

THE BLENDING OF STANDARD ENGLISH WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN
EBONICS: ACCOMMODATING TO EACH OTHER

By

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother. She has given me my determination and strength. Even though she didn't understand exactly what a thesis was she still encouraged me every day that I can do it. Thanks mom.

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Abstract of Thesis

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Communications

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Abstract

This study investigates the perception of speaking Ebonics in situations in a classroom, at work and at an informal social event. Using communication accommodation theory, this investigation into African American communication focuses on whether individuals would adapt to persons who speak differently. The participants are students at a mid-western American university with the majority of the population Caucasian American. Three conditions of Ebonics were displayed 1) light Ebonics, 2) none (Standard English) and 3) heavy Ebonics. The results indicate a perception of using heavy/light Ebonics in the classroom and at work less appropriate. Speaking Standard English was perceived as the more appropriate dialect over the heavy and light Ebonics conditions. Additionally, the results suggest a tendency for participants to diverge from the heavy/light Ebonics conditions and less from the Standard English condition. These results could be used to decrease problems associated with inter-ethnic communication.

African American English, Black English, African American vernacular English (AAVE), 'Noble Language of The Ghetto' Ebonics or (before the 1950's) "Negro English" or "Negro dialect;" these are just some of the expressions used to describe the vernacular of some African Americans (Croghan, 2000). Controversy over what exactly it is and how to incorporate this language into society has existed since the civil rights era. In the late 1990's the state of California's response to the decreasing of students grade point averages became a national debate. Blaming the children's "community" language in not being Standard American English, the state proposed the Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development Credential (CLAD), in which teachers would have to become certified to teach this "community" language the students were speaking (Croghan, 2000). To add, in April of 2010 the Drug Enforcement Agency of Atlanta (DEA) wanted to hire experts in Ebonics speaking to translate the language of African American suspects. Efforts to understand Ebonics and narrow the communication gap between those who speak Standard American English and those who don't has led extensive discussion and ongoing debate. But should we be looking at the parallels of the two dialects, or the blending of the two?

Wolfram (1991) defined dialect as, "any variety of language which is shared by a group of speakers." (p. 2) He further asserted that every language has a dialect that one speaks and is strictly by geographical location, social class or age, in which race was not a factor. Wolfram (1991) gave characteristics of each; Formal Standard English, Informal Standard English and Vernacular English that will be helpful in this exploration into

African American dialects and Standard American English. Formal Standard English is applied primarily to written language, which means books, dictionaries, novels and other texts. Formal Standard English is a very conservative dialog and is widely acceptable in society. Informal Standard English is applied to spoken language. Mainly used when speaking to family, friends and in social interactions. Rarely is Informal Standard English written unless it is in a novel or making a point in a newspaper article. Vernacular English is also spoken language. It is socially stigmatized by society and negatively stereotyped against for its linguistic structures. Vernacular English is mainly spoken by isolated or minority groups (Wolfram, 1991).

This investigation into the mixing of Standard English and African American vernacular English the focus will be Standard English and vernacular English. The present study seeks to find whether Standard English and African American vernacular English (AAVE) are blending. Communication accommodation theory (CAT) will be utilized in seeing how individuals adapt in communication and accommodating to each other when they are from differing ethnicities. Noticing the recent popularity of social networking sites, blogging with self proclaimed "journalists," not to mention modern day Rap and Hip Hop music which is being embraced by all ethnicities, this kind of "blending" seems to be embraced by other outlets of communication. If analysis reveals that there is a blending of dialects this might prove helpful in decreasing inter-ethnic communication difficulties which plague our classrooms, and employment environments.

Increasing overall awareness of differences in communication styles is also an

important component in this research. Some African Americans speak a vernacular, but it is also important to note that other cultures can speak a dialect of English as well. This will be noted later in the text, but such populations such as foreign exchange students, immigrants relocating from other countries and others can also speak a dialect form of English. The results from this investigation can translate into whether Americans accommodate to different communication styles and accents. If the results reveal that Americans do not accommodate to speech differences, this could mean dire consequences such as communication breakdowns and communication avoidance from those who speak a vernacular. If the results reveal that Americans can and do accommodate to speech differences it will open doors for multi-cultural communication research. Creating more harmonious work and classroom environments can be attainable.

Wolfram's definition of dialect and characteristics of Standard speech will be the foundation needed to understand this investigation into the blending of African American Vernacular English and Standard American English. The results from this analysis of "mixing" of communication styles can be used in multiple inter-ethnic or inter-cultural aspects. Such aspects in dealing with communication issues associated with cultural differences in the workplace, class and others. The aforementioned terms used to describe the dialect of African Americans will be used interchangeably in this research to indicate that all terms are appropriate to use.

Literature Review

History of Ebonics

African American vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics was created by Africans while being forcibly enslaved by English speaking European Americans. Ebonics evolved as a way for Africans to communicate with each other and the surrounding natives, the Indians (Johnson, 1998). African American vernacular English (AAVE) stems from native African language of West Africa (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). Through the merging of slave owners English language and native African tongues (which differed from tribe to tribe), Africans developed their own way of communicating with each other without any formal education.

McLaren (2009) coined it the Africanization of European languages. This Africanization needed to occur for obvious reasons, to survive the new land with other groups of displaced people from different tribes and languages from Africa. Schneider (1981) added that the way in which Africans picked up on the language was forced and restricted. The language was unidirectional in that the slaveholders did not learn African native languages. Learning English depended on whether Africans were house slaves or field slaves. Meaning, house slaves learned English faster because they had more contact with their slaveholders. The field slaves picked up on English the best way they could through other slaves and with the small amount of communication with their slaveholders.

As a new dialect formed within the groups of displaced Africans, the Europeans

noticed the abnormal word and sentence structures they were using. They labeled it "makeshift" languages, mixed and broken English (Blackshire-Belay, 1996). The new dialect created from uneducated slave immigrants encompassed a thick foundation of tradition, culture and religion. The broken English somewhat sounded the same as the Europeans English, but had its own unique meaning and structure. Hecht, Jackson and Ribeau's (2003) research on African American communication revealed that family and religion have very strong influences in the early formation of the African American communication system. As Africans began creating a way of communicating with each other apart from their differing tribal languages, they shared the common struggle of being a forced slave in a foreign land. Their differing tribal origins became one tradition, culture, religion and communication system.

Daniel and Smitherman (1976) comprehensively investigated African American communication and its relation to traditional African World View, its similarities to African American communication, culture and religion. The authors began comparing call and response found in religious meetings and African American music. The call and response involves spontaneous talk to express agreement with the speaker. It is a way of active participation in church, for example, so as to say that the audience is listening and approves of the message being said. With the church example, the call and response would be a spontaneous "Amen" from the audience when the speaker asks, "Are ya'll with me?" The call and response in African and African American cultures establishes a "we" rather than a "me" view and involves everyone in the sermon or speech.

Daniel and Smitherman (1976) also examined the African tradition of community participation in raising children with a strong faith in religion and their similarities to African American culture. In the community participation value it involved family and in the rearing of children; the old saying, "it takes a village" explains this position. The concept of time is also similar to African World View to African American's value system. The concept of time is not a particular time, stating specifically when an event will take place. Rather examples of time would be sayings such as, "what goes around comes around," "in due time it will happen," in God's timing," or "not to be on time, but just in time." Daniel and Smitherman (1976) concluded that the commonality of the different tribal traditions and camaraderie developed during slavery between displaced Africans is the source of deep structured traditions of African American culture and communication today.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination in public places and organizations, started a revolution in the Black community (Ward, 1993). The 1960's and 1970's were a time of gaining equality with every man and woman regardless of color or origin. In this period of time a shift occurred in society which changed how African American communication is seen. It was also a time of African pride and heritage. The Black Power movement asserted to society that African Americans were no longer reserved but declared their ethnicities by wearing afros, African jewelry, and clothing. Starting African American based organizations such as the Black Panther Party and pursuing higher education affirmed that African Americans were here to stay. Seymore

and Seymore (1979) explained that in the 1960's African Americans wanted to express themselves and their significance in society. The phrase "Black is beautiful" and the Black Power movement became a way to intimidate African American oppressors. African American dialect created from their African ancestors and English speaking slaveholders, became a way to declare the difference between African Americans and everyone else. Suddenly, speaking the "makeshift" language originally called broken and deficient was a declaration of heritage and pride (Seymore & Seymore, 1979).

In his examination Ward (1993) reflected upon African American communication and traditions, that in the 1970's the integration of African Americans into society as equals was debated and argued among many. This argument along with many Civil Rights riots, protests and rallies, African Americans were being newly seen as men and women in America, not displaced slaves. With the new integration into society as equals, the public was also coming to terms with African American speech patterns were different than that of European Americans. With the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, African Americans were definitely unwilling to change, or adapt their way of speaking to that of the general public. Speaking Ebonics asserted "Blackness" and to not, would be rejection of heritage. By the 1970's it could be argued that Black dialect was a unique form of dialect, structurally different from Standard English, not wrong or deficient. This was a huge step for African Americans, although some others still may think that AAVE is an "incorrect" way of speaking. But some African Americans value AAVE and identify with it.

The 1980's for African Americans were a decade of moving forward with the opportunities gained in the 70s by African American civil activists. It was a decade of firsts for African Americans in sports, politics, music, and higher education. Jewell (1985) described the African American struggle to gain equality in the 1970's and the progress made politically, in the educational system, employment, housing and other areas in which inequality and discrimination limited African Americans. She also explained that the progression of the 70s could have become a regression in the 80s. Jewell reflected on the anti-affirmative action views trying to stop the progression of ethnic minorities in the educational system. Affirmative action policies are a way for African Americans and other underrepresented groups to gain access to higher education, employment and health programs. Without these programs African Americans would be reverted back to being limited in their employment and educational opportunities, therefore regressing and being segregated to areas with affordable housing. This segregation to particular areas with little interaction with other ethnicities would stagnate African Americans. Since Standard American English is the language of America, learning how to speak it was and is important for advancement and acceptance into society.

Modern Day Ebonics

Instead of the rigid segregation and overt discrimination of the 60's and 70's along with the Black power movement, modern African American communication involves a sort of "negotiation of culture" (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). The authors argued

that African Americans observe their surroundings and learn from them, meaning that in an intercultural interaction African Americans choose their cultural identity, and aspects of themselves to be displayed. Most African Americans continue to communicate "comfortably" and speak in AAVE with interactions involving their own racial group with friends and family. The negotiation of culture concept Hecht and associates introduced would involve interactions with outside racial groups. The 1970's and Black Power movements, big afro-centric hair and an obvious statement of individuality against European Americans have now become a more harmonious subtleness. Colleges and universities are becoming more diverse, businesses and organizations are also increasing diversity. More African Americans seem more willing to adapt communication to "fit" their surroundings.

With the surge of social networking sites in the early 21st century, a diverse music selection including Caucasian Americans in Hip Hop, the cultural divide is diminishing now more than ever. Awareness of what encompasses African American culture, shown through YouTube videos, Hip Hop/Rap videos, entertainment sitcoms and reality shows with African American actors such as *My Wife and Kids* or reality shows like *Basketball Wives*, showcases some aspects of African American culture and communication. Rap music, in particular, is not just an illustration of the Black Struggle with lyrics describing inequality in America. Now, Rap music has an array of differing cultural backgrounds which includes Latino and Caucasian American rappers. Rap lyrics are more about the human struggle, not just a race struggle anymore. Rappers lyrically represent how

homelessness, disadvantage and unemployment can supersede race. The commonality of the human struggle, especially with the recent recession, creates camaraderie of those with the same strife regardless of race.

AAVE and slang associated with Rap and Hip Hop music are more and more being used by political figures, teachers, and entertainment television. Slang phrases such as “diss,” “don’t go there,” and “you the man!” has been assimilated into American culture, claimed Lee (1999). Originally slang was used as a “secret” language so slaveholders couldn’t understand the conversations of their slaves. Lee called it “black verbal expression.” Not to confuse AAVE with slang, slang changes as the time changes. For example, “you jive turkey” was most likely used in the 70’s, but modern slang can be terms such as “chrome,” “salty,” and the most popular in mainstream society “bling, bling” (referring to diamonds). AAVE is a continuous unchanging dialog which can be used without slang. Older African Americans who communicate through Ebonics probably wouldn’t understand those slang terms previously mentioned. The generational differences in slang make it an aspect of African American communication but AAVE as a dialect is entirely different.

Modern day AAVE has progressed from the 1970’s in being a parallel dialect from Standard English, to as being used in American culture today. One way this has happened is because of its withstanding nature within the African American community. The heavy drawl that AAVE had when its originators became self educated English speakers is not as profound in today’s use of Ebonics. For example consider an excerpt

from *The Color Purple* (Walker, 1984),

The first week, nobody come. Second week, three or four. Third week, one. Harpo sit behind his little counter listening to Swain pick his box. He got cold drinks, he got barbecue, he got chitlins, got store bought bread. He got a sign saying Harpo's tacked up on the side of the house and another one out on the road. But he ain't got no customers. I go down the path to the yard, stand outside, look in. Harpo look out and wave. Come on in, Miss Celie, he say. I say, Naw thank you. Mr. sometime walk down, have a cold drink, listen to Swain. Miss Shug walk down too, every once in a wile. She still wearing her little shifts, and I still cornrow her hair, but it getting long now and she say she soon want it press.

Or an example, *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1988), in which Tom and Jim are fetching water from a fountain;

Say, Jim, I'll fetch the water if you'll whitewash some.
Jim shook his head and said:
Can't, Marse Tom. Ole missis, she told me I got to go an' git dis water an' not stop foolin' round' wid anybody. She say she spec' Marse Tom gwine to ax me to whitewash, an' so she tole me go'long an' 'tend to my own business—she 'lowed she'd 'tend to de whitewashin'.

African American's who use AAVE mostly do not speak in such broken English as the previous example. Although the heavy drawl in the example could still be spoken by older African Americans. An example of present day AAVE might be something like this;

When I started school I didn't know I would be the focus of attention. I sat down where all these white people were looking at me. Everytime I try to ast a question, everybody be looking and turning they heads. Dang! Turn around, I be thinking to myself. I'm a student too, just like you. We ain't no different. Never changed, soon as I walk in a room. I even tried to be they friend, ya know kinda talk to em'? Yeah right, I didn't get very far.

In this example, others who are not African American would better understand an individual who spoke in AAVE such as this. Understanding why AAVE never left the

African American community but only became "watered down" stems from the deep roots in culture, and religion that is associated with the dialog. AAVE was built on a strong foundation which has prevailed throughout generations. African Americans pursue higher education, which partially explains the homogeneity of African American speech.

There is a difference in AAVE usage between educated and uneducated persons. African Americans who speak AAVE, and pursued higher education, have learned ways to communicate to persons outside of their race. This exposure to other ethnicities, and possible contact with discrimination associated with their comfortable way of speaking, has made it necessary for African Americans to "turn off" and "turn on" their dialog. Uneducated African Americans who speak AAVE most likely haven't had the chance to interact with people outside of their environment. These are usually African Americans with lower socio economic status, which are unable financially to attend college or take classes in a particular trade. Therefore, the last example of AAVE is more like an educated African American way of speaking. One should keep in mind that these are not generalizations of all African Americans or African Americans who speak in AAVE.

Another reason why modern AAVE continue to endure is because of its use by other ethnicities and ranks, including Politicians, news anchors or other public figures. The last example of AAVE could be spoken of a non African American and no one would give it a second thought as to the educational level, or socio economic status of that individual. In the 21st century teenagers are finding ways to shorten sentences purposefully misspell words and entirely rewording speech in ways never thought of.

Quoting a Facebook status update, "Abt 2 go hmee nd do mii hmewrkk den watch mii recordns," taken from a 14 year old explains the paradigm shift that seems to be occurring in today's communication with children. As the paradigm shift leans more toward improper use of Standard English and grammatical errors associated with shorthand written language in text messaging and social networking sites, Ebonics still lives in the new generation of teens.

Summary of History and Modern Ebonics

AAVE have evolved as African Americans became more educated and less segregated into communities. The AAVE that was spoken by enslaved Africans which were self taught English, has not the same diction and sentence structure as AAVE today. Referring back to the earlier examples from Alice Walker's "Color Purple" and then the example of how African Americans would most likely speak today, the progression in vernaculars are noticeable. Throughout the generations of African Americans, AAVE has changed in wake of the Civil Rights Movement and Brown vs. Board of Education. Without these changes African Americans wouldn't have had the opportunities to enter higher education. By increasing education, African Americans are better able to desegregate and relocate to suburban areas, further changing their AAVE. The "makeshift" language that Blackshire-Belay (1996) described in his study on African American communication is no longer an incorrect dialog but a different way of communicating English in America.

Standard English

Standard English (SE) is taught to students in the United States from the time they are able to speak as children through high school. It is our native language. In this section instead of looking at the practices of Standard English such as what is a pronoun and how to use a verb in a sentence, chances are if you are reading this research investigation you know everything there is to know about how to compose a grammatically correct sentence in Standard English. Instead, this section will introduce a brief historical lesson on the origin of Standard English, but more importantly focus on how versatile Standard English is, the different forms it can take, and the uses of it by other countries. By getting a grasp of Standard English (SE) from this point of view of styles and accents, a better understanding the of vernacular of African American dialect will be obtained.

McArthur (1999), in his exploratory review of SE, established that the term Standard English wasn't coined as such until the 1770's. The first dictionary of Royal Standard English, which was formatted after the King's speech patterns, implied that this standard of English was higher than the other dialects of English. The subsequent definition of Standard English was the speech and writing of educated people (in which "educated" was not defined). The other forms of the language, called "deviations from English," were termed dialects. Categorizing the royal King or Queen's language as the higher Standard English and the others the lower Standard English (Standard and Non-Standard English), discrimination against other forms of dialects began.

When SE was established from the Royal King/Queen of England it became the norm, which caused it to be taught in classrooms, written in textbooks, magazines, and

novels. McArthur (1999) described that the deviant dialects were given terms like; jargon, accents, Creole, slang, colloquial, 'bad' English, and so on. Who would speak this Standard English in the late eighteenth century (which became a debate) would be the "educated" persons, including the Royal family. But the educated speakers of SE (which then was called The King's English) became those of high economic status, including the upper-class and upper-middle class.

Recently authors have suggested that SE is being influenced by the current generation of young adults (Denison, 2008; Gilsdorf, 2002). Reflecting on McArthur's review on the origin of SE (1999), staying in the "ye olde" era of the eighteenth century instead of globalizing and diversifying would be a mistake in keeping everyone in the confined box of a "standard." The U.S. embraces culture and traditions that its foreigners bring in relocating to America, with its recognitions of Cinco de Mayo, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras's celebration of lent and others. Gilsdorf (2002) asserted that change is happening, and with it comes the "morphing" of SE. In teaching our foreign inhabitants the English language in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms, SE is definitely not the same as eighteenth century's SE. As Gilsdorf (2002) pointed out the "users" of the English language use it for many purposes. These purposes include using it in art, to vent in emotion, philosophical abstraction, to portray humor, and other ways English is used to express one's personality, thoughts and opinions. Denison (2008) noted that unplanned speech seemed to not follow SE. She described in her investigation into change and the emergence into Non-Standard English, that spontaneous speech of some educated persons does not conform to SE.

Yong-lan (2007) gave a definition of Standard English, "Standard English is defined not as a language, a style, an accent, but as standardized grammar and vocabulary with different accents" (p. 4). This definition, introducing his abstract, was used in his research on educators who teach ESL. Yong-lan asserted that SE has been globalized with over 650 million speakers of the language worldwide. This type of popularity of a language is not without its accents and differences in pronunciation when moving from region to region. Clarifying that SE is only one form of the dialect, Yong-lan explained the language as having many styles. The author stated that English does not belong to any country or nation. The language has been adopted by numerous countries, therefore changing the pronunciation and adding diverse accents to it. Learning SE in school is just that, learning a language and how to produce grammatical sentences. There isn't "life" to it or personality until the people who speak it give it life.

SE is used by other cultures, demonstrating its versatility stated Yong-lan (2007). The author explained that other countries also use English as their native language. He classified these other countries as "circles," realms of different cultures who use English besides the United States. The inner circle is composed of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle is composed of India, Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa. Also the expanding circle which are China, Japan, Israel, Greece, Poland and others. The inner circle is those countries who speak English as a native language. The outer circle refers to those countries that were former English colonies, and the expanding countries are those practicing English as a first language. Looking at this list, it is impossible to think that everyone could speak in the same dialect

of the same language. Wolfram (1991) defined dialect as “any variety of language shared by a group of people (p. 2).” The language becomes varied because of the differences in geographical locations and the grouping of people in areas.

Yong-lan (2007) further explained that SE has no style in itself. It alone has very formal sentence structures and is generally not used in everyday dialog. The author asserted that SE is only one variety of English among many, including other countries structures of the English language. As an example, Yong-lan explained how Nigeria uses English as a native language. He explained, in an interview with a fellow Nigerian, that Nigerians appreciate English and its ability to unite countries to communicate in international business settings. Gilsdorf (2002) pointed out that Nigeria has a form of the English language called Standard Nigerian English in which the natives modified the language to suit their African experiences and yet not change it so others do not understand.

Standard English was established in the late eighteenth century by using the King/Queen speech patterns. By establishing the differences between the King’s English and everyone else, categories of Standard and Non-Standard English (NSE) were created. These categories of SE and NSE are still in use today. Gilsdorf (2002) suggested that the English language and what we know of as the “Standard” is changing. Foreign speakers of the dialect, along with other countries who also use English as their native tongue, are changing what is considered SE.

African American Vernacular English

In this section, the differences and similarities between Standard American English and Ebonics will be established to grasp a better understanding of the two dialects. Wolfram (1991) agreed that African American vernacular English (AAVE) is unique from SE. For the record, he asserted that Southern White dialect is similar to AAVE. This concept was also found in Botan and Smitherman's (1991) results which found that industrial blue collar workers (Caucasian American) understood their African American co-workers use of AAVE, and spoke in the same dialect. White collar workers did not understand the dialect like the lower class blue collar workers. The results from Botan and Smitherman (1991) investigation suggested that AAVE is not generally by race (which initially only spoken by African Americans) but a dialect by geographical location and socio economic status.

In the same breath, Wolfram (1991) also asserted that AAVE have characteristics not found in southern Whites dialect, and are not as often used as in African American Ebonics. Examples of these characteristics included the deletion of "is" in sentence structures such as, "she gonna do it." Wolfram also described that in AAVE some words or phrases have "camouflaged" meaning. This, he described, looks as if the word is SE, but actually means something else in AAVE. An example of camouflage is the word steady, which means something firm or constant. In AAVE the phrase, "they be steady messing with you" means a continuous intense activity. Another example of camouflage, among many, is the use of the word bad. Of course bad is something negative, but in AAVE bad can mean something good or positive. Hecht, Jackson and Ribeau (2003)

explained that the sentence structures and the camouflage concept that Wolfram introduced came from African native languages. The differences stem from structural patterns of the African languages.

In using an example from a recent Rap artist, AAVE is illustrated. Note that not all African Americans speak in the same manner or dialog. Some do speak Standard American English; the continuum of dialect applies to any race or ethnicity. The song is entitled, *Black Republican* (2007), the artist is Lil Wayne:

I feel like a black Republican Tote a MAC'n Republican Act so southern n' die for my brethren Money, money, money Like money Mac and publishin One life to live, never ask for a mulligan Streets call but the heat make me feel covenant Been done had cake day late like Anne Sullivan Fly like an eagle but no I'm no Donovan Boy you better go eat some soup with your mom n' them And my mind is on another continent I am real Cash Money, no counterfeit I don't parkin' lot pimp I just politic But I get all in her mouth like polident. New Orleans represent it to the inner Come from the city where the glitter don't glimmer the sun don't shine and the guns don't sleep

This excerpt from the song *Black Republican* is about the rapper being financially stable. The rapper considers republican politician's being also financially stable, making them both have a commonality; money. The rapper refers to Caucasian Americans (Anne Sullivan in the rap lyrics), as if saying he is just like them, because he has luxuries and riches. Lil Wayne originated from New Orleans, and is not a politician but reflects in his song that he is a politician because of his wealth.

The popular rapper's use of AAVE in this excerpt is understood by most African Americans (which is his majority audience), but could be misunderstood or generally not understood by other ethnicities. This description in use of African American dialect is not always spoken by African Americans. The English language can be thought of as being

on a continuum of dialects, which means that not all ethnicities speak one standard dialect. Not all African Americans speak a vernacular, and not all Caucasian Americans speak Standard American English; it varies. As was mentioned before, dialects can vary by location or socio-economic status. Depending on the area, for example the Bronx, New York, the individuals speak differently than someone from Little Rock, Arkansas. Regardless of culture or ethnicity, the dialect bleeds into everyone in that area making their communication styles the same.

SE and NSE (Non-Standard English) is a continuum of communication dialects (Wolfram, 1991). This range of dialect can be seen as having SE on one end and NSE on the other:

SE-----↕A-----↕B-----↕C-----NSE

In this illustration, Standard English is on one side and Non-Standard English is on the other. Person A would be speaking in almost perfect SE. Wolfram explained that these individuals speak in ways that are too perfect for everyday conversation. This is a concept called Super-Standard English. An example of this would be the phrase, "he is not as smart as I," or "to whom are you referring?" Person B would be speaking in informal Standard English, which is mostly used and generally accepted. Person C would be considered speaking a dialect of nonstandard English, which could include AAVE among other forms (e.g. Gullah).

Defining what exactly is African American Vernacular English is a difficult task.

As Ward (1993) explained, AAVE has its own structurally different communication method. These structures do not have a method or written text on how to speak/write in Ebonics and it is generally not taught in mainstream America. Nevertheless a definition is needed to grasp the area of African American dialects. In Wyatt's (1995) study of African American children who speak AAVE she gives a broad definition of AAVE, "often referred to as a "nonstandard" dialect of English. Nonstandard dialects represent those varieties of any language that deviate to some extent from the standard variety of that language, which represents for the most native speakers the most socially and grammatically correct variety. In her definition (Wyatt, 1995), she explained that the other "varieties" of English language include Southern White English and Appalachian English. According to Wyatt, AAVE is a sort of anomaly to Standard English in which society doesn't quite understand its structures. This anomalous language varies in its intensity, much like Wolframs illustration of the continuum of Standard and Non-Standard English. Within those populations of African Americans who speak in AAVE, sentence structures vary along with use of slang terms. Wyatt also explained that just because the dialect AAVE is named after African Americans, not all African Americans speak this dialect. Other ethnicities may also identify with AAVE.

Green (1994) explained the characteristics of AAVE compared to SE. There are differences in the presence or absence of the copula, Green explained. The copula being the linking verbs in a sentence. For example, Green focused on the copula "be" and others that are used in AAVE "be done," and "bin done" in his examination of AAVE.

Examples he gave are:

1. Julie be waiting for the bus
2. Julie bin waiting for the bus
3. Julie bin left
4. Julie done left for school
5. Julie bin done left for school

Green explained that these aspectual markers have different meanings from SE. For example, the "bin" in the sentence Julie bin waiting for the bus in example two, or in another example; they bin running. The omitted "have" in "they have been running" is a different meaning than "they bin running" which means for a long period of time. This sentence structure "they bin running" could also be a saying as in being tired, or not being able to sit and rest, not a literal meaning. Green further explained the differences of meaning between AAVE and SE. The sentence, "they'll probably be done left by then," if trying to interpret this sentence in SE, it would be in future tense as in "they will have left by then." In AAVE this sentence would have a different meaning. Green clarified that this sentence structure has an "if this, then that" meaning. This same concept of differences in meaning was found in Wolfram's (1991) camouflaged concept mentioned earlier in the text. Other examples of a condition then consequence are, "I'll be done bought my own car waitin' on him to buy me one." This explains the consequence if this event (of not buying the car) did not take place. In another example, "we know what would happen if somebody would read to us for a whole day. We'd be done gone and fell

out (as in faint from boredom)." This sentence further explains the event then consequence if this event does not take place such as "I'll be done bought my own car," or "we'd be done gone and fell out."

Summary of SE and AAVE

Standard English became the normative form of the English language taken from the dialogue of Royal Family. The deviant dialects from this norm of speech became known as Non-Standard English. Categorizing SE from NSE made the “improper” dialects a vernacular. This categorization also assumed that the people that spoke improper dialects were uneducated and of lower status than the SE speakers. The differences in speech between the SE speakers and the NSE speakers created a barrier in status and education. A communication barrier between the classes also existed which made interactions difficult to overcome.

One form of NSE, a deviation from SE is AAVE. African American Vernacular English is mostly used by African Americans with close friends and family. Created from African slaves as a way to adapt to their surroundings, AAVE has now changed to better fit the current generation. It is still not SE; current AAVE has better sentence structures gradually changing over the past 300 years. Although there was a change made in AAVE (mostly due to African Americans progressively pursuing higher education), there still exists a communication barrier between non AAVE speakers.

As a glue to bind the two dialects together, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) can help individuals with apparent differences interact together. SE and AAVE have indeed some differences in meaning, sentence structure and pronunciation, but it is still one language; English. Accommodating and adapting in interactions one with another, overcoming barriers that race creates can be averted.

Communication Accommodation Theory

According to Ayoko, Hartel and Callan (2001), communication accommodation theory (CAT) is the modifying of speech behaviors, language use, and response to accommodate the other person in a conversation dyad. Ayoko et al. (2001) say that this kind of exchange in communication style is to gain acceptance from the counterpart. To explain further Chen and Cegala (1994) added that, "a speaker may use a dialect that is the same as or different from the interlocutor in order to associate or dissociate self from the other person (p. 390)." The authors say speech rate, tone, pitch or volume may also be altered to fit the other person. In African American communication sometimes understanding AAVE can be confusing. As with the examples mentioned explaining "camouflaged" words which can take on a different meaning from SE such as bad meaning good. In an inter-ethnic (or inter-cultural) communication interaction, meaning can become confused especially when one speaks in AAVE. Using CAT in situations involving inter-ethnic communication, the difficulties and miscommunication can be lessened.

Eberhardt (2008) asserted that we can adapt or choose a "strategic inauthentic" self given specific situations. This "inauthentic" self encompasses an identity not affiliated with that person. An example Eberhardt (2008) gave was a black gay man turning into the persona of an upper-class white woman through drag. Although this example is a bit extreme, this inauthentic self is also found with African Americans in switching from "talking Black" to "talking White." According to Eberhardt, a situation in which an individual would switch not only how they look and carry themselves (as with

the drag queen example), but would switch their dialect to adapt to surroundings. The population of African Americans who speak AAVE may feel the need to talk in SE in certain situations, converting to that “inauthentic self” Eberhardt talked about. Reasoning for the change in dialects can range from escaping embarrassment and stereotypes associated with African Americans to speaking in SE to conform to society’s standard to fit in.

Willemyns, Gallois and Callen (2003) found that in CAT interactions are drawn from a wide range of communication strategies such as approximation (convergence and divergence), interpersonal control (superior and inferior), discourse management and relational strategies. Discourse management and relational strategies are the opposite of each other. Discourse management is when superiors dominate conversations with lower status others, controlling conversation topics and interrupting. Relational strategies involve empathy for the other person and valuing their opinions, supporting and inclusion into the conversation. Convergence and divergence are the two main concepts in CAT, in which discourse management and relational strategies fall into. To explain further, Buzzanell, Burrell, Stafford, and Berkowitz (1996) clarified the convergence and divergence concepts of CAT.

Convergence is the interactant’s attitude toward the conversation and showing approval for the other person, which would also be the relational strategies Willemyns et al (2003) explained in their study. There is no step-by-step approach to convergence, but there are ways to convey a mutual understanding in communication. Voice pitch and tone

can vary given a situation (Gregory & Webster, 1996). In divergence, the interactant would accentuate the differences between them. In Willemyns et al (2003) study, discourse management would fall under the category of divergence in CAT. This could mean starting a debate or argument because of differing opinions. In addition to the convergence and divergence concepts the authors include maintenance, which happens when an individual continues to use their own style of communicating without regard to partner cues.

Establishing that AAVE has its own style and sentence formation with its own meanings different from SE, using CAT in a diverse interaction is important when trying to reciprocate to each other's differing communication styles. Converging with someone who speaks in AAVE, which would be relating to the other and showing approval of what the other is saying, would have to come from experiences with African American culture. Having awareness of cultures, whether it is African American, Asian, or Latino cultures would be important in using CAT strategies. If there is no awareness of culture, divergence would be likely to happen and the individuals would notice apparent differences in communication. Establishing a common ground would be difficult, arguments could ensue which could affect any aspect of creating a diverse environment.

Authors such as Eberhardt and Giles have studied the styles of language and set a solid foundation of the adaptation in communication. Eberhardt's (2008) research argued that identities have no constraints. One's style of speech is not just originated from society and identity roles, but from others' identities as well as we gather experiences with

other cultures, and ethnicities. Incorporating different identities into our conversation in diverse interactions, Eberhardt (2008) explained it as an “inauthentic self” is a part of becoming socially adept. It may sound confusing but learning to harmonize with others communication style is CAT at its best.

Other authors have contributed to the success of CAT and the perception of race in which African American participants were found to adapt more to the "acceptable" speech rather than to AAVE (Bourhis & Giles, 1976a; Bourhis & Giles, 1976b). Although AAVE is not an incorrect way of speaking, SE is the only “acceptable” way to communicate in the U.S. African Americans who speak in AAVE would also have to speak in SE in order to converge with the general population. Aspects of African American culture can be shown in a conversation, but the whole of what AAVE is may not be understood by everyone, therefore SE would generally have to spoken.

Giles (2008) also introduced under-accommodating, over-accommodating and non-accommodating concepts into CAT. Under-accommodation is seen more with older adults and the younger generation. These miscommunication problems can start with older adults stereotyping younger adults, seeing them as immature and inexperienced. This can be the same as the Willemyn et al. (2003) study and discourse management strategies with dominating superiors. Over-accommodation is talking down to someone in a condescending manner like calling younger adults "sweetie" and talking slower (in thinking they will understand it better) excessive smiling, touching and head nods. The last which is non-accommodating is someone who has no empathy whatsoever. In

communication this person is unadapting, and not understanding. An example of this would be when a society is unadapting to the belief, values, and traditions of another culture such as the long struggle of equality among homosexuals, women and racial/ethnic minorities. These concepts are divergence strategies of CAT. Under, over and non accommodating individuals are accentuating the differences in age, race and overall identity characteristics that are dissimilar from their own.

Speech accommodation was later renamed in the late 1980's to CAT to better fit the main focus of the theory which is interactional adaptation. Originally focusing on social interactions, CAT has grown to studies involving conversational alteration and adjustment. CAT is used in interactions involving biological differences between people such as gender and race. When challenges come from unawareness of race (or gender) at work or at school, communication barriers can transpire. African Americans converging to an individual who speaks in SE would be most likely to happen, but in CAT it is important that both converge in an interaction.

Communication Accommodation, Race and Difficulties

In CAT it is important to understand that everyone has different beliefs and value systems in order to converge with them in an interaction. These different value systems give us our unique communication styles. Understanding the differences in traditions and culture can help in accommodation with diverse peers, employee associates and friends. Labov (1966; 1978) in his earlier research on language and society found apparent differences in English dialog depending on environmental location. Labov's research can

explain the differences in dialog in such cases as the African American family and immigrant families settling in one area of a city. When Labov's earlier research was established on linguistics and society, socioeconomic status determined the location families were to live. Now that colleges have a more diverse student population, minorities have better job opportunities decreasing segregation to areas. But a more diverse classroom and workplace can also lead to communication difficulties between races.

Research on race and communication barriers has been studied more often now because of work environment and apprehension associated with lack of experiences with different cultures. This apprehension to communicate with diverse others can lead to lowered product sales in organizations and employee dissatisfaction. Authors have established that if peers in a diverse work/classroom environment can communicate effectively together product sales and group performance will increase (Harrison, Price, Gavin & Florey, 2002; Pitts & Jarry, 2009). To help with uneasy conversations about race, Watts (2007) developed the privileged identity exploration (PIE) model. Watts believed that if conversations about controversial issues such as race topics were talked about in a group setting, uneasiness with inter-ethnic communication would eventually subside. Watts's model to a good tool to use to increase awareness of diversity, CAT can be integrated to further aid in communication difficulties associated with race.

Watts (2007) model is composed of eight defensive reactions that can happen when a diverse group is asked to reflect on a sensitive social justice issue (race, sexual orientation, being able-bodied, and gender topics). Watts's model can help to foster a

cohesive and diverse environment by addressing issues related to race. By knowing the defense reactions most associated with these sensitive topics (denial, deflection, rationalization, intellectualization, principium, false envy, benevolence, and minimization), facilitators can prepare for these reactions that can cause possible conflict. After these sensitive topics are tackled, further cohesiveness can begin by using CAT strategies. With CAT employees can adapt to others in a conversation now that they know more about the others experiences.

In a study focusing on diverse workgroups and conflict resolutions, Ayoko, Hartel, and Callan (2002), found that in initial interactions conflict can arise in diverse participant workgroups. This initial group conflict can occur because of cultural differences in communication styles. Ayoko et al. (2001) found that as time went on conflict resolution strategies increased as the group members learned to accommodate to each other. Additionally, Mazer and Hunt (2008) found that a teacher's use of downward convergence (in CAT) and using slang terminology resulted in positive affect in students. This study implies that two seemingly different demographics can successfully communicate together. In another study designed to observe communication in multiracial families, communication accommodation theory was helpful in finding that supportive communication and self-disclosure were significantly related with relationship satisfaction (Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009). These studies validate and support the relevance of communication accommodation theory for a variety of contexts.

On the other side of successful communication accommodating, are the non-accommodators. Giles (2008) explained that non-accommodating is one in which the

opinions of others is unimportant. It is extremely difficult conversing with this individual because they show no empathy or concern for the thoughts of others. Giles also explained that this non-accommodating person does this subconsciously. This could possibly be the case in Aritz and Walker (2010) study on multicultural workgroups in which English non-native speakers were uncomfortable expressing themselves to the English natives. The English native speakers contributed more to the conversation when in the minority group, as the English non-native speakers contributed less while in the minority group (compared to a majority group). The non-native participants admitted they felt uneasy communicating in the minority workgroup.

For AAVE speakers communicating in SE can be unusual and uncomfortable. Much like the English non-native speakers (which were first generation ESL Asian Americans) interacting with the group of Americans. Communicating in AAVE is learned, so speaking in SE can be uncomfortable especially when interacting with non AAVE speakers. Switching to SE can perhaps be perceived as ingenuine which could also bring apprehension in an interaction.

Non-accommodation can be found in generational gaps with age. Authors agree that younger populations feel that they have to accommodate more to older adults and that older employees were "unaccommodating" (McCann, & Giles, 2007; Ota, Giles, & Lilnabeth; 2007). Giles (2008) noted that older adults can be condescending using "sweetie" when talking to their younger adult peers. Younger employees admitted feeling more comfortable conversing with their same aged peer, and therefore avoided communication with older employees' altogether.

Although these results do not directly deal with race, these studies can also be applied with difficulties in communication with those who are unadaptive. These examples of non-accommodation are in the same category in dealing with communication challenges involving gender, sexual orientation, and race. The outcome of a non-accommodating person in a family, organization or in a classroom can affect everyone around them. Interacting with non-accommodating people causes the receiver to become more accommodating (for their lack of accommodation), which can cause, feelings of discomfort, therefore, causing others to evade conversation. This could be difficult if the non-accommodator is a manager or teacher, so contact with him/her is unavoidable.

Linking the present investigation with these findings, unaccommodating to a person with race differences who has a different dialog than the standard is equally challenging. Being a minority in a group such as a classroom or a division of an organization is already difficult because of stereotypes associated with ethnic races, but to add communicating in this group using ones style of dialog, accent or vernacular. Communicating with an individual who is uncompromising, unadapting and accentuates differences is especially challenging to becoming a more diverse people.

CAT works in diverse workgroups through progressive familiarity and awareness of culture. Willingness to accommodate to someone with differences is also important when converging in an interaction. One way to converge in diverse interactions is through code switching strategies. Code switching can be a useful tool to increase successful inter-cultural and inter-ethnic communication in classrooms and workplaces.

In referring back to Giles's examples of non-accommodation (Giles, 2008), this would not just mean one sided accommodation but equal accommodation by all parties. Since the majority race population of the United States are Caucasian Americans who speak mostly Standard American English, the pressure could be that minorities over-accommodate to the majority race. Communication accommodation should be used by everyone in a diverse setting so as to display empathy and understanding.

Code Switching

Modern day AAVE has a "negotiation of culture" as Hecht and associates (2003) explained earlier in the text. This negotiation also involves, depending on the social situation, switching on and off the AAVE to a more "socially acceptable" dialog. Unfortunately the stereotypes associated with Ebonics (e.g. laziness, ignorance and talking loudly), can also have negative outcomes for the thriving of an African American individual, limiting employment and housing opportunities. African Americans who have pursued higher education have most likely come in contact with these negative stereotypes associated with their way of speaking.

In classrooms or at a business meeting, African Americans will, at some point, have to "turn off" their native AAVE dialog. Becoming "bi-dialectical" is an advantage the African American will have in pursuing higher paying job opportunities in which, unfortunately, an African American who have not learned SE properly will not have. Code switching of dialects which African Americans have learned to use is important to their progress in society. Taking a better look at the definition of code switching and how it relates to African Americans will be further discussed.

Greene and Walker (2004) defined code switching as "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction (p.435)." Code switching (also called language switching and code mixing) was mainly used in bilingual code switching between Spanish/English speakers or immigrants migrating to the United States (Leitner, 1983; Scotton & Ury, 1977). In these studies code switching is situation-based, which includes instances as in social arenas, or conversations with mixed status individuals. Leitner (1983) assured that there is an appropriate speech behavior and a "normative" way of communicating; deviating from this norm could cause embarrassment or out-grouping. Scotton and Ury (1977) agreed that code switching is a response to conform to the appropriate speech behavior. In addition, the authors gave reasons as to why the bilingual speaker code switches. Scotton and Ury asserted that some communicators code switch because of uncertainty in a given social interaction. The participants in the interaction yielded two responses, to redefine (contingent on the social arena) or to avoid (by continued code switching). In response, the participants in the interaction can accept the code switch by reciprocating which forms a new code, or reject it.

These studies can give insight into the code switching strategies of African Americans. The previous research on multilingual communication and code switching can bare similarities as to why and how African Americans code switch, such as code switching to conform to a societal norm, code switching to avoid embarrassment or to escape the stereotypes associated with African Americans. Using AAVE in a social situation, at work or in a classroom is noticed because of the apparent differences from SE. The sometimes broken words, slang terminology, and meanings different from SE

African Americans who choose not to code switch from AAVE to SE in these situations can have consequences.

The research by Scotton and Ury (1977) focused on code switching between different languages (between Spanish/English, Asian/English). A key difference is that African American code switching is using the same language, which is English. Latino Americans who are code switching to SE is not the same as African Americans code switching. Spanish is very different from English, and code switching from Spanish to English involves an actual language switch. Ebonics is not a language in itself but a dialect of a language which is English. The foundations of English, learned from our African ancestors, are not a language but an aspect of Standard English.

African Americans using AAVE in America have been the subject of debate for decades (Hall, 1997; Taylor, 1998). How to compensate for this deviated dialog of Standard American English has caused all types of responses among educators and students. The most controversial response to the Ebonics debate have been the Oakland's School District's CLAD initiative (Croghan, 2000) in which the school district enforced teacher education in Ebonics to better accommodate their students needs. Another response in the African American community would be the option of code switching to accommodate standard speech and normative dialect. The initial code switching definition given by Greene and Walker (2004) which was, "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction (p. 435)," would also apply to this section as well.

Greene and Walker (2004) suggested that African Americans code switch as a

response to being a racially ethnic minority in America. The authors explained that those that decide to code switch experience cognitive dissonance within their cultural identities and being true to themselves. This could be because of the aforementioned pride of being Black in America of the 60s and 70s. Seymore and Seymore's (1979) description of "Black is beautiful" and "Black power" may have caused African Americans to feel "less black" when they code switch to accommodate in a multicultural interaction. A study done by Thompson, Craig, and Washington, (2004) on African American children found that the student's ability to code switch improved their academic performance significantly. This study could imply that African Americans code switching may have positive effects on education, and positive effects on employment possibilities. Another study also found the same results as the Thompson et al. (2004) study resulting in students who code switch outperforming those students who do not (Craig, Lingling, Hensel and Quinn, 2009).

The research on code switching on African American participants who code switch yielded surprising results. Rahman (2008) studied middle-class African American participants who code switch and found that these participants code switched regularly. These participants felt that using African American Ebonics in the work setting was inappropriate, even though the dialect felt more comfortable than Standard English. The participants admitted, gladly, that they spoke in Ebonics with family and friends but with employees' code switched to Standard English. Rahman's (2008) results also implied that Ebonics is a continuum dialect. The research also revealed that using little (moderate) AAVE can be on the SE "scale," which suggests that the use of some AAVE is

acceptable. But on the opposite side of the spectrum high usage of AAVE projected judgments of lower class and lack of education (even though all participants were middle class). This research implies that to some extent using Ebonics is socially acceptable. This could also mean that the ethnic majority race also use accommodation strategies with African Americans resulting in equal accommodating one race to another.

So far, previous research has revealed that African Americans who code switch are found to succeed better academically, which implies that this could continue into higher education and could increase job opportunities. Through education African Americans would learn how to “turn on” and “turn off” their AAVE by code switching. Learning when to use AAVE and SE, such as at a job interview or networking with possible employment organizations, could determine job outcomes for African American Ebonics speakers. What about the other side of the "continuum" of AAVE dialect to encompass those who choose not to code switch (or perhaps cannot)? What are the consequences of deciding not to code switch with not just the majority population who speaks Standard English but to other minority races as well?

Hill (2009) asserted, in her research on students of African American descent, that AAVE dialog is not the "wrong" dialog. She suggested that instructors should never tell their students this misinformation. African American students should, instead, have a balance of standard and non-standard dialect. A mix of standard and non-standard dialects could encourage a comfortable class/work environment for everyone. AAVE is different, with its own "persona of speech" says Rahman (2008). With its own phonological, morphological syntactical and semantic characteristics, Flowers explained

(2000). African American students should be aware that their AAVE is a different dialect, but not incorrect. African Americans can misunderstand that code switching is not becoming less Black, but instead becoming more accommodating to others in a world that so easily discriminates against differences. Using CAT strategies with code switching is a way to be incorporated into society.

Purnell, Idsardi, and Baugh (1999) found that based on audio alone (phone conversations) the participants could decipher race, and in most cases, correctly so. Purnell and associates also found that these participants discriminated against the audio excerpts that sounded African American giving preferential treatment to those who sounded Caucasian American. African Americans are already at a disadvantage in being an ethnic minority in America, and to add discriminated against for having a different dialect. CAT and code switching is a way to co-exist with others. It is great to have a separate identity, culture and traditions but the ability to adapt to a world that uses SE is crucial to an African American, other minorities and international students. Flowers (2000) also emphasized that "most members of the subordinate group are obliged to learn the standard dominant language to get along in school, at work, or in any mixed group setting (p. 222)."

The fact is SE is the norm in the United States which means that SE is written in textbooks, advertisements, and is spoken by most everyone. This would leave AAVE speakers at a disadvantage to be continually misunderstood by peers outside of their African American communities. Flowers (2000) goes on to note that students who do not learn to code switch early on maybe labeled as language deficient, or learning disabled

and put into a special education class for their language differences.

Effects of Not Code Switching

Ogbu's (1999) research on children, parents, and teachers and found that African American children not only have difficulties communicating in the classroom, which can affect academics, but their parents also have difficulties communicating with teachers. At a particular school, Ogbu interviewed the children, parents and teachers and found that some children did find ways to dialect switch but the parents had not learned these techniques (1999). Ogbu also revealed that although the African American students were code switching in class, they did not code switch with peers (of a different race) bringing a divide between the class which caused them not to become friends with their Caucasian American peers. The parents and students used AAVE in all other aspects with friends (of the same race) and at home, but only used SE with "outsiders." In this study the African American students referred to their dialect as "comfortable," and "regular." The same students referred to the way their Caucasian American peers talked as "correct English" and "proper English" (which Standard American English is the correct term). The perception of "white talk and black talk" among the African American participants in this study have led to communication barriers in the classroom built on dialect differences only. These communication barriers, very well stemming from their parents' perception of Caucasian Americans, can last into adulthood affecting their choice of higher education, in turn affecting job opportunities.

In the previous study, Ogbu (1999) noted that the attitude, perception and belief of the African American participants led to communication barriers between them and

their Caucasian American peers. The lack of cultural awareness from both ethnicities (the Caucasian American students also felt uncomfortable talking with African American peers) leads to communication breakdowns and an example of the outcome of no communication accommodation and code switching. Research revealed that CAT helps to integrate different dialects, and languages between groups in order to have a conducive interaction (Ayoko, Hartel, & Callan, 2002; Mazer & Hunt, 2008; Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009). One way to accommodate to someone else is through code switching techniques. Also, by becoming culturally aware of the people in the interaction, accommodating to each other, code switching can become a more flowing interaction. In order to successfully accommodate in conversations, the individuals in the interaction should be willing to code switch. The children in Ogbu's study didn't accommodate to their peers because they had a predisposition associated with Caucasian Americans. They definitely didn't try to code switch with their classmates, causing avoidance and no communication at all.

Non-accommodative individuals make others escape communication (Giles, 2008). Much like the example of the generational gaps in age, the younger participants were more likely to evade conversation with their older peers. The type of behaviors exhibited in Ogbu's study (1999) in which students is speaking AAVE in all aspects, they are displaying divergence. Divergence emphasizes differences between two culturally diverse individual in a conversation (Buzzanell, Burrell, Stafford and Berkowitz, 1996). The students' unwillingness to converge to their classroom peers encouraged their peers not to communicate with them entirely.

To close this section, although accommodation is important to diversity and empathy toward others' opinions, it is very important not to lose self identity. Some of the participants in Terhune's study (2005) felt a loss of identity when relocating to a predominantly Caucasian American city in Oregon. The African American participants were code switching and accommodating to their surroundings but somehow felt a loss of self identity. This could be because of over-accommodating, especially if other co-workers are not as equally accommodating to them as well. The participants expressed feeling out of place, and feeling uncomfortable in their environments. In closing, is what one of the participants expressed when code switching to accommodate her different surroundings,

We work to redefine ourselves for ourselves. After we work to define ourselves, we have to work to reconcile who we've become or who we are, how to reconcile that identity within the different environments in which we find our selves... It was difficult for me to be in an environment where I knew the people were not exposed to who Black people could be and all of the wonderful things about us.

Since classrooms and workplaces are becoming more diverse, decreasing communication difficulties should continually be researched. Communication accommodation theory is a great start in understanding that everyone's cooperation is needed in having successful dialog between a diverse group, team or dyad. By accommodating, individuals are adapting to their peer and showing empathy and concern to their thoughts and opinions. Learning that one way to accommodate to someone would be by code switching. The main point in code switching is that both parties equally use this technique. If all in an interaction do not code switch, then one would have to over-accommodate the non-accommodating individual. This could lead to feelings of being

uncomfortable and avoiding conversation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find whether other ethnicities would be more accommodating to someone who speaks in AAVE.

In his argument about the "endangerment" of African American vernacular, Labov declared that as African Americans become less segregated to their communities the vernacular will increasingly become Standard American English (Labov, 2010). He goes on to argue that African American Vernacular English exists because of segregation during the slave period. Now that African Americans are furthering their education and gaining higher positions in the workplace, the vernacular of most African Americans will change (thus the endangerment of AAVE). Although his research is sound, another point could also be made. Instead of an endangerment of a vernacular with SE replacing it, the speakers of AAVE (or Ebonics) and the speakers of SE could reach a common ground blending the two dialects whilst communicating.

Assuming that African Americans and Caucasian Americans accommodate to each other's communication style equally, accommodating to someone who speaks Ebonics is a likely outcome. CAT strategies would involve the inter-ethnic dyad adapting to each differing communication styles. Converging in the interaction, the conversation would value the opinions of everyone and showing approval in the discussion.

This reasoning stems from observing the intense popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Communication is no longer the same. It is easy and faster to meet new people and this current generation has latched on. Music also

plays a huge part in the diminishment of racial lines bridging the gap between ethnicities. Hip hop was originally a medium to voice the lack the civil rights and racial discrimination of African American people but have changed since the 70s and 80s. Hess (2005) argued that with hip hop artists such as Vanilla Ice, Eminem and Paul Wall rapping with well known African American artists, hip hop is not just for Black people anymore, it is for all people who enjoy the genre of music. Looking at lyrics of a popular rap artist, Eminem (who is Caucasian American), in comparison to the previous excerpt of the rapper Lil Wayne's lyrics mentioned earlier;

*I feel like a black Republican Tote a
MAC'n Republican Act so southern n'
die for my brethren. Money, money,
money Like money Mac and publishing
One life to live, never ask for a mulligan
Streets call but the heat make me feel
covenant. Been done had cake day late
like Anne Sullivan. Fly like an eagle but
no I'm no Donovan. Boy you better go
eat some soup with your mom n' them
And my mind is on another continent I
am real Cash Money, no counterfeit I
don't parkin' lot pimp I just politic But I
get all in her mouth like polident New
Orleans represent it to the inne glimmer.
The sun don't shine and the guns don't
sleep*

*Come from the city where the glitter
don't Yesterday my dog died, I hog tied a
ho, tied her in a bow. Said next time you
blow up try to spit a flow. You wanna
criticize dog try a little mo. I'm so tired
of this I could blow, fire in the hole. I'm
fired up so fire up the lighter and the
dro. Better hold on a little tighter here I
go. Flows tighter, hot headed as
ghostrider. Cold hearted as spiderman
throwin a spider in the snow So ya better
get lower than Flo-Rida inside of a
lowrider. with no tires in the hole Why
am I like this? why is winter cold Why is
it when I talk I'm so biased to the hoe*

On the left is Lil Wayne's song, "Black Republican" mentioned in the earlier section, and on the left is Eminem's song entitled, "On Fire," written in 2010. If looking at the two song lyrics, they seem quite similar in style. This illustrates the commonalities

of music between African American and Caucasian American rappers. Lil Wayne's audience is mostly African American, with Eminem's audience mostly Caucasian American. The song lyrics demonstrate the similarities of the songs, which listeners can pick up on. Thus, the possible unifying of dialogs between AAVE and SE speakers.

A more recent study found that in "sounding white" African Americans can obtain more jobs, housing and progress in education (Johnson & Buttny, 1982). In the Johnson and Buttny study (1982) the results supported that some Caucasian American listeners have selective bias toward speakers who sound African American. The study's participants are more closely related to the present investigation in age (average age of Johnson and Buttny study was 19 years) and race. The results in this study are adversely related to the present investigation because the analysis can also reveal discrimination against African American dialect and African Americans.

African American dialect has developed into a dialect that is used more widely by entertainment television and by politicians in creating clever catch phrasing to be used in the next election. Historically Ebonics was created from Africans adapting to their surroundings by taking English and unpurposefully turning it into a language that they can use to communicate with other slaves. Now that African Americans have increasingly pursued higher education, African American communication hasn't disappeared but rather changed with the times and through generations. Although AAVE has some similarities with SE, there still lies a difference in sentence structuration and meaning that could be inappropriate in some situations.

Accommodation theory and code switching are important to the professional

advancement of African Americans (Johnson & Buttny, 1982; Thompson, Craig, & Washington, 2004). Accommodation allows interactions to flow (with willing participants) by each sender and receiver adapting to each other in a conversation. African Americans who code switch in a conversation are converging with the other individual. This consideration acknowledges that the receiver may not know about African American communication, therefore, the individual code switches to Standard English.

This study addresses the differences in communication between SE and AAVE speakers, which have caused barriers in communication and interaction avoidance. Given the information from the reviewed literature, this study investigates the appropriateness of Ebonics in situations and the possibility of divergence in conversation between inter-ethnic interactions. In studying appropriateness of Ebonics and whether it's met with divergence or convergence, an understanding of how Ebonics is perceived by other ethnicities will be better understood. Biases that are unfortunately associated with speaking Ebonics can be decreased by code switching to the generally acceptable speech; Standard English.

Methodology

Analyzing how ethnicities respond to African American communication can be done in many ways. Focusing on the types of Ebonics spoken (light, none, and heavy), this investigation seeks to identify which types of Ebonics would likely be met with accommodation versus non-accommodation. In which situations (classroom, work or informal social event) would Ebonics be appropriate to use will also be questioned. Additionally, the research seeks to differentiate levels of comfort in an interaction between a person who does not speak in AAVE and one who does. This study has an experimental quantitative research design. Assessment of comfort, appropriateness and accommodation (Dependent Variables) in relation to level of Ebonics (Independent Variable) will be the focus of this investigation.

Problem Statement

Intercultural communication can become a problem between peers, friends, co-workers, and strangers. Specifically, African Americans as they increasingly pursue higher education and compete for higher paying jobs will also encounter these communication barriers. Ebonics is a culture specific dialect, to which most other ethnicities have little exposure. This study explores the relationship between African American Ebonics speakers and others' reactions to the dialect. The exploration into AAVE speakers and others who speak in SE will explain whether there is a blending of the dialects in interactions involving CAT. This merging of AAVE and SE between inter-ethnic speakers can eventually lead to AAVE being more incorporated into American society.

This study will address the following research questions:

RQ₁ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE in the classroom?

RQ₂ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE in a job meeting?

RQ₃ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE at an informal social event?

RQ₄ Will greater use of AAVE be associated with divergence on the part of non African American students?

Participants

The participants for this study were students from a mid-western university. The participants were majors or minors in Communication with ages that ranged from 18 to 50. To gather a sample of all ethnicities the researcher used a convenience sampling technique, with random assignment of subjects to the three conditions. The researcher also wanted to gather participants with varying levels of experience with African Americans.

Since the University is majority Caucasian American, the researcher focused on the student population who were Caucasian American and their reactions to African American Ebonics.

Instruments

American Tongues, a video about dialects and accents in the United States was utilized for this investigation. The section of the video on Ebonics was shown to the

participants in conjunction with a questionnaire about the video. Three teenage African Americans women spoke in varied levels of Ebonics (Appendix A shows the commentary). The conditions heavy Ebonics, light Ebonics, and none (spoke in mostly Standard English) were displayed to the participants. A manipulation check was successful in finding two distinct levels. The Standard English speaker was perceived as significantly different from the light and heavy Ebonics speakers, while the light and heavy speakers were not perceived as significantly different.

A dialects questionnaire was created to assess reactions to the varied levels of Ebonics spoken by all three women. The questionnaire consisted of 29 Likert style items, focusing on aspects of appropriateness, accommodation, convergence and divergence. Questionnaires were distributed randomly, so that an equitable number of participants responded to the light AAVE condition (Person A), the heavy AAVE condition (Person C), and the none condition, or Standard English (Person B).

Procedures for Data Collection

Participants were given questionnaires to complete in their classes. Each student had their own desk to complete the questionnaire. The students were asked to read the informed consent carefully and detach from the questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on either Person A, B, or C in the video. The speakers in the video displayed the conditions of Ebonics used in the experiment; light, none and heavy (A, B, and C). The students were cautioned that the video contained racist remarks, and were told that the survey was entirely voluntary. If they felt uncomfortable, they could cease participating at any time. The researcher remained in the room while the video played and while the

students completed the survey.

Procedures for Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used. A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to decipher the differences among the conditions of Ebonics and the dependent variables. With this information the researcher was also able to find the significant differences between the three conditions. Noticing the F Value (F) the researcher will decipher if there is a significant difference among the group means. Also noticing the Significance (Sig.), the researcher will interpret the strength of difference (with .05 or less indicating statistically significant differences). If the probability level is considered to be significant, the researcher will investigate where the differences exist with a Multiple Comparisons analysis and Scheffe test.

RQ₁ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE in the classroom?

The analysis of RQ₁ was done with a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Mean (M) differences were significant, so the researcher continued with a Multiple Comparisons test to decipher the differences between the variables.

RQ₂ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE in a job meeting?

The analysis of RQ₂ was examined through a One-Way ANOVA test. Once again, there was a significant difference among the three conditions of AAVE. A Multiple Comparisons test was done to closely observe which groups differed

significantly.

RQ₃ Will there be differences with respect to perception of appropriateness of AAVE at an informal social event?

The investigation of RQ₃ was used with a One-Way ANOVA. Since the results did not produce any significant values, the researcher did not go further with a Multiple Comparisons test.

RQ₄ Will greater use of AAVE be associated with divergence on the part of non African American students?

To determine the results of RQ₄ the researcher developed a Divergence Scale using the items from the questionnaire. With Reliability Analysis, the researcher input the 13 convergence/divergence items. The Cronbach Alpha was reached (.83) after deleting 5 of the 13 items of the questionnaire (items 1, 6, 7, 12 and 13). This left the items that were geared more toward divergence:

- I would generally try to avoid interacting with this person.
- I would keep interactions with this person as short as possible.
- This person and I probably would disagree about most things.
- This person communicates differently than I do.
- I communicate in a way that is more correct than this person.
- I would not feel comfortable telling this person anything about myself.
- I feel like this person wouldn't have anything interesting to say.
- I feel like this person would judge me harshly if I told her something

With the Divergence Scale created, the researcher could proceed with an ANOVA

test to determine whether the participants would diverge from AAVE. The figures suggested that there was a greater tendency toward divergence among the three groups. That being established, the researcher created a Multiple Comparisons table to further decipher where the differences lie in regards to Participant Respondent A, B and C (light Ebonics, no Ebonics, and heavy Ebonics).

Additionally, the researcher included Exposure to African American culture (Exposure) and degree of comfort in an interaction with a multicultural group (Comfort). Although each was not included in the research questions, the investigator thought looking into these aspects might add to the results.

These analyses were done simply with a descriptive statistical analysis and frequencies test. The percentages of the participants were shown for each question in regards to exposure to African American culture and degree of comfort in diverse settings.

Results

This chapter explains the results from the data analysis. The researcher sought to find participant perception of appropriateness of AAVE in class, at work, and at an informal social event (RQ 1, 2, and 3). Using the three situations (class, work and informal social event) along with the three levels of Ebonics, the research will reveal in which situation Ebonics is less appropriate and at which level is it inappropriate. Divergence (RQ₄) was also examined in terms of the three levels of Ebonics to find in which levels would receivers diverge from interactions involving an Ebonics speaker. Additionally, exposure to African American culture and degree of comfort in multicultural interactions were included to enhance the results of the research questions.

Table 1 shows the number of persons who responded to the three levels of the independent variable, which were light Ebonics (person A), none (person B) and heavy Ebonics (person C) conditions.

Table 1 <i>Level of Ebonics Conditions</i>				
Condition	<i>f</i>	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
A	49	34.3	34.3	34.3
B	48	33.6	33.6	67.8
C	46	32.2	32.2	100.0
N=143				

Table 2 indicates the average of participant age in the data collection. It shows the mean age, the number of each sex who participated, and the Standard Deviation of the mean. The table also shows that the majority of participants were between the ages of 21 and 22 years.

Table 2 <i>Persons Age</i>			
Persons Sex	M	N	SD
Male	22.4500	60	4.75297
Female	21.8659	82	4.38787
Total	22.1127	142	4.53841

Table 3 shows the participant sex in the data collection. It shows the percentages of males and females who participated out of the total of 142 participants. The table also shows that the majority of the population was female

Table 3 <i>Persons sex</i>				
Sex	<i>f</i>	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Male	60	42.0	42.3	42.3
Female	82	57.3	57.7	100.0
Total	142	99.3	100.0	
Missing	1	.7		
Total	143	100.0		

Table 4 shows the range of participant ethnicities of the data collection. The frequency, percent and valid percent are indicated. The majority of the student participants were Caucasian American.

Table 4 <i>Ethnicity</i>				
Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Caucasian American	111	77.6	77.6	77.6
Latino	6	4.2	4.2	81.8
African American	12	8.4	8.4	90.2
Asian	9	6.3	6.3	96.5
Native American	1	.7	.7	97.2
Other	3	2.1	2.1	99.3
Total	143	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 displays the participants' feelings toward multicultural social interactions. The numbers to the left of the table represent the Likert scale from 1-7 (1=strongly agree, 7=strong disagreement). With respect to item, "I feel comfortable interacting in a multicultural social environment," the table displays the frequencies in regards to this on the Likert Scale.

Table 5 <i>Comfort</i>				
Scale	f	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
1	44	33.6	33.8	33.8
2	41	31.3	31.5	65.4
3	16	12.2	12.3	77.7
4	9	6.9	6.9	84.6
5	7	5.3	5.4	90.0
6	7	5.3	5.4	95.4
7	6	4.6	4.6	100.0
Missing	1	.8		
<i>n</i> =131				

With respect to Table 5, Comfort, African American participants were eliminated from the sample making the new sample size of 131. The table shows that 65.4% (n=85) of the participants agree with this statement. Most of the student participants' rated either 1 or 2 on the statement. This means that most of the sample size feels comfortable in multicultural settings. Also, the table shows that twenty participants rated between 5 and 7, stating their degree of discomfort with interacting in multicultural settings.

Table 6 shows participant exposure to African American culture. With respect to the item, "Have you been exposed to aspects of African American culture?" It shows the frequency of "yes" responses, and the frequency of "no" responses.

Table 6 <i>Exposure</i>				
Response	<i>f</i>	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Yes	93	71.0	71.5	71.5
No	37	28.2	28.5	100.0
Missing	1	.8		
<i>n</i> =131				

In regards to Table 6, African American participants were also excluded from the sample. The table shows that 71.5% of the participants (n=93) have had some sort of exposure to African American culture (which ranged in exposure from taking a course in African American culture, having African American friends, to observing African

American culture on television programming). The participants that answered no to this statement were 28.5% (n=37). Although most of the sample has had some exposure to African American culture, there still is quite a few that have no experience with African American culture.

Table 7 addresses whether there will be differences in regards to the appropriateness of Ebonics in the classroom. In regards to RQ₁ an ANOVA test was done with a descriptive statistical test. It shows mean scores for each of the three conditions (light Ebonics, no Ebonics, and heavy Ebonics). The reader should keep in mind that lower scores indicate more appropriateness, with higher scores indicating inappropriateness.

Table 7
Classroom Descriptives

Condition	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.		
A	46	2.347	.604	.089	2.168	2.527	1.0	3.0
B	43	1.441	.502	.076	1.287	1.596	1.0	2.0
C	41	2.341	.761	.118	2.101	2.581	1.0	4.0
Total	130	2.046	.755	.066	1.915	2.177	1.0	4.0

Table 8 shows the F-value for a one-way ANOVA with its corresponding level of significance. With the indication of significant differences between the three conditions (Participant respondent A, B, and C), the researcher proceeded with a Multiple Comparisons and Scheffe test to determine the differences among the three conditions.

Table 8 <i>ANOVA for Classroom Appropriateness</i>					
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23.464	2	11.732	29.646	.000
Within Groups	50.259	127	.396		
Total	73.723	129			

Table 9 shows the Multiple Comparisons test done because of the significant values shown in Table 8. The three conditions are represented (A, B, and C) in regards to appropriateness of speaking Ebonics in the classroom. Remember that with Multiple Comparisons test the significant results to notice are the ones with an asterisk beside them.

Table 9 <i>Multiple Comparisons</i>						
(I) Participant responded to	(J) Participant responded to	Mean Diff. (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.
A	B	.90597*	.13344	.000	.5754	1.2365
	C	.00636	.13511	.999	-.3283	.3410
B	A	-.90597*	.13344	.000	-1.2365	-.5754
	C	-.89960*	.13732	.000	-1.2397	-.5595
C	A	-.00636	.13511	.999	-.3410	.3283
	B	.89960*	.13732	.000	.5595	1.2397

In regard to Table 9, higher numbers represent less appropriateness of Ebonics. The sets that show significant differences are between Participant A and B, and also between Participants B and C. Participant B's speech was perceived as more appropriate than A and C, while perceptions of A and C's appropriateness did not differ.

Table 10 shows the participants' perception of appropriateness of speaking Ebonics at work. The three conditions are represented by letters A, B, and C. In regard to RQ₂, higher scores indicate less appropriateness of Ebonics at work and lower scores indicate more appropriateness. Observing the means, suggests that there are differences in the three conditions.

Table 10
Work Descriptives

Condition	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.		
A	46	2.8913	.706	.104	2.681	3.101	1.0	4.0
B	44	1.5682	.728	.109	1.346	1.789	1.0	3.0
C	41	3.0244	.651	.101	2.818	3.230	2.0	4.0
Total	131	2.4885	.955	.083	2.323	2.653	1.0	4.0

Table 11 shows the F-value for a one-way ANOVA and the corresponding level of significance for appropriateness of using Ebonics at work. The test indeed indicates that there is a significant difference with the F-test at 58.11 and Significance (Sig.) lower than .05.

Table 11 <i>ANOVA for Work Appropriateness</i>					
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	56.505	2	28.253	58.115	.000
Within Groups	62.228	128	.486		
Total	118.733	130			

Table 12 shows the Multiple Comparisons test for RQ₂, appropriateness of Ebonics at work. The table displays a similar pattern for RQ₂ as was revealed in RQ₁. Respondents to condition B perceived it as the more appropriate dialogue than conditions A and C in regards to speaking Ebonics at work.

Table 12 <i>Multiple Comparisons</i>						
(I) Participant responded to	(J) Participant responded to	Mean Diff. (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.
A	B	1.32312*	.14703	.000	.9590	1.6873
	C	-.13309	.14975	.675	-.5040	.2378
B	A	-1.32312*	.14703	.000	-1.6873	-.9590
	C	-1.45621*	.15135	.000	-1.8310	-1.0814
C	A	.13309	.14975	.675	-.2378	.5040
	B	1.45621*	.15135	.000	1.0814	1.8310

Table 13 displays the descriptive statistics for RQ₃, appropriateness of Ebonics at an informal social event. Higher scores indicate less appropriateness of Ebonics at an informal social event and lower scores indicates more appropriateness. Noticing the means of each condition, there is not much variation between them.

Table 13
Informal Social Event Descriptives

Condition	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.		
A	46	1.6087	.649	.095	1.416	1.801	1.0	4.0
B	44	1.5227	.628	.094	1.331	1.713	1.0	3.0
C	41	1.6341	.733	.114	1.402	1.865	1.0	3.0
Total	131	1.5878	.666	.058	1.472	1.703	1.0	4.0

Table 14 shows the F-value for an ANOVA test done for the appropriateness of Ebonics at an informal social event. With no significance shown, a Multiple Comparisons test was not needed.

Table 14 <i>ANOVA for Informal Social Event</i>					
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.294	2	.147	.328	.721
Within Groups	57.446	128	.449		
Total	57.740	130			

Table 15 shows descriptive statistics of the Divergence Scale created from the 8 items of the questionnaire geared toward divergence. This table addresses RQ₄, whether greater use of AAVE leads to divergence in an interaction. The means show a significant difference between the three conditions of Ebonics with lower mean scores representing more divergence. Condition B (Standard English) has the highest mean score which indicates less divergence.

Table 15 <i>Divergence Scale Descriptives</i>								
Condition	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.		
A	45	26.1111	6.803	1.014	24.067	28.155	12.0	39.0
B	43	30.2791	4.876	.7436	28.778	31.779	19.0	40.0
C	40	25.9500	5.183	.8195	24.292	27.607	16.0	37.0
Total	128	27.4609	6.016	.5318	26.408	28.513	12.0	40.0

Table 16 shows the ANOVA test to show a Significance level of .001 and F-test of 7.88. With significant values indicated for the Divergence Scale, the researcher proceeded with a Multiple Comparisons test between the three conditions.

Table 16 <i>ANOVA for Divergence Scale</i>					
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	514.809	2	257.405	7.880	.001
Within Groups	4082.996	125	32.662		
Total	4597.805	127			

Table 17 displays the Multiple Comparisons test done to examine divergence between the three levels of Ebonics. Among the three conditions, the important differences are between condition B and conditions A and C (participants perceived A and C to be similar). Between the three conditions, participants responding to condition B would diverge less compared to conditions A or C.

Table 17 <i>Multiple Comparisons</i>						
(I) Participant responded to	(J) Participant responded to	Mean Diff. (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bnd.	Upper Bnd.
A	B	-4.16796*	1.218	.004	-7.1874	-1.1485
	C	.16111	1.241	.992	-2.9157	3.2379
B	A	4.16796*	1.218	.004	1.1485	7.1874
	C	4.32907*	1.255	.003	1.2188	7.4394
C	A	-.16111	1.241	.992	-3.2379	2.9157
	B	-4.32907*	1.255	.003	-7.4394	-1.2188

With respect to the items of the Divergence Scale (refer to Methodology for 8 questions), the researcher tested the strength of significance for each item. Three items were particularly consistent with the overall pattern of results in which condition B were different from conditions A and C (light/heavy Ebonics). These items were:

- I would keep interactions with this person as short as possible.

- This person and I would probably disagree about most things.
- This person communicates differently than I do.

Concerning these 3 items, the participants would likely diverge more toward the heavy/light Ebonics conditions and would be less likely to diverge toward the Standard English condition.

Three items revealed a slight discrepancy with the overall pattern compared with the other results. The items:

- I would generally try to avoid interacting with this person.
- I would not feel comfortable telling this person anything about myself.
- I feel like this person would judge me harshly if I told her something.

These items demonstrated a difference between condition B (Standard English) and condition A (i. e. light AAVE speaker), but not with condition C (i. e. heavy AAVE speaker). Participants would diverge more from speaker A than speaker B but not necessarily from speaker C. These results explain that factors other than speech alone accounts for inter-ethnic communication patterns.

Discussion

The first research question addressed whether AAVE would be perceived as appropriate to use in a classroom setting. The results revealed that the heavy/light conditions of Ebonics were perceived as less appropriate to use in a classroom setting. This relates to the investigation by adding which situations AAVE wouldn't be appropriate to use. Based on these findings, African Americans who speak in AAVE would have to code switch more so toward Standard English when speaking with peers or instructors. Of course these findings are not generalizable to every classroom. For example, the population used to gather the results from this investigation were majority Caucasian American. In a majority black college or university, using Ebonics in the classroom could be acceptable.

The second research question addressed the appropriateness of AAVE in a work environment. Again, as with the first research question, the results indicated that the heavy/light conditions of Ebonics were perceived as less appropriate to use in a work setting than the Standard English condition. Based on these findings, African Americans who speak in AAVE would have to code switch in order to blend with their environment while at work. Code switching is a skill learned in varying degrees in order to conform to the normative dialect, Standard English. Scotton and Ury (1977) suggested that African Americans who speak in Ebonics would have to learn this skill in order to overcome stereotypes associated with speaking improperly. The results from this research investigation agree that persons who speak in Ebonics would have to code switch to fit with their surroundings, specifically in a work setting.

The results from RQ₂ also agree with a previous research finding that using AAVE at work can be met with negative stereotypes (Doss & Gross, 1992). To avoid these negative stereotypes associated with speaking improper English, individuals who speak a vernacular must code switch to SE. Rahman's (2008) investigation also agrees with the present study which surprisingly found that African American's felt that using Ebonics at work was inappropriate. These participants professed that they are Ebonics speakers, but choose not to use their dialect while speaking with co-workers. The previous findings into the area of appropriateness of speaking Ebonics at work can give insight into why the present study found the same results. There still lies a bias with using AAVE in a work setting, as with Doss and Gross (1992) study, it could be met with stereotypes or discrimination. African Americans who speak Ebonics and choose not to at work are escaping these stereotypes associated with their dialog by code switching to Standard English.

The last research question that yielded significant results addressed whether greater use of AAVE would be met with more divergence. The participants, again, perceived that if interacting with persons of the heavy/light condition would be more apt to diverge and not converge in an interaction. In communication accommodation theory; an individual who accentuates differences, is unaccommodating, argumentative and dominating in a conversation is diverging (Buzzanell et al., 1996). Since this research question did not specifically give a situation where more AAVE spoken would result in greater divergence (such as class, work or social event), the findings are generally stating that greater AAVE would be met with divergence.

Gender differences in divergence revealed a difference for men and women. Women demonstrated a pattern consistent with the overall sample which was divergence more toward conditions A and C (light/heavy) compared to condition B (Standard English). Male respondents were only more likely to diverge from condition C (heavy Ebonics). There were no differences in divergence between conditions A or B in regards to male participants. Although the researcher wanted only speech to be a factor in the investigation, these results question whether the student participants took into consideration attraction or other factors such as body language.

The research on divergence also implies that if speakers of AAVE, for instance in a work or classroom setting, do not accommodate to their surroundings by speaking in Standard English, their peers would be more likely to be disengaging in conversations, and possibly even discriminatory. This is an important finding to inter-cultural communication because African Americans who decide not to code switch in situations can interpret this divergence as rudeness or disrespect which can create greater communication barriers. The person on the receiving end of the conversation may not understand the AAVE spoken, consequently not responding at all. This causes barriers in communication between peers and co-workers.

Additionally, the researcher decided to include participant exposure to African American culture and comfort in a multicultural setting to the findings. These questions revealed that while most of the participants did have some sort of exposure to African American culture, a surprising amount of the participants did not have any exposure to African American culture, and didn't feel comfortable in a multicultural setting. The

participants that indicated no exposure to African American culture or feelings of discomfort in diverse settings could feel a great deal of apprehension communicating with African Americans (or any other ethnicity for that matter). Interacting with such individuals would depend on their willingness to communicate, which represents a possible direction for future research in this area.

Limitations

The manipulation check of the three conditions of the research, which were heavy Ebonics, light Ebonics and Standard English, yielded only two differences and not three separate conditions as previously thought. This signifies that the participants could not decipher between the light and heavy conditions. The item of the questionnaire, “this person speaks in a way that some persons would refer to as “Black English,” participants perceived only conditions heavy and light as being in this category. The participants did not perceive the speaker of Standard English as speaking in Black English.

The third research question did not reveal any significant differences between the three levels of Ebonics usage at an informal social event. The findings did not distinguish which level of Ebonics would be more or less appropriate to use as with the other research questions. Perhaps with this question the participants misunderstood what type of event this question addressed. The researcher intended for the informal event to be a party, social mixer, bowling, etc. This result could also be a consequence from the shortness of the video segment. Perhaps the participants did not have time to decipher differences between the levels of Ebonics presented in the video, resulting in no difference at all.

This finding to RQ₃ also assumes that of the three levels of Ebonics displayed, the participants perceived all three as appropriate to use at an informal social event. It could be that the participants weren't mistaken by the video. The results could mean that the participants perceived that all three levels of Ebonics (light, Standard English and heavy conditions) were appropriate at an informal social event such as a party mixer. The investigation initially sought to find whether Standard English and African American vernacular English were blending. This blending would address the debate surrounding Ebonics being spoken in America. According to the findings from RQ₃, it could be that since all three levels of Ebonics are acceptable at a social event, this blending of dialects could possibly occur in this setting. The results of RQ₃ are unique in that the other research questions did not reveal that Ebonics were appropriate in class or work, so blending together speakers of SE and AAVE would most likely not occur in these settings.

A limitation of the research design was revealed with respect to the manipulation check. The participants did not perceive a difference between the heavy and light Ebonics conditions. This could be because the three women displaying the three conditions did not speak an equal amount of time in the video. Respondent's B and C spoke more than the woman who was to display the light Ebonics condition. The participants perhaps didn't have time to grasp the differences in dialogue between the three women. If this investigation were to be replicated, the video of actors should be displayed speaking the same amount of time.

The sample of 143 student participants was taken from one university whose population was majority Caucasian American. If the investigation extended to other universities with a more diverse student population, the results could have revealed more about AAVE and reactions about the dialect from other ethnicities.

Another limitation to the study is that the researcher did not factor in attractiveness. Since the experiment was not an audio of the three AAVE conditions, attraction of the women shown could also be a confounding variable of the results. The participants could have been responding to the questionnaire based on the appearance of the individual instead of the dialogue used. This affects the results especially because in the light Ebonics condition, the woman did not speak as much. The participants could have completed the questionnaire geared toward condition A based on her appearance alone.

Other factors could've explained why male participants perceived more divergence from A compared to B but not divergence from C, the heavy Ebonics speaker. Taken into consideration the video used in this investigation was not an audio tape, several factors could have influenced the participants' attention away from the three levels of Ebonics spoken. Such factors as appearance and body language which weren't accounted for in the study could explain this variance.

Future Research Directions

Future research directions can focus on the video associated with the questionnaire. Another video could be used which displays the conditions of Ebonics, like with this study, but instead uses three men instead of three women. The researcher

purposefully used women in the video to display the conditions because if using men an extraneous variable could influence the results (e.g. perception of aggression). Using three men in the video could produce very different results based on the perceptions of the participants especially if the participants are majority female, as with this investigation.

With the Divergence Scale and results, since increased Ebonics is shown to be met with more divergence, could there be a “tipping point” to how much Ebonics can be spoken? Future research can address this question delving into specifically what levels of Ebonics is or isn’t appropriate and where, on this continuum of dialects, is Ebonics completely misunderstood and unaccepted. Since it was found that Ebonics is not appropriate to use in class or work, distinguishing on a continuum (as shown on page 24) can give more insight into how much/little should speakers use AAVE.

The researcher is African American, and handed out the questionnaire to participants’ in their classrooms. Future research could use a Caucasian American to set up the video and distribute the questionnaires. Since the questionnaire and video had topics of race, additionally the researcher is African American, the participants could have felt uncomfortable while completing the questionnaire. Future studies should test for “researcher effects” such as these.

The research investigation used participants from a university with a large Caucasian American student population. Future research could use participants from a majority African American student population. The researcher was unable to find out how African American students felt about the appropriateness of AAVE in interactions

because there wasn't enough in the sample to find this result. Previous research found similar findings for appropriateness of AAVE at work among African American participants (Rahman, 2008); it would be interesting to find whether these results would continue with a different population.

Future research studies could use this investigation with dialects other than AAVE. Such an investigation could also be used to determine responses of using dialects at class, work or social event. The findings would be interesting to compare against American findings of participant response to Ebonics.

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Appendix A

Movie Commentary, American Tongues

Girl A (Sherry), B (Amelia) and C from left to right

C: Yeah girl, I met a dude too his name Kevin, but he was with his girlfriend and I didn't play nothing like that. So I left him alone.

A (Sherry): Forreal girl? Girl I know what you mean...

B (Amelia): Yeah, I saw this guy name Mike...

(Second take of girls)

Narrator: Do the three of you all talk in the same way?

A (Sherry): Yeah. I think so.

B (Amelia): No!

C: No! I think me and Sherry do, it's just not like Amelia's.

A (Sherry): Yeah.

C: Huh?

Narrator: What's the difference?

B (Amelia): I don't use slang as much

C: I know what the difference is! Amelia gotta proper voice than us (nods head). She talk proper.

B (Amelia): I don't use slang as much.

Narrator: Why not?

B (Amelia): I dunno.

C: I know why, cuz' she a school girl and a she a momma girl. Ima' momma girl too, but you kno I still be using them slangs. "What's happ'en girl? Where you been at? Alright!

Nothin much huh? That's my girl! (high fives girl A).

A (Sherry): Yeah. It ain't about nothing (ha ha ha).

C: That's my posso!

Narrator: So is it a bad thing to speak proper?

B (Amelia): Yeah.

A: We call Amelia bunny rabbit (ha ha ha).

B (Amelia): Because some people, some people look at you different cuz' you don't use as much slang as them. She trying to be cute or something like that.

Appendix B

Dialects Questionnaire

Please Indicate:

Age
 Gender: M/F
 Ethnicity
 European American (Caucasian American)
 Latino
 African American
 Asian
 Native American
 Other (please explain)_____

Please answer following questions as honestly as you can:

Do you feel comfortable interacting in a multicultural social environment?

Yes

No

Have you been exposed to African American culture? (Could include through music, or direct experience with African Americans)

If so, please explain.

Please answer questions as best you can based on the video:

How comfortable would you feel speaking with (Person A)?

Very comfortable

Not comfortable

Somewhat comfortable

Extremely uncomfortable

How comfortable would you feel speaking with (Person A)?

Very comfortable

c. Not comfortable

Somewhat comfortable

d. Extremely uncomfortable

Would you say that the dialogue Person A is speaking appropriate for:

I. Class

Very appropriate

Not appropriate

Somewhat appropriate

Very inappropriate

II. Work

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Very appropriate | c. Not appropriate |
| b. Somewhat appropriate | d. Very inappropriate |

III. Informal Social Event

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Very appropriate | c. Not appropriate |
| Somewhat appropriate | d. Very inappropriate |

How likely would it be that when talking to Person A in an interaction (for example an interaction talking about college experiences) you would be supportive, polite and attentive?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Very likely | c. Not likely |
| Somewhat likely | d. Very unlikely |

How likely would it be that when talking to Person A in an interaction about college experiences you would give advice or talk about similar experiences?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Very likely | c. Not likely |
| Somewhat likely | d. Very unlikely |

In an interaction with Person A how likely is it that you would: feel obliged to respond politely rather than say what you truly wanted to say?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Very likely | c. Not likely |
| Somewhat likely | d. Very unlikely |

Out of the responses listed below, please circle the best reaction you would have when interacting with Person A talking about college experiences.

- I would walk away
- I would not have much in common with this person
- I would listen, but not share my thoughts
- I would find myself agreeing with this person

Would you be compelled to separate yourself from this person in an interaction?

Very compelled

c. Not compelled

Somewhat compelled

d. Very uncompelled

Please answer the next set of questions based on the following scale:

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

I would enjoy talking about a controversial topic with this person.

1

2

3

4

5

I would generally try to avoid interacting with this person .

1

2

3

4

5

I would keep interactions with this person as short as possible.

1

2

3

4

5

This person and I probably would disagree about most things.

1

2

3

4

5

This person communicates differently than I do.

1

2

3

4

5

This person's norms for interacting are just as appropriate as mine.

1

2

3

4

5

If I had a conversation with this person, I would adjust my behavior to fit hers.

1

2

3

4

5

I communicate in a way that is more correct than this person.

1

2

3

4

5

This person speaks in a way that some persons would refer to as "Black English."

1

2

3

4

5

I would not feel comfortable telling this person anything about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like this person wouldn't have anything interesting to say.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like I would trust someone like her.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like I would talk to this person about anything.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like this person would judge me harshly if I told her something.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Definitions

Dialect--Any variety of language which is shared by a group of speakers

Can be in same language (Ex. Southern accent)

By geographical location, status or age

Vernacular--On a continuum are Standard English and Non-Standard English. Vernacular would be more on the Non-Standard side.

A dialect with English foundations

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)--The modifying of speech behaviors, language use, and response to adapt to the other in a conversation.

Convergence (showing approval of the other person/accommodation and adapting)

Divergence (unaccommodating/accentuating differences/argumentative)

African American Vernacular English (AAVE)—an informal unwritten form of English mostly spoken by African Americans. A form of Non-Standard English.

Standard English (SE)—Formal and written speech. Widely accepted speech of the English language.

Code Switching—the switching of linguistic varieties (of the same language) to better fit the environment.