* Harlow, England: Pearson Education.

Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking voices*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Taylor, D., & Dorsey-Gaines, C. (1988). *Growing up literate: Learning from inner-city families.* Portsmouth, NJ: Heinemann.

Thomas, E. & Reaser, J. (2004). Delimiting perceptual cues used for the ethnic labeling of African American and European American voices. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(1), pp. 54 – 87.

Troutman, D. (1997). Whose voice is it anyway? Marked features in the writing of black English speakers. In C. Severino, J. Guerra, & J. Butler (Eds.), *Writing in multicultural settings* (pp. 27-39). New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Turner, L. (1949). *Africanism in the Gullah dialect.* Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

Vaughn-Cooke, F. (1987). Are black and white vernaculars diverging? *American Speech, 62,* 3-80.

Villanueva, V. (Ed.). (1997) *Cross-talk in comp theory*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language* (Trans. E. Hanfmann & G. Vakar). Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

Wade-Gayles, G. (1993). *Pushed back to strength*. New York: Avon.

Washington, B. T. (1901). Up from slavery. In L. Harlan & J. Blassingame (Eds.), *The Booker T. Washington papers. Vol. 1: The autobiographical writings*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.

Wheeler, R. & Swords, R. (2006*). Code-switching: Teaching Standard English in urban classrooms.* Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Williams, C. (2002, April 2). *Teaching practices borrowed from the black church*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle.

Williams, C. (2003). *Language variations among African American students*. Unpublished manuscript, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

Williams, C. (2006). "You gotta reach 'em": An African American teacher's multiple literacies approach in a middle school language arts classroom. *Theory Into Practice*, 45 (4), pp. 346-351.

Williams, R. (1997). The Ebonics controversy. *The Journal of Black Psychology*, *23*(3), 208-214.

Williamson, J. (1970). Selected features of speech: Black and white. *CLA Journal*, *13,* 420-433.

Wilson, W. J. (1980). *The declining significance of race* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Winford, D. (1997). On the origins of African American English – a creolist perspective part I: The sociohistorical background. *Diachronica*, 14, pp. 305 – 344.

Winford, D. (1998). On the origins of African American English – a creolist perspective part II: Linguistic features. *Diachronica*, 15, pp. 99 - 154.

Wolfram, W. (1991*). Dialects and American English*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Wolfram, W. and Thomas, E. (2002). *The development of African American English*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Wood, P. (1974). *Black majority.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Woodson, C. (1933). *Mis-education of the Negro.* Washington, DC: Associated Pub.

Zaharlick, A., & Green, J. L. (1991). Ethnographic research. In J. Flood, J. Jensen, D. Lapp, & J. Squire (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the language arts*. (pp. 205-225). New York: MacMillan.

Zeigler, M., & Osinubi, V. (2002). Theorizing the postcoloniality of African American English. *Journal of Black Studies*, *32*(5), 588-609.