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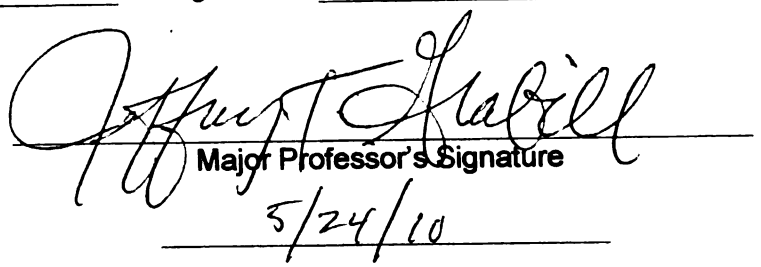

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BACK TO THE CLASSROOM: AFROCENTRICITY AND TEACHER-RESEARCH IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

By

Staci Perryman-Clark

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ABSTRACT

BACK TO THE CLASSROOM: AFROCENTRICITY AND TEACHER-RESEARCH IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

By

Staci M. Perryman-Clark

My dissertation, "Back to the Classroom: Afrocentricity and Teacher-Research in First-Year Writing," is a qualitative empirically-based teacher-research study that examines the ways in which African American students and all students perform expository writing tasks using an Ebonics-based Rhetoric and Composition focused first-year writing curriculum (WRA 125). I begin unpacking how Afrocentric pedagogy is understood and situated in this project. While Afrocentric scholarship targets multiple disciplines, including education and sociolinguistics, the primary audience for this project is teachers and researchers in Composition Studies. I further address how the concept of Afrocentricity is understood by 1) clarifying the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and the African and African American worldview, since many definitions of Afrocentricity suggest a focus on, or discussion of, African and African American worldviews; and 2) explaining the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and Ebonics since many Afrocentric courses focus on Ebonics as both communicative and cultural practices.

In subsequent chapters of the dissertation I situate my own work with teacher-research within the context of four previous classroom and teacher-research studies on African American students. Based on these four studies I have found a limited focus on the uses of Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns strategically and rhetorically, in addition to the focus being only on African American students. I extend these composition teacher and classroom-research studies by 1) also including a discussion of phonology and

African and African American students' uses of Ebonics phonology and syntax purposefully, and 2) including data from non-Black students that point to how they might benefit also from Afrocentric pedagogy.

After laying the groundwork for Afrocentricity and teacher-research, I discuss the findings from my own teacher-research study, with one chapter focusing on African American students' expository writing patterns, and another chapter focusing on all students' work produced in the Afrocentric curriculum. Data results from African American students reflect the ways in which African American students employ AAR and Ebonics phonology and syntax rhetorically across major writing assignments. When looking at all students' work, my findings illustrate that students' essays reveal tensions and conflicts reflected in students' writing, reading, and research practices. Improvement is still needed in argument construction that moves beyond summary, the use of evidence, and citation practices. In the conclusion, I discuss the methodological implications, surprises and limitations of the work done with my WRA 125 course. I also acknowledge methodological challenges that emerge both from the study itself in addition to how my institution's human subjects review board chose to interpret the study design.

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I first give praise, honor, and glory to the One who created me, the One who by His mercy and grace made it possible for me to write this dissertation. I praise God because I recognize that without Him, I could not have accomplished any of what I have accomplished in my short time here at Michigan State University. I also acknowledge the unconditional love He has granted me even when I doubted the final outcome.

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I further thank the committee that was there in the end to support me despite the many—and often times—painful changes that took place within the past four years. I especially thank my chair, Jeff Grabill, for stepping in to assume this role after many changes and disappointments. I thank him for valuing my work and believing in me enough to take on the challenge of being my chair. I also thank Geneva Smitherman (aka "Dr. G.") for her tough and everlasting love and support that she has given me for the past four years. In many ways, she has served as a surrogate grandmother that never spared the rod when I needed it most. I count it as a privilege for her to play such an integral role in my scholarly and personal development. Special thanks also go to Malea Powell, Elaine Richardson, and Terese Monberg for the personal and intellectual support they too have offered as committee members. Finally, I thank my special friends: Angela Haas, Kendall Leon, and Steven Lessner for their undying love and support.

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Chapter 1

PERSPECTIVES ON AFROCENTRICITY AND EBONICS

1.1 How this Study Began: An Introduction

My interest in Afrocentricity began as a first-year writing teaching assistant completing my Master's Degree at a mid-sized Midwestern university. At that time, I was unsure whether or not I wanted to pursue interests in sociological and civic engagement issues at the doctoral level. I had been greatly influenced by the African American church that I attended, where my father served as pastor. Week after week I witnessed my father's preaching, a theology that focused much on liberation, and racial and gender inequities. Understanding the need to be critical about issues of race, as they impact social justice, I wanted to bring some of this teaching into the classroom.

During my first year teaching a pre-college writing course I sought to teach students how to develop a critical consciousness concerning race. I wanted students to recognize how issues of race affect particular literacy and linguistic practices, and in essence, educational policy. In some ways this wouldn't be difficult to achieve, since our shared first-year writing reader included several texts that engaged many of these concerns. As a result, I could confront these issues in my classroom without deviating too far from curricular resources.

By the end of the course I realized that my pedagogical approaches to race often alienated students. As I was grading students' final portfolios, I received a letter from a white female student who expressed her alienation because she did not share my same racial and political views. She felt as though the course focused too much on African

American struggles and racism, noting that everyone in society is not racist. As proof, she argued that many African Americans like Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby were successful and both have followings from people of all races. And this student had a point: Of course everyone is not racist, and of course, there are African Americans who aren't in poverty. Nonetheless, I felt that I had a point too. While there are some African Americans who, by God's grace, have made it out of poverty, significant inequities continue to exist.

The problem with my pedagogical approaches was not that they lacked sufficient theory; rather, the problem existed in the tools that I used to support my theoretical rationale. I recognize that I am no sociologist, so in some ways, I may not have the training and expertise that students expect that I have to confront these issues in a first-year writing course. This doesn't mean that race has no place in the composition classroom, though. After all, my students do come into the classroom raced, classed, and gendered, and these sociological variables often do affect the literate experiences that shape their lives. What I needed to understand was that students might have to draw these conclusions on their own; perhaps I cannot draw these conclusions for them. That was one significant problem with my previous pedagogical approaches. I wanted to bring a form of Afrocentricity that confronts racism into the classroom, while teaching and arguing to students that racism exists. But, sometimes students needed to draw that conclusion on their own. In other words, in order to prove that racism exists, students sometimes have to find experiences of racism on their own; at times the evidence with which they are confronted is more powerful than the convincing we attempt to do as teachers. Thus, I needed to adapt an Afrocentric pedagogy that gives students the

rhetorical tools necessary to draw the conclusions that they draw. I also needed to adapt an Afrocentric pedagogy that doesn't alienate students, but includes their own experiences, as we all work to understand the problems associated with racist linguistic and educational practices.

My previous experiences now shape the methodological work I do as a teacher-researcher. I am interested in how all students understand and make sense of Afrocentricity. Because the concept of Afrocentricity is significantly broad, I want to encourage students to make sense of Afrocentric pedagogy in relationship to particular linguistic and rhetorical practices and how these influence the types of writing done both in and outside of the classroom. I understand that I am not a sociologist, but I am a writing specialist, and if we can deal with these issues in the context of writing, we can understand how writing becomes a subject and not just an activity that people do. In *Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies*, Nancy C. DeJoy argues that using Composition Studies as a focus in undergraduate writing courses is beneficial because

> student writing can be illustrative, teaching us things about how certain practices affect the process or products produced... [The problem is that] students are not included in the process of analysis that constructs such knowledge from their texts. Positioning students in relation to the discipline in such ways is part of a larger related habit of excluding students from our discussions more generally. The idea that we can change the terms of this material reality by raising and/or empowering individual consciousness without challenging these limited notions of literacy in our disciplinary and professional spaces is misinformed. (14)

In the past, my pedagogical practices often excluded students' contributions and their dissenting views. But now, I want a more inclusive pedagogy and agree with DeJoy, who proposes that we change our discipline's exclusive practices toward students. I want to design a course that introduced and included students in our disciplinary discussions, while at the same time, implementing the Afrocentric ideologies that birthed my teaching career. In a sense, I want the best of both worlds: an inclusive pedagogy and an Afrocentric pedagogy, and I want to study the ways that both are attainable in the classroom. This also means that I need to research students' responses to such a curriculum in order to examine particular sets of knowledge and writing practices that were gained by the students.

This chapter unpacks how my new understandings of Afrocentric pedagogy are understood and situated in a descriptive qualitative teacher-research study on an Afrocentric language-focused first-year writing curriculum. While Afrocentric scholarship targets multiple disciplines, including education and sociolinguistics, the primary audience for this project is teachers and researchers in Composition Studies.

This project is a descriptive qualitative teacher-research study on an Afrocentric language-focused first-year writing curriculum. Because there still exists a limited amount of empirical and pedagogical scholarship on the benefits of Afrocentric pedagogy (Redd and Schuster Webb; Richardson), and because the concept of Afrocentricity is often obscured in academic scholarship (McPhail 100), it is first important to understand the theories that inform how I understand Afrocentricity in this project. As both a teacher and researcher, I decided to apply Afrocentricity to the study of Ebonics because I believe Ebonics to serve as one of many concrete examples that clarifies the relationship

between Afrocentricity and African-based communicative practices. Thus, this chapter also explains the relationship between Ebonics, as an African-based cultural and communicative practice, and the concept of Afrocentricity. Furthermore, because the teacher-research study focuses on a first-year writing class, my target audience is members in Composition Studies, although scholarship on Ebonics and Afrocentricity cross multiple disciplinary audiences. In the next section, I discuss the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and African worldviews. Such a discussion is necessary in order to understand the philosophies and ideologies that inform how I understand Afrocentric thought in the classroom.

1.2 Perspectives on Afrocentric Pedagogy in Relationship to African Worldviews

Before discussing how Afrocentric pedagogy is situated in Composition Studies, it is first important to explain the conceptual framework that guides my understanding of Afrocentricity. I emphasize that most work with Afrocentric teaching does not come from Composition Studies, but instead, is rooted in African and African American studies (Asante *Afrocentricity*; Irvine "Afrocentric"), and K-12 education (Ladson-Billings *Teaching*; Lynn and Parker "Critical Race"). Although this project is positioned disciplinarily in Composition Studies, I find it necessary to look at Afrocentric pedagogy in multiple disciplinary contexts because these have contributed significantly to my understanding. This section will then discuss how Afrocentric education is typically described and its elements, as they are situated in particular disciplinary contexts, each of which has guided how I apply Afrocentric pedagogy in this project.

Much scholarship dealing with Afrocentric education is sure to acknowledge Molefi Asante's contributions to the concept of Afrocentricity. In *The Afrocentric Idea of Education* Asante identifies two sociological perspectives on education as they apply to Afrocentric pedagogy: The first is that "education is fundamentally a social phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is to socialize the learner; to send a child to school is to prepare that child to become part of a social group" (170). The other is that "schools are reflective of the societies that develop them" (170). Using these perspectives as a lens, Asante asserts that Afrocentricity be used as a framework for students studying the histories, peoples, and concepts from an African worldview (an extensive discussion of these worldviews in relationship to specific pedagogical practices takes place in Chapter 2). In her article, "Afrocentric Education: Critical Questions for Further Consideration," Jacqueline Jordan Irvine extends Asante's work to provide the following discussion and working definition, as she explains the elements of an Afrocentric curriculum:

> The term Afrocentric is used widely and its definition has taken a variety of meanings. Most agree that an Afrocentric curriculum is a systematic study of the multidimensional aspects of black thought and practice centered around the contributions and heritage of people of African descent. (201)

Asante more specifically defines Afrocentric education as

> a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person (Asante, 1987). In education this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African worldview [...] Because all content areas

are adaptable to an Afrocentric approach, African American students can be made to see themselves as centered in the reality of any discipline. (171)

Asante further emphasizes that the Afrocentric approach understood in his essay is not a variation of Eurocentric approaches, where Eurocentric worldviews comprise "sum total of the human experience" (172). Afrocentric approaches to education are not merely Afrocentric just because one adapts curriculum resources from and by persons of African descent. It is not the people who make the curriculum Afrocentric; rather, it is the ideology and worldview that determine whether or not an approach is Afrocentric. This means that curriculum resources from non-blacks can be included, as long as these practices are situated from the perspective, and within the interests of, people of African descent; and as long as they employ shared African-based worldviews. Subira Kifano also provides two perspectives on Afrocentric education, one being "a development of a liberation pedagogy within African [American] communities," and the other being development of an "alternative value system that is responsive and responding to the cultural and spiritual ethos of people of African ancestry" (209). The Afrocentric idea of education, to which Kifano refers, is also grounded in worldviews employing educational practices that are culturally situated within the interests of African Diaspora people, despite the institutional or organizational infrastructures.

In order to understand Afrocentric pedagogy, one must also become familiar with African American worldviews, since many discussions of Afrocentricity speak in terms of understanding the African and African American worldview. When speaking of the abstractness that is often associated with the African worldview, Mark Lawrence McPhail argues that while Afrocentricity is often understood to reflect the underlying

epistemological and ontological assumptions of an African worldview, many of its critics have suggested that "its centrist emphasis has served to obscure that worldview instead of clarifying it" (100). Although much has been written on African-based worldviews in relationship to Afrocentric ideology, much of this discussion remains too conceptual and particularly vague for both scholars and students.

While limited, some scholarship in rhetoric and composition attempts to define what is meant by the African and African American worldview. Adisa Alkebulan defines the African worldview as "the guiding principles and values that determine how Africans respond to life and interact with the universe. Worldview is the means by which culture determine what is beautiful and what is not" (34). In *African American Literacies*, Elaine Richardson clarifies the African American worldview by stating: "When I say African American worldview, I am referring to the knowledge that Black folks have about how to negotiate Blackness in everyday situations" (27). These are just a few examples of how the African American worldview is typically defined in disciplinary scholarship. Such definitions, however, remain abstract. Therefore, in this chapter, I will attempt to make Afrocentricity and its worldviews more tangible by identifying some aspects of this worldview.

Mergence between the Sacred and Secular

A more specific aspect of the African worldview is the relationship between the sacred and secular worlds. Geneva Smitherman identifies Black speech associations with the African worldview, including a connection between the sacred (church) and secular (street). In her discussion of Black communication, Smitherman reveals that

> [t]he Black communication system is actualized in different ways, dependent upon the sociocultural context—for instance, "street" versus "church—but the basic underlying structures of this communication network are essentially similar because they are grounded in the traditional African worldview. In brief, that view refers to underlying thoughts, patterns, belief sets, values, ways of looking at the world and the community of men and women that are shared by all traditional Africans (that is those who haven't been westernized). (*Talkin and Testifyin* 74)

With Smitherman's conceptual framework of the African worldview, the church refers to any practices that are considered sacred, spiritual and/or religious (e.g. meditation, praying, other abstract ritualized forms, etc.); spiritual practices extend beyond any specific religion or church denomination. The street refers to those secular or "everyday" practices that do not have a direct sacred or religious purpose (e.g. paying bills, listening to non-religious music, going to work for the man[1]). Further, this worldview, while a way of seeing the world, extends beyond perception by including beliefs, practices, and values that African and African Americans share. What makes many working definitions of Afrocentricity (and its relationship with African worldviews) less clear is the idea that this worldview is something that must be *perceived* by people of African descent, even if this perception is not articulated to, or understood by, members outside of these groups. Perception (particularly in its relationship to a cultural epistemology) is usually discussed

[1] Working for "the man" is an African American idiomatic expression that suggests how African Americans must deal with those in powerful positions above them, usually, White folks. It is assumed that when one works for the man, he/she is working for a white boss, and must obey the rules of his/her master or risk being fired. "The man" also refers to the one with the most power, usually the White man. Even if a boss is female, it is assumed that even she still must answer to the White man at some point.

theoretically and stop short at the praxis level. Explicit examples of these everyday practices and beliefs are less often referenced. But, if we center more on concrete values, beliefs, and practices, perhaps our understandings of the African American worldview may become clearer. With Smitherman's discussion of the African worldview, while an understanding of the spiritual and its relationship with the African worldview may still be abstract, when placing this abstractness in line with the street, we see more tangibly the practices and beliefs that people of African descent most commonly share.

As Smitherman points out previously, there is a strong relationship between the sacred and secular world, and between the spiritual and carnal. Even in the African American church,[2] where the spiritual is explicitly actualized, we see a similar connection between the spiritual and secular. In the book, *The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology*, James Deotis Roberts argues that the "secular and sacred, the personal and the abstract, and the practical [each] interface" (xi). Understanding the African American worldviews then requires understanding the relationship between the spiritual and secular world, the personal and collective, and the abstract and practical. This spiritual connection is often portrayed through narration, song or dance. Cummings and Latta indicate: "When it comes to traditional Black rhetoric, what Blacks say in the form of stories, dance, and song is the way they communicate their feelings, beliefs, desires, values, and way of life" (66).

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[2] Here I refer to the African American church as an institution that extends beyond particular religious sects, or Christian denominations. Regardless of the religion or denomination, African American Christian churches, mosques, synagogues etc. similarly share many African-based religious traditions that connect the sacred with the secular world.

In Smitherman's most recent book, *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans*, she reemphasizes the ways that the merging of the sacred and secular becomes actualized in preaching linguistic and rhetorical discourse:

> Our [Black] preachers continue to be masters of the rhetorical, linguistic, inventiveness ... In the African way, blending the sacred and the profane, Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright Jr., [former] Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chi-town, expertly incorporates vernacular street language. Preaching on the subject "Demons and Detractors," he takes us on a journey "to see what a First Century text can teach those of us who live in the Twenty-First Century"... (66-7)

Using African American preachers as an example, Smitherman clarifies that the relationship between the sacred and secular is not only one aspect of the African American worldview, but also, it is a linguistic and rhetorical device used by Black preachers to demonstrate a connection between the spiritual world (heaven) and the physical world (earth) in which we live. In the Good Reverend Dr.'s sermon, Wright merges the sacred and secular by applying the "First Century text" (The New Testament of the Christian Bible) to the "Twenty-First Century" period in which we live.

Liberation

Another critical aspect of the African American worldview is the idea that liberation must be acknowledged (Jackson 120). Asante states that Afrocentric awareness

> is when the person becomes committed to a conscious level of involvement in the struggle for his or her own mind liberation ... [They are committed to working

> toward] African liberation [or making a] constant determined effort to repair any psychic, economic, physical or cultural damage done to Africans. (8)

Smitherman's reference to Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright's sermon too speaks to liberation theology. In his sermon, Wright preaches:

> Don't you let what people say about you stop you from being who God says you aaaaaarrrreee! Other people don't define you, so don't let them *confine* you [...] All my White friends here tonight, White folk, listen to me, hear me tonight. You ain no honky [...] You are a child of God [...] just like an Asian, an African, an Arab, an Indian, an Afghanistanan; an Iraqi is also a child of God [...] I'm an equal opportunity preacher [...] Stop looking to other folk for validation an affirmation, for definition and recognition. God is the source of everything you need! (qtd. in Smitherman 67) (emphasis added)

(The previous excerpt is also significant because it most certainly contradicts the media's interpretation of Wright's so-called racist and separatist rhetoric that plagued Barack Obama's bid in the 2008 Presidential Election, but I digress!) In the Good Reverend Dr.'s case, liberation is expressed by the freedom to define one's own identity. As Reverend Wright preaches, if you let people define you, then you also let them confine you, and anytime a person is confined, they are most certainly not free. Also worth emphasizing is the idea that liberation, while an important aspect of the African and African American worldview, is inclusive to all people. To emphasize his point of liberation and equality, the Reverend Dr. identifies different races and ethnicities and how essential it is for each of them to look to God and not to other people for "validation" and "definition." In short,

while liberation is valued by African and African Americans, it is also made available to all people.

The Relationship between Liberation Theology and Liberation Pedagogy

In *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, Roberts also indicates that when defining African American liberation theology (through Christianity),

> the purpose of *Liberation* and *Reconciliation* [must be] taken seriously [so] that one can fully appreciate its complete message [...] Black Theology must be addressed to all in a language they can understand [...] In a similar vein, it is clear that Black Theology must closely be related to the black church. Its message needs to challenge all Christians from the church to the pew. Its purpose is social transformation for making life more human. (emphasis in original) (xiii)

Just as liberation pedagogy seeks social transformation in the classroom, liberation theology too seeks a similar transformation in the African American church, in this case, the Christian church. Christian education (the sacred) becomes connected Afrocentric education (the secular). Both concepts accentuate the call for the liberation of Africans/African Americans.

Ricky Lee Allen contends that "unlike critical pedagogy [Afrocentric and critical race theorists] take the side of liberation from white supremacy" (64). In his own discussion of relationship with liberation pedagogy, Peter Murrell Jr. further states that the

> incompleteness of American education is in two critical respects contradistinctive to African pedagogy: (1) deep thought as both the process and the aim of

education for liberation, self-agency, and self-determination; and (2) community participation in deep thought that furthers and develops those ends. (34)

Liberation is one of many elements not only of the African/African American worldview, but also, one of many elements of Afrocentric pedagogy. In this way, the sacred and secular is also merged as pedagogy and theology coincide. Because Christian or church education is a critical aspect of the Black Church, liberation pedagogy becomes implicated in church teaching and training. In fact, in many Black Christian denominations members are expected—and church leaders often required—to attend both Sunday School prior to Sunday morning worship AND Wednesday night Bible Study. Traditionally on Wednesday nights (although days may vary with different churches) church congregations combine "Prayer Meeting" with Bible Study. Prayer Meeting usually occurs right before Bible study, when members of the congregation are given the opportunity to testify, sing a song, or say a prayer.

When members testify, they acknowledge and affirm "the significance or power of an experience outside the Black Church" (Smitherman *Testifyin* 45). Testifyin' at Prayer Meeting offers many examples of the way the sacred and secular worlds interface. When believers testify, they make overt connections between their relationship with God (sacred) and their experiences outside the church (secular). Furthermore, the sacred and spiritual experience of Prayer Meeting prior to Bible Study is significant: The sanctimonious nature of a Prayer Meeting prepares believers to engage in the intellectual discourses associated with Bible Study. During Bible Study, teachers (not always the preacher) may study and reflect on liberation theology by examining the relationship between biblical passages on liberation (e.g. the Israelite's freedom from Egypt) and

African Americans' freedom from slavery. Using the Bible and Prayer Meeting as examples, liberation theology and liberation pedagogy unite.

Summary of the Elements of African American Worldview

While there are additional elements not acknowledged in this space, this section addresses the specific elements of the African Diaspora worldview, as they influence my pedagogical work with Afrocentricity. The mergence between the sacred and secular and liberation are the two elements I deal with most in my classroom. I focus on the sacred and secular in my pedagogy because I believe that students should be encouraged to make sense and merge the literacies of the classroom with those outside of the classroom, just as people of African descent do when they merge sacred and secular shared experiences. I also focus on liberation because I find it to be a useful heuristic for students to use when making sense of issues of racism. As a teacher, liberation pedagogy includes all students' experiences, and permits students to understand that liberation is necessary for all citizens, and not just African Americans. While African Americans identify with liberation, it is not exclusive to African Americans' shared experiences. As a teacher, liberation pedagogy, then, seeks to free Afrocentricity from much of its separatist critique.

1.3 The Relationship between Afrocentricity and Ebonics

While I focused previously on the relationship between Afrocentric education and the African and African Diaspora worldview, such a focus on Afrocentricity often maintains a linguistic component as well, where teachers often position Ebonics as the focus of curricular inquiry. Building on this linguistic focus, I specify my focus on

Ebonics in relation to African Americans, rather than someplace else in the Diaspora. Since "Ebonics *is* a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans' appropriation and transformation of a foreign tongue during the African Holocaust" (Smitherman 19), I believe an Afrocentric approach must account for African-based cultural and communicative practices. Because language is cultural, and because an understanding of Afrocentric pedagogy requires a focus on African American cultural practices, it is understandable that an Afrocentric curriculum incorporate African American language and communicative practices. Put simply, if one chooses to focus on African American communicative practices such a focus must include a discussion on Ebonics, the language of African Americans. Alice Ashton Filmer states that "an awareness of the sociolinguistic pressures facing African-American students is difficult for most outsiders, even sympathetic ones, to grasp without careful attention to the lived experiences of black people" ("African American" 265). Asante adds that the "sociolinguistics or racism and cultural imperialism have to be challenged and neutralized in order to produce an area of respect where African Americans assume more than a marginal role in their own discourses" (*Manifesto* 7).

In addition to this understanding, the conceptual framework that guides how I understand Ebonics as a writing instructor is also worth mentioning. Because Ebonics is the language derived from Africans' transportation during the African holocaust, I subscribe to the Africologist (what Teresa Redd and Karen Schuster Webb call, "Afrocentric") theory of the development of African American speech. Carol Blackshire-Belay argues that an Africological paradigm "must view the language development of African people from the perspective of African agency" ("Location" 10).

In relationship to Ebonics Kifano and Smith more specifically argue that the Africologist theory of Ebonics "posit[s] an African-centered view of the descendents of enslaved Africans' language [...] The Africologists contend that because Ebonics is not 'genetically related to English,' the term Ebonics is not a mere synonym for the more commonly used phase 'Black English'" (63 and 71). In response to Africologist/Afrocentric theory, Redd and Schuster Webb further explain Smitherman's reasons for categorizing Ebonics as an African derived language. They note:

> Smitherman also questions classifying [African American English] as a dialect on the basis of mutual intelligibility. She points out that sometimes listeners misunderstand AAE because they are not familiar with AAE communicative strategies, such as reversing the meaning of a word [...] Because of such differences, Smitherman has started speaking of the "language" rather than the "dialect" of African America. (15)

While classifications as to whether or not Ebonics is a language or dialect remain in dispute (in both sociolinguistics and Composition Studies) (Redd and Schuster Webb 15-16), an Africologist theory of Ebonics understands Ebonics as "enslaved Africans' language," and not an English dialect. And even though there are some clear linguistic similarities between Ebonics and Standard English, and Ebonics and Southern English (e.g. English vocabulary), the phonological, grammatical and syntactical structures of Ebonics often bear more similarities to West African languages (Smitherman *Talkin that Talk*; Smitherman *Black Talk*; Smitherman *Word*; Palacas "Liberating"; Perry and Delpit *Real Ebonics*; Blackshire-Belay "Location"; Green *African American*; Baugh *Beyond*).

Because I do not consider Ebonics a mere nonstandard variety of English, it is also necessary to make distinctions between different terminologies that are often used interchangeably with Ebonics. Although many sociolinguists, compositionists and educators often use Ebonics synonymously with Black English (BE), African American Vernacular English (AAVE), or Black English Vernacular (BEV), I want to clarify the distinction I'm making between each of these terms, even though I used them interchangeably in this study to account for readers who are familiar with different terminology. I prefer the terms Ebonics or African American Language (AAL) because I believe both to highlight Africa's presence in the origins of Black American language, what I call its "Africaness." BEV, AAVE, AAE, or BE seem to underscore the Englishness associated with the language. With this idea of Englishness, BEV, AAVE, AAE and BE also suggest that each are dialects or nonstandard, inferior varieties of English. As Lisa Green states, Ebonics differs from terms like AAVE, BEV, and BE "because [Ebonics] was created to refer specifically to the language of people of African descent that had its roots in West African languages, and not as a reference to any dialect of English" ("African American" 77).

Many Africologists and other scholars caution the dangers associated with not adopting an Afrocentric/Africologist theory of Ebonics, or relying on English-based/Eurocentric understandings of AAL. Arthur Palacas states that he is more inclined to believe that "Black English is a language to respect in its own right" and therefore, must be liberated from Euro-English ("Liberating" 345). Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay further contends that "even some of the best theorists [who study Ebonics] have been trapped by categories of European domination" (5). And Kifano and Smith assert that one

of the problems with some Africologists is that while they acknowledge that "the grammar rules of Ebonics follows the grammar rules distinctive of the Niger-Congo African languages they often rely on and cite the works of many European and Euro-American Africanists whose works are generally regarded as authentic and reliable" (77).

While I find it problematic to primarily rely on European and European American scholarship to explain the legitimacy of African American communicative and cultural practices, I would also caution the dangers associated with being exclusive to other cultural groups and perspectives. With my own Afrocentric curriculum students will read some work by European Americans and other non-black scholars because I believe that Afrocentricity should be inclusive to all traditions. Arguments like Blackshire-Belay and Kifano and Smith may potentially miss the mark when placing emphasis on the *race* of the scholars' scholarship and not the *worldviews* identified from the scholarship, as Asante suggests we do when understanding the Afrocentric idea of education: African and African American worldviews determine what make approaches Afrocentric, not the race or ethnicity of the authors' texts used in the curriculum.

Afrocentric approaches also require a language-focused understanding of writing assessment. Sandra Kamusikiri understands an Afrocentric approach in relationship to the study of Ebonics and writing assessment as an approach "in which both student and teacher are informed about the history and tradition of AAE and the student writer and his or her peers understand that AAE is a valid language choice when appropriate to the subject, audience, and purpose of the essay" (202). She further adds:

> By adopting an Afrocentric approach to writing assessment, teachers can appreciate the linguistic virtuosity of AAE speakers and see them " as people who

have brought, originated, and transmitted certain unique mores and values to create a culture that has survived continual efforts to annihilate it" (Haskins and Butts 14). (202).

What is especially valuable in Kamusikiri's discussion of Afrocentric approaches to writing assessment is the idea that a) students should be included in understandings of writing assessment, b) students should be aware of Afrocentric approaches to writing instruction and assessment, and c) students should be familiar with the linguistic elements of Ebonics in order to contribute fairly and effectively to the evaluation of their peers' work. The responsibility to celebrate Africanized modes of discourse, then, becomes that of both teachers and students, and perhaps this is one reason why Afrocentric curricular approaches that expose students to other linguistic and rhetorical traditions are especially useful. Seen in this light, students are required to learn alternative linguistic systems besides Standard English. Requiring students to demonstrate knowledge of alternative language varieties may go a long way in encouraging students to participate in an increasingly multilingual society.

In a review of sociolinguistic studies that successfully integrate African American communicative practices into classroom instruction, Hollins, King and Hayman draw on several examples of Afrocentric pedagogy. They note:

> Heath's (1983) decade long research in North Carolina, which examined language learning and use in Trackton, a Black community in North Carolina, and [how it] incorporated some interactional features into the classroom, is another study that demonstrates that reducing sociolinguistic discontinuity between students' home

and school environments can positively influence Black students' participation in school lessons...

> Hollins found evidence of cultural congruence between aspects of Black communicative behavior and ... teaching style... In their study of effective Black teachers ... Henry (1990) and Ladson Billings & Henry (1990) suggest that the rhythms, call and response and the use of proverbs... in the vocal expressive communication patterns of African Americans [...] Foster (1987, 1989) found evidence of code-switching... (236)

As we will see later in the next chapter, African-based communicative rhythmic patterns like call and response and proverbial usage can successfully be drawn upon in African American students' expository writing. In Chapter 2, I look extensively at how patterns such as call and response can be integrated by the teacher in the writing classroom.

Kifano and Smith argue that Afrocentric pedagogy is also implemented as a student-centered approach to language acquisition. They state:

> Given [that education] is rooted in the larger human project of socializing children in the values and views of the society, effective instruction of African American learners who are also [English Language Learners] reflects African American sensibilities, acknowledges the historical origins of [African American English], sees literacy development for ELLs not as a linear process but as a continuum where students interact within concentric circles of family, ethnicity, age, gender, and school cultures. (84)

In other words, in order to teach African American students effectively, teachers must also provide students with an understanding of their own cultural traditions, including

students' home language practices. Such an understanding is critical especially for students whose first language differs from the Language of Wider Communication (LWC), or Standard English (SE).

In Composition Studies, the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and writing instruction is also typically framed by a discussion of Ebonics and African American communicative practices. Elaine Richardson discusses the pedagogical rationales associated with using an Afrocentric composition curriculum in *African American Literacies*, which also draws on teacher-research about African American students in her writing course. She considers an Afrocentric (what she terms "African American Centered") approach to mean

> the course of study of subjects (i.e. English language usage, literacy acquisition, rhetoric, writing, education, for example) from the viewpoint of African American experiences [...] Like many other American linguistic minority groups, African American Vernacular English speakers who wish to become participants in mainstream institutions have to master spoken and written forms of elite White American languages of commerce. (32)

In establishing a connection between language, literacy, and rhetoric—as they are enhanced by culturally relevant curricular approaches—Richardson concludes:

> [B]y integrating the speech styles, rhetorical, and literacy traditions of African Americans into academic writing, we invite students to have a fair fight with discourses. Disconnecting them from their cultural histories and the heterogeneity of their language and literacy practices is restricting their classroom literacy experiences from the word go. (113)

Other scholarship in Composition Studies positions Afrocentric pedagogy in relationship to the Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), a 1974 resolution approved by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) to insure that all students, including those whose language varieties differ from Standard English, be permitted to write in the language varieties of their nurture, or whatever varieties in which they find their own style. In their essay, "Students' Right to Possibility: Basic Writing and African American Rhetoric," Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson apply "Afrocentric" pedagogy to SRTOL. They admit that SRTOL is still controversial because many teachers still believe that they should be "preparing so-called minority students for success in the market place, all while many of the most successful people in the market place are running off with fresh stacks of pretty little green ones accumulated to the advertising beat of hip hop" (38).

The relationship between SRTOL and Afrocentric pedagogy has not been met without conflict and outright resistance. David Holmes argues that "while 'The Students' Right to Their Own Language' made avant-garde contributions to race, language, culture, politics, and pedagogy, the document fell short of sufficiently complicating the links among race, language, and identity for peoples of color" (*Revisiting* 101). Even though SRTOL aims to promote academic success for people of color in composition classrooms, it becomes less clear how the linguistic prejudice that the document seeks to end specifically affects people of color in higher education. Others insist that SRTOL is not directed exclusively at African American students because the resolution calls for all students—not just African Americans—to draw on "whatever dialects" in which they find their own style. As a result, critics contend that Afrocentric pedagogy cannot be the

primary purpose for applying SRTOL. Quoting directly from the SRTOL Resolution, it states:

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the *dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style*. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (emphasis added) ("Students' Right" 74)

Using the language from the resolution as an interpretive framework, one might infer that SRTOL functions as one example for why Afrocentric pedagogy should not be limited exclusively to African American student populations. While I do consider Afrocentric pedagogy to be particularly beneficial for African American students, it should also support all students. Comparably, SRTOL permits African Americans to draw on Ebonics and other home language varieties, but it also, makes space for all students—ESL students, students whose language varieties are different from Standard English, Ebonics speaking students, Spanglish speaking students, and even students whose home languages are varieties of Standard English—to write using their own chosen language patterns. Like SRTOL, Afrocentric pedagogy must also make spaces for students to

include their own cultural traditions. Understood this way, Afrocentric pedagogy becomes a heuristic and inventive space from which students may build, as they apply their own experiences.

1.4 Additional Critiques and Resistance to Afrocentricity

Critiques of, and resistance to, Afrocentricity often cross disciplinary contexts. In Composition Studies resistance to Afrocentric teaching, in relationship to SRTOL, is also manifested through the exclusion of Afrocentric curriculum resources and teaching materials. Responding to the need to include students' language varieties in the composition classroom, educators also sought resources that provided tangible examples for teachers how to include alternative language varieties. Scott Wible's essay, "Pedagogies of the 'Students' Right' Era: The Language Curriculum Research Group's Project for Linguistic Diversity," examines a Brooklyn College research project that placed African American Language (AAL) and culture at the center of a composition curriculum during the SRTOL era. Wible argues, however, "[b]ecause of charged political and educational discourses of the mid-1970's...publishers shied away from adopting the [research] group's textbook manuscript. By not publishing, the LCRG and its project perished [sic]" (444). Wible also adds: "In most present-day work around issues of linguistic diversity and language policy, then, compositionists seem to agree that the conversations informing the 'Students' Right' theory did not lead to pedagogical transformation inside the classroom" (444). To put it bluntly, neither SRTOL nor any curriculum resources did nothin' to make teachers change and do right by they "nonstandard" writing students in the classroom. Furthermore, this tension pressured

many educators to abandon Afrocentric teaching methods and resources as culturally relevant pedagogy in their implementations of SRTOL.

Other critics of Afrocentric pedagogy and curriculum design in composition classrooms are not so much concerned with SRTOL; rather, they are more generally skeptical of its pedagogical effectiveness, charging that regardless of whether or not Afrocentric pedagogy is focused on Ebonics, it is unclear if Afrocentric pedagogy actually works. In *A Teacher's Introduction to African American English: What a Writing Teacher Should Know*, Teresa Redd and Karen Schuster Webb discuss several instructional approaches to teaching Ebonics speakers Standard Written English (SWE). They identify one specific approach as "Afrocentric," where Black teachers use Afrocentric materials and strategies to identify with their African American students. Through instruction, they incorporate Black literature, group participation (including African American rhetorical styles such as call/response), and encourage Standard English with a rhetorical style that "marks authors and speakers as Black" (97). The instruction is not merely about the grammatical strategies that make African American English (AAE) distinct from SE, but also, the rhetorical strategies most commonly associated with Black culture. The problem with this approach, according to critics, is that it fails to offer solutions/strategies for non-black teachers (and even some black teachers) who wish to employ Afrocentric teaching methods. Other critics contend that there isn't sufficient empirical evidence to support its effectiveness (98). And yet, others caution that there are minimal explicit resources and strategies on Afrocentric pedagogy for writing teachers (Redd and Schuster Webb; Ball and Lardner).

In education, one critique of Afrocentricity is that proponents of Afrocentric pedagogy have not always convinced critics how an Afrocentric approach may benefit both African American students and all students. Amy J. Binder's case studies the challenges for three K-12 school districts to implement successful Afrocentric curriculums. Binder identifies three of these challenges to the success of Afrocentric design in the following excerpt, noting that

> these three challenges were shaped by myriad cultural and organizational forces- some at the level of resonance with cultural belief systems; some at the level of state versus local school systems' curricular protocols; and some in the details of local district policies, like testing, the tenor of previous revisions, and coverage by the media. (87)

Also worth mentioning from this article is the fact that one critic of the Afrocentric curriculum was more willing to "gamble" or "experiment" with a poorer set of Washington D.C. African American students by trying the Afrocentric curriculum. Such opponents were unwilling to incorporate it in other sections of the city where test scores were higher, fearing that Afrocentric design would compromise these scores. The media hoopla seems quite familiar with that displayed during the 1996 Oakland Ebonics Resolution, where proponents wanted teach Ebonics as a means for teaching the acquisition of Standard English. It still remains clear that Afrocentric scholars need to make more progress with educational (including K-12 and higher education) communities, public policy, and public perception.

Giddings also identifies one of the challenges for Afrocentric education being "the seeming lack of mass support from parents and community members," (476) similar

to those challenges faced by the Oakland School District. In order to confront this opposition Giddings recommends that educators "use information gained from social science research that uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine and report on the efficacy of existing models of Afrocentric curricula" (476). Giddings urges Afrocentric proponents to revisit earlier mass mobilizations of Afrocentric teaching movements, including those taking place during the 1950's and 1960's Civil Rights movements (477). The reason why these earlier movements were successful is because they had widespread support from parents and community members. In sum, for Afrocentric design to be effective, we must not only appeal to the institutions where we teach, but also, the African American community at large. I see postsecondary education as useful space for doing so, where many institutions in higher education are also concerned with preparing its students for civic engagement and community activism. Also worth noting is how the Civil Rights movement used college student workers (both white and black) to spread the word. Perhaps we can encourage the students in our college classrooms to spread their knowledge about reproducing systems of social inequality, as realized in literacy and language pedagogy.

One of the largest—and perhaps—most significant critiques of Afrocentricism across disciplinary circles is its supposed tendency toward separatism. In addition to the experiences shared at the beginning of this chapter, from additional past experiences teaching with Afrocentric pedagogy, I have faced criticism from colleagues who contend that Afrocentricity is not culturally relevant because of its exclusiveness. As a result, critics have recommended a multicultural-focused curriculum because from their perspective, multiculturalism is more inclusive to all students' experiences;

multiculturalism is the trope in which critics seek to establish cultural relevance. As Victor Villanueva reminds us, however, multiculturalism is not essentially productive:

> Ethnicity and the cultural plurality suggested by multiculturalism appeal to common sense in ways that can address racism—and sometimes they do, maybe often—but without tugging at its hegemony with the kind of force so many of us would wish [...] Multiculturalism hasn't improved things much, not even at the sites where students are exposed to such things. ("The Rhetoric" 650 and 651)

I agree with Villanueva that multiculturalism often becomes a means of putting off conversations about racism. And I also agree that it hasn't helped composition pedagogy much because it offers a superficial gloss over racism in addition to cultural practices, beliefs and worldviews. Afrocentricity serves to center on and counter hegemony in ways that multiculturalism often does not. Multiculturalism, then, becomes a means of color-blindness that ignores the implications of race and oppression by bolstering "reactive rather than proactive strategies to redress discrimination" (Holmes "Affirmative" 31). And Arnetha Ball and Ted Lardner also remind us: "Though there has been much scholarly and public debate about multiculturalism in higher education, there is little evidence to suggest wide-ranging, effective changes in writing and composition classrooms" (28). In short, multiculturalism cannot replace the role of Afrocentricity in a language-focused curriculum because it does not sufficiently address racism and oppression, nor is there any evidence that suggests its benefits more than Afrocentricity.

1.5 A Response to Critics: Toward Inclusion and Cultural Relevance

Despite such resistance, there is no reason why all students can't benefit from Afrocentric pedagogical approaches that promote exposure to African American communicative practices. David Holmes provides a persuasive rationale for using Afrocentric pedagogy in composition to teach all students, therefore, arguing that

> composition scholars should continue to creatively incorporate the African American oral tradition into their classrooms. [All] [s]tudents should listen to and, in most cases, see and listen to (via audio, video, and hypertext) the great sermons, speeches, and songs of African America. For one reason, our students' perceptions of American culture and so-called standard language are distorted without this exposure. More importantly, the students will realize that they can barely fathom the richness of a tradition that was mean to be heard and not read, spoken and not written. (106)

Holmes's understanding of Afrocentric pedagogy, including the exploration of African American communicative practices, *can* be available to all students. Like Holmes, I argue that exploring the richness of African American cultural practices enhances not only African American students' literacy development, but also, all students. As we will see later in this chapter, a literacy and writing curriculum that promotes development for not only African American students, but also, all students, will be critical to writing students' successes in composition classrooms.

Lena Ampadu's essay, "Modeling Orality: African American Rhetorical Practices and the Teaching of Writing" also demonstrates effectively how and why Afrocentricity can help all students become better writers because many African

American texts and speeches often serve as stellar examples of the writing we want our students to produce; however, very few of these texts are cited as models in actual writing textbooks. Ampadu argues: "What is not always noted is that African American texts are exemplars of audience-involving texts, which include highly orally based forms such as letters and speeches" (137-8). Ampadu's essay supports the call for Afrocentricity because African American texts can be placed at the center of discussion to serve as written models for all students to consider or appropriate. And since the idea of providing models of good writing exists in many composition courses (even though some writing teachers/scholars do oppose the use of models), Afrocentricity can still be used to accomplish the goals of any first-year writing course (see Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of this idea). Students are not expected to learn merely African-based and African American principles and practices for course content; instead, they are expected to think more critically about the ways that these practices influence how students, particularly, African American students, choose to write. Through African American texts, all students can reflect on their own reading practices in order to make choices about the expository writing patterns at work in their own texts. In effect, students may be encouraged to use these practices as heuristics and inventive spaces for becoming better writers, although they need not have to.

Ball and Lardner also emphasize that through the study of language (in their case, AAVE), teachers can adapt pedagogical practices that are culturally relevant for students. They further conclude that

> African American students' preferred modes of expression should be included in the curriculum, not only as building blocks for bridging African American

> students' experiences with academic-based writing but also as a rich resource of knowledge that all students should know as they broaden their abilities to express their ideas in a variety of forms. Including these devices in the writing curriculum is a strategy that is in keeping with other educational approaches that have successfully used the cultural resources of their students to enrich the learning experience. (174)

Like Ball and Lardner, I believe that one effective way to apply Afrocentric pedagogy is through the study of Ebonics (what they identify as AAVE). Although analysis and discussions of Afrocentric pedagogy in this chapter are not limited to Afrocentric design in composition classrooms, as Ball and Lardner point out, Afrocentric design (one example of culturally relevant teaching) works well with writing pedagogy because like culturally relevant pedagogy, it permits students to draw on their own forms of expression, something that essentially can be done through the act of writing.

In education, Afrocentric pedagogy as it applies to inclusion is often understood in regard to its cultural relevance. When cultural relevance is put in relationship with Afrocentric pedagogy, the contributions from Gloria Ladson-Billings need necessarily be acknowledged. In its relationship to African and African American culture, Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant pedagogy as

> the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the culture to the students' culture, but also to use the student culture as a basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. Thus, culturally-relevant teaching requires the recognition of African American culture as an important strength upon which to construct the schooling

> experience... [It] is a practice that celebrates African and African American culture. ("Reading" 314)

Just as Afrocentric pedagogy celebrates African and African American culture, as Ladson-Billings asserts, culturally relevant teaching too recognizes and celebrates African and African American culture. I'd also add, though, that culturally relevant teaching should celebrate other cultural traditions as well, since my own students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and since student culture serves as the basis for understanding themselves and their culture. Within the context of Ladson-Billings's scholarship, I recognize that culturally relevant teaching is applied to her study of teachers (regardless of race or ethnic affiliation) who successful teach African American students, since this is one of the primary populations with which she works. I find it necessary to clarify my applications of Afrocentricity as culturally relevant pedagogy here because my work is not limited to the study and teaching of African American students. After all, African American students comprise less than one-third of the students taught and researched during this project. Extending culturally relevant approaches to all students is critical because while I argue that students need not be African American to benefit from Afrocentric pedagogy, it is essential that teachers invite them to make connections between their own experiences and African American cultural and intellectual traditions. It is also critical that teachers begin with the cultures that students bring with them into the classroom, as they encourage them to make connections. This involves using Afrocentric teaching to help all "students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge" (314).

Ladson-Billings further identifies the following characteristics of culturally-relevant pedagogy:

(1) *The students whose educational, economic, social, political, and cultural futures are most tenuous are helped to become the intellectual leaders of the classroom...*

(2) *Students are apprenticed into a learning community rather than taught isolated and unrelated skills...*

(3) *Students' real life experiences are legitimated as part of the "official curriculum"...*

(4) *Teachers and students participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates both literature and orature...*

(5) *Teachers and students are engaged in collective struggle against the status quo...*

(6) *Teachers engaged in this broad vision of the curriculum are cognizant of themselves as political beings...* (emphasis in original) ("Liberatory" 386-8)

While Ladson-Billings's work with culturally relevant pedagogy focuses primarily on elementary school populations, it is clear that these characteristics for culturally relevant pedagogy are also applicable to college composition classrooms. I also find these characteristics to be meaningful because while relevant for African American students, they still can benefit all teachers and students. Using these perspectives as a lens, I offer Afrocentric pedagogy as one example of culturally relevant pedagogy as it seeks to teach students from African cultural experiences and ways of seeing the world. Such a focus on African-based cultural experiences does not mean that non-black students' experiences

are not acknowledged. In other words, while African and African American culture may be at the center of scholastic inquiry, all students' experiences and ways of seeing the world are included in the curriculum.

1.6 Synopsis of Chapters

In Chapter 2, "Unpacking the Afrocentric Curriculum, Unpacking African Worldviews," I provide an extended discussion of the pedagogical rationale for implementing Afrocentric pedagogy in relationship to Ebonics. The Afrocentric approach I design here is inclusive to other traditions. For example, one can locate evidence of this in the course assignments that invite students to analyze their linguistic practices and readings (e.g. Gloria Anzaldua's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" and Leah Zuidema's "Myth Education: Rationale and Strategies for Teaching Against Linguistic Prejudice").

In Chapter 3, "On Building a Teacher-Research Methodology," I review previous teacher and classroom research studies on African American students and use these studies as a lens for understanding the methodological choices that guide the study design implemented in this project. I also provide examples of data from students in order to show how I interpret and make sense of students' work. These examples are used as a lens for understanding the data and results interpreted in Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 4, "How African American Students Be Writin'," I provide rhetorical analysis of African American students' expository writing assignments regarding their linguistic skills and writing practices associated with the texts they produce. This chapter further seeks to address the following research questions:

- What Ebonics-based linguistic practices do African American student writers employ?
- What African American rhetorical (AAR) practices do African American student writers employ?
- How do African American students employ Ebonics rhetorically?
- In what ways does a linguistic-focused Afrocentric curriculum support African American students?

An integral portion of this project seeks to not only look at the ways in which African American students benefit from an Afrocentric curriculum, but also, the writing skills, knowledge and attitudes that all students gain and possess as well. In Chapter 5, "Afrocentric Pedagogy for All Students: Toward a Pedagogy of Inclusion," I look more specifically at the skills, knowledge and attitudes that all students possess on Ebonics. More specifically, I address the following questions:

- How does Afrocentric pedagogy support all first-year writing students' work in a composition classroom?
- What skills do all students acquire from Afrocentric pedagogical instruction?
- What knowledge and attitudes do all students gain and possess? How have these attitudes and knowledge changed over the course of the semester?

Taken together, Chapters 4 and 5 provide extensive analysis of the written results that emerge from my teacher-research study. In Chapter 6, "Conclusion," I discuss the methodological implications, surprises and limitations of the work done with my first-year writing course. I also acknowledge methodological challenges that emerge both

from the study itself in addition to how my institution's human subjects review board chose to interpret the study design.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter addressed how the concept of Afrocentricity is understood by 1) clarifying the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and the African and African American worldview, since many definitions of Afrocentricity suggest a focus on, or discussion of, African and African American worldviews; and 2) explaining the relationship between Afrocentric pedagogy and Ebonics since many Afrocentric courses focus on Ebonics as both communicative and cultural practices. This chapter also acknowledged several critiques of Afrocentric pedagogy, with one major critique being its supposed separatist position. By addressing separatist critiques I argued how Afrocentric pedagogy can offer cultural relevance for all students. The next chapter describes explicit pedagogical practices that demonstrate what Afrocentric pedagogy looks like in an Ebonics-based first-year writing course. These include linguistic forms of instruction like contrastive analysis, and Afrocentric teaching methods like call/response.

Chapter 2

UNPACKING THE AFROCENTRIC CURRICULUM, UNPACKING AFRICAN WORLDVIEWS

2.1 Institutional Context for Afrocentric Curriculum Design

Building from the perspectives of Afrocentricity that were outlined in Chapter 1, I provide specific examples of how Afrocentric pedagogy is applied in a Tier I Writing (first-year writing) course, WRA 125 - "Writing: The Ethnic and Racial Experience." I argue that the assignments and course materials are also consistent with the shared learning outcomes and objectives passed by the Tier I Writing Program (*Guidebook* 4), thus demonstrating that Afrocentric curricular approaches can be implemented without deviating from the objectives and learning outcomes designated by university writing programs.

According to the Michigan State University course catalog, WRA 125 – Writing: The Ethnic and Racial Experience is a themed-based Tier I (first-year) writing course that focuses on "drafting, revising, and editing compositions derived from readings on the experience of American ethnic and racial groups to develop skills in narration, persuasion, analysis, and documentation." WRA 125 is one of many courses offered in the Tier I Writing Program. As course content, most instructors who teach sections of this course select one specific racial or ethnic group on which to focus, and assign course readings and other materials corresponding to these groups accordingly. Therefore, most instructors find it useful to add more specific versions of the course in addition to the one identified in the course catalog. Because I believe a focus on African Americans as a

racialized group to be too broad, I specify my focus on African American language and communicative practices. In addition to the catalog description, my specific description reads as follows:

> Welcome to WRA 125! While the title of this class is highly generic, we will examine writing the American, ethnic and racial experience, using an Afrocentric framework to explore the field of Composition Studies. As we use an Afrocentric lens, we'll study more specifically, Ebonics/African American Language (AAL), and African American Rhetoric (AAR). As students, you will be introduced to Ebonics/AAL and AAR as systems of speaking and writing, equally legitimate to Standard Academic English (SAE), the writing that you typically do in school. In this class, each of you will have the opportunity to write in SAE, AAL/Ebonics, or other language varieties and languages. While many of you may or may not be familiar with AAL/Ebonics, it is my hope that you all will have a clearer grasp on the language usage of African Americans, and how this language fits in college composition classrooms.
>
> Since this is a Tier I Writing course, you will be expected to write. While we'll study the use of AAL/AAVE as a language and composition studies as a discipline, you will also practice producing various pieces of writing. Our course goals are also consistent with the shared learning outcomes passed by the Tier I Writing Program Committee. By the end of the course, hopefully you will have achieved the following goals as a student:
>
> •To engage reading, writing, and research as epistemic and recursive processes;
>
> • To understand AAVE/AAL/Ebonics as a valuable linguistic system, equally legitimate to Standard English;
>
> • To understand the rhetorical value of legitimating AAVE/AAL/Ebonics and other languages/language varieties, in addition to recognizing the choices behind language variety appropriation;
>
> • To begin negotiating the use of different linguistic systems through audience expectations;
>
> • To identify and use the appropriate conventions depending on genre and/or audience expectations;
>
> • To collect, analyze, and share information (both orally and written) through the research process;
>
> • To develop arguments and present ideas to others in clear, effective, and persuasive prose in a variety of genres; and
>
> • To begin developing analyses of both verbal and visual texts in print-based and digital environments.

When designing alternative curricular designs, in this project, I want to call attention to the idea that teachers should make sure that their Afrocentric writing courses are consistent with the institution's first-year writing programmatic outcomes and

objectives. In August 2008, as a member Tier I Writing Program Committee, I coauthored the *Guidebook for Teach Tier I Writing at Michigan State University* that discusses how instructors can use curriculum materials and resources to meet programmatic objectives. As acknowledged in our *Guidebook*, the Michigan State University mission statement reads as follows:

> As a public, research-intensive, land-grant university funded in part by the state of Michigan, our mission is to advance knowledge and transform lives by:
>
> - providing outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional education to promising, qualified students in order to prepare them to contribute fully to society as globally engaged citizen leaders
> - conducting research of the highest caliber that seeks to answer questions and create solutions in order to expand human understanding and make a positive difference, both locally and globally
> - advancing outreach, engagement, and economic development activities that are innovative, research-driven, and lead to a better quality of life for individuals and communities, at home and around the world.
>
> (http://president.msu.edu/mission.php)

We further add a discussion of how our Tier I Writing Program contributes to the overall mission of the University:

> As part of the general education requirement, Tier I Writing contributes to this mission by focusing on inquiry-based teaching and learning that encourages students to begin to understand themselves as:
>
> - contributing members of MSU's community of scholars

- committed to asking important questions and to seeking rich responses to those questions
- developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to improve the quality of life for themselves and others through their scholarly, social, and professional activities. (2)

Consistent with this mission, the Tier I Writing Program passed a series of shared learning goals in order to foster inquiry-based teaching and learning. By using an inquiry-based approach, our goals require students to demonstrate knowledge of writing, reading, and research (*Guidebook* 4). These goals were passed by the Tier I Writing Committee during the spring of 2008, and are designed to be flexible enough to account for a variety of curriculum materials and pedagogical approaches for instructors and students to meet the shared goals. In our *Guidebook*, we state that these goals "do not require a standardization of materials or pedagogical practices. They do, however, require that each section of the course creates an environment in which inquiry-based teaching and learning is fostered and encouraged" (2).

Because I designed a similar WRA 125 prior to the passage of the Tier I Writing shared learning goals, I had to make sure the revised course carried out the mission and new goals of the Program. Redesigning the course, then, required that I place larger emphasis on research across different assignments (more on the assignments later). It also required that I place more emphasis on community engagement; the focus on community engagement was where I decided to connect Afrocentricity. By learning about African American communicative practices and how they assist students' understandings of the

collective identity that is shared by people of African descent, was one focus, on which, I wanted students to interrogate and ask rich and critical questions.

In their recent article, "From Language Experience to Classroom Practice: Affirming Linguistic Diversity in Writing Pedagogy," Lovejoy, Fox, and Wills state that "most composition programs do not have explicit language policies or program initiatives that address linguistic diversity in the classroom" (262). With regard to writing, one of our own programmatic goals states that students should "understand diction, usage, voice, and style, including standard edited English, as conventional and rhetorical features of writing" (4). As members of the Tier I Writing Committee, we decided not to require students to learn only Standard English, in order to make room for the exploration of other language varieties that meet specific rhetorical purposes. We agreed on this shared learning goal to allow for increasing opportunities that explore alternative linguistic systems and varieties. As Stuart Barbier reminds us, ""dropping standard English statements [from programmatic outcomes] does not mean students will not be using/learning it" ("Reflections" 263). This goal makes room for students to learn Standard English without making it the primary goal of writing instruction. Standard English becomes one of many language varieties made available to students. As opposed to merely teaching Standard English, it becomes my job as an instructor to equip students with the rhetorical decisions necessary for them to choose Standard English or other language varieties effectively for various writing situations and contexts.

Our Program has also made the shared learning goals flexible enough to account for each of the themed Tier I writing courses taught in our program, although other courses focus on gender, technology, or other racial and cultural themes. Many of the

texts that students read in WRA 125 also come from the Tier I Writing shared reader that I co-edited, *A Reader for Writers* (published by McGraw-Hill in 2008), to account for the different themed courses taught in the Program. Each text from the reader encourages students and instructors to make connections between literacy themes in higher education and the writing they are expected to produce. In *A Reader for Writers*, several texts focus on Ebonics, African American rhetorical traditions, and African American uses of technology (Smitherman "Ghetto Lady"; Gilyard "Rapping"; Banks "Taking B(l)ack; Nakumara "Cybertypes"; Nembhard "A Perspective"). The assigned readings are designed to encourage students to think about issues related to the literacy autobiography, cultural literacies analysis, disciplinary literacies analysis, and remix literacies projects. Some instructors include a fifth revised literacy autobiography assignment. Most instructors also choose to sequence major writing assignments in this order, although there is flexibility for assignment sequencing. (Examples of ways to adapt each of these assignments with course themes can be found in our *Guidebook*. Examples of each of these assignments I designed for WRA 125 can also be found in our *Guidebook*.)

In our *Guidebook*, samples of each of the assignments I designed, in addition to other themed-based course assignments, are included in order to provide examples for how themed-courses can still meet the shared learning goals. The course I designed addresses each of the shared objectives by using scholarship from Composition Studies (and scholarship on Ebonics) to engage writing, reading, and research. In our *Guidebook*, we situate writing, reading, and research goals within the context of invention, arrangement and revision (IAR). With our Program's understanding of IAR, we attempt to move beyond the prewrite, write, rewrite process model by encouraging students to

examine the relationships between the ideas and practices that are created by the texts one reads (invention), the relationship between the ideas and practices that are organized within the text (arrangement), and the ways the writers aim to bring about change or challenge specific beliefs and practices within a text (revision).[3] Students ultimately answer the following IAR questions (adapted from Nancy DeJoy's *Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition*):

1) What is Invention?

(What activities did the writer have to engage in to create the text?)

2) What is being invented?

(What ideas, practices, arguments, etc. are created by the text?)

3) What is arrangement?

(What is being put in relation to what?)

4) What is being arranged?

(How are things being put in relation to one another?)

5) What is revision?

(What is the writer trying to change (e.g. what ideas, practices, etc.))?

6) What is being revised?

(What strategies are engaged specifically to help the writer achieve the revisions?) (71)

In WRA 125, students conduct IAR analyses of the texts they read in order to make connections between the texts they read and those that they write. For each major writing assignment, students are also required to conduct IAR analyses of the IAR choices they

[3] For an extended discussion of Invention, Arrangement, and Revision, please see *Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies* by Nancy DeJoy (Utah State Press, 2004).

employ in their own written texts, just as they do IAR analyses with the texts they read. By using IAR as a lens, WRA 125 encourages students to critically engage writing, reading, and research with each major assignment. While invention, arrangement, and revision analyses are not designated Afrocentric, they can help students think critically and rhetorically about the ideas presented in the text (the call), and how they respond to what is presented in the text (the response) (more on call-response later in this chapter).

2.2 Description of Major Writing Assignments

During the fall semester of 2008, I designed four major writing assignments that focused on Ebonics and African American Rhetoric (AAR). As stated previously, these four assignments were also adapted to accompany the new literacy-focused shared curriculum including the following shared major assignment sequences: a literacy autobiography; a cultural literacy assignment; a disciplinary literacies assignment, and a remix literacies assignment. (Some instructors complete a fifth assignment which is a revised literacy autobiography, an assignment I opted not to include since students' multigenre projects are often multimodal and complex.) For the literacy autobiography assignment, students compose a linguistic literacy autobiography that analyzes their spoken and written languages/language varieties at home and school.

In many first-year writing curriculums, a personal experience narrative is usually assigned first to give students practice writing on topics with which they are most familiar. The linguistic literacy autobiography assignment asks students to identify and analyze the differences between their home languages and school languages, using Keith Gilyard's *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence* and Smitherman's "From

Ghetto Lady to Critical Linguist" (in *Talkin that Talk: Language and Education in Black America*) as frameworks. While literacy autobiographies and personal narratives are common genres associated with first-year composition courses, they are less often assigned or discussed through Afrocentricity or sociolinguistics. Some critics caution that a linguistic autobiography may privilege African American, working-class, or ESL students over middle-class Standard English-speaking students, who may find that they use the same language regardless of whether they are home or in school (I address later in this chapter why assigned readings and materials that teach generally about language awareness be included prior to the study of Ebonics). I argue, though, that this has not been the case in any linguistically focused course that I've taught. In fact, because digital language, text messaging, and instant messaging have become increasingly popular, even White students find it interesting to analyze the differences between the way they compose in digital genres and the way they compose essays for school. I would also argue that very few of our students communicate exactly the same way in school as they do to their family and friends. Thus, discussions regarding code-switching are valuable conversations to address with students as they produce texts and oral forms of communication across genres and contexts.

The next assignment moves from individual communicative practices to the communicative practices of particular online communities. For the cultural literacies assignment, students formulate an argument regarding how AAVE is appropriated and/or discussed in online and digital spaces.[4] For this assignment, students analyze a personal

[4] Situated within the context of these classes and texts that students read, Ebonics and AAVE were also used interchangeably.

website, a popular culture website, and an academic website in order to understand how discussions and/or appropriation of Ebonics change, or do not change depending on the website's mode, audience, and purpose. To complete this assignment, students read essays and articles on the use of African American Rhetoric in technology (including Adam Banks's "Taking Black Technology Use Seriously: African American Discursive Traditions in the Digital Underground; portions of Lisa Nakamura's *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Web*; and Carmen Kynard's "'Wanted: Some Black Long Distance [Writers]': Blackboard Flava-Flavin and other AfroDigital Experiences in the Classroom"). Students also read essays on Black feminism and how visual images of African American women are manipulated in digital environments (including Stephen Knadler's "E-Racing Difference in E-Space: Black Female Subjectivity and the Web-based Portfolio" and Regina Spellers's "The Kink Factor: A Womanist Discourse Analysis of African American Mother/Daughter Perspectives on Negotiating Black Hair/Body Politics). Some of these texts are included in our reader (like Banks and Nakamura); other texts are supplementary.

The third assignment shifts from a focus on online communities (broadly conceived) to disciplinary communities. With the disciplinary literacies assignment, students conduct research in academic journal articles published in Composition Studies, and then formulate an argument about how Ebonics-based conversations in the field have changed over time. To complete this assignment, students were assigned articles on Ebonics, language rights, and pedagogy between 1974 (beginning with the passage of the Students' Right to Their Own Language Resolution) and 2000 to read in class. These essays were written by both African Americans in addition to those of other racial/ethnic

groups, thus suggesting inclusiveness of other points of view. Once we discussed these articles as a class, students conducted research in academic journals that intersected the fields of Composition Studies, sociolinguistics, and education. After they conducted this research, they composed arguments that determine the state of Ebonics in rhetoric and composition, and how discussions of Ebonics may or may not have changed over time (Analysis of the work that students produced with this assignment is featured in Chapter 5). While research on Ebonics intersects several fields, students were given the option to use research in related fields to Composition Studies to formulate their arguments.

The last assignment gives students the opportunity to synthesize key themes from the course (and their previous essays) while demonstrating creativity. The final essay is a remix essay that asks students across Tier I Writing sections to take a previous project and turn it into another genre (i.e., a public service announcement, or CD, etc.). For the remix project I assign, students create a multigenre project where they take a theme from one of their previous major projects and compose a multigenre essay based on that theme. In the past, some students have used multigenre essays to compose a website of Ebonics resources for students. Others have prepared print-based packets with handouts and guides or preservice workshops for K-12 teachers teaching Ebonics.

2.3 Applications of Afrocentric Pedagogy through Ebonics

As discussed in Chapter 1, Afrocentricity is often positioned in relationship with Ebonics in sociolinguistics and Composition Studies scholarship. Doing so makes sense because a focus on language is critical for understanding the communicative practices associated with African American cultural traditions. And, while I've identified the

Africologist theories that influence my understanding of Ebonics in Chapter 1, it now makes sense to identify practical examples of how Ebonics was taught in my classroom. The study of Ebonics as a rule-governed language was introduced very early on in the semester prior to introducing the major writing assignments because Ebonics serves as the topic for each of the subsequent assignments. The following table is a summary of a sequence of pedagogical approaches and resources for teaching Ebonics at the beginning of the term. It includes an introduction to the study of language and language varieties and an introduction to the study of Ebonics. What follows is an analysis of the significance and cultural relevance for implementing these approaches.

Table 1.1 Language-Focused Pedagogical Approaches

Pedagogical Approach or Resource	**When to Use It**	**Theoretical Rationale**
Unit 1	Weeks 1-4	Explores different disciplinary scholarship on the relationship between Ebonics and autobiographical scholarship
Unit 2	Weeks 5-9	Explores different disciplinary scholarship on the relationship between Ebonics, AAR, and technology
Unit 3	Weeks 9-13	Research and assess different aspects of Ebonics published in Composition Studies
Unit 4	Weeks 13-16	Gives students the opportunity to synthesize course themes.

Table 1.1 Language-Focused Pedagogical Approaches, cont.

Pedagogical Approach or Resource	When to Use It	Theoretical Rationale
Administer a Language Attitudinal Questionnaire regarding students' experiences with language and language varieties	First and last day of class	Permits both instructor and students to examine and share attitudes about language and see how they have changed
Have students watch the *American Tongues* documentary[5]	Week 1	Encourages all students to recognize that they all have accents and speak language varieties associated with their own regions and social identities
Assign students to read Leah Zuidema's "Myth Education: Rationale and Strategies for Teaching against Linguistic Prejudice" from *A Reader*[6]	Week 2	Dispels the myth that one language or language variety is better than the other; offers practical resources and sample assignments for learning about language awareness
Assign readings that teach the structure, phonology and syntax of Ebonics (egs. Smitherman; Redd and Schuster Webb; Green)	Week 3	Teaches students that just as Standard English is rule-governed, so is Ebonics
Contrastive Analysis Exercises	Week 3	Handouts that help students translate sentences from Standard English into Ebonics and vice versa and compare/contrast the similarities and differences

[5] The full citation of this source is included in the bibliography.

[6] The full citation of this source is included in the bibliography.

As illustrated in the previous table, it is necessary to introduce students to the study of language and language varieties generally before specifically focusing on Ebonics. I find this pedagogical approach to be valuable because 1) it persuades all students against the stigmas and myths that are often associated with Ebonics (and any language variety that differs from Standard English) by encouraging students to recognize how all language varieties are systematic and follow certain rules; and 2) it encourages all students, not just Ebonics speakers, to locate themselves within a regional dialect or language variety, thereby, permitting them to realize that like Ebonics speakers, they too follow the conventions of the language varieties of their home regions or sociocultural networks. Later on in this chapter, I will demonstrate the connections between home and school discourses in the first assignment. The location of language varieties in home discourses serves as a useful introduction to the first writing assignment.

2.4 Applications of Cultural Relevance and Inclusion

Although this course is Afrocentric in ideology (meaning that it is centered on African cultural and communicative practices and worldviews), I also believe it to be inclusive to all people. This Afrocentric course underscores that while African American epistemologies are placed at the center of inquiry, perspectives from other ethnic groups may be included. For example, I include essays on Ebonics and/or language rights by other scholars beside those who are African American (e.g. assigning Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a *Wild* Tongue", Leah Zuidema "Myth Education: Rationale and Strategies for Teaching against Linguistic Prejudice", Lisa Nakamura's *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet*, all of which are included in *A Reader for*

Writers). I select texts not by the color of the author's (s') skin, but by whether or not I believed their frameworks apply African and/or African American worldviews and epistemologies, and by how they make spaces for students to make connections between the experiences of African Americans and their own personal experiences.

The study of Ebonics, in addition to Afrocentric curricular approaches, must encourage students to make connections between African-based cultural and communicative practices and their own experiences. Doing so, may free Afrocentric pedagogy from the separatist, exclusionary paradigm that has traditionally clouded critics' judgments of Afrocentricity. One of the major purposes for this project is to offer Afrocentric pedagogy to all students, by allowing all students to contribute and share their own personal experiences. Although the course focuses on Ebonics, students are encouraged to use Ebonics as heuristic and inventive spaces for understanding their own linguistic practices.

In this chapter, I wish to explain my attempts to establish cultural relevance for all students. In theory, it is critical to include students' personal experiences, but what does inclusive Afrocentric pedagogy look like in practice? If Afrocentricity is made available to all students, it is also necessary to demonstrate how all students use Ebonics and Afrocentricity as a framework for discussing their own linguistic practices. After studying the challenges with language acquisition for Ebonics speaking students, Ryan,[7] a student who identifies himself as Latino American, used Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" as a lens in one of his blog posts to look at how Spanish and English influence his linguistic literacy history. While data analysis and results are

[7] Student elected to use a pseudonym as opposed to his actual name.

included in subsequent chapters, I include Ryan's text here because it offers one of many examples of how students who are not African American make meaning in an Afrocentric curriculum; the fact that students of other ethnicities can make meaning in complex ways demonstrates the culturally relevance that Afrocentric pedagogy possesses for all students. Ryan writes:

> "We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like once [sic] cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. A veces, no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy." (Anzaldua)
>
> At times, I am nothing or nobody. But even when I am not it, I am it. Here she is trying to talk about how when you are half of something and half of another, sometimes that doesn't make a whole in the minds of some people. Instead of being accepted by both groups, sometimes you are cast away from them instead. Gloria Anzaldua's experience is somewhat similar to my own. Growing up the son of a Salvadorian father and a white mother, I was caught in the middle of two different worlds. Wholly one, wholly another, yet no one can comprehend that you can still be both. When people ask me what I am, I'll tell them that I'm not mexican, but it's easier to pretend that I am. Many people simply do not have a working knowledge of the world around them. "Henriquez...you must be mexican. You're Irish and Scottish? But you're last name is Mexican... Oh, your Dad is from El Salvador. What part of Mexico is that?"
>
> I think that Anzaldua's experiences as a chicano were similar to mine. Until Cesar Chavez gave her and her people an individual identity, she was caught in the "hispanic-american" limbo. I've been in somewhat of a limbo too. Double standards exist with any race, and when you're more than one race, it's more like a quadruple standard. Here at the MSU, I'm hispanic enough for them to offer me "extra special help" because I'm from what they call a "historically disadvantaged group". But, I am not hispanic enough to get any sort of scholarship from any hispanic scholarship funds. People try to tag others with only one label. You can be white or black, asian or native american. Anyone who tries to break the mold and branch out on their own path to find their own identity is told by everyone else how they should act. Anzaldua was told that her spanish wasn't like the spanish of those around her. It was different and therefore wrong. They just didn't realize that she wasn't "just mexican", but american as well and it was reflected in her speech. I haven't had my language corrected by anyone recently, but that's because spanish as a language is fairly new to me.
>
> In fact, I guess you could say it was completely foreign to me until high school. There were funny sounding words, different names for everything, and that oh so famous spanish tongue rrrrrrroll on each "r". Spanish was never spoken at my house when I was younger unless my parents were talking about something secret that we weren't supposed to learn about, so when I made it to high school, I made sure to take a Spanish class so I could finally get in on the secrets. None of my classmates could fathom that I didn't already speak spanish. Even the teacher seemed taken aback when he learned that spanish wasn't my primary language. Here I was being told by everyone that I must speak spanish because it couldn't be possible that I'm half white and spanish wasn't spoken in my home. Turns out I wasn't hispanic enough for them, but when I tell them that I'm going to mow someone's lawn, suddenly I'm not white enough. I don't know. I guess Anzaldua was right: I am nothing and I am no one. Even when I am not it, I am it. Neither hispanic, nor white, I'm going to have to create my own identity and claim it as my own.

Ryan's analysis is quite interesting because it reflects a sense of double-consciousness[8] that not only African Americans negotiate, but also, one that people of color from other racially and ethnically marked groups find necessary to negotiate. On one hand, Ryan acknowledges the pressure to learn Spanish because of his Latino heritage, but on the other hand, because he is part-White, people connect him less to his Latino heritage since he cannot speak Spanish. If we use an Afrocentric lens for understanding Ryan's discussion, we see tension between establishing a collective identity with a non-dominant community and being a part of the "oppressor" group. Part of adapting Afrocentricity ideologies also requires acknowledging "the primacy of cultural crisis in a heterogeneous racist society" (Asante 9). In doing so, Afrocentricity confronts "all forms of discrimination, persecution, and oppression simultaneously" (Asante *Afrocentric* 9). As Asante further describes:

> To put it bluntly, the suppressing of anyone's personality, economic or cultural expression, civilization, gender, or religion creates the state of oppression. The operators of such systems or the enforcers of such individual or collective suppressions are themselves participatory oppressors. What the oppressed must do to regain a sense of freedom is to throw off the layers of oppression that result from all forms of human degradation... ("Discourse" 650)

I interpret Ryan's discussion as an example of how systemic oppression operates because his cultural expression and civilization are suppressed. The fact that Ryan writes, "I am nothing," also speaks to a system in which oppression operates. In Ryan's case,

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[8] The term "double-consciousness" is often credited for being coined by W.E.B Dubois. Here, I interpret its meaning to refer to the internal conflict that non-white citizens often have when being a person of color and living in America.

oppression operates in the form of the acceptance/rejection that Ryan experiences from both Caucasians and Latinos. It also operates in a sense of problematic paternalism, where Ryan is considered "hispanic [sic] enough to [be offered] 'extra help'" because he comes from a "'historically disadvantaged group'." In this case, paternalism operates as a type of oppression where the oppressed adopt a colonialist, "I must save *these* people" attitude. And, as Ryan informs us, the oppressed also mimic the oppressors, when he states that he is not considered "Hispanic" enough by Latino groups.

Perhaps, most importantly, Ryan's discussion demonstrates how Afrocentricity is inclusive of all students. When drawing on Afrocentric ideologies, we must be careful not to position them as dichotomies, where black and white are cast in either/or terms, and anyone in between is ignored. Such binary-like thinking can be construed as separatist because it excludes those who are not African and African American or White. As Ryan reminds us, "You can be white or black, asian or native American. Anyone who tries to break the mold and branch out on their own path to find their own identity [should not be] told by everyone else how they should act." Inclusion is necessary, particularly, in first-year writing classes, because as any writing teacher who *skooled* in composition pedagogy *know* full-well how writing teachers long for *they students* to feel comfortable participating and contributing in classroom discourse.

2.5 Applications of African Worldviews

This section more specifically describes my WRA 125 pedagogical practices used in the curriculum. In this section, I demonstrate connections between Afrocentric pedagogy, African American worldviews, and my course requirements and teaching

practices. In the first sections of this chapter I positioned specific examples of Afrocentric pedagogical practices in relationship to language (Ebonics). It now makes sense to focus on African-based worldviews as they apply to African language and communicative practices because, "[w]ithout question, Africa has the longest recorded history of written documentation dating back forty thousand years" (Crawford 112). In order to make sense of these values, the concept of Afrocentricity needs to be unpacked with greater clarity.

During the first week of class, I asked students to conduct a search on the term *Afrocentricity*. Students were then asked to come to class prepared to discuss their results. Although I did not specify which results they were to discuss, most students chose to record results that gave a working definition for Afrocentricity, so for our class discussion about their search results I asked students to identify 1) what Afrocentricity means, 2) where they searched for the term, and 3) why they chose to search in that particular place. Unpacking Afrocentricity became a useful space for introducing students to research and academic search engines. Based on students' searches, they gathered the following definitions for Afrocentricity:

- an intellectual perspective of African people;
- a way to show Africans' contributions to Western culture;
- something that seeks to discover and interpret information through a different filter from Eurocentric scholarship;
- a worldview that emphasizes the importance of African people and culture.

The majority of students chose to search in the following electronic locations:

- Wikipedia;

- Google;
- http://www.worldagesarchive.com.

When students were asked why most of them chose to search in these locations, they identified the following reasons:

- Google is easy to use, and thus, very convenient;
- Wikipedia was the first result that came up on Google; and
- Wikipedia is a good place to find factual information;

After addressing the students' decisions based on their responses to the previous questions, we discussed how different search engines and databases yield different results, and how some search engines and databases may or may not be more credible than other engines. For example, after discussing the results that students came to class with, I assigned students to conduct a search again for *Afrocentricity* using Google, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. From these results, my students concluded that Google Scholar may be more credible than Google because it provides results from academic papers, journals, books, and other publications written about Afrocentricity, while Google displays a broad range of results that may or may not be as credible, peer-reviewed, or evaluated by researchers. Issues of credibility become more complex when comparing JSTOR and Google Scholar, however. Based on our searches in JSTOR, students concluded that there is a trade off: It may be easier to find peer-reviewed articles on JSTOR than Google Scholar since JSTOR contains a database of mostly peer-reviewed articles from academic journals written about Afrocentricity. Google Scholar also contains peer-reviewed publications, but it is often more difficult to exclude papers that have not been peer-reviewed by scholars and experts of a particular discipline from its

search results, since PDF and MS Word versions of conference papers, term papers, and workshops are often included in Google Scholar . But Google Scholar has an advantage over JSTOR because it yields the most recent results, while JSTOR only stores articles published prior to a certain year. Furthermore, JSTOR only houses selected academic journals, while Google Scholar often provides links to academic journals and databases not housed in JSTOR.

Based on the results found in scholarly search engines and databases, students reconstructed their own working definitions for Afrocentricity. Surprisingly, based on the definitions for which students searched, they found similar results. Most definitions pertained to intellectual perspectives of people of African descent, or African worldviews. I then asked students to highlight words in each of these definitions with which they were less familiar. Students identified *intellectual perspective*, *Eurocentric*, and most commonly, *worldview*, as some of these terms. Because the term *worldview* is highly abstract, students first needed to identify what that term meant for them. Most students defined *worldview* as a way of seeing the world, and then determined that Afrocentricity as a way in which Africans and African Americans see the world. This definition was still too theoretical to grasp. As a focus for the rest of the Fall 2008 semester, the class posed the following question as a lens for understanding the rest of the intellectual work we sought to accomplish in the course: How do Africans and African Americans see the world?

In relationship with this activity, I also want to highlight how this exercise taught many skills associated with research practices, skills that are often taught in first-year writing. First, this exercise exposed students to the skills necessary to research secondary

sources. Students had to select keywords to search terms (in this case *Afrocentricity*), as they made critical intellectual decisions on the evaluation of sources. From this exercise, students also had to consider where sources came from, and how the locations of sources speak to issues of credibility. They also gained some exposure to academic search engines and electronic databases. As we will see in Chapter 5 introducing students to these databases early on prepared the way for the work they are required to produce for their disciplinary literacies writing assignments.

2.6 Applications of Liberation Pedagogy in the Composition Classroom

Liberation pedagogy is a familiar concept addressed in education, theology, and Composition Studies, where we often refer to the works of Paulo Freire. With specific reference to the composition classroom, Carmen Kynard applies aspects of liberation pedagogy to digital environments in her African American vernacular-focused first-year writing classroom. In her essay, "'Wanted: Some Black Long Distance [Writers]": Blackboard Flava-Flavin and other AfroDigital Experiences in the Classroom," Kynard invites students to "position themselves inside of a (digital) long-distance struggle for liberation and see their writings and experiences as part of a larger liberation movement" (330). As I understand it, Kynard's applications of liberation pedagogy not only liberate students to draw on Afrodigital vernaculars and linguistic manipulations pertinent in some online environments, but also, enable students to "meet and shape [their] sense of themselves as writers, thinkers, and social agents [where they] are re-envisioned in [a] kind of cyberspace as constructers of and co-participants in black intellectual and rhetorical tradition . . . now AfroDigitized" (332).

In my own course, similarly to Kynard, liberation pedagogy is recognized in a safe linguistic space where students are free to "let loose on what we often think of as conventional, acceptable modes of face-to-face with you, maybe gettin in your face" (331). In order to understand how students can freely manipulate linguistic choices, students first read parts of Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin*, *Talkin That Talk, and Gilyard's Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence* (both are included in *A Reader for Writers*), where each scholar manipulates—and often translates—texts from Ebonics to Standard English and Standard English back to Ebonics. Liberation is not only approached through an examination of required texts that address how Ebonics speaking students and writers should be *free* to use their home languages (although I do believe Ebonics-speaking students—and all students should be given this liberty); liberation also demands that students be equipped with the critical skills necessary to work for social change, in this case, the promotion of linguistic awareness and diversity. These skills may be identified through critical reflection on linguistic awareness, but they may also become identified when students locate the relationships between societal racism and linguistic prejudice. (In Chapter 4, I examine the ways in which African American students, let loose and get down, as they style and profile.)

As previously discussed in this chapter, to account for connections between linguistic prejudice and societal racism I assigned the documentary, *American Tongues*[9] at the very beginning of the semester. Although the documentary is more than twenty years old, it still points to current visible (and invisible) markers that suggest that the stigmatization of Ebonics (and other forms of linguistic prejudice) has at least as much to

[9] *Americans Speaking* is an updated version of *American Tongues* that can also be used by teachers.

do with the linguistic elements (phonology, semantics, morphology etc.) of the language, as it does the speakers who speak the language. Although students are encouraged to acknowledge racism by making connections between racial prejudice and linguistic intolerance, they may also fight additional forms of intolerance (sexism, homophobia, etc.) that similarly correlate with linguistic prejudice, or they may choose to confront other prejudices that extend beyond linguistic narrow-mindedness.

Like Kynard's discussion of students' work in AfroDigital environments, as a class, we also considered the implications for liberation pedagogy with the specific language and rhetorical choices students were free to make in their digital written work. During my Fall 2008 course we discussed issues of appropriateness and how language choices depend on the genres in which we write, in addition to perceptions and assumptions made by audiences who read these genres. In one particular class discussion we talked about how we use language differently for different writing situations. For the first paper, since students are asked to compose a linguistic literacy autobiography in which they analyze the differences between their home and school languages, we discussed the consequences and implications for negotiating home and school language choices. Using our first assignment as a framework, we talked about the linguistic styles used on our blogs, since students are required to post prewriting exercises and responses to readings to their blogs. Some students claimed that because their class blogs discuss literacy and academic issues, most of them felt compelled to use some variety of Standard English in order to prove their credibility and ability to respond "intelligently" to academic audiences (we complicated this notion of a Standard and issues of intelligence, correctness, etc. in subsequent class discussions). Others attempted to draw

on other varieties of English, including texting or digital language (that may or may not include Ebonics and Hip Hop Language) because of the genre in which they were composing. Since they were in fact composing on a blog, and since blogs are digital, they argued that digital and text message language should be acceptable.

When students identify the consequences behind their language choices, they still have to make a choice. As the CCCC Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) reminds us, students have the right to choose whatever languages and language varieties in which they want to write. Part of really understanding these rights, I believe, especially pertains to how we encourage students to recognize and make specific linguistic decisions based on these rights. The idea behind SRTOL often stops short at equipping students with the contextual knowledge needed to make an informed decision about their rights, and not just whether or not they have the right to make a choice (Zuidema 667). And as Kynard reminds us, even when writing teachers invite students to consider the consequences behind such choices,

> [t]here is often a type of binary thinking: Standard English is one side, and anything non-English and/or non-standard is on the other side, and you simply just code-switch back and forth between the two sides. A type of tug-of-war game is played where seemingly different registers are easily separable on opposite sides of the rope, never moving in the same direction, always traveling opposite. (Kynard 331-2)

Providing students with a much richer understanding of SRTOL—as well as the complexities associated with making linguistic choices—may serve as one specific example of how liberation pedagogy can be applied and realized in composition

classrooms. Instruction on linguistic freedom and language choice must move students beyond the concept of code-switching, particularly in digital spaces where Standard English/Ebonics binaries become blurred or less identifiable.

Although rhetoric and composition scholars have historically acknowledged linguistic prejudice and worked significantly to affirm students' home languages and language varieties, our disciplinary practices often point to the idea that students must still demonstrate proficiency in Standard English (Barbier "Reflections"). The CCCC Position Statement on Ebonics (1998) states that CCCC "strongly support[s] the call for additional research on how educators can best build on existing knowledge about Ebonics to help students to expand their command of the Language of Wider Communication ("standard English") and master the essential skills of reading and writing" (par. 5). While the CCCC Position Statement on Ebonics acknowledges Ebonics as a legitimate linguistic system, the focus of the previous quote points to the idea that Ebonics should be used to support students in learning Standard English.

Furthermore, in rhetoric and composition, disciplinary discussions on the legitimacy of alternative language varieties are often framed in terms of toleration, and not celebration. In other words, disciplinary scholarship presents multilingualism (including Ebonics) as a deviation from the standard rather than an indication of versatility and power. A. Suresh Canagarajah asserts that "every time teachers insist on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingualist ideologies and linguistic hierarchies" ("World Englishes" 587). Multilingualism primarily becomes valuable when students are able to expand their command of Standard English; other linguistic varieties (especially Ebonics), while legitimate, are positioned in

opposition to the standard. As a writing teacher and a teacher-researcher, *I ask: Should* Ebonics be used merely to support students in expanding "their command of the Language of Wider Communication"? Can a focus on alternative linguistic varieties be the primary goal for instruction in a first-year writing course, or should Standard English always be the main goal? What happens when writing courses place an alternative linguistic variety at the center of scholastic inquiry, and not Standard English?

2.7 Creating a Shared Sense of Collective Identity through Orality in the Writing Classroom

My first-year writing courses also draw on the concept of establishing a community or "collective identity" of students. When I speak of collective identity, I do not interpret it to mean sameness; instead, I understand collective identity to mean shared senses of intellectual and scholastic engagement. While I don't expect everyone in the class to agree or reach consensuses about the material discussed, I do believe the students in my classes represent shared knowledge on fairness, an exposure to (and at times, an acknowledgement of) racism, and exploration of African-based intellectual traditions.

In my courses, one critical aspect for understanding how communities reflect a sense of shared cultural knowledge is also understanding how collective identity is reflected by the community's communicative practices, in this case, Ebonics. If collective identity can be demonstrated by a community's culturally-based communicative practices, Ebonics may be an effective heuristic pedagogically for students who may not clearly comprehend the abstractness associated with African American worldviews, particularly when these worldviews are made so obscure in academic scholarship.

Language is a concrete example of how shared identities and knowledge are made transparent. Because spoken and written languages are more easily identifiable, I find that positioning Afrocentric pedagogy alongside discussions of Ebonics is quite valuable.

Michelle Foster's study of Afrocentric schools in San Francisco identifies several explicit examples of African American cultural practices, practices that can readily be applied to classroom discourse, including displays or oral and visual African-based rituals:

> The display of visuals that are Afrocentric, everyday predictable rituals, African American curricular content incorporated throughout the curriculum, situational enactment (the use of classical cultural ethics as a method of classroom management, i.e. doing maat, incorporating things that are good for Black children, i.e. Rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and movement, and things that are good for all children, i.e. student centered activities. (qtd. in Kifano and Smith 86)

Moreover, as Smitherman also states, in Black America, the oral tradition has served as a

> fundamental vehicle for gittin ovuh. The tradition preserves the Afro-American heritage and reflects the *collective spirit* of the race. Through song, story, folk sayings, and rich verbal interplay among everyday people, lessons and precepts about life and survival are handed down from generation to generation. Until contemporary times, Black America relied on word-of-mouth for its rituals and cultural preservation. (emphasis added) (73)

Smitherman's discussion of orality then fits Afrocentric pedagogy because through orality students are also urged to make connections between the everyday experiences of African Americans, the lessons faced, and means of survival. Orality also draws on the

concepts of a collective identity and connection between the sacred and secular (especially in black theological discourse; see previous chapter), also indicative of the African Diaspora worldviews. To clarify, orality is one way students explore and understand cultural practices and values of people of African descent. Another way students understand these worldviews is by locating the everyday practices and survivals of African people at the center of scholastic inquiry. Lessons, precepts about life, and survival are a few of many ways students may understand African worldviews.

One way that we apply oral traditions is by producing oral reports/speeches on the work that students produce throughout the semester. For one assignment, students were assigned oral reports to illustrate their understandings of the 1996 Oakland School District Resolution on Ebonics and the 1979 Ann Arbor Black English Case in order to understand the general public's and educators' interpretations on Ebonics and linguistic awareness (or lack thereof). To complete these tasks, students conducted Internet searches on both cases in order to determine how each was represented by the public, and/or by academics on the Web. These historical landmarks were used as references for addressing disciplinary arguments made by compositionists and sociolinguistics during the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's. For the disciplinary literacies assignment students used these historical landmarks to formulate arguments about the composition's attitudes toward Ebonics in the field, and how those attitudes have changed over time.

What is interesting about this topic is how through discussions of Ebonics, students learned more about the field. When I first introduced the disciplinary literacies assignment, students completed an activity that prompted them to use JSTOR and Google Scholar to look for sources on Ebonics and Composition Studies. To complete this task,

students were asked to record the keyword searches they used when searching for sources, the types of sources, they found, and any additional trends they noticed when searching, just as they had done when searching the term, *Afrocentricity*. These trends then prompted us to discuss various elements of scholarly discourse and the field's discourse. Based on their findings, students used the following keywords:

- Representations of AAVE in Composition Studies
- AAVE in College Composition Studies
- "AAVE in college"
- Ebonics Composition Studies
- AAVE Composition Studies
- AAVE in Composition Studies
- AAVE and Composition Studies
- Ebonics in Composition Studies
- Ebonics in Composition
- Representations of AAVE in College Composition Studies
- AAVE Composition

After gathering a list of keyword searches, students explained why they tried certain keywords. Some students noted that Ebonics and AAVE are often used interchangeably in the field, and by relying on one term, they might miss key articles that use the other term. Other students insisted that they needed to put in Composition Studies in quotations marks to exclude sources that discuss Ebonics in other related disciplines like sociolinguistics and education. Others indicated that if they only searched for

"Composition Studies" the results were too broad; they only wanted sources that discussed both Ebonics *and* Composition Studies.

Like the *Afrocentricity* search activity, the *Ebonics/AAVE and Composition Studies* search activity also prompted us to discuss the different genres and conventions associated with scholastic discourse. Students noted that the majority of their results in JSTOR were journal articles, essays, and book reviews. With Google Scholar, however, students noticed that books, edited collections, book reviews, journal articles, essays, electronic resources, and academic papers were all included. With these observations we discussed the conventions of published books, published articles, and sources that were not peer-reviewed. Because Google Scholar results generated academic papers and conference papers, and because the disciplinary literacies assignment specifically asks students to draw from sources published in academic journal publications, students were to proceed with caution and review sources carefully. One student asked if academic books and edited collections could be included in his/her sources, since the assignment only asks for journal articles. The student accurately identifies books as peer-reviewed publications that are also credible, scholarly sources that should be used. If students were to make an argument about the field, then only referring them to journals may be misleading because it excludes book-length projects and edited collections, all of which are needed to make an argument about the state of the field.

Both the study of Afrocentricity and Ebonics/AAVE/Composition Studies open up a repertoire of disciplinary and scholarly conversations about how the academy operates. Students learned more from applications of Ebonics and Afrocentric pedagogy besides the cultural and communicative practices of African Americans. They also learn how

Ebonics is talked about in Composition Studies, how things get published in the academy, and how to do secondary research on scholarly sources. And, they became more familiar with the various genres of published scholarship. Introducing students to conversations about scholarship, the academy, and how things operate provide students with glimpses of how writing is situated in disciplinary contexts.

2.8 Applications of Call-Response in the Classroom

Additional oral forms of discourse such as call-response were also applied to my teaching practices. Call-response certainly is no stranger to rhetoric and composition scholarship; we've seen much analysis of this in rhetorical analysis of the Black church, composition classrooms, and other community literacy settings (Smitherman; Richardson; Moss *Community*; Lathan) where the mergence between the spiritual and secular is often actualized. Elaine Richardson identifies these forms of call-response as "dialogues," which "are an attempt to translate ...ideas and philosophies into a Black discourse pattern, call-response, for the benefit of community literacy" (*African American Literacies* 57). Smitherman asserts:

> The African-derived communication process of call/response... [reflects a] spontaneous verbal and nonverbal interaction between the speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements ("calls") are punctuated by expressions ("responses") from the listener [...] Like most other Africanisms in Black American life, call-response has been most carefully preserved in the church. But it is a basic organizing principle of Black American culture, generally, for it

> enables traditional black folk to achieve the unified state of balance and harmony which is fundamental to the traditional African worldview. (104)

As Smitherman defines it, the concept of call-response is both verbal and non-verbal. Because the verbal concept is one of the most visible ways to see call-response enacted, one might easily apply this concept to requirements that students participate in oral discussion. Going beyond traditional participation requirements in composition courses that require all students to participate (usually through oral or digital discussion forums and listservs), I more explicitly engage in call/response dialogue with the students directly in the classroom in ways that extend beyond oral-based student participation, although my understanding of call-response often requires students to immediately "talk back" verbally to me during class discussions. For example, when I'm explaining the syntactical or phonological structures of Ebonics, I may ask students, "You dig?" (meaning, "do you understand?), and they orally (and sometimes visually) respond back. This requires students to speak back while I'm instructing. Although there is a minimal amount of lecturing that takes place in a writing classroom, the lectures that are conducted are highly dynamic and dialogic.

Smitherman also specifically makes use of applications of call-response to the composition classroom. Smitherman states: "Since blacks communicate best by interacting with one another, they can also *learn* best by interacting with one another. [Furthermore, just as] blacks aren't passive communicators or listeners, they aren't passive learners" (220). While Smitherman's discussion of implementing call-response into the classroom focuses on the benefits for African American students, I'd also suggest that call-response can help all students see the value in dialogic interactions with each

other. Shared learning practices like call-response can aid students as they participate in a communal, collective educational experience. And as Smitherman acknowledges, White (and non-black) students also need to learn about these discourse intellectual practices like call-response and other forms of orality (*Testifyin* 235).

In *A Community Text Arises: A Literate Text and a Literacy Tradition in African American Churches*, Beverly Moss addresses how African American preachers and their congregations make use of the call-response. Although Moss makes a key rhetorical move by beginning with a rhetorical analysis of the verbal elements initiated in the call-response, Moss makes another critical move by pointing out the relationship between call-response and a collective shared identity preachers must share with their congregation, while also establishing an acceptable ethos with the people:

> [T]o be effective preachers, these ministers must simultaneously create bonds between them and their congregations. In other words, they must build trust between their congregation and themselves; they must build their own identities as part of the congregation. At the same time, these ministers must show that they are leaders worthy of standing in the pulpit before the congregation. (65)

Quite eloquently, Moss demonstrates the complexities for preachers to be respectable authorities, while at the same time, establishing a sense of a shared collective identity and cultural understanding with their congregations. Rhea Estelle Lathan sees an interesting parallel between the ethos that preachers must establish with their congregations and the ethos that teachers must establish with their students. Lathan argues that the preacher's use of call-response "is a complicated act because similar to the teacher[/]student

relationships, the move from the pew to the pulpit tends to signal a sense of distance from the congregation" (74).

It is also critical that Moss makes the move from the verbal to the nonverbal since as Smitherman suggests, the use of call-response is also nonverbal. Like Smitherman, Lathan's interpretation of call-response extends beyond the verbal, but unlike Smitherman's discussion, Lathan does not consider call-response spontaneous; instead, call-response is an intellectual act that calls for critical reflection of both the call and response:

> When call-and-response is situated in a particular place and time, [...] we see critical intellectual work being performed [...] In this context, call-and-response operates out of an intellectual tradition that connects literacy practices, meanings and values with individual group identity and autonomy. Through call-and-response participants define themselves while validating their collective experiences. Most importantly, call-and-response in this context, represents a crucial intellectual activity because it *requires* a considerable capacity for knowledge (emphasis in original) (76).

Lathan critically identifies the intellectual activity necessitated by call-response, where the rhetorical act extends beyond spontaneity; for Lathan, the fact that critical intellectual activity is necessary disrupts the idea of spontaneity because participants must think before they initiate the call, and think again before they initiate the response. The interpretation of call-response works exceptionally well in a writing classroom application: For teachers, the concept of call-response should extend beyond having students repeat what the teacher (or caller) says (responds to). As Lathan suggests here,

call-response should require both teachers and students to engage in critical intellectual activity before when they call or respond.

Ball and Lardner's applications of call-response in *African American Literacies Unleashed: Vernacular English and the Composition Classroom* speak to more tangible examples of how call-response may be applied to writing classrooms, particularly with regard to class discussions. They indicate:

> Call and response embodies an interlocking and synergistic communicative dimension in which members of a group participate interactively by adding their own voices [with] others to serve both as counterpoint and counterforce, alternating, stimulating, and encouraging each other and receiving the stimulus of others until a collective agreement or regeneration is achieved. In the successful community-based classrooms [...] observed, students use patterns of high interaction, personal engagement, and call and response to bring their own voices—and to invite others to do likewise—into a complementary or even challenging relationship with the *discussion at hand so that all participants might benefit* from the power of those combined voices. (152) (emphasis added)

Although Ball's and Lardner's conceptual framework for call-response may readily be applied to oral-based class discussions, I argue that like Lathan's conceptual framework, call-response can also be applied in the writing classroom in ways that extend beyond a verbal response from students to a teacher's directions. For example, when I taught an Afrocentric curriculum for the very first time during the spring of 2007, I assigned students to complete multigenre projects. The call (from me, the instructor) was to create a self-designed multigenre essay, usually in the form of a print-based handbook or

packet, with an Afrocentric theme students selected from the course. The response, from many students in the class, was to create websites that included different genres representing their themes. This prompted me to redesign the multigenre assignment for the fall 2008 semester, giving students the option to choose whether their project would be print-based or digital. This example of call-response moves beyond a verbal response, since many students indicated their desires to create websites in a written proposal. Call-response here also reflects critical intellectual activity: Students determined that a linear, print-based document would not sufficiently capture the rhetorical moves they needed to make for multigenre multimodal compositions. In one student's case, she wanted to include a YouTube video of herself with her brother show-boating on the b-ball court in order to demonstrate applications of African American rhetorical strategies including braggadocio, so-called obscenities, and signifyin.[10] A printed handbook or packet would not permit her to do this, but a website on the rhetorical features of Ebonics with a hyperlink to the YouTube video as an example, would. Thus, while call-response may be an effective rhetorical strategy for class discussions, it can be equally effective for written or composition-based intellectual activities. As Ball and Lardner also remind us, the idea that "every teacher ultimately becomes adept at the use of call-and-response-style interaction is not the goal. The positive, participatory environment that can be engendered through call-response—that is the key" (153). I see this idea essential for both verbal and

[10] For an extensive list of African-based rhetorical features, see Redd and Schuster Webb's *A Teacher's Introduction to African American English*, pp. 42-50.

nonverbal discourse. The idea that students are invited to participate in intellectual discourse is the key idea for promoting a community solidarity in the classroom.

2.9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter sought to make two key rhetorical moves: one, to identify a clearer relationship between African and African American worldviews and Afrocentric pedagogy; and two, to provide practical examples of how these worldviews are—and can be—implemented into first-year writing course design. In other words, I aim to move from a theoretical discussion of African and African American worldviews to practical applications of these worldviews. In this chapter I devoted explicit space to identifying and applying African worldviews because 1) limited attention has been paid to specifically identifying the worldviews associated with African American language and culture, and 2) limited attention has been paid to how these worldviews become visible in the curriculum materials and resources that adapt Afrocentric pedagogical methods.

I focused in greater detail on these worldviews because I wanted to highlight the necessity of understanding Afrocentric worldviews in their relationship to Afrocentric curriculum design. I believe that such a move must be made first before one chooses to design Afrocentric course materials, or materials teachers may believe to be Afrocentric. Ladson-Billings states:

> Cultural competence [requires] teachers to have in-depth understanding of culture and its role in human cognition... [M]erely providing teachers with African and African American curriculum will not ensure their internalization of the information and the appropriate use of it. Further, white teachers often believe

> that information about African and African Americans is necessary to improve the "self-esteem" of black children [...] Rarely do white teachers see this information as a counter narrative to the dominant Eurocentric script [...] The real challenge of most teachers is to recognize authentic expressions of African and African American children and support them. This can only happen when teachers are open to study and experience African and African American culture. (193)

I wish to reemphasize the point that Ladson-Billings makes when referring to the use of Afrocentric curriculum design in order to improve the self-esteem of African American students. Although pedagogy that works to improve self-esteem may be useful, especially with writing instruction, what is more necessary is the need to not only challenge the "dominant script," but also, the need to encourage students themselves to recognize the cultural and intellectual practices of African Americans, and how these are represented in rhetoric and composition scholarship. The way I apply Afrocentric pedagogy moves beyond the role of teachers in curriculum design to include students.

This chapter also demonstrated how Ebonics is specifically applied in the classroom. With each assignment, students place Ebonics at the center of their scholastic inquiry. Students are also invited to place African American culture at the center, by not only examining Ebonics and the cultural politics behind the language, but also, by exploring the ways in which African American Rhetoric influences the way Ebonics becomes appropriated in print, digital, and visual environments. In short, using language as a framework, students eventually come to investigate many additional aspects of African American culture.

Chapter 3

ON BUILDING A TEACHER-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Because I identify the methodology in this project as a descriptive qualitative teacher-research study,[11] this chapter provides a discussion of how Afrocentric pedagogy and African American linguistic practices are studied using teacher-research. While there is extensive work done with Afrocentric pedagogy and language in education, African American studies, Composition Studies, and sociolinguistics (Asante; Kamusikiri; Richardson; Richardson and Gilyard; Kifano and Smith "Ebonics"), limited attention has been paid to its relationship with teacher-research. This chapter addresses teacher-research in Composition Studies by analyzing some of the previous teacher and classroom-research studies on African American student writers that do exist.[12] I use these studies as references for describing the methodological practices that I draw on in my own teacher-research study.

Teacher-research has contributed significantly to rhetoric and composition's professional and disciplinary identity. It has also contributed significantly to how we understand the linguistic and rhetorical practices associated with African American

[11] Although several methodologies may be associated with teacher-research (e.g. quasi-experiments, classroom ethnographies, etc.), I am interested in teacher-research as its own distinct methodology that takes into account any data gathered from a teacher's classroom.

[12] Due to the limited representation of teacher-research studies on African American students in Composition Studies, this chapter also analyzes classroom-based research studies, as both address the pedagogical implications for working with African American students.

student populations. During the mid to late 1990's and early 2000's Composition Studies saw a significant amount of empirical teacher-research that focused either on the use of Ebonics in student writing or Afrocentric curriculum design (Richardson; Richardson and Gilyard; Canagarajah; Ball). Currently, however, many recent works on Afrocentric pedagogy focus less on empirical study and more on specific strategies for teaching African American student writers (Ball and Lardner *Literacies Unleashed*; Redd and Schuster Webb *A Teachers Introduction*, Canagarajah "The Place"). Recognizing the need for African American research in these areas, my work aims to shift the focus back to empirical teacher-research studies on Afrocentric pedagogy and language.

Of the recent empirical teacher-research on African Americans, most studies/researchers focus primarily on how African American students adapt African American linguistic, rhetorical, and discursive styles, *or* how they employ Ebonics syntax in their academic essays, whether deliberately or otherwise. Less often do teacher-research empirical studies address how African American students employ both Ebonics syntax and African American rhetorical styles at the same time.[13] And, few empirical studies address how African American students may appropriate Ebonics phonology and syntax both strategically and rhetorically (see Canagarajah's "The Place of World Englishes" and "Safe Houses"); many studies, instead, focus on an increase or reduction on Ebonics syntactical features in essay exams (Fogel and Ehri; Richardson; Szpara and Wylie). Even more rarely do studies in composition address African American students' written use of Ebonics-based phonological features in expository texts since the use of

[13] Elaine Richardson looks at both syntax and rhetoric in the teacher-research study featured in *African American Literacies*.

many structural features have declined significantly over the past several decades (Smitherman "Black English"). As a result, future teacher-research that focuses on African American students' uses of phonology, syntax, and rhetorical features is still needed.

This chapter reviews four teacher-research and classroom empirical studies in composition that either focus on African American students' use of Ebonics syntax, or African American students' use of African American rhetorical practices in composition classrooms in order to extend methodological possibilities for understanding African American students' (including their phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical patterns)—and all students'—writing practices. I have selected these four studies because each study has influenced how I understand and apply teacher-research methodological practices in my own composition classroom.

In the sections that follow, I identify the conceptual framework that influences how I understand teacher-research, as it is situated in this project. I first begin with a discussion of teacher-research in education and Composition in order to provide a conceptual framework that examines the relationship between classroom/teacher-research and Afrocentric pedagogy. I am interested in studies on African American students that do one of the following things: a) self-identify their pedagogy as an African American-Centered, or Afrocentric; b) specifically study the rhetorical, literate, and linguistic practices of African American students and analyze these with African-based communicative practices in mind; or c) rely on additional African-based worldviews and discursive practices to study African American students as empirical data (An extended

discussion of African worldviews as they apply to Afrocentric pedagogy was addressed in Chapter 1).

The latter sections in this chapter shift to analyses of four classroom and teacher-research studies on African American students, as they are situated in Composition Studies. I also choose to review these four studies in Composition Studies to establish a clearer relationship between African American students' writing and teacher/classroom-research. Because my own work focuses on first-year writing students, I find a review of the African American communicative practices used in writing classrooms to be necessary for laying the groundwork for my own study which will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. And, by providing extended understandings of Afrocentric pedagogical practices, I also provide additional spaces for rethinking teacher-research methodological scholarship in Composition Studies. Thus, my work aims to extend previous teacher-research scholarship on African Americans by providing opportunities to include all students as participants in our studies on Afrocentric pedagogy and Ebonics.

3.2 Perspectives on Teacher-Research as They Are Situated in This Project

Before discussing teacher-research and its relationship with Afrocentric pedagogy, it is first important to identify the theoretical framework that guides my understanding of teacher-research. While discussions of teacher-research may vary, and while it often does intersect many different fields, for the purposes of this project, I find it most useful to discuss its relationship with education and Composition Studies. This section, then, identifies my own understandings for using teacher-research as a research-based

methodology, a practice that I find to involve teachers collecting and analyzing empirical data from the students taught in teachers' classrooms. My conceptual framework for teacher-research is in no way intended to provide a definitive definition of the term; instead, it is meant to demonstrate how such a framework for teacher-research influences my own work with the Afrocentric pedagogy and curriculum design.

While it is debatable exactly when teacher-research became a major research methodology in education and Composition Studies, most sources agree that the 1990's marked a prominence in teacher-research scholarship (Baumann and Duffey-Hester; Cochran-Smith and Lytle). In their discussion of teacher-research as a distinct methodological practice, James Baumann and Ann Duffey-Hester identify the 1990's as being

> marked by the resurgence and coming of age of teacher research... [This] recent renaissance [...] has resulted in the publication of numerous compendia [...], full-length books [...], and essays on classroom research. [...] In spite of the proliferation of published teacher research studies, relatively little attention has been paid to the methodology processes and how they evolve and mature... ("Making Sense" 1)

Although there were a significant number of teacher-research publications during the 1990's, limited attention has been paid to the methodological implications associated with teacher-research. For Baumann and Duffey-Hester, the focus has been more on the pedagogical components surrounding teacher-research and less on the methodological practices that influence teacher-research processes and practices.

The conceptual framework that influences how I understand teacher-research requires a consideration of its role both pedagogically and methodology, as trends in teacher-research scholarship often address one or more of these roles. In their article "Teacher-Research: A Decade Later," Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle (1999) identify five major trends that characterized teacher-research during the 1990's, including:

> (a) the prominence of teacher-research in teacher education, professional development, and school reform; (b) the development of conceptual frameworks and theories of teacher-research; (c) the dissemination of teacher-research beyond the local level; (d) the emergence of critique of teacher-research and the teacher-research movement; and (e) the transformative potential of teacher-research on some aspects of university culture. (15)

As shown in the previous excerpt, such trends also point to specific pedagogical and methodological implications for doing teacher-research. From a pedagogical perspective, teacher-research can be used to enhance professional development and school reform, thus shaping particular practices associated with institutional programs and curricula. From a methodological perspective, the results from teacher-research studies can potentially disseminate beyond the individual classroom in order to transform disciplinary and institutional practices.

Baumann and Duffy-Hester further indicate that

> most [definitions of teacher-research] include several common characteristics. [...] Being present daily in the research and work environment, teacher researchers have an insider, or *emic,* perspective on the research process. This

> provides them a unique, situation-specific, participant role in the inquiry. [...] Theory and practice are interrelated and blurred in teacher research. It is this mixture of reflection and practice, or praxis, in which a teacher's personal theory within a field converge and affect one another. (2)

As noted previously by Baumann and Duffy-Hester, my understanding of teacher-research locates it as a place where theory and practice, and pedagogy and research intersect. If I simply categorize teacher-research as a type of scholarship that studies a teacher's practice, I am not taking into the account the active role of the researcher in the classroom, as (s)he critically analyzes, interprets, and disseminates data. But if I simply categorize teacher-research as another form of empirical work, I am not considering the pedagogical role the teacher assumes in the classroom. Also worth emphasizing is the fact that theory and practice both drive and influence my pedagogy and methodology, as there are specific theories of Afrocentricity that inform how I teach and research. Thus, in this project, I discuss both my pedagogical rationale for using Afrocentric pedagogy (see Chapter 2), in addition to the methodological implications surrounding my commitment to African American—and all—first-year writing students.

In sum, the conceptual framework that guides how I understand teacher-research considers the following: 1) a methodological practice that is data-driven 2) a practice that disseminates written findings beyond the local classroom, and 3) a practice that uses data collected from the teacher's classroom with aims to transform university and disciplinary pedagogical practices. Although teacher-research does range from informal observation and reflection, to a formal dissemination of empirically-driven data, for the purposes of this study, I am primarily interested in a teacher-research study where the

teacher(s)/author(s) reference or cite their own students' essays or other student empirical work as primary data from their own classrooms.

3.3 Four Teacher-Research and Classroom-Research Studies: Richardson, Richardson and Gilyard, Ball, and Canagarajah

In this section of the chapter, I shift the focus from my perspectives on teacher-research to Afrocentricity by addressing four teacher and classroom empirical studies in composition that either focus on African American students' use of Ebonics syntax, or African American students' use of African-based rhetorical practices in composition classrooms in order to identify opportunities for future work with teacher and classroom-research. I use these studies as a framework for building my own methodology of teacher-research on African American students. In building this methodology, I call for extended work with African American students' intellectual discourse.

I first begin with Elaine Richardson's (2003) "African American Centered Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy: Theory and Research" study on how African American students learn about African American language and literacy practices because it makes an effective argument for why and how teacher-research can in fact be empirical. Richardson's methodology is a quasi-experiment. She identifies this methodology as a quasi-experiment because the participants are not selected at random; instead, they are selected because they are students in her writing classroom, where they are required to attend class, complete each assignment and participate in class (98). The students took a prewriting exam at the beginning of the experiment; and an exit exam that addressed their attitudes toward Ebonics linguistic, literate and rhetorical practices,

whether students appropriated Ebonics syntax in their writing, and whether or not these attitudes and/or appropriations changed by the end of the semester. Her primary methods consist of discourse analysis of student texts (both syntactical and rhetorical), including both qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis (98-100).

Richardson's quasi-experimental study on how her basic writing composition students work through an Afrocentric curriculum draws on both African American teaching, written, and oral practices. Richardson concludes that students' fluency in producing academic writing was enhanced by creating an Afrocentric curricular approach to teaching composition, and by allowing students to draw upon African American rhetorically-based practices to complete writing tasks. By the end of the study, nearly all of her students wrote or said explicitly that they saw the value in learning and adapting African American literate and rhetorical practices in writing classrooms.

Richardson's conceptual and theoretical framework for this study is sound on many levels. Grounding this study in the theory of Afrocentricity greatly enables her to address her research question as to whether an Afrocentric curriculum will help students improve fluency in academic writing. Using an Afrocentric curriculum as a focus permits her to examine students' attitudes about African American linguistic and literate practices. By utilizing these practices pedagogically and explicitly in writing classrooms, students can readily determine whether they decide to accept or reject the value and legitimacy of African American literate practices.

Using an Afrocentric curricular approach also raises many pedagogical issues for what it means to adapt alternative/cultural rhetorical approaches for teaching writing as opposed to adapting traditional forms of writing instruction that both traditionally and

historically privilege White middle-class students. Conducting this study enables writing teachers to see that placing alternative literate and rhetorical traditions at the center of composition instruction will similarly help students acquire skills necessary to write more fluent academic prose (in both Standard English as well as another language variety). Traditionally, many writing teachers charge that if students don't learn dominant or traditional forms of writing, they will not develop the academic skills necessary to write for other disciplines in the academy, which similarly privilege dominant forms of writing and Standard English, nor will they have the communicative skills necessary to enter the workforce once they graduate from college, despite the fact that "many of the most successful people in the market place are running off with fresh stacks of pretty little green ones accumulated to the advertising beat of hip hop" (Gilyard and Richardson 38).This study counters these claims by examining the ways in which students are exposed to alternative literacy practices while still learning how to write for academic audiences that often prefer Standard English at the same time.

Along with the theoretical curricular approach that Richardson offers, the research design itself also possesses many strengths. Including both qualitative and quantitative instruments of measurement is useful because both support each other, thus offering a much richer account of the data gathered rather than selecting one method over the other. For Richardson to study the usage of Ebonics, Standard English and other language varieties, quantitative data are useful. For example, in the pretest she can literally count the number of times students use Ebonics syntax as opposed to Standard English. With the posttest, she can then determine whether the amount of Ebonics syntax increases or decreases. When working with qualitative data, Richardson can effectively provide

discourse or rhetorical analysis from student texts to not only measure syntax, but also, examine whether or not, and how, students' attitudes toward African American literate practices have changed over the course of a semester. The fact that she was able to draw qualitative (textual) evidence from several of her students' papers on their changes in attitude really strengthens her study.

While Richardson's data and analysis in the chapter, "African American Centered Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy: Theory and Research," focus on how students employ Ebonics syntax, her study with Keith Gilyard in "Students' Right to Possibility: Basic Writing and African American Rhetoric," specifically focuses on how African American students draw on African American rhetorical styles that are not syntactically-based. Using the CCCC SRTOL Resolution as a framework, Gilyard and Richardson begin with the following theory about SRTOL and pedagogical practice:[14]

> There was never a shortage of ideas about how SRTOL could be implemented beyond a liberal pluralist paradigm, just a shortage of empirical models. We offer one. In doing so we shift the terms of engagement somewhat; we extend the notion of "Students [sic] Right to Their Own Language" to a question of "Students' Right to Possibility." We acknowledge language rights at the outset, and this allows us to place our emphasis on the ways of knowing and becoming that our students exhibit—and that we help them exhibit—as they negotiate the structure of academic schooling. (39)

[14] For an extended discussing of SRTOL in relationship to Afrocentric writing pedagogy, see Chapters 2 and 4.

Gilyard's and Richardson's discussion emphasizes both a pedagogical and empirical model for those wanting to integrate SRTOL into practice. In their study, classroom-research becomes the methodology for which the authors aim to apply SRTOL, while they also argue how their Afrocentric composition curriculum becomes possible through SRTOL.

Gilyard and Richardson then describe and analyze their own study of fifty-two African American students using the same Afrocentric basic writing curriculum researched in "African American Centered Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy." This time, a panel of researchers outside this classroom looked specifically at rhetorical and modes of Africanized discourse used in the student essays. For each student enrolled, the panel of writing specialists from varied racial/ethnic backgrounds scored their out of class essays.

Of the African-based rhetorical styles, researchers found evidence of *some* of the following patterns existing in students' writing:[15]

- Call and Response – Ebonics writers often ask rhetorical questions or engage in other dialogic acts with their audiences and readers in their academic texts. A writer may also return "repetitiously to the prompt [or written task] as a structural device, checking for constant connection with the question or text at hand" (42). These texts frequently elicit a response from the reader, although readers do not necessarily respond aloud to audience members. Dig?

[15] While more discursive patterns were identified and analyzed in Gilyard's and Richardson's chapter, I focus on these patterns because such rhetorical patterns were more commonly used in my own classroom practices, and found in my own students' essays.

- Signifying – Ebonics speakers often make use of indirection to illustrate a point. They may "employ oppositional logic, overstatement, understatement, and/or reliance on reader's knowledge of implicit assumption that is taken to be common knowledge (shared world view)" (42). If you still don't understand what signifying means, *ax yo momma*.
- Rhythmic, dramatic, evocative language or imagery - Many Ebonics speakers are skillful at using metaphoric and other types of visual language. For example, one student in the study writes: "Our history through the eyes of white America after it has been cut, massacured [sic], and censored is pushed down Blacks throath [sic]" (42).
- Narrative Sequencing - Ebonics writers will often tell a story in their writing, regardless of whether or not the genre they compose in fact is a narrative. Even for research essays or seminar papers, students may narrate their processes. Narrative sequencing is heavily influenced by African-based traditions of orality and proverbial use to tell stories. It is also common in the Black Church, where preachers narrate biblical stories in order to illustrate a main point or message for the congregation to take away (Redd and Schuster Webb 46; Smitherman *Talkin and Testifyin* 148-150; Gilyard and Richardson 42). In the conclusion of this project, I narrate my experiences with institutional review boards skeptical of race-based research.
- Cultural values, community consciousness – "Expressions of concern for the development of African Americans; concern for welfare of entire community, not just individuals" (42).

- Cultural references – These refer to culturally-specific "items/icons that usually carry symbolic meaning in the [African American] community" (42).
- Field dependency – This pertains to the idea of "personalizing phenomena," or demonstrating a lack of distance from various topics and/or subjects. Ebonics speakers may often do this in attempt to establish a rapport with their audiences (42).

Like Smitherman's 1994 study on high school students who took the NAEP ("Blacker the Berry"), Richardson and Gilyard found that African American students who employed more Black rhetorical strategies, as indicated from the examples above, scored higher than those students who did not (45). As a result, Gilyard and Richardson concluded that African American Rhetoric (AAR) can serve as an opportunity for applying SRTOL to classroom practices. Pedagogically, this study also raises implications for those teachers who are unfamiliar with many African American rhetorical features, and may misunderstand key arguments African American writers aim to make; they may also ineffectively and inaccurately mark students down for using these discursive patterns. I remember my own high school days when my AP English teacher told me to take out a part about African Americans being kings and queens, and God's chosen inheritors in their own home lands because it supposedly had nothing to do with Bigger's second-class status as a chauffer in *Native Son* (even though I was using this metaphor to demonstrate that African Americans had no business being slaves, servants, or chauffer drivers from jump!). Had she been familiar with some of these rhetorical features, she might have recognized this imagery. So the moral of the story is, if ya don' know now ya know!

It is also worth noting how both of the previous two studies discussed complement each other. While the first study focuses mostly on syntax, the latter study shifts its focus toward rhetorical discourse, although Richardson's first study does acknowledge the problems associated with reducing Ebonics only to syntax. Because Gilyard's and Richardson's study is textually-based, the primary research methods are mainly qualitative, since quantitative data cannot best analyze the richness of the rhetorical styles identified from each student's essay. As previously noted, Richardson's other study, "African American Centered Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy," does effectively make use of quantitative data, as she records the reduction of Ebonics syntax features in students' essays. Put together, both studies underscore the values associated with recognizing African American linguistic practices, both syntactically and rhetorically, and qualitatively and quantitatively.

Arnetha Ball's earlier qualitative study (published in 1996) in, "Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students" also highlights how African American high school students draw on African American rhetorical styles, while still meeting the requirements for academic writing at the same time. Although Richardson's and Gilyard's, and Richardson's methods rely solely on textual analysis, Ball's positions student texts in relationship with personal interviews, thus adding more complexity to the ways in which African American students understand their own appropriations of AAR. And while Richardson, and Gilyard and Richardson use examples of textual evidence from nearly their entire population of students, Ball's evidence is limited to five texts from four case study students attending a West Coast high school. This permits Ball to

provide very detailed and rich accounts of how African American students engaged in these writing situations, and their experiences with writing their texts the her study.

Similar to many of the patterns found in the Gilyard and Richardson study, Ball found evidence of the following discursive/rhetorical strategies used by high school students:

- Use of repetition;
- Establishing rapport with one's audience (e.g. using lexical terms like "we're")'
- Exhibiting performance in the style and delivery of the text;
- Using orally-based organizational patterns in school-based genre tasks (e.g., in the five-paragraph essay);
- Engaging in interactive dialogue or call/response with audience (e.g., "you know what I mean?");
- Using common African American idioms that assume mutual understanding of shared cultural experiences; and
- Linking topics through personal anecdotes or narrative sequencing. (34)

From her analysis of these patterns, Ball finds two key principles that are noteworthy. The first is the need to create multiple spaces for a diversity of voices, and to "[cultivate] a desire to actually 'hear' those voices. Within traditional writing classrooms ... exposition continues to lack broad participation of diverse voices in identifying, constructing, and formulating the knowledge we expect all students to master" (34). The second principle is the need to understand how African American strategies are used strategically to promote classroom success, where teachers may actively integrate African-based modes of discourse into the classroom curriculum (35). For example, one

of Ball's participants recalls a story she wrote using many African-based discursive and syntactical strategies, but only received a B- from her teacher because she used the word, "ain't" (27). I also recall my own experience where the teacher instructed me to take out the African kings and queens part. With both cases, because the teachers did not listen to these voices, and because the recognition and study of African American rhetorical strategies were not integrated into mainstream curricula, both students received lower scores, hence, decreased success in their composition classrooms.

A. Suresh Canagarajah's study featured in "Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Strategies of African American Students in the Academy," investigates how African American students negotiate their racial identities during a summer writing course designed "to induct such students gradually into the 'academic culture' in order to improve their retention rate" (174). Comparable to the Gilyard and Richardson, and Richardson studies, nearly all (ten of the twelve) of the students in the classroom were African American; the participants in Canagarajah's study were all African American. Because African Americans comprised a large majority of this course, they felt a stronger sense of community. Canagarajah writes:

> The safe houses of the African-American students were motivated by some of the peculiarities of the way my course (and research) was organized. Being a sizable body of students, they could develop a sense of "community" that was difficult for the students from other ethnicities in the class. Furthermore, though students could have constituted themselves in class or gender terms to form safe houses, the purpose of the Preview course and the curriculum I adopted heightened their ethnic consciousness at the cost of other identities. It is possible that as I set out to

focus on African-American students, I may have overlooked the activity of safe houses defined according to other group affiliations. (175)

After describing the context of the study Canagarajah provides analysis on how the African American students situate their academic writing rhetorically. Of the many rhetorical devices associated with African American students' writing and oral discourse, Canagarajah found evidence of the following:

- Rhythmic discourse (181);
- Topic association (183);
- "Voice merging" or sampling/citing other voices as a communicative practice (187-8);
- Mimicry – employing white academic language and conventions (188);
- Fronting - "a seeming conformism that masks deeper oppositional tendencies ... [T]his practice has been historically developed by African-Americans in the face of pressure from mainstream society" (188-9); and
- Person-centered arguments (191).

Many of the devices identified by Canagarajah (topic association, person-centered discourse) are also consistent with the rhetorical patterns found in the Ball, and Gilyard and Richardson studies. With each of these studies, the researchers also draw similar conclusions. Each calls for multivocal voices in text production, and "meeting point[s] of heterogeneous cultures and ideologies" (Canagarajah 195), and each study calls for educators to make spaces for African American students to draw on their own linguistic styles in academic writing, while at the same time, acknowledging the hegemonic relationships that privilege dominant discourse and language styles (including Standard

English) over other alternative linguistic systems. Perhaps each of these studies represents different verses of the same song. Anybody wanna spit another verse at the mic?

3.4 The Context for My Own Teacher-Research Study

Despite the richness in all four of the studies previously described, there is still room for extended research on African American students. And although I would be the first to admit that Composition Studies has come a long way in retarding linguistic prejudice, the four previous works discussed still leave a few unanswered questions for writing teachers and researchers. My first question pertains to how these studies help support not only African American students, but all students. The four studies previously analyzed focus exclusively on African American students and don't explicitly provide resources for those wishing to apply Afrocentric curricular methods for White students, especially given the fact that White students typically account for the largest populations of students in our first-year (non basic-writing) composition courses (HBCU's be another story!). Not to mention the fact that Canagarajah overlooks the contributions of non-Black students in his Preview class, a limitation he does acknowledge to be sure. But what might White students gain from learning about Ebonics and African-based rhetorical devices? And what happens with students who aren't Black but aren't White either? What about students who don't identify Ebonics or Standard English as their first language? Don't all students need exposure to alternative linguistic and rhetorical writing systems too? As Leah Zuidema cautions, the SRTOL Resolution and many other organizations in English Studies stop short at encouraging all students—not just students

of color to learn about language rights. She argues that very few organizations including the

> International Reading Association (IRA) and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) devote ... attention to the need for *all* students to study language variation. For example, while IRA and NCTE publications and position statements emphasize teachers' responsibilities to accept and accommodate diverse students' languages, no official statements have been made about teaching students themselves to be accepting of linguistic diversity. Even the frequently cited (and recently reaffirmed) Conference on College Composition and Communication's resolution *Students' Right to Their Own Language* (1974) stops short of declaring the need to teach students about peoples' rights to their own language.(emphasis in original) (667)

Thus, if Afrocentricity truly fosters many of the rich literate and rhetorical practices that can benefit all students, we then need more empirical work demonstrating that such is the case. Recall that Teresa Redd and Karen Schuster Webb note that some of the limitations of Afrocentric approaches to teaching composition are that they don't offer enough strategies for non-Black teachers wishing to employ an Afrocentric approach, and there remains very limited empirical work demonstrating that an Afrocentric approach is sufficient (99). The empirical work that does exist focuses primarily and exclusively on teaching African American students.

Another issue that most of these studies do not explicitly deal with is how African American students employ Ebonics phonology and/or syntax rhetorically. None of the studies provide any analyses or identification of students' usage of Ebonics phonological

features; perhaps a discussion of phonology was not included because students may have drawn on few if any of these features. With regard to syntax, Arnetha Ball provides a hint of the implications for students wishing to draw on Ebonics syntax in her example of the student who is graded down for using "ain't." But within the context of this student's essay, the use of "ain't" also becomes an issue of word choice for the teacher and not just syntax (verb conjugation), and other than that, we don't really see more explicit evidence for how and why African American students choose to manipulate Ebonics syntax, despite potential consequences for evaluation, grading, and assessment. The Gilyard and Richardson, and Richardson studies also do not clearly address how the students might explain their syntactical choices rhetorically; however, Ball's study does leave some room, but she does not designate space (at least in the article) for students to account for the choices behind syntax and syntactical usage be it through personal interviews or expository texts. Although she gives students the opportunity to explain why they chose or did not choose to employ African American rhetorical and idiomatic styles, from her analysis, the students do not discuss their syntactical choices. With the student who took out African American idioms for fear he would be graded down by his Hispanic teacher (32), I wonder if he similarly chose not to use Ebonics syntax for the same reasons.

Although Canagarajah does provide some linguistic analysis of how African American students employ Ebonics syntax rhetorically (180), the analysis of Ebonics syntax is limited to oral discourse and mail messaging, while rhetorical analysis of African American discourse patterns (not related to syntax) is primarily conducted in students' expository texts. I am left to wonder to what extent African American students may use Ebonics syntax rhetorically in formal writing assignments and major essays to

illustrate arguments (Canagarajah does acknowledge this argument in a more recent work, "The Place of World Englishes: Pluralization Continued," where he argues that Mainstream English (ME) need not be the only language appropriate for formal writing situations). If students truly have the right to their own languages, is it possible to employ the syntactical conventions of their home languages in academic discourse, or is this right only designated for oral or informal discourse? Is Ebonics only appropriate for certain informal genres like instant messaging, text messaging, or emails to friends? Is content truly more important than form? If Ebonics be so good it's *baad*, why *cain't* it be used in formal writing situations (Smitherman "So Good It's Bad")?

Examining the ways in which African American students employ Ebonics phonology and syntax rhetorically as deliberate and strategic acts are two of three major focuses in my own work as a teacher-researcher. Building explicitly on these precedent studies and on the tradition of teacher-research as I have articulated in this chapter, my work is a descriptive qualitative teacher-research study that examines the linguistic and rhetorical features African American students perform in expository writing situations, including the four major writing assignments offered by the Afrocentric curriculum.[16] Although I am interested in the African-based linguistic and rhetorical practices that African American students use, I am also interested in how they do so deliberately and purposefully.

A third focus in my work is the study of all students' benefits. Because these precedent studies focus exclusively on African American students, my teacher-research study also examines the work that all students produce from the Afrocentric curriculum.

[16] See Chapter 2 for an extensive discussion of these major writing assignments.

With all students (including non-Black participants), I am interested in what they learn about writing, reading, and research in relationship with our Program's shared learning goals. My work includes non-Black students in order to offer both an inclusive Afrocentric pedagogy, as well as a methodological argument that points to the need for research on non-Black students' work in Afrocentric and Ebonics-based curricula.

My study took place during the fall semester of the 2008-2009 academic year. The class for the study was a WRA 125 – Writing: The Ethnic and Racial Experience first-year writing class focused on Ebonics and Afrocentric pedagogy. Students were not recruited for the class, but student-participants were recruited during the first week of class. Although students knew that they were registering in a race and ethnicity-based section of a first-year writing course, they did not know that the course would focus on Ebonics prior to registering. Twenty-three students were registered (N = 23), of which twenty two successfully completed the course by the end of the semester.[17] Of the twenty-two students who completed the class, twenty-one students signed consent forms to participate in this primarily qualitative descriptive study (n = 21). A pseudonym was requested by two students granting consent to use work from their assignments. All other students granted consent to use their first names.

Of the twenty-one participants featured in this study, six were African and African American (five were African American and one was African); two were of Asian ancestry, one was of Latino descent; and thirteen were of European and European American descent (twelve were European American and one was European). These

[17] One student stopped attending class within the first couple of weeks the semester. The student did not officially deregister from the class.

racial/ethnic demographics add complexity to the ways that Afrocentric pedagogy has typically been described in disciplinary scholarship (Redd and Schuster Webb). In contrast to previous studies on Afrocentric pedagogy in relationship to African American students, my study focuses on all students, the majority of whom are not African American. In doing so, I argue that non-Black students can also benefit from the study of Afrocentricity in purposeful ways.

In relationship to African American students, I more specifically address the following research questions concerning African American students' writing:

- What Ebonics-based linguistic practices do African American student writers employ in assigned essay texts?
- What African American rhetorical (AAR) practices do African American student writers employ in these texts?
- How do African American students employ Ebonics-based syntactical and phonological patterns rhetorically in purposeful ways?
- Essentially, in what ways does a linguistic-focused Afrocentric curriculum support African American students?

In addition to research on African American students, I am interested in examining the following research questions with respect to all students:

- How does Afrocentricity accomplish the goals and requirements of an institution's program?
- What skills, knowledge and attitudes do all students gain from the study of Afrocentricity and Ebonics?

- Essentially, in what ways does a linguistic-focused Afrocentric curriculum benefit/not benefit all students?

3.5 Methods for Data Collection

Given these questions and given the types of students enrolled in the class, I chose the following options for data collection and analysis: collection and analysis of specific assignments from student texts and collection and analysis of all students' responses to a language attitudinal questionnaire. Many of the indicators pertaining to my research questions on African American students and all students were found in student writing, so I collected student writing.

Because I am interested in looking at the ways that African American students employ Ebonics syntax, phonology, and rhetorical features across expository texts, I referenced African American students' writing across the four major assignments produced from the curriculum. When dealing with African American students' texts, I referenced the works of six African and African American student participants in this study (n = 6).[18] Of the six African and African American students featured in this study, three were male and three were female. A pseudonym was requested by one African American participant in this study; the other African and African American students have chosen to remain on first name basis only. By studying each of these students, I do not suggest that all African and African American students employed each African-based

[18] African and African American students were selected based on their own self identification as a person of African descent. All but one African American student enrolled in this course granted informed consent.

linguistic and rhetorical convention identified later in this chapter on all occasions, nor do I suggest that the Ebonics and African-based rhetorical features were only appropriated by African and African American students. Although I found evidence from each African and African American student using some AAR and Ebonics syntactical and phonological patterns on multiple occasions, all students did not use all the patterns that will be discussed on all occasions.

In addition to looking exclusively at African American student texts, I also took textual artifacts from all student participants' responses to the disciplinary literacies assignment. By looking at the disciplinary literacies texts, I measure specifically students' skills and knowledge that they gain from the Afrocentric curriculum in relationship to the Tier I Writing Program's writing, reading, and research goals (*Guidebook* 4).[19] Of the twenty-one participants featured in this study, twenty students granted consent to use excerpts from their essays in the written results (n = 20). While I look at African American students' work across assignments, with other students', I focus my attention on the disciplinary literacies assignment. This is because I believe the disciplinary literacies assignment to be the best assignment for illustrating the work that students can do with each of the writing, reading, and research goals of the course. The disciplinary literacies assignment represents some students' most complex work, and because it was completed later in the term, there was greater improvement in comparison to the first two assignments. Thus, I wanted to assess their best work in relationship to the learning goals. To recap, this assignment asks students to research journal articles in

[19] While the term knowledge is abstract, I specifically understand students' knowledge in terms of the trends that they discuss and identify in disciplinary conversations on Ebonics.

Composition Studies and make an argument about how the field deals with Ebonics. Completing this assignment then requires an understanding of research practices, and processes, in addition to writing and reading processes, since students must critically locate, evaluate, interpret, and write about the articles they find on the subject.

Additional indicators regarding students' attitudes and benefits from the curriculum were found by posing specifically-targeted questions to all students. For these, I designed a language attitudinal questionnaire to assess students' attitudes toward Ebonics in order to chart students' progress toward negative perceptions of Ebonics. On the first day of class students were asked to take a language attitudinal questionnaire, both as a participatory requirement for the course, and as a component for the teacher-research study. The same questionnaire was administered to students on the last day of class in order to see how students' knowledge and attitudes have changed over the course of the semester. Of the twenty-two students completing the class, seventeen students took both the pre and post language attitudinal questionnaires (n = 17). Results are only included and analyzed for those students who took both the pre and post questionnaire.

3.6 Procedures for Data Analysis

To address questions related to African and African American students, I rely on textual artifacts from African and African American students' four major writing assignments because I am interested in exploring the ways that African and African American students draw on Ebonics and AAR across different assignments, genres, and writing situations. I position sociolinguistic and rhetorical scholarship in relationship with the assignments used in the curriculum in order to examine their knowledge and

execution of such practices. In reference to Ebonics and AAR scholarship, I employed the following processes when looking across African and African American student texts: 1) I identified the most common Ebonics-based phonological, syntactical and rhetorical patterns; 2) I read through each African and African American student's essay sentence by sentence; 3) I put excerpts from these sentences into those categories corresponding to the most common African-based phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical patterns; 4) I selected the clearest examples of each of these patterns for me as a researcher to identify; and 4) I provided closer readings of texts based on these patterns that I found to be especially meaningful as a teacher-researcher.

When identifying the phonological and syntactical patterns I reference Lisa Green ("What is African American English") and Geneva Smitherman (*Talkin and Testifyin*). Based on this scholarship, the following is a summary of the most common phonological patterns that I sought to code from student texts: 1) the absence of final consonant where *in'* or */in/* is used for *ing*;[20] the initial voiced */th/* sound being written as the */d/* sound; 2) the absence of the middle and final consonants; 3) contraction of *going to* being pronounced as *gon'*; and 4) the vowel plus */ng/* is rendered as */ang/*.

In *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*, Smitherman states: "In linguistic environments where the initial *th* sound is voiceless, it is pronounced the same way as in white speech, as in *thought*, which is always *thought* (not *dought*), or thing, which is thing, or more usually *thang* (not *ding* or *dang*)" (17). In addition, the vowel plus */ng/* in *thing*, for example, is rendered as *thang*. The *ang* sound as opposed to the *ing*

[20] While other varieties of English (including Southern White English and Appalachian English) also drop the *g* in the */ing/* sound, what is distinctive for Ebonics speakers is that most final consonants are absent, whereas the *g* is the only final consonant dropped in other varieties of English.

sound pattern used in students' texts also consistently follows the phonological conventions associated with Ebonics. With the case of */ing/*, in many cases, the final consonant */g/* is absent, and */in/* (or *in'*) is used instead (17). In her overview of the Ebonics phonological rules, Lisa Green further states that

> AAE [African American English] speakers produce *t* and *f* (voiceless) sounds in environments where voiceless *th* occurs in other varieties of English but produce *d* and *v* (voiced sounds) in environments where voiced *th* occurs in other varieties of English. Also, AAE speakers often produce the *d* sound at the beginning of a word where voiced th occurs in other varieties of English (cf. *dese* and *these*), but they usually produce voiceless th sounds at the beginning of all words in which it occurs in other varieties of English. (86)

When dealing with syntax I coded for the following most common Ebonics-based syntactical patterns that existed across African American students' texts: 1) the presence of zero copula ø;[21] 2) the use of the habitual *be* verb; 3) zero *s* form in subject agreement and/or verb conjugation; and 4) the use of multiple negation. When identifying the rules governing Ebonics sentence patterns, several sources in sociolinguistics and rhetoric and composition have written extensively on the presence of the zero copula (ø) and habitual *be* verb rules. In brief, the zero copula (ø) refers to the absence of any conjugation of the verb *to be* (e.g. "he skinny"). The habitual *be* verb refers to conditions where the action

[21] I acknowledge linguistic debates concerning whether or not certain phonological and syntactical features were deleted or absent in Ebonics. Some linguists argue that the deletion of certain sound patterns or syntactical structures implies that these patterns were dropped from the English language, while those who posit these patterns as absent, argue that since Ebonics is not derived from English, such patterns (including the zero copula) could never have been dropped, and therefore are simply absent (Smitherman "Dat Teacher"). Because I subscribe to the Africologist theory of Ebonics (see chapter 2), I choose to use the term "absent".

occurs habitually (e.g. "I be analyzing data" which means, "I analyze data on a continuous basis.") (Smitherman19). When dealing with multiple negations in sentences, Smitherman states the rule very simply: In Ebonics, "if the statement consists of only *one* sentence, negate every item..." (*Testifyin* 31)

When identifying the rhetorical patterns, I reference several of the works of AAR reviewed previously in this chapter (Richardson and Gilyard; Ball; Canagarajah), in addition to some scholarship referenced in Smitherman's most recent book, *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans*. Using these works as references, I then looked for and identified similar patterns that were used in my six African and African American students' four major writing assignments and compiled a list of the most common rhetorical patterns. They include: 1) the use of field dependency or person-centered arguments, which pertain to the idea of "personalizing phenomena" (Gilyard and Richardson; Canagarajah); 2) identifying shared cultural values of community consciousness (Gilyard and Richardson; Ball); 3) the use of mimicry where African American students employ white academic language and conventions (Canagarajah; Gilyard and Richardson); and 4) the use of imagery and provocative language (Gilyard and Richardson). There were occasional uses of signifying (Gilyard and Richardson).

After my initial coding of African American students' texts, I identified examples of the Ebonics-based patterns, the students who used them, and the essays in which students employed them. On many occasions, there were multiple uses of various Ebonics phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical patterns within the same sentence or excerpt from African and African American students' texts. Such passages with multiple uses that I found particularly meaningful as a researcher, and those passages that I found

to have significant implications for composition teachers, I chose to analyze more extensively. Once the patterns were identified, and examples were recorded, I provided rhetorical analysis of particular students' texts to speak to the ways that writing teachers may learn and benefit from the discussion and implementation of Afrocentricity and Ebonics.

The following is example of a student text where I coded for multiple uses of Ebonics phonological, syntactical and rhetorical patterns. The student text is a poem that was included in the final multigenre project. She writes:

> Hey how y'all doin
> Dey be some great thangs happenin
> I learned Ebonics in ma WRA class
> Now, I be speakin it like crazy
> Do you wanna try it out?
> It be fun, trust me
> Although ma teacher be interesting
> She goofy wit dose projects sometimes
> Dey be fun though
> It be killin me so bad ...

With this particular excerpt, I coded line-by-line as opposed to sentence-by-sentence, since the genre in which the student writes is a poem. In the first line, I coded "doin" as a phonological feature where */in/* is used for *ing*. In the second line ["Dey be some great thangs happenin"], multiple Ebonics-based phonological features are present. The student first substitutes the */d/* sound for the */th/* sound in "dey.". Next the vowel plus */ng/* in *thing*, for example, is rendered as *thang*. And, she also substitutes the */in/* for */ing/* in "happenin" again. With regard to syntax, she makes use of the habitual *be* verb when she writes, "*be* some great *thangs happenin.*" The next line does not include any apparent Ebonics-based phonological, syntactical, or rhetorical patterns. The fourth line includes the habitual *be* verb again when she writes, "Now, I *be* speakin it like crazy." The fifth

line doesn't include any apparent Ebonics-based patterns again, and the sixth and seventh lines employ the habitual *be* verb when she writes, "It *be* funny" and "Although ma teacher *be* interesting." The eighth line is one of a few occasional examples of signifying, an African American rhetorical pattern that employs an "oppositional logical" or "reliance on reader's knowledge of implicit assumption that is taken to be common knowledge" (Gilyard and Richardson 42). The student signifies when writing, "she goofy," when she makes reference to the instructor's (me) "goofy" demeanor. Such a reference assumes that readers are familiar with either the individual teacher's disposition in the class or the disposition of nerdy or goofy English/composition teachers in general. The final two lines include additional incorporations of the habitual *be* [e.gs "dey *be* fun though" and "It *be* killing me so bad...", and the next to last line substitutes the */d/* sound for the */th/* sound when she writes, "*dey* be fun...". Using an example such as the previous student's demonstrates the ways that my students execute multiple Ebonics-based patterns in a given passage on multiple occasions. The execution of Ebonics-based patterns can further be identified as a writing skill that demonstrates the student's ability to engage both Ebonics and Standard English in writing situations that she deems appropriate.

To determine how African American students employ such Ebonics-based patterns rhetorically and deliberately, I also rely on textual artifacts of students' essays. I chose to look at texts as opposed to merely interviewing students and asking them about their linguistic choices because I wanted to see how students acknowledge and execute these patterns through the act of writing, and within the context of their own essays. Such a move demonstrates complex intellectual skills and knowledge that not only shows that

students have learned the structural and rhetorical features of Ebonics, but also suggests that they know how and when to apply them for contexts that they determine are most appropriate. I look for students' explicit reference and identification of such phonological, syntactical, and/or rhetorical patterns in their own writing. For example, later on in the previous student's poem, she writes: "It was very important/Learnin about de history/Rhetorical features of AAVE/Fo example: check dis out/Beyoncé be braggin dat /She no longer a single lady." The student not only directly addresses rhetorical features, but also demonstrates her ability to apply them when she provides an example of Beyoncé and braggadocio (Redd and Schuster Webb). She also makes a cultural reference to Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" song by saying that Beyoncé is no longer single herself (she recently married rapper Jay-Z), thus illustrating the cultural knowledge that members of the African American community and her generation share with music. (This poem will be analyzed with greater detail in the next chapter.)

Another way that I coded for students' use of Ebonics rhetorically is by looking at the ways that they style shift in their own essays. If they switched back and forth between different styles and phonological and syntactical patterns, and explained the purposes for doing so, I interpreted their use of Ebonics to be a deliberate and rhetorical act. Consider the following example:

> We've all seen comedy sketches that point out the one African American who works in the office building among his white coworkers. After a board meeting, everyone starts slapping high fives giving pats on the back and say encouraging things like "Good job" and "Way to go." When the congratulations get to the lone African American in the office his coworkers switch to Ebonics and say things like "Dats what I'm talkin' bout, brotha," as if he doesn't understand Standard English.

When the student writes, "Dats what I'm talkin' bout, brotha," he does so deliberately and purposefully in order to show that necessities of being able to code-switch between

Ebonics phonology, general words and phrases, and Standard English. Thus, when students use Ebonics rhetorically, they understand the situations that they identify as requiring Ebonics for certain communicative circles, where they feel it to be accepted and appropriate. Such purposeful decisions are often applied explicitly in their essays.

In contrast to the system used to code African and African American students' texts, a different system of coding was used when dealing with students' disciplinary literacies texts. When reading students' disciplinary literacies essays, I coded for common themes across students' responses to the state of Ebonics in the field. With both African American students' essays and all students I wanted to see what writing practices students gained and identified through expository texts. The differences between looking at African American students' texts and all students' texts exist in the writing contexts that I was interested in examining as executions of those practices. With African American students' texts I wanted to see how they engaged writing practices across assignments. With all students, I wanted to investigate the ways in which they engaged writing practices with one specific assignment in relationship to my institution's programmatic goals.

The themes that I identified are the most common ones discussed in students' disciplinary literacies essays. More specifically, the themes that I coded for were: 1) identified strengths and weaknesses of the CCCC SRTOL) Resolution; 2) an acknowledgment of explicit pedagogical and curricular approaches used for implementing Ebonics; 3) the continued demand for changes in teachers' attitudes regarding Ebonics; 4) identification of disciplinary progress and the need for more progress; and 5) identification of research methods and methodologies used to study

Ebonics. Common themes in students' responses will speak to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that students gain and identified through the investigation of Ebonics. The disciplinary literacies assignment is then intended to measure students' knowledge and attitudes about Ebonics, in addition to their knowledge and attitudes about Composition Studies. The ways in which they discuss both Ebonics and the field will be used to measure particular writing and research related skills. Such findings will be used to identify the benefits and limitations of the Afrocentric approach used to teach about Ebonics, the field, and, in essence, writing.

Based on all the students who granted me permission to cite evidence from their disciplinary literacies essays, I was able to code each student's response into one or more of the aforementioned categories. For each theme I referenced a few examples in order demonstrate and analyze the ways that students talk about Ebonics in the field. Based on students' discussions, I then noted strengths and areas for improvement in their responses in order to assess the relationship between their own work and the shared learning goals. For example, a student who stated that there are limited explicit pedagogical strategies included in the CCCC SRTOL document, but did not provide any evidence or citations of this, shows that particular research skills and processes are lacking. Or, a student who frequently incorrectly cited a source in MLA or another citation system, demonstrates that while the student understands "the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles," they have demonstrated limited proficiency in "at least one citation system" (*Guidebook* 4). Such examples reveal the skills that students are most proficient at, and those skills that require improvement.

Consider the following example of how I coded a theme from a student's text and assessed their work in relationship to the shared learning goals. The student writes:

> Year after year, more and more journals are popping up about the composition studies field and the analysis of what needs to be done for all students to be receiving equal opportunity education and competing against each other in the same level. [...] Writing a paper for a required college class, which focuses mainly on AAVE, and learning about its rhetorical and linguistic features, it is clear that there has definitely been improvement on appropriation of this English variety since the 1970s...

The central idea in the previous excerpt is that progress has been made in the field concerning the study of Ebonics though more "work needs to be done for all students to be receiving equal opportunity education and competing against each other in the same level." Therefore, I place this excerpt into the identification of disciplinary progress and the need for more progress category. What is missing from this paragraph (and the rest of the essay) is a detailed discussion of what this progress looks like, and specific areas for making more progress. In relationship to the shared learning goals that discuss writing and research processes, I conclude that although the student can identify and locate particular themes, improvement is needed in his/her ability to "apply methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding" (*Guidebook* 4). In other words, the student simply summarizes key findings in the field but builds limited knowledge since solutions for additional progress are not offered. She indicates that she has learned a lot from the research process when she writes: "Writing a paper for a required college class [...], it is clear that there has definitely been improvement" but doesn't really specify the new knowledge that (s)he has learned or generated.

When dealing with student texts, my coding procedures were strictly qualitative; in contrast, when looking at all students' attitudes concerning Ebonics in the language attitudinal questionnaire, I relied primarily on quantitative analysis although some

qualitative elements are included. Qualitative data require students to write open-ended responses regarding their attitudes toward Ebonics. I perceived students who saw Ebonics as acceptable for particular communicative contexts as having more favorable attitudes toward the appropriateness of language, and those who viewed Ebonics as unacceptable as having less favorable attitudes toward the appropriateness of the language. For example, if a student writes, "If the teachers [sic] ok with it then I think it's totally fine," the student is perceived as having a positive reaction toward the appropriateness of Ebonics. In short, each method of data collection, student texts and the language attitudinal questionnaire, examines the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of first-year writing students in an Afrocentric curriculum. Each is critical because they demonstrate students' ability to execute particular writing skills, their ability to make sense of those skills being/not being executed, and the relationships that exist between accomplishing the writing skills designated by the institution's program and using a specialized non-traditional Ebonics-based approach to teach those writing skills. If Ebonics is used as a heuristic for teaching writing, then attitudes toward the language must also be addressed.

Quantitative results from both pre and post questionnaires were also tallied to count the number of students who had more or less favorable attitudes toward the appropriateness of Ebonics at the beginning and end of the course. Quantitative-specific questions ask students to rate the appropriateness of speakers and writers using Ebonics in particular contexts, with 1, being not appropriate at all; 2, being somewhat appropriate (but not definitely appropriate); 3, being definitely appropriate (but not extremely appropriate); and 4, being extremely appropriate. If students rated the use of Ebonics as a

1, then they were perceived as having less favorable reactions toward the appropriateness of Ebonics. Questions three and four request that students use this rating system:

3. Read the following passage and respond to the set of questions following this passage:

> Derrick is a fellow student in your English composition class.[22] When the instructor asked for Derrick's response to a required reading, Derrick replied: "I ain' really get da gist of't. I mean de author just be goin' round and round in circles; he kinda be sayin' da same thang over and over. It just don' make no kind of sense to me."

In the series of questions below, 1) circle the number which most closely corresponds to your reaction, and 2) explain your responses.
KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

1. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:
   1 2 3 4
   Explain:

2. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class.
   1 2 3 4
   Explain:

3. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:
   1 2 3 4
   Explain:

4. Listen to the following audio recording and respond to the following questions:[23]
   KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate
   1. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:
      1 2 3 4
      Explain:

   2. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class:
      1 2 3 4
      Explain:

   3. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:
      1 2 3 4

[22] Students may interpret this question to mean in the WRA 125 course, or in any given composition classroom.

[23] Because some speakers may have different attitudes toward spoken and written Ebonics, an audio-taped version of the text written in the previous question was recorded for students to listen to in order to see if any attitudes toward the spoken and written texts differed.

Explain:

In sum, the questionnaire is intended to measure all students' attitudes about Ebonics at the beginning and end of the course. I draw on these questions to assess students' knowledge of, and attitudes toward, Ebonics at the beginning and end of the course. I wanted to see how what students have learned about Ebonics at the end of the course influences both their own writing skills and styles, in addition to their favorable or less favorable attitudes toward the language. I included the data collection and analysis in addition to student texts because the questionnaire provides a more direct and concrete accounting for what students know at the beginning of the semester, and what they learned by the end of the semester. Such a method is intended to show the benefits of Afrocentricity for all students.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter situates my own work with teacher-research within the context of four previous classroom and teacher-research studies on African American students. Based on these four studies I have found a limited focus on the use of Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns strategically and rhetorically, in addition to the focus being only on African American students. I extend these composition teacher and classroom-research studies by 1) also including a discussion of phonology and African and African American students' uses of Ebonics phonology and syntax purposefully, and 2) including data from non-Black students that point to how they might benefit also from Afrocentric pedagogy. The next chapter provides data results of African and African

American students' work with the Afrocentric curriculum; the following chapter provides results from all students.

Chapter 4

HOW AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS BE WRITIN'

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, many teacher and classroom-research studies on African American students focus either on how students employ Ebonics-based syntactical features or on how students employ Ebonics-based rhetorical features in student writing. More recently, however, research has focused on the use of African-based rhetorical patterns (Richardson and Gilyard; Ball; Canagarajah), since the use of African American students' Ebonics-based syntactical features has declined over the past decades (Smitherman "Black English"). Previous research on African American students' ability to draw on Africanized patterns in expository writing often focuses on writing that is performed in limited contexts including essay exams (Gilyard and Richardson; Fogel and Erhl; Smitherman), email/digital textural genres (Canagarajah "Safe House"; Kynard "Wanted"); or creative writing-based assignments (Ball "Expository"). This study focuses on writing performed across assignments that require a diversity of contexts, genres, and writing situations. Based on the research gathered from my students, however, I argue that 1) African and African American students draw upon Ebonics-based syntactical, phonological, and rhetorical patterns in appropriate and purposeful ways, and 2) their ability to employ Ebonics phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical patterns across different genres and assignments speaks to their rhetorical sophistication. In other words, in ways that expand findings from previous studies, I argue here that

African and African American students can leverage both the structural and rhetorical features of Ebonics and then use them across multiple contexts, genres, and writing situations.

To build on this argument, I first provide discussion and analysis of the ways in which African and African American students manipulate Ebonics structural features (including phonology and syntax) in highly purposeful ways across different writing assignments and writing situations.[24] Following this, the second section of this chapter highlights the ways that African American students manipulate phonology and syntax in their multigenre essays. In doing so, I illustrate the complexities associated with African and African American students' abilities to negotiate particular linguistic choices across the different genres and writing situations present in the same writing assignment. Following the second section, I show how African and African American students employ Ebonics rhetorical patterns across different writing assignments and contexts. To provide more depth to the discussion, the final section shows how one particular student strategically employs Ebonics phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical features in a disciplinary literacy research assignment. His ability to execute each of these features in a literature review-focused research paper on Ebonics and rhetoric and composition scholarship speaks volumes to the ways that Ebonics-based practices become executed in expository writing. In essence, what this chapter says about African and African American student-writers is that they are capable of using Africanized forms of expression in situations that often have not been understood as appropriate, and that such forms of expression can be used successfully across writing situations and genres where

[24] See Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of these assignments.

students have typically not been shown as successful when using Ebonics in these situations.

4.2 Structural Features of Ebonics: Students' Africanized Phonological and Syntactical Patterns

When African and African American students employ Ebonics phonological and syntactical features, they often do so for self-identified purposes, purposes that I interpret as the strategic and rhetorical manipulation of Ebonics phonology and syntax. I focus first on phonology in this section because limited scholarship in rhetoric and composition directly analyses the ways that African American students use Ebonics phonological patterns; most studies focus on either African American students' use of Ebonics syntax (Richardson; Smitherman "Black English; Fogel and Ehrl), or African American students' use of Ebonics rhetorical patterns (Ball; Canagarajah; Richardson and Gilyard). As discussed in Chapter 3, I focus on the following Ebonics-based phonological patterns: The absence of final consonants in sound clusters; the initial voiced /th/ sound being pronounced as the /d/ sound; the absence of the middle and final *r*; the contraction of *going to* being pronounced as *gon'*; and the vowel *i* plus */ng/* sound being pronounced as */ang/*.

In my analysis, I also focus on the following Ebonics syntactical features: the presence of zero copula (ø); the presence of the habitual *be* verb; the use of the third person singular verb form; and the presence of double or multiple negation. By identifying and analyzing both phonological and syntactical features, I demonstrate the ways that African American students employ these features across writing assignments

and contexts, and the purposes that they identify for employing such features. Such a move illustrates sophisticated familiarity with these Ebonics-based features, in addition to students' profound ability to execute Ebonics patterns for different purposes and contexts. Furthermore, such purposes that students identify for executing particular Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns include examples where students want to convey a specific idea or phenomenon; to define a specific word, phrase or idea; to illustrate examples of code-switching; or to execute, identify, and/or analyze the genres that students determine necessary for using Ebonics phonology and/or syntax.

Uses of Ebonics Phonology and Syntax to Convey a Specific Idea or Phenomenon

On many occasions, African American students rely on Ebonics phonological and/or syntactical patterns to help illustrate a specific point or idea. Such choices demonstrate the purposefulness associated with employing these patterns strategically. The following examples from Marquise's writing illustrate the ways in which students often use Ebonics phonological and/or syntactical patterns in to illustrate specific points and ideas.[25] These examples are used by Marquise across three different writing assignments. The assignments in which the patterns were used are provided and identified in parenthesis:

[25] As addressed in Chapter 3, six African and African American students participated in this study. These participants are identified by the following names: Marquise, Bola, Candace, Jordan, Marcus, and Antonice. Bola is African; all other students are African American. One student, Marquise, is identified by pseudonym. All other students are identified by first name. Each participant in this study employed one or more Ebonics structural and/or rhetorical/discursive patterns in written essay assignments. Thus, excerpts of particular patterns from students' texts will be identified by students' first names.

Marquise:
"Why yall make it so hard to undastand my talkin," is what my grandfather always says when the younger family members tilt their heads, lost in confusion when having a conversation with him. (Literacy Autobiography Assignment)

The thing about that, people, whether it's family or complete strangers, lack patience to analyze my unique form of speech. For example, I might use AAE pronunciations along with formal English, like when I speak to my mother, I may say, "momma, what sto' do you be getting groceries from?" (Literacy Autobiography Assignment)

"U need to shut yo big head up befo' I come do it 4 ya!" is something that my friend Kiaira would tell me when I scold her excessive partying. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

The world has become so standardized that even as I type, I am being criticized for my use of grammatical features (dis freakin' spell check is irritatin'). (Disicplinary Literacies Assignment) For example, if I were to write a statement once in Standard English (SE) and also in AAVE, which would the general audience respond to more quickly? The SE form of the statement without a doubt! Here is an example:

We always be ova our grandma house, eatin' up her food.
We're always over at our grandmother's house, eating all her food.
(Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

With each example, Marquise uses multiple Ebonics phonological patterns [e.gs.; "dis *freakin* spell check is *irritatin* "; "We always be *ova* our grandma house"] (where the /ing/ is rendered as /in/ and the /o/ rendered as *a*); he also uses the habitual be verb [e.g. "...what *sto'* do you *be gettin* these groceries from"]. In the last example, Marquise also the habitual be verb, but does so redundantly [e.g. "We always be ova our grandma house, *eatin'* up her food."]. Because it is implied that the subject (in this case, *we*) is habitually over grandma's house, the word *always* is optional, and therefore, makes the sentence redundant. Instead, the sentence could simply say, "we be ova our grandma house." However, Marquise is also correct in omitting the *s* from the word *grandma* to show possession.

In each example, Marquise identifies the reasons as to why the Ebonics form of certain words and sentences is used. Marquise uses Ebonics phonology to indicate how his grandparents sound and speak. Marquise so uses Ebonics phonology and syntax to

demonstrate how he talks in his home language with his mother, when writing, "*sto*'" and "you *be gettin...*" What is also interesting is how Marquise similarly explains how his friend would write to him in an instant message using the absence of final consonants [e.g "U need to shut *yo* big head up *befo'* I come do it 4 *ya*!"]. The linguistic choices used in his disciplinary literacies essay are perhaps the most sophisticated and complex because Marquise does not merely write how someone would say or write a text to him in Ebonics; instead, Marquise provides a critique of how Microsoft Word often autocorrects the spelling of certain words to make them consistent with Standard English (SE), when he deliberately intends for the word to be written in Ebonics. To illustrate this idea, Marquise includes in parenthesis, "dis freakin' spell check is irritatin'." Marquise's ability to manipulate different Ebonics phonological rules for specific purposes, and explain these purposes in writing, shows knowledge and awareness of several of the structural patterns of Ebonics, in addition to an astute ability to execute these patterns in strategically determined contexts for specific purposes.

Using Ebonics Phonology and Syntax to Define a Word, Phrase, or Idea

On many occasions, African American students employ Ebonics to help explain or define a word, phrase, or idea. This practice was most often executed in students' literacy autobiographies. Because the first assignment asks students to identify the differences between their home and school languages, for Ebonics speakers whose home languages they identify as different from SE, one might expect to find specific examples of these differences. Furthermore, because this assignment provides students with the option of conducting contrastive analysis of their home and school language varieties, many African American students provided sentences or phrases written in Ebonics prior

to translating their meanings into SE. In several cases, the students introduce a term, sentence, or phrase, and then translate the meanings for those most familiar with the oral conventions associated with SE (students' uses of specific phrases that demonstrate shared cultural understandings will be discussed later in this chapter). Here are a few examples that illustrate this move:

> Marquise:
> The term "city slicker" had a close relation to the different dialects spoken by African Americans in the 20th century. For example, when a man from a major city, such as Chicago or New York, visited family in the south, he would be immediately ostracized by the community, based on his appearance and his formal way of speaking. The elders would call him "cityfied," in which they believe he couldn't survive without the conveniences of the city.
>
> Marcus:
> She ended up going upstairs, grabbing me by the ear, and bringing me downstairs. She told me to grab a *twitch* (branch) off the tree.
>
> Jordan:
> *"Was good, cuz?"* was a popular phrase that was spoken amongst my classmates. I would usually answer back in a similar style saying: *"Not much. Sup witchu?"* This was not the preferred style for me, but I didn't want to be anymore of an outcast than I already was.

With each of these examples, the students define a word, phrase, or sentence used in Ebonics-based discourse prior to analyzing its overall meaning. With the first example, Marquise introduces the term, "city-slicker" (and later "cityfied"), provides an example of its application, and then explains the significance of the term in his own literacy history. With the second example, Marcus chooses to translate the term "twitch" (also known as, "switch") into the SE by putting "branch" in parenthesis. With the final example, Jordan provides examples of phrases in Ebonics, in addition to Ebonics syntax. The first phrase, "Was good, cuz," means, "How are you doing," with *cuz* being short for *cousin*. (Now to be clear, the person need not be your actual cousin to be referred to as a *cuz*. This phrase originated in response to the notion of Black folk having many biological and extended family). The next term and sentences, "Not much. Sup witchu"

reflect Ebonics-based grammatical and phonological conventions. If we translate, "sup witchu" into SE, meaning "What is up with you," or "What's going on," we notice the absence of the *to be* verb, also known as the zero copula. Notice with Jordan's example, however, he does not carry contrastive analysis out completely because no translation into SE is provided; nonetheless, his example illustrates how students understand the meanings of different terms, phrases, and sentences in Ebonics and SE. The fact that students provide words, phrases, and/or sentences in Ebonics demonstrates their ability to use Ebonics purposefully as they translate their meanings in Standard English.

Use of Ebonics Phonology and Syntax to Illustrate Examples of Code-switching

While in some cases, students identified particular terms and sentences in Ebonics prior to explaining their meanings in SE, other students illustrate how they manipulate Ebonics or SE in both orally and written discourses by discussing code-switching in their literacy autobiographies. In other words, African and African American students consciously write how they speak and write in Ebonics for certain contexts and SE for other contexts. The follow examples discuss African American students' familiarity with and awareness of code-switching:

> *Marquise:*
> I guess it wasn't one of my smart moments to assume that people have the inability to adapt. Now in my case, people believe that my speech is as formal as it can get, in which I use the exact forms of words, as if I'm an avid reader of Webster's Dictionary. The thing about that, people, whether it's family or complete strangers, lack patience to analyze my unique form of speech. For example, I might use AAE pronunciations along with formal English, like when I speak to my mother, I may say, "momma, what sto' do you be getting groceries from?" That seems to occur naturally (Yet they say that I speak white...ok). The thing that I believe is the most funniest is how my brothers mock my speech, but it's naturally being mixed into their own... To sum it up, I must say that Smitherman's writings, as well as Redd and Schuster-Webb opened my eyes to how AAE can be considered as an official language.

> *Candace:*
> My mother explained to me that I had to learn to use my "business voice" on my essay or report that needed to be turned into a professor or teacher. She explained that my "business voice" had to sound like "white peoples voice" when I wrote papers, essays or even when speaking to people

> outside of my city. It wasn't hard for me to figure out what "white people voice" sounded like. I could tell the difference because of where I lived... The way they spoke when my mother and I went shopping sounded a lot clearer and different than how people sounded in Detroit... My mother would use her "white peoples voice" when she was talking to my doctor, the salesman in Gross Pointe, even some of the bill collectors. I was impressed at how she would say, "Candace, get in here and do dees dishes now" but when the phone rang, she would say," Hello. Johnson's residence, Sharon speaking". The passage in our "Reader for Writers" book hit right on the nose when Kieth Gilyard told how his mother was a "...bidalectal speaker, capable of producing Black Language and Standard English" (28). My mother was the master of that, and she often got her way when she did it.
>
> Jordan:
> If we take a step backward and look at the situation from a different standpoint we may see where issues may stem from this code switching. We've all seen comedy sketches that point out the one African American who works in the office building among his white coworkers. After a board meeting, everyone starts slapping high fives giving pats on the back and say encouraging things like "Good job" and "Way to go." When the congratulations get to the lone African American in the office his coworkers switch to Ebonics and say things like "Dats what I'm talkin' bout, brotha," as if he doesn't understand Standard English. Do you really think that the African American doesn't understand Standard English? There's a possibility that he speaks Standard English just as fluently as his coworkers. The same could be said to African Americans who switch from Ebonics to Standard English when they talk to their waiter or their boss. There's a good possibility that they have an understanding of Ebonics and its rules of syntax. The delivery of the content probably doesn't matter as long as the proper key words are in place.

What is quite interesting about each of the previous examples is not only African American students' ability to identify and understand the certain contexts that require Ebonics or SE, but also, the ways that they actually—and quite deliberately—code-switch in written discourse. These contexts are those that they choose to identify as appropriate or not. To be clear, the fact that students determine the contexts and situations that require them to code-switch is not intended to suggest that for those contexts and situations when they choose not to use Ebonics, that Standard English is the only language variety that is appropriate. With the first example, Marquise writes the sentence, "momma, what sto' do you be getting groceries from," in Ebonics prior to explaining the how we code-switches and translates into SE. Candace similarly writes the sentence, "Candace, get in here and do dees dishes now" in Ebonics prior to explaining how her momma be switchin to her "business voice." Jordan writes, "Dats what I'm talkin' bout,

brotha," prior to explaining how this sentence is viewed appropriately or inappropriately depending on the context and audience.

What each of these examples further tell us is that 1) my African and African American students can use examples written in their home languages to show how they code-switch, 2) they are consciously aware of audience expectations that *may* require them to code-switch for certain situations, and perhaps, most importantly, 3) that they can write strategically and deliberately in Ebonics as they determine which circumstances demand its necessity. In other words, if students are expected to understand the concept of code-switching, and if they are expected to provide examples of the ways in which they code-switch, then such circumstances must also require them to employ Ebonics in their texts if they are to explain how they shift from Ebonics to SE depending on oral and written discourse. What makes the previous excerpts exceptionally rich is the fact that these students don't merely tell us that they code-switch in different contexts; instead, they *show* us how they code-switch, the purposes for code-switching, and the rhetorical tools and skills necessary to make the switch successful.

Use of Ebonics to Execute, Identify, and/or Analyze Ideas across the Different Genres

In many cases, students specifically identify specific genres that they find necessary for making particular linguistic choices. Previous discussions of linguistic decisions addressed spoken discourse; however, linguistic choices must often be negotiated with both print and digital genres. In the following example, Marquise offers a different example of a conversation from an American Online Instant Messaging (AIM) text message conversation with a friend in order to demonstrate the differences between the way he writes at home and at school for his own literacy autobiography paper:

Kiaira DatDeal at 10:50pm September 30
lol o wow...interestin lol
im sure u can find sumbode in hubbard lol
Marquise E at 10:52pm September 30
oh thats mad funny..like akers aint hood 2
Kiaira DatDeal at 10:53pm September 30
lol it aint fa real fa real...but sumtimes i cant tell who live in hubbard and akers..we all b in both lol
Marquise E at 10:58pm September 30
yeah they kinda mellow ova there. did u go 2 the advantage? the other two was there…
Kiaira DatDeal at 10:59pm September 30
naw i aint go..i juss stayed in ma room watched a movie and fell asleep lol
Marquise E at 11:01pm September 30
i wish i could pass out like dat
Kiaira DatDeal at 11:13pm September 30
Lol why u make it seem like i gotta sleepin problem or sumthin...shyt i aint go to sleep till dis mornin lol
Marquise E at 11:18pm September 30
naw, u put that image in my head...passin out walkin down the street
Kiaira DatDeal at 11:19pm September 30
lol never...i b tired but not enough to pass out lol

In the previous excerpt, it is clear that for Marquise, his use of Ebonics in home environments consists primarily of phonological features, although a few examples of the Ebonics syntactical conventions are used. In the first line of his message, we notice the *in* (*/In/*) sound of the word, "interesting"; in other examples, he writes "sleepin," "sumthin," "passin," and "walkin." Marquise also makes use of the */d/* sound for voiced *th* sound with "dat," and substitutes the *a* sound with words like "ova," "fa" (for), "gotta," and "ma" (my). What we also notice with Marquise is the fact that he applies the *a* phonological rule to sounds to which that phonological rule does not generally apply in Ebonics (for example, in Ebonics *fo'* would typically be the correct use of *for*). Perhaps this might suggest an example of hypercorrection, where the over application of the Ebonics rule is applied to another Ebonics rule. Although final consonants are absent in Ebonics, the spelling of *fa* should be *fo* to be considered correct in Ebonics, since only the final consonant *r* is absent, and not the vowel *o*. We are typically accustomed to examples of hypercorrection from Ebonics students when they over apply a Standard

English rule to other sentences written in SE. We also see a couple examples of habitual *be* verb (Ebonics syntax) in the previous excerpt, where Marquise writes "we all b in both" and "i b tired but not enough to pass out". Marquise's examples are unique because while they make use of the habitual *be* verb, the spellings of *be* (*b*) are consistent with the conventions of text messaging/digital language. Thus, Marquise's use of Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns are complicated by the fact that he also employs linguistic patterns consistent with digital language, a finding that further demonstrates the linguistic varieties that Marquise is capable of using on multiple occasions.

Literacy autobiographies, however, are not the only contexts in which students demonstrate their ability to execute specific Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns. Students also executed the following Ebonics phonological rules in their cultural literacies and disciplinary literacies essays: the absence of final consonant, where *in'* or */In/* is used for *ing*; the absence of the middle and final *r*; the initial /th/ being rendered as /d/; and the contraction of *going to* rendered as *gon'*. The fact that students are able to execute Ebonics phonological patterns across writing assignments demonstrates their ability to determine the writing contexts necessary for its usage. Additional examples of students' execution of these patterns included the following:[26]

> Bola:
> For instance, I posted my [facebook] status as [...] is *workin'* on a project. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> "U luk sassy? Whose' *de* lucki dude" (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> Marquise:
> "U need to shut *yo* big head up *befo'* I come do it 4 *ya* (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> We always *be ova* our grandma house, *eatin'* up her food. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

[26] Words are italicized to assist readers in identifying the phonological or grammatical rule being employed.

And I aint *gon' b* surprised (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

Naw dat ain't a good look, *fa* real! (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

The first example from Bola ["I posted on my [facebook] status..."] is worth discussing because Bola identifies a genre (electronic writing on facebook/web page) and then uses the phonological pattern *in'* in order to illustrate how using this pattern is appropriate for the genre and rhetorical situation, where multiple languages and varieties of English are appropriate—and at times expected—on a platform like facebook.

Ebonics syntactical features were used, but minimally in students' cultural literacies and disciplinary literacies assignments. They include the third person singular verb form, and double or multiple negation. The following two examples are illustrative of those rules:

Third person singular Verb
Jordan:
[...] nearly everyone on KanYe West's blog *use* some form of AAVE's rhetorical or grammatical features that [...] reveal their racial affiliation. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

Multiple Negation
Marquise:
Naw dat ain't a good look, fa real! (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

While Ebonics phonological and syntactical patterns were used across writing assignments, they were used most frequently in African American students' literacy autobiographies. Perhaps this was because the autobiography as a genre was most personal and familiar (since students were writing about themselves), and students felt most comfortable experimenting with such patterns in more familial contexts

4.3 Structural Features of Ebonics in Multigenre Situations

Up until this point, I have illustrated the ways that African and African American students use Ebonics structural practices across different writing situations, genres, and assignments. My students also demonstrated their ability to manipulate Ebonics or SE both strategically rhetorically in the final multigenre essay projects. I find that a discussion of the multigenre essay is worth addressing in greater detail because through these texts, students demonstrate not only that they can execute different linguistic practices across different writing assignments, but more importantly, that they can execute and make particular linguistic decisions across different genres and writing situations in the same assignment. Depending on the genres employed, students strategically and carefully selected when they felt that writing in Ebonics was most appropriate for the genre, and when they saw writing in SE as most appropriate. The following is an example of the actual email offering an email text that Bola wrote creatively for her multigenre essay. In this text she employs Ebonics phonological features in order to demonstrate AAVE appropriation:

> When i didnt see ur reply from the email i sent concerning rudy, i understood u be really busy and may have not read it. anyway i be here workin' ma butt off and u know rudy be kind of expecting something from me and i promised her dat I'll be checkin' her out soon, but i gave her a silly excuse and told her abt dis weekend dat i had a little something to handle and she be complainin' to me about a couple of her problems and i saw with her.i do really wanna help this bitch .i wish i could help just dat ma hands are tight. Dear anyhow like u told me. If it hard on ur side don stress urself to help me help her coz u have already helped me enough .anyway I be waitin on ur reply. luv u and miss her. i still really luv dis chick (rudy). While u keep doin' ya thang. take care...
>
> --- En date de : Lun 24.11.08, ndifontah bola *<kel_cbola@yahoo.com>* a écrit :
>
> De: ndifontah bola <kel_cbola@yahoo.com>
> Objet: Re: hey dear
> À: censiper@yahoo.fr
> Date: Lundi 24 Novembre 2008, 19h59
>
> Hey dear, how r u? i guess ok and nothin' much. if so den i'm so happy for u as alway. well dear sorry i wasn't able to read my emails till today, and i found out dat u sent me a mail concernin'

> rudy, but i didn't see it til today. Yeah i heard from Fritz and Pachinko dat y'all are rehearsin' fo a party. dats great. i'm so proud of y'all. Anyway i'll try ma best wit wat i can help with, and try to help wit dat befo the 11th. Take great care of urself and remain blessed. Remember i luv and miss u so bad. Imma bounce now. Talk to ya later.

The previous email correspondences demonstrate Bola's multilingual abilities as she employs three different languages all at the same time. This passage is first interesting, because portions of the email text are written in French [e.g. a écrit, which means, "written by"]. This demonstrates that the default language for Bola's messages is French. In her literacy autobiography, Bola explained how she speaks several varieties of the African dialects associated with her tribe while also learning French and English in grammar school. It is clear that Bola's multilingual capabilities underscore the complexities associated with language use in expository writing. Requiring Bola to employ only SE would significantly undermine her ability to compose for writing additional contexts (like email) where audience expectations often require that she write in other languages/language varieties.

In another genre entry Bola appropriates Ebonics phonological features, although there are a few instances of Ebonics syntax as well. Such appropriation is illustrated in the following poem written about the WRA 125 class in order to demonstrate the ways in which Ebonics can be employed in classroom discourse:

> Hey how y'all doin/Dey be some great thangs happenin /I learned Ebonics in ma WRA class/Now, I be speakin it like crazy/Do you wanna try it out?/It be fun, trust me/Although ma teacher be interesting/She goofy wit dose projects sometimes/Dey be fun though/It be killin me so bad /It was very important/Learnin about de history,/Rhetorical features of AAVE/Fo example: check dis out/Beyonce be braggin dat /She no longer a single lady /Smitherman be bumpin us /Wit a lot of relevant info /About Ebonics, dat your/Head can't contain./It be hard to read all dat stuff/Ramsey wit his personal experience /Of teachin AAVE/Gilyard and Richardson be showin out /The capabilities of AAVE student and the point /Dat dey be bringin a lot to the classroom/I bet you, you don know dese writers huh.../I be feelin super smart lately/Just come check out dis class/You love it. It be fun.

The previous poetic excerpt not only shows Bola's exceptional ability to draw on various Ebonics-based phonological features, but it also illustrates her understanding of some of the rhetorical patterns and syntactical structures that govern the language. In the previous passage, on several occasions, Bola makes use of the habitual *be*, and sometimes, she even makes use of the zero copula, when she speaks of the teacher (me), "she goofy" (also a form of signifying), and of Beyoncé Knowles, "she no longer a single lady," thus making a cultural reference to Beyoncé's music. "Beyonce be braggin" that also reflects her ability to employ not only Ebonics phonological features and cultural references with regard to Beyonce's music, but also rhetorical patterns that include braggadocio (more on students' appropriation of AAR patterns later in this chapter). Teresa Redd defines braggadocio as an African American rhetorical practice that includes "boasts about oneself or heroes" ("Untapped" 224). In essence, Bola's poem provides us glimpses of the skills and knowledge she gained from the Afrocentricity language-focused composition curriculum. She demonstrates an awareness and familiarity of the syntax, phonological features, and rhetorical patterns, and she also demonstrates an ability to apply and appropriate them effectively in given writing contexts.

In another example from a multigenre project, Candace doesn't explain the linguistic choices she proposes in her Multigenre essay per se, but instead, strategically style shifts back and forth between Ebonics and SE in the PowerPoint presentation she created for her final project. The theme of her PowerPoint project, titled, "You, Me, & AAVE," was the appropriation of AAVE in mainstream culture. To convey this theme, she chose to compose a poem, an editorial comic advertisement, a visual collage, and a diary entry in order to dispel myths and misconceptions about AAVE in mainstream

culture. On the first slide of her PowerPoint, where she introduces her themes and genres to her audience, she chooses to use SE. When introducing and summarizing the genres on her slides she also uses SE. In her introduction to her personal diary entry, she writes:

> I wrote my diary entry based on my personal feelings of how people perceive other people based on how they sound when they talk. I have also talked about how I feel when I feel misunderstood or when someone is using prejudgment on me because of the color of my skin. I discussed certain instances where I was prejudice to someone because of their accent and because of their skin tone. At the end of the entry, I talk about how I learned to be acceptable to everyone and to think about what I say and to think before I act. I chose this piece because it shows how some people may think about those who don't speak in AAE, or who don't speak the way they do and how they feel about the situation. This was my perception of how I felt about my roommates. I am currently the only African American in my room, the other three are Caucasian.

In the previous excerpt, Candace associates speech with skin color in order to demonstrate the ways that Ebonics speakers are "misunderstood" and judged based on both. Although she obviously finds fault with this form of prejudice based on linguistic choices, she still chooses to explain this understanding in SE.

When the slides provide screen captures of her actual diary entries, entries that she chooses to display handwritten on notebook paper, she goes back and forth between SE and Ebonics. In her first entry, "Go Green," she writes the following:[27]

> Dear Diary,
>
> I guess I state ain't Bad considering I see black people. Like Real talk from where I stay. I see nothing but Black people. I like the fact that I can talk how I want to, I mean, [...] with four white girls. Molly cool as me though. A little of me rubbin off on her. The other 2 are more like upscale boutique bougie females for real.
>
> All of em from uptown close to the clans and stuff, even Molly. Molly's mother is from Detroit so I guess that's why her attitude changed. At first nobody talked to me (Scared Ill pull my gun out.) Maybe the "hood" in me showed ... right. So anyways.
>
> They sound like average white chicks ...

The first entry immediately leads into the second, titled "Go Black":

> Like they appear to be white but they talk like they are one of me. Poor babies. They try so hard t be like me or black.

[27] Complete entries are shown in their entirety.

> Times go on and I see more and more Crayola outa them ...
>
> That shit bothers me to all ends. I mean they automatically assume the worst outta me... but I neva ... yea I did, white trash. But as time went on, the ignorance faded. The more they loosened up the more I seen out of them. To be honest they are normal. They never seen my kind before and they was just tryin to get a feel for me? I got white experience. I'm not gonna like though, they probably didn't talk to me because of how outgoing I was. I'm a city girl, theyre small time females. They expect urban outta me, not black. Sometimes my ignorance is ignorant.

The second entry is followed by the final one, titled, "Go White":

> One thing I hate though is that not all white people are like them. But whats funny is when I went to the south I notice everybody talked the same. Except for me and my Detroit goons (we got a national rep). We were the outcasts. They were the majority. The way they talked was sloppy! All that long ass unnecessary switching of them words. Then when they loud argue, I want to scream. Later that week as I found out they gave me the accent. The Dirty dirty.
>
> →Damn it←
>
> I actually liked it though. I wanted to keep the crap but couldn't... It came back to the D.
>
> I guess I'm angry that people are prejudice anyways... I am, but not anymore. I actually want an accent and ignorance to fade away.

From these entries we see the writer's struggle with her own form and others' forms of racial and linguistic prejudices. These entries reveal that linguistic prejudice isn't only an issue for whites who make judgments about the speech patterns of African Americans, but also, African Americans who unfairly judge speakers based on other speakers' linguistic choices. One point that Candace wants to emphasize is the idea that we often make judgments about a person based on the way (s)he speaks. As Leah Zuidema states:

> Many of us feel free to make judgments about others because of the ways that they use language. We make assumptions based on ways that people speak and write, presuming to know about their intelligence, their competence, their motives and their morality (Wolfram, Adger & Christian, 1999). As [Vivian] Davis (2001) explained, we assume that because we know a little about how people speak or write that we also understand "what they wear, what they eat, how they feel about

certain things including birth, death, family, marriage, and what they believe about the world and their place in it" (p.1). (668)

Like Zuidema, I find that this is exactly the point that Candace conveys in her entries. From these entries we see the closely knit relationship between linguistic prejudice and overall judgments that people make about other people's identities. With the first entry, Candace tells how White females made judgments based on her speech, particular judgments that speak to the ways that African Americans have been stereotyped in mainstream culture. With the second entry, she continues to show the ways that White speakers negotiate their own negative attitudes toward Ebonics speakers all the while appropriating African American communicative patterns for their own use. This point speaks volumes to our understanding of the overall theme of her project. On one hand, people make negative assumptions about the language of African Americans, but on the other hand, we find evidence of its appropriation in mainstream culture (her collage and advertisements demonstrate ways that general terms and phrases associated with Ebonics (e.g. Apple Bottoms) have become part of mainstream and popular culture). With the final diary entry, Candace also takes responsibility for the ways that linguistic prejudices continue to perpetuate mainstream culture by telling of her experiences with Southern English speakers. While she admits her own prejudices, she attempts to reconcile them by acknowledging that they are in fact prejudices, and that a change in one's attitude is necessary.

Although this genre highlights significant knowledge about sociolinguistics and linguistic prejudice, Candace's linguistic choices are also noteworthy. If one notices, she employs more Ebonics in the first entry than the latter two, although some Ebonics is

used in each of these entries. When she references the ways that White females judge her based on her skin color and the way that she speaks, she employs more Ebonics phonological features and syntax [e.gs. "neva"; "A little bit of me rubbin off on her"]. But when she references her own forms of linguistic prejudice, she uses less Ebonics. Although her style still reflects a nonstandard variety of English in many cases, there are less Africanized phonological and syntactical patterns used. From Candace's work, then, we see quite extensively how the subject matter influences her linguistic choices. In other words, when she is being judged by how she talks, we see more appropriation of Ebonics. But, when she is the one who judges other people based on their linguistic choices, we see less Ebonics. From Candace's work, we see quite effectively how she manipulates Ebonics phonological features and syntax quite rhetorically, a point that shows writing teachers and educators how we can equip students with the rhetorical skills and tools necessary to truly give students the right to their own language.

4.4 Discursive Features of Ebonics: Students' Africanized Rhetorical Patterns

While my previous discussion focused on the ways that African American students manipulate Ebonics phonological features and syntax strategically and rhetorically, I further illustrate the skills and knowledge that African American students demonstrate within their own writing, what I call, *stylin'* and *profilin'*. *Stylin'* and *profilin'* is a metaphor that I use to reflect students' ability to draw on African American rhetorical patterns that are not phonologically or syntactically based. Building from the rhetorical and discursive features identified and analyzed by Richardson, Richardson and Gilyard, Ball, and Canagarajah in Chapter 3, I further identify and analyze these African-

based discursive practices found within my own students' expository texts. In doing so, I discuss how African American students' use of such patterns emphasizes the ways that they may style and profile, or show off across different writing situations. In contrast to students' uses of Ebonics phonology and syntax, students more often used Ebonics rhetorical patterns across each of the four major writing assignments. In my analysis of African American Rhetorical features, I focus on the following: 1) the use of field dependency or person-centered arguments, which pertain to the idea of "personalizing phenomena" (Gilyard and Richardson 42; Canagarajah); 2) identifying shared cultural values of community consciousness (Gilyard and Richardson; Ball); 3) the use of mimicry where African American students employ white academic language and conventions (Gilyard and Richardson; Canagarajah); and 4) the use of imagery and provocative language (Gilyard and Richardson).

Field Dependency: Personalizing Phenomena, and Person-Centered Arguments

In many writing situations, students often chose to personalize phenomenon or develop person-centered arguments. Gilyard and Richardson define field dependency as the following: "Involvement with and immersion in events and situations; personalizing phenomena; lack of distance from topics and subjects" (42). Using their definition as a framework, I apply this understanding to African American students' close proximity as subjects to the arguments in which they construct. Such arguments often address students' self-expressed beliefs about events or cultural phenomenon. This rhetorical pattern was used across each of the four major writing assignments. Examples of field dependency are as follows (in some instances I italicize portions of these texts to emphasize where the field dependency/person-centered arguments appear):

Marquise:
Now being the simple kind of guy that I am, I try to respond to things with a straight forward mentality. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)

There was a recent blog in which a BET journalist contacted the FBI concerning the hateful tactics being used by the McCain/Palin ticket against the Obama/Biden ticket. The explosive post brought out anger-fueled AAVE dialogue in the form of reader comments... *This takes me back to an observation I made, where emotions play a huge role in the use of AAVE, whether it being happiness, or pure fury.* (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

What is most powerful from that statement, *in my opinion*, is the use of empowerment, in which African Americans have this natural born instinct to defend their rich and constantly misunderstood culture. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

[We] must not rule out the general purpose of writing, which is correcting the flow of the literary piece. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

Marcus:
Even though these differences exist the truth is they exist with everyone so no one should be judged on this topic one way or the other. I *believe that everyone has the right to be their self and doesn't have to act differently or feel uncomfortable in different situations.* My use of language changes throughout the day whether it's "chillin" with my teammates, or going to class and interacting with other people. Everyone cares about the impression they leave on someone after they have a conversation with them. *So my philosophy is, be yourself, let the real you come out and do not let anyone think you are less of a person because of it.* (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)

Bola:
As Kynard talked about blogging and web blogs of his students in ["Wanted: Some Black Long Distance [Writers]': Blackboard Flava- Falvin and other Digital Experiences in the Classroom], she encourages teachers to use weblogs in their classroom, get their student engaged with internet and experience what is happening in cyberspaces. *I remember in one of my lecture classes last week, not to mention the class, my professor is a white. My professor gave an example in class about differentiating races, saying "when whites are studying and taking care of business, Blacks are in the streets, taking in crack cocaine and doing drug dealing"...* (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

As for my third genre, it came from group four. This is about personal and private writing. I chose email. After taking this course, I realized that I could now write in AAVE. I was so excited and deeply touched to use this as one of my genres for this project. Students actually put into practice what they learn from classroom in other situations. Using my writing as an example, student put AAVE into practice outside the classrooms. *This is the more reason why I stress on the fact that teachers should encourage and allow the practice of AAVE in classroom.* (Multigenre/Remix Assignment)

Antonice:
I feel I connected the most with is Smitherman's "Ghetto Lady" passage. In this she speaks about how when she was a young girl, she was constantly under linguistic attack, thus causing her to go into a silent mode to avoid them. To attend college she had to take and pass a speech test, which she failed. "...they were linguistically and culturally biased against all varieties of U.S. English..." She states, "...Although the overwhelming majority of those who failed these tests were People of Color I recall that there are a couple of whites in my group..." [...] This expresses how broad the English language is, and how it shouldn't be a specific right way to talk. *I feel that another aspect that causes bias in writing and mostly speaking is the attitude of the writer.* (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)

> *You don't have to be a rocket scientist to express what you are trying to say to someone, and that is something African Americans have used now and in the past.* He feels that "African American Vernacular English can accomplish what Standard English can not." (Rickford 268) AAVE brings a different attitude and personality to a speech that SE doesn't *for example when I go to church my pastor may breath a certain way or say "and-a" in between his sentences to add emphasis. Something that I don't particularly see in a SE based church that I have also attended.* (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

While I would argue that person-centered argumentation is not limited to African American students' expository texts, it is still clear that African American students draw on such arguments in written discourse. And, when they are not developing a person-centered argument, an argument that revolves around their own epistemologies and ways of seeing, many of them do personalize additional phenomena. In Marquise's first example offered from his literacy autobiography, he links his identity to the way he communicates in oral discourse, thus, demonstrating how he personalizes phenomena. With his other examples, we see development of person-centered arguments. In his cultural literacies assignment, he connects his observations about language (AAVE) with the comments posted in response to the 2008 presidential election. For his disciplinary literacies assignment, he develops yet a different kind of person-centered argument when he makes use of the collective "we".

Other students personalize phenomena and arguments in unique ways. With Bola's example from her cultural literacies essay, she not only references a course text, but also personalizes the argument she plans to make by showing the relationship between that text and her own experiences in the classroom. With Antonice's example from her literacy autobiography, she establishes a connection with the texts she reads and explains how this connection helps her formulate an argument. If we compare her disciplinary literacies example with Marquise's (when he develops a collective "we"),

Antonice establishes a collective you. I consider both of these examples to be consistent with field dependence/personalizing phenomenon because they demonstrate a lack of distance between the one's thoughts and the arguments and ideas that are being invented. With each of his examples—and others—the concept of person-centered arguments and personalizing phenomena is intended to illustrate African American students' engagement and immersion in the events, topics, and arguments they choose to explore.

Shared Cultural Values, Community Consciousness

In Chapters 1 and 2, I talk extensively about the elements associated with the African and African American worldview, one being a sense of collective identity and shared community consciousness. Gilyard and Richardson further state that cultural values and community consciousness express "concern for the development of African Americans: concern for the welfare of [an] entire community, not just individuals" (42). Using this definition of community consciousness as a reference, I find evidence of the following examples from African and African American students' texts. In some cases, students choose to show community solidarity with the identification with African Americans as a racialized group. In other cases, they demonstrate this solidarity with African American youth:

> Marquise:
> The treatment of people speaking with eloquence can still be seen among today's youth. I, for one am criticized by my black peers for using full words in my speech. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> What is most powerful from that statement, in my opinion, is the use of empowerment, in which African Americans have this natural born instinct to defend their rich and constantly misunderstood culture. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> With the computer age being dominated by the younger generation, the use of Standard English on the social web has diminished drastically in the past few years. This has caused older generations to look down on the youth because of the "misuse" of today's technology. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

Today Blacks are charged with dealing with a conflicted sense of identity in which speaking a particular vernacular can mean acceptance in one community and rejection by another... (Multigenre/Remix Assignment)

A staple in the African digital community has become the BET official website. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

Bola:
Unity and equality should prevail in the Nation (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

The black artists and celebrities try to express their success to the community especially due to some racial discrimination African American went through and still going through. For instance, On December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks was asked to give her seat to a white man, on the Bus. When she refused she was asked to get off the bus by the bus driver. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

Jordan:
In recent years, however, that barrier of the digital divide has been crossed and African Americans have found themselves back into the trenches of the battle for equality. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

The movement brought about plenty of studies. Most of those scholarly researches centered around African American youth. Questions of why African American students were not as successful as their European American peers were brought to the attention of scholars. Some of them blamed racism as the reason why African American students performed less spectacularly than their peers. The other stance on the argument was that African American students were "culturally deprived" unlike Whites. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

Another reason why Ebonics was put down was because it was something that African Americans identified with. During the Civil Rights era not a lot of people wanted to see African Americans equally represented in society. All sorts of measures were taken in order to make sure that African Americans still received the short end of the stick. This included doing things like putting down of Black culture. Everything about the culture was disenfranchised from the way women wore their hair to the words that came out of their mouths. Because Ebonics was the language largely used by African Americans it was heavily critiqued and made a mockery of in order to belittle the culture. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

Educating African American youth most likely included the putting down of their home language, Ebonics, during their class periods. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

All of the research done on African American culture and language made Ebonics a popular topic as the years went on. Ebonics remained on the radar even after the Civil Rights movement. The negative taste that went along with the language did not go away either. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

Each of these examples are meaningful because they not only call attention to how African and African American students self identify with the African American community in particular ways, but also, because they stress the tensions that often create generational conflict within the African American community, what many African

Americans term as the Old Skool versus New Skool debate. In many of their cultural literacies essays, writers identify with the New skool, and discuss the ways in which technology continues to separate them from Old skool members of the African American community. In *Race, Rhetoric and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Adam Banks states:

> The presence of these modes online shows the ways that "the structural underpinnings of the oral tradition remain basically in tact even as each new generation makes verbal adaptations within the tradition. Indeed, the core strength of this tradition lies in its capacity to accommodate new situations and changing realities" (p. 199) but they are central to it—without these discursive practices from an African American oral tradition [electronic writing spaces] could not exist. (79)

Like Banks, the students' discussions offered previously not only emphasize the cultural understandings they share with other African American youth, but also emphasizes the ways in which, despite generational changes, African American forms of discourse are alive and active online. Thus, the African American oral tradition—and the community who participates in this tradition—continues to pass down its communicative practices from one generation to the next, practices that now appear to be present in digital environments.

Mimicry: Employing White Academic Language and Conventions

Earlier in this chapter, I described the ways that African American students negotiate their linguistic choices between Ebonics and Standard English strategically. When my students do choose SE in certain context, they often do so, as they attempt to

mimic white academic language and its conventions. At times, such a form of mimicry is illustrated by their syntactical and/or vocabulary/diction; at other times, this mimicry is illustrated by their attempts to mimic specific citation practices. The following examples will provide evidence of these moves:

> Marquise:
> There has been extensive research on the use of AAVE in university classrooms, specifically in Composition Studies, where first level writing students struggled to succeed in the course work. While most scholars believed that the problem was caused by the lacking strength of the dialect users, based on their socioeconomic origins. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)
>
> In the 1960's and 1970's, people were quick to dismiss the AAVE factor from American culture, especially academics. This project is to focus on AAVE/Composition Studies, but I believe that the culture of the dialect must first gain positive ground in the country, if not the world before introducing ideals of language equality in academia. As P.A. Ramsey states in "Teaching the Teachers to Teach Black-Dialect Writers," "Dialects are simply different!"(Ramsey, Teaching Black-Dialect, 200) [...]As Tiffany Jones explains in "You Done Lost Yo' Mind" by acknowledging the linguistic divide, many African Americans have been ostracized from their AAVE-using counterparts, for simply following the grammatical "rules" set by the white academic world. She states," Today Blacks are charged with dealing with a conflicted sense of identity in which speaking a particular vernacular can mean acceptance in one community and rejection by another."(Jones, You Done Lost Yo' Mind, 6) (Multigenre/Remix Assignment)
>
> Marcus:
> When speaking and writing in dialects, there are enormous differences but there are also similarities. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> Jordan:
> For as long as I can remember I've been deemed a well-educated and well-mannered young man by my family, neighbors, acquaintances, and peers. The first thing that most of them take notice of is often the way I'm dressed which is often conservatively favoring a polo and slacks in most occasions. Secondly, they'll notice that my speech is nearly flawless apart from the occasional stutter. They tell me that I sound like an intelligent young man who is bound to be a doctor or a lawyer one day. They acquire all of this just from my dress and my speech. Believe it or not, I am not on the road to be a doctor nor a lawyer. I wasn't valedictorian or anything close to the top ten, twenty, or fifty percent of my graduating class. In fact, I was rated 118 out of 248, and the valedictorians and salutatorian didn't always speak as clearly and as flawlessly as I did. They spoke in Ebonics and AAE in the lunchroom as well as the classroom. The only place where their speech consistently surpassed mine was in English class where the masses seemed to miraculously have possession and knowledge of the same skills that I employed during all hours of the day. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> When one speaks of the digital divide they're usually referring to the gap that exists between people who have the Internet and those who don't. It also is used to describe those who can effectively use the connections to their advantage. It is not enough to simply have access to the World Wide Web. It's important to possess knowledge on how it works as well. Web pages and web language has its own rules and African Americans were left out of the coding process that got these websites off the ground. That being said, not many African Americans knew how to use the Internet as a means of researching or classifying...

> In recent years, however, that barrier of the digital divide has been crossed and African Americans have found themselves back into the trenches of the battle for equality. The first course of action in this ongoing war was to establish a home base on this new digital space. Giving African Americans a sense of self in these spaces that were at one point in time meant to be racially neutral has done that (Banks, 2005, p. 100). Everyone who used the Internet was assumed to be White, middle-class, and male until proven otherwise. The use of different languages like AAVE would give one's race away and expose them to prejudice and possible discrimination on these digital spaces. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

> Antonice
> I was able to research another source for my argument on the use of AAVE in composition studies. I read a review on John Russell Rickfords' book Spoken Soul. Rickford spoke on African American actors, comedians, rappers, even preachers. He expresses his feeling of AAVE being very valid in American culture, stating that "most African Americans do talk differently from whites and other Americans of other ethnic groups, or at least most of us can when we want to." (Rickford 268) (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

What is important to notice from the previous passages is the way that each of these students style shift from the linguistic conventions associated with Ebonics to those associated with the academy. We especially notice the ways that Jordan switches to formal language that is often associated with the academy when he discusses the ways in which his formal speech practices distinguish him from peers. In another example, Jordan contextualizes the concept of the digital divide in order to argue how African Americans still struggle with technological access in digital environments; the language in which he chooses to construct these arguments further mimics a variety of standard academic English.

In other instances, not only do African and African American students' linguistic choices seem to mimic the academic conventions associated with the academy, but also, the types of argumentation patterns and uses of evidence similarly mimic these conventions. If one notices in each of these excerpts, there is an attempt to mimic the conventions associated with MLA and APA citations systems, although in some cases, these citations are formatted incorrectly. Nonetheless, what is most critical is not the fact that some citations should be formatted correctly, but the fact that students are

consciously aware that while citation systems are often a requirement for academic writing, different forms of evidence are acceptable and required for other literate texts. In her book, *A Community Text Arises: A Literate Text and A Literacy Tradition in African American Churches*, Beverly Moss complicates the concept of textual evidence and academic literacy by discussing the ways that the African American preacher's sermon as a textual artifact often does not require him or her to cite textual evidence or acknowledge his/her sources. Moss states that

> ministers' use of textual evidence, for instance, may be useful in helping students understand how to integrate written sources as evidence within their academic texts... [Sermons] provide good examples of texts that integrate different types of evidence within the text: textual evidence, personal narratives, historical evidence, and so on [...] The greatest problem faced by many students whose primary model of a literate text does not match that of the primary model in academic literacy is finding the tools to help them recognize such sites of negotiation, be they sites of conflict or common ground. And the next problem is to turn these sites into resources that can make them multiliterate. (156-7)

Moss's points concerning the knowledge and appropriate application of academic literacy significantly call attention to the purposes in which my own students attempt to mimic citation practices. As stated previously, students know that they must employ citation practices as textual evidence, but more importantly, they recognize the appropriate contexts and sites for this negotiation. If we take Jordan's argument about the digital divide in relationship to African Americans in digital spaces, for example, we see Jordan's awareness of the need to cite Adam Banks's work in *Race, Rhetoric and*

Technology: Searching for Higher Ground because like Banks, Jordan seeks to complicate the notion of a digital divide that separates the haves from the have-nots, considering that there are still racial differences between users online when they both have access to a given technology, in this case, the Web. In the first sentence of her excerpt, Antonice's example also overtly shows the intellectual processes needed to inform readers of the citations practices needed for evidencing her argument as she reference's Rickford's *Spoken Soul*, a familiar text associated with Ebonics scholarship, although the text was never assigned in class.

In other cases, mimicry is demonstrated when students explain the methodological decisions that guide their use of sources. Antonice's example also provides readers with a glimpse of the methodological process work needed to do research for her disciplinary literacies assignment,[28] when she identifies key authors and sources needed to be references, sources, she had to locate and evaluate critically on her own. In his own disciplinary literacies essay, Marquise's discussion that denotes the research that has been done on Ebonics in rhetoric and composition also provides us with some understanding of how students read and interpret the methodological practices associated with a given discipline. From Marquise's passage, we see an implicit argument of the conflicting positions on language rights being a racial issue or language rights being an issue of class in the field, as he invokes a discussion of socioeconomic status. I will demonstrate later in this chapter through Marquise's disciplinary literacies essay the ways that he draws on multiple AAR traditions while negotiating his mimicking of the

[28] See Chapter 2 for an explanation of this assignment, and Chapter 5 for an extended discussion of students' responses to this assignment.

academic conventions as the same time, when he writes that there "has been extensive research on the use of AAVE in university classrooms, specifically in Composition Studies, where first level writing students struggled to succeed in the course work." Through his example I argue that students can use Ebonics effectively in formal writing situations, including research papers.

Imagery and Provocative Language

In several cases, African and African American student writers draw on imagery or dramatic and provocative language. In these cases students will often make use of "metaphors, signification, [and/or] vivid imagery" (Gilyard and Richardson 41). The following excerpts represent students' execution of imagery and metaphoric language across writing assignments:

> Marquise:
> He puckered his lips as if he were trying to use them as hands, and started mouthing every word that I spoke. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> My friends say that it's like I have a slang-speaking twin and we switched dimensions. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> There is an invisible bond between African Americans when using digital spaces when it attacks against the race come from outsiders (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> Basically, the creations of African American websites is not necessarily for sharing the rich background of the Black community, but for that "mean green." It's the capitalization of the nation's economy, where ethnicities, predominantly Black are attracted to digital communities, gaining close to nothing while billions of dollars are being made under their nose. It's almost as if the activity of AAVE only exists on the Internet for profit. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)
>
> Bola:
> When growing up in Cameroon, in West Africa, all I knew at a tender age to say was mommy and daddy. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
> Candace:
> I could write and make my words seems like little pictures of art, something like the works of Leonardo De Vinci. (Literacy Autobiographies Assignment)
>
> Times go on and I see more and more Crayola outa them. (Multigenre/Remix Assignment)
> The other 2 are more like upscale boutique bougie females for real (Multigenre/Remix Assignment)
>
> Jordan:

> Since then AAVE and speakers of AAVE have come to face a different enemy after defeating bad publicity. Ebonics speakers were forced to face the great wall that put them in the slow lane on the information super highway. That enemy was the digital divide (Nakamura, 2002, p. 396). (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

> The Internet was looked at as merely a playground. The rest of the world was moving right along with its advancements and African Americans were left to bite the dust. (Cultural Literacies Assignment)

> The language has only moved forward in this decade, though, so this is a positive. Looking back at history and where the language has come from as far as badly it was talked about and defaced shows resilience that was truly unmatched. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

> The consensus that they all came up with always seemed to be consistent: Ebonics is not a language. To the protestors, Ebonics broke all the rules of Standard English. It also had no real rule or syntax structure simply adding to the list of incapabilities of the language. The protestors would seem to have their way with the public view for some years especially in the age of the disco. (Disciplinary Literacies Assignment)

In African and African American students' literacy autobiographies we notice how students use imagery and vivid language in their descriptions of their linguistic practices. Marquise's example, "He puckered his lips as if he were trying to use them as hands, and started mouthing every word that I spoke," vividly identifies the visible cues that mark the ways that one might speak. Instead of merely informing readers of how one communicates in particular contexts, Marquise descriptively shows readers this type of communication. With Candace's discussion of her penmanship, she does not merely tell readers that her hand writing is neat; instead, she uses metaphoric language to compare her penmanship to De Vinci's art. With Bola's discussion of the chronological development of her communicative practices, she doesn't merely tell readers of her communicative practices when she was young. Instead, she describes these practices vividly, as she establishes a stronger connection with readers by writing, "tender age" and when all she knew how to say was "mommy and daddy." Doing so encourages readers to make connections between her experiences of childhood nostalgia and their own.

African and African American student writers don't only employ metaphoric language when talking about themselves, however. Even when referencing scholarly material, they often do so quite descriptively. If we offer Jordan's excerpts as examples, we notice the provocative language he employs as he identifies the digital divide as the enemy of the digital age. Furthermore, his use of strong and provocative language continues in his disciplinary literacies assignment when he states: "The protestors would seem to have their way with the public view for some years especially in the age of the disco." Notice that Jordan's word choice of "protestors" for critics of Ebonics, a term that has a much stronger connotation than "critics" or even "opponents." And also notice how Jordan associates historical phenomenon with the status of Ebonics in Composition Studies: His use of "the age of disco" perhaps establishes a stronger connection with readers than if he were to merely state that during the 1970's critics viewed Ebonics negatively in the public sector. In short, African American students demonstrate exceptionally the ways they might establish stronger connections with audiences when they employ provocative and metaphoric language. They further illustrate the ways that students can be descriptive as they show readers what is happening in their texts, as opposed to merely telling readers what happens in a given text, and they are able to write descriptively across different genres and writing situations.

4.5 Multiple Ebonics Structural and Rhetorical Patterns Illustrated in a Writers' Text

As is the case with students who draw on multiple forms of Ebonics phonological features and syntax, students can also draw effectively on multiple African American discursive practices in provocative ways while writing formal research essays. I chose discuss Marquise's disciplinary literacies essay (that asks students to argue how Composition Studies's stance on Ebonics has changed over time) in this chapter because I believe that his work offers teachers a prime example of the ways in which African American communicative practices can be included and implemented in additional expository writing contexts. Discussion and analysis of this essay is central to my argument because it shows how African American students can successfully employ Ebonics in genres and contexts where they have not typically been shown as successful. Analysis of this work illustrates how Ebonics can be used strategically and appropriately in formal research papers. I am also interested in Marquise's essay because he acutely employs additional African American rhetorical strategies not commonly appropriated in other African and African American students' texts. I include his essay in its entirety because it speaks to the richness of the African American communicative tradition, in addition to the writer's ability to mimic the academic conventions in extremely purposeful ways:

> AAVE has come a long way since being used by African American slaves close to 500 years ago. This is especially true when it comes to academia. Ever since the late 1960's, AAVE was considered as a black scar on the American English language in universities across the nation. As time progressed, the rich culture of AAVE began to receive recognition. My plan is to show how this has occurred.
>
> There has been extensive research on the use of AAVE in university classrooms, specifically in Composition Studies, where first level writing students struggled to succeed in the course work. While most scholars believed that the problem was caused by the lacking strength of the dialect users, based on their socioeconomic origins. The professors were also to blame for not understanding their pupils' needs. With saying this, instructors were also in of need of teaching. In

P.A. Ramsey's "Teaching the Teachers to Teach Black-Dialect Writers", he shares an experience in which his knowledge of Black Vernacular English was put to the test. In the spring of 1979, Ramsey was offered the opportunity to instruct a graduate level college course based on strategies teachers could use to help Black-dialect users become better writers. The moment he accepted, regret set in, caused by his lack of knowledge in AAVE. Was it because he was black? Or maybe he may have been brought up in an impoverished area? Also with him not being familiar with the dialect, how could the class he was expected to instruct (all white students), respect him? Even though regretting his involvement, he pressed on. The concept of his class was based on the use of national journals focused on English and Comp. Studies. By taking this route, his grad students began to show their opinions about black dialect, where they simply wanted Ramsey, a black man, to explain how to "fix" the writing habits of black-dialect users.

The thing that Ramsey wanted his students to realize was an authentic enhancer to Standard English and more than just a dialect. The course was to implement practicality over theory based presumptions, in which he ultimately wanted to eliminate the common misconceptions of black dialect-users. Ramsey states in his writings that he wanted a class that helped teachers guide students into writing more effectively. As the class progressed, the focus was shifted to how all writers could produce better literature, and not just dialect users. As Ramsey states in his observations:

What I learned from our inability to stay on the topic of the course was that maybe we did not really need the course. The real problem was not how to teach black dialect speakers to write, but how to teach any student to write. The basics of writing, like how to organize, how to develop a paragraph, how to write with specificity rather than in generalities-are aracial. Of course there are special nuisances when teaching dialect writers: how to get that "s" on the third person present tense singular and the "ed" on the past tense. But these grammatical irregularities, though they grate on the ears and eyes of almost every English teacher, are minor when compared to the problems of teaching that essays must proceed logically and clearly and be about one, and only one, "thesis idea.(Ramsey pp.198-199)

The point that Ramsey is making is that even though AAVE has visible flaws, we must not rule out the general purpose of writing, which is correcting the flow of the literary piece.

With Ramsey having taught remedial writing courses to dialect users, he was able to use his techniques in class, where they may serve a purpose to the graduate students. He did this by having his class critique a dialect writer's paper each week and break it down with open discussion. Also Ramsey notices how the curiosity of the graduate students expressed a new form of racism, in which he states:

The very volume of material on black dialect has sanctioned a type of racism which masquerades as "the English professor's excuse." It goes something like this: "We've admitted these ['unqualified minority' understood] students, and ah, I don't know how to teach them to write. They, ah, have dialect problems, and ah, I don't know what to do with them." Does this sound familiar? It does to me: "They," "them," "the blacks," "those exotic primitives over there are so different/dumb/dark, I don't know what to do with them. They're nothing like me." The very quantity of literature on dialect speakers and writers supports the saying, they're-so-different-therefore-I-can't-teach-them attitude." What I found was that my graduate students were afraid to teach minority students to write because the graduate students felt they did not know enough. When I thought about conversations I had had with my colleagues, I found the same to be true of most of them. No wonder I kept getting the remedial composition courses. I was one of the few who did not believe that my black students were too exotic to teach (I hope "exotic" in the mind of enlightened English professors does not read "dumb"). If enough college teachers assume this humble I-don't-know-how posture, the effect will not be unlike that of the slave laws which forbade "them" to learn to read and write. (Ramsey pp.199-200)

Ramsey goes on to say that if teachers can't instruct without researching the greatest African American linguists, they may never grasp the ability. I agree with Ramsey on this point, because I believe that teachers were given all the tools they would need to teach different language backgrounds, whether standard or not. I also believe that teachers must create their own strategies to guide students into better writing, or at least comprehensible to the majority, while encouraging them to continue using their home languages.

"What I ventured to share with my graduate students was that I was not nearly as worried about the attitudes of my black students toward their own dialects as I was about the attitudes of my white colleagues, the attitudes of the graduate students themselves, and the attitude of the white students they would someday teach. If we want to change attitudes towards dialects, the place to begin is with white students, not black ones. White students are the ones who will one day most likely be in the power positions. They are the ones whom the dialect speaker will need to speak and write for. (Ramsey pp.200-201)

In his writings, it is obvious that he hasn't really grasped the idea or the purpose of what AAVE serves. In the statement above, it comes off as if he is saying that we must play the game along with Standard English users to keep the flow going. Even though he believes in black-dialect, he doesn't take it seriously. From what I've read, it seems as though Ramsey was unmotivated in changing the views of his colleagues and students, but more like patting them on the hand, when they showed slight discrimination towards the use of black dialect.

<u>Naw dat ain't a good look, fa real!</u>

Unlike Ramsey's experience with AAVE, Arnetha Ball's, "Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students" takes on a more experimental approach in research of AAVE's role in Composition Studies. In her writings, Ball gives reason why AAVE users in college suffer in their first year writing classes. The main cause is of lack in preparation in composition. She figures that most students who are behind tend to have come from impoverished inner-cities, where education is sub-standard to suburban and, even rural areas. These students are then looked over in college level courses, labeled as slow or remedial. What Ball tries to provide is examples of how students have been able to produce quality writing, using their regular daily language, while providing simple guidelines uncovered through her study of language diverse students.

Ball begins her research with a young African American girl, in which she records and critique the narrative of how the girl was embarrassed by the criticism she received for using a vernacular term in her writing. After the girl shares her story, Ball goes further by asking questions leaning more to the psychological side, in which she covers the emotions and level of motivation the girl had after receiving such hard criticism from her former instructor. This student could speak for the majority, because this is how it feels to sit down and compose a paper, with an off the wall topic, poking your brain consistently. The ideas that may come to mind are easily shattered by the thought of having to use Standard English to receive a respected grade for the piece. The problem with this is that AAVE users have a difficult time jumping out of that vernacular "box", where it seems as though they are stuck between expressing themselves in a comfortable manner and slowly falling behind at the hands of their instructor.

Over the many years that Ball has studied the writing habits of African American students, she has become more supportive of the students, in which she becomes defensive when scholars criticize the language as being "sloppy" or an "uneducated dialect." This is especially true when students are faced with the dreaded "red pen", something that tends to demolish the proud work of many AAVE users. Ball continues her research by closely monitoring four urban high school students, in which she collects two types of data over a one year period, she states:

I visited these students' classroom twice each week and conducted detailed text analyses of the students' writing during the second half of their 11th-grade year and the first half of their 12th-

grade year. Three of the four students, one male and two females, described themselves as bi-dialectal. They spoke AAVE sometimes but were mainstream American English speakers most of the time. (Meaning) that is, most of the time they were speakers of the language of wider communication in American society. One male, however, described himself as an AAVE speaker a majority of the time. In particular, most of the time he used a logical, systematic pattern of language expression that is characterized by a highly consistent syntax, pronunciation, and lexicon that is the first dialect learned by many lower and working-class African American youth throughout the United States. As is the case with many AAVE speakers, these four students demonstrated an ability to skillfully manipulate and interchangeably use AAVE, mainstream, and academic English during discussions-style switching with ease depending on their degree of personal engagement in the conversation and the topic being discussed. These students tended to use more AAVE features in their speech when they were more engaged in a conversation. (Ball pp.(28))

Ball visited these students only twice a week, which does not seem to be an effective amount of time to collect enough data. Just think about it, what if the students were only providing Ball with the information she was looking for on those two days. They may have exhibited totally different behaviors on the other days of the week. Personally, I believe that I am bi-dialectal, in which I can switch back and forth between AAVE and Standard English, but it mainly depends on the environment (Home, work and school life). After conducting her research, Ball had this to say:

Schools and employers often- times picture a majority of AAVE speakers as victims of "language poverty" or "illiteracy," anthropologists, social historians, and folklorists have detailed the long-standing rich verbal and literary tradition, including forms of oral and written narratives, rhymes, stories, rhythmic expressions, sermons, and jokes characteristic of this culture (Heath 1989). Becoming more aware of these historically divergent views about my students' language and literacy abilities, especially as they relate to their out of school oral and written literacy practices, helped me to recognize the skills and resources these students bring to the class.

Something that I said all along, people must not focus on the grammatical features of AAVE, but to look at the historical base and its rich culture before making a fair decision on whether it can be considered on the same level as Standard English. For example, how could a griot tell a West African story by using a Standard English translation, it would defeat the whole purpose! Or that's like an African slave historian trying to write the lyrics to old slave hymns using Standard English; this would cause the songs to lose their character. After the school year ended for the students, Ball decided to extend her research for three last sessions in the summer. She wanted to test the students on their comfort levels out in an informal environment. She required the students to write a letter to a person they felt comfortable with, where judgment played no role. From what she gathered, one thing played a major role, the method of experience. She could see that the students were using personal experience to engage their audiences, in which they would easily relate and understand. Based on these findings, Ball comes up with this idea:

Such illustrations give English educators concrete examples to examine and provide illustrations that can help them in developing an expanded notion of available resources that students can use to express their ideas in classroom settings. By demonstrating specific instances when AAVE speaking students have successfully included culturally influenced strategies and styles of expression in their writing, it becomes evident that such inclusions that emerge in their students' texts may not represent random instances of poor writing. Some of the culturally influenced discourse strategies these students have used included:

1. Using repetition to create formulaic patterning
2. Establishing a link or sense of rapport with the audience through the use of inclusive lexical terms like "we're"
3. Taking on a quality of performance in the style and delivery of the text

4. Using orally-based organization patterns in addition to the topic associations compare and contrast patterns and the traditional five paragraph essay used in most classrooms (see Ball 1992)
5. Using interactive dialogue with the audience with phrases like "you know what I mean, man"
6. Using common African American idioms that assume mutual understanding based on similar cultural experiences;
7. Linking topics through the use of personal anecdotes and narratives interspersed within expository texts.

By looking closely and critically at these students' written texts, I recognized that they participate in many discourse communities (home, school, workplace, etc.) and that each of these communities may have preferred norms for effective communication (i.e., specialized vocabulary, politeness norms, organizational patterns, etc.). A socio-cultural view of language supports the notion that different cultures may value and use particular language and literacy behaviors not practiced in other discourse communities. (Ball pp.34)

It's interesting to see that she was able to formulate these strategies based off of the students' input. She has uncovered a very common practice of inclusiveness in writing, something that sort of goes against the grammatical grain. It brings warmth to writing, in which the reader sinks right into the piece. As Ball pointed this out, I realized that this strategy could be traced back to Africa, specifically the western region, where griots, or village storytellers, intertwines the audience into the story, particularly when it comes to morals that should be followed to maintain stability in the community. Ball also notices how the students used repetition in their writing, creating a pattern. I'm not entirely sure what that means, in terms of being a strategy. Does that mean that she believes that students tie things together in their writing by using the same terms repeatedly? She also goes on to say that AAVE users put on an unintentional performance in their writing, which I take as saying that students implement personality when composing. Now that is a strategy that I believe all writers should use so that their views can be retained by readers. Arnetha Ball expressed full understanding of the use of AAVE in writing and composition. She treats AAVE in writing as equal as Standard English, which I believe is the first step towards AAVE being acknowledged as an authentic form of American English. By Ball being one the highest scholars of AAVE amongst others like Geneva Smitherman, the acceptation of vernacular language in the world shall soon come.

Scholars in AAVE have gained much ground since the 1970's, when the concern of AAVE related problems with students first surfaced. But in the late 1990's to early millennium, scholars have introduced new ideas in which they conflict with the guidelines put in place by distinguished scholars, most notably Geneva Smitherman, who in the mid-1970's wrote, "Its Bees Dat Way Sometime," which all AAVE literature that has followed has cited from. An example of conflicting ideas is from a Valerie Balester, a rhetorician from Texas A&M University. In September of 2000, Balester wrote in the journal of College Composition and Communication, in which she shares her views on the use AAVE in college writing courses. Balester's piece titled, *The Problem of Method: Striving to See with Multiple Perspectives*, she states that she went "against the grain when it came to AAVE use in Composition by considering it as being richer than a dialect. Balester, being a Caucasian woman working at a predominantly white university, she was unfamiliar with the history of AAVE use, and decided to engage in experimental research on AAVE use. The issue with that she based the use of AAVE on race rather than socio-economic backgrounds. This is assuming that since AAVE is closely related to African Americans, they're the only users of it. When she was faced with criticism based off of this, she stated:

By describing participants as speakers of AAVE, I am not in any way stigmatizing them. Furthermore, I took pains to show that speaking AAVE cannot be equated with race. I am guilty of describing my students as outsiders. In fact, this was a model applied to most students of composition, one that appealed to me and to many composition scholars of the time. Although I viewed all students as novices reaching toward that elusive "academic discourse," I saw African American students as more alien, more outside. bell hooks' eloquent expressions of the pain

experienced by many African American students, even those who could in no way be described as "basic," perhaps influenced my view. To me, this as well as accommodation theory in linguistics offered some explanation of their struggles. (Balester pp. 130-131)

It's highly noble of her to say that she is well aware of African American struggles in academic discourse! In fact it is highly disrespectful to isolate African Americans, placing them in a "special" category in which they may need different learning strategies to achieve college level comprehension of Composition. So instead of defending her views, Balester fi rther "dug a deeper hole" into the discussion. In *Multiple Perspectives*, Balester's whole argument is ludicrous, simply based on the following comment, in which she states:

I resisted the stigmatization of AAVE by discussing its history and manifestations and by explaining that its use is not a mark of low socioeconomic status or limited exposure to Standard English or schooling. (Balester pp. 131)

Now early in Balester's argument, she stated that she had no prior knowledge of the history of AAVE! She seemed to have contradicted herself into a corner, as soon as she faced criticism from colleagues. Now I'm not trying to bash Valerie Balester, because I mean I'm only a college freshman, but when you state an unclear idea or belief to academia, you kind of deserve it. There is one statement that I can agree with her on. She believes that AAVE can be used successfully, if only it was accepted in Composition Studies. At the same time, Balester seems to be stuck to idea of only African Americans speaking/writing in AAVE. She separates black students from other races who may face similar writing issues, by making this statement:

This is their linguistic legacy, an important aspect of their linguistic repertoires that ...can serve as a scaffold in acquiring other registers. At the same time, teachers ignorant of this tradition or prejudiced against any but formal academic registers of English can undervalue these devices, even punishing students for their use. (Balester pp.132)

In my opinion, I feel as though Balester caused more harm to the subject of AAVE then promoted it. By sharing her views, gives scholars more of a reason to oppose the use of the vernacular language in writing and composition. In today's world, if you express your opinion, it's mandatory that it can be followed up with proof or examples. What I would suggest to Balester is that the next time she composes literature stating her opinion, that she discusses them with colleagues in her discipline. I also noticed that Balester focuses on grammatical aspects of AAVE, and not so much the specific ideas presented by it. She constantly stresses the point that AAVE has not received it's recognition by Composition Studies, because of this small issue. Yes, it's true that syntax is the main flaw of AAVE, but at the same time, the less it is discussed the more attention the other factors can receive.

Syntax has become the most debatable facet in AAVE, only because it has never conformed to what Standard English has evolved into. The use of "aint" and the occurrence of double negative sentence structures come to mind when thinking of common problems with AAVE. People find difficulty in looking past the physical wording of ideas and not the ideas itself. For example, if I were to write a statement once in Standard English (SE) and also in AAVE, which would the general audience respond to more quickly? The SE form of the statement without a doubt! Here is an example:

We always be ova our grandma house, eatin' up her food.
We're always over at our grandmother's house, eating all her food.

The world has become so standardized that even as I type, I am being criticized for my use of grammatical features (dis freakin' spell check is irritatin'). When will things become more liberal, in which all languages and dialects can exist without the notoriety of being different? The answer is still unknown, but things are beginning to change. In Leah Zuidema's writings titled, *Myth*

> *Education: Rationale and Strategies for Teaching against Linguistic Prejudice*, she speaks upon how the people view the variety of languages in the modern world today. She gives prime examples as to how dialects, including AAVE can affect the stability of the Earth, she states: *These assumptions are not inconsequential thoughts. People act on their ideas, and as a result, prejudice becomes active discrimination. Employment, promotions, grades, recommendations, and business agreements are just a few of the things that may be affected (negatively or positively) by reactions to the ways a person uses language in speech or writing. (Zuidema pp.352)*
>
> This is especially true when it comes to applying for employment. When most people attend an interview, they use a more formal way of talking so that they can be understood most effectively. If an individual went into an interview speaking in their home language, they are guaranteed to be turned around almost immediately. This goes back to saying that the ideas of an informal dialect speaker must be the focus and not the diction or eloquence. To also view this from a scholastic standpoint, nothing is more critical about languages and dialect than academia. From elementary school to college courses, criticism runs wild.
>
> I hate to repeat this so many times, but the status of AAVE, along with other dialects must receive their due respect. It can only occur if more scholars like Geneva Smitherman, P.A. Ramsey, and Arnetha Ball step up to the plate and encourage the world that variety can never be considered negative.

From Marquise's essay we see both his successes and struggles with his appropriation of the academic conventions. We notice his attempts to cite sources, although most of these attempts are not successful. But, while his citations are formatted incorrectly (he italicizes direct quotes and titles of articles and essays), he is in part successful with his ability to summarize, critique, and evaluate the sources he uses. He not only states his affirmation and disagreement with particular scholars' arguments; his close reading of referenced sources and texts demonstrates an acute awareness of the arguments made, in addition to places where the authors' points may be strengthened. While many of Marquise's views are subject to interpretation and debate regarding his ability to critique certain scholars' work, for a first-year writing student, Marquise's text indicates his ability to mimic the academic conventions associated with disciplinary critique. And, notice that he even adds a subheading to mimic discursive practices associated with academic publications and texts!

But Marquise's language ain't straight-up Standard Academic English. After reading his essay, we also notice several places where he style shifts between Ebonics and SE in his appropriation of Ebonics phonological features and syntax when he writes: "dis freakin' spell check is irritatin'" and "Naw dat ain't right for real!" He also makes use of various AAR strategies to establish stronger connections with his audience. In one example, he writes, "if I were to write a statement once in Standard English (SE) and also in AAVE, which would the general audience respond to more quickly? The SE form of the statement without a doubt!" Asking this rhetorical question exhibits a call/response-like pattern that requires readers to consider the question and potentially respond to it.

Let's also consider the rhetorical practices at work in the following passage taken from Marquise's essay. He writes:

> Now early in Balester's argument, she stated that she had no prior knowledge of the history of AAVE! She seemed to have contradicted herself into a corner, as soon as she faced criticism from colleagues. Now I'm not trying to bash Valerie Balester, because I mean I'm only a college freshman, but when you state an unclear idea or belief to academia, you kind of deserve it.

In the previous passage, not only does Marquise establish a strong connection with his audience in his direct address and conversational tone (a rhetorical pattern also identified by Gilyard and Richardson, but not used frequently by other students—see Gilyard and Richardson 41), but he also develops various forms of person-centered arguments. In doing so, he links his status as a college freshman with that of scholars in order critique Valerie Balester's admitted lack of familiarity with AAVE. He then, uses Balester's lack of familiarity to signify directly (another AAR strategy), when he states, "when [stating] an unclear idea or belief to academia, you kind of deserve it." I'm not suggesting that his interpretation of Balester's text is valid, but what is important is how he draws on both AAR patterns and the conventions associated with academic discourse.

Marquise also makes use of repetition, a repetition that he is sure to acknowledge:

> I hate to repeat this so many times, but the status of AAVE, along with other dialects must receive their due respect. It can only occur if more scholars like Geneva Smitherman, P.A. Ramsey, and Arnetha Ball step up to the plate and encourage the world that variety can never be considered negative.

It is significant that Marquise acknowledges this repetition because he demonstrates to readers the use of repetition as a rhetorical and purposeful act. He isn't merely repeating ideas because he has nothing else to say; rather, he makes use of repetition to emphasize meaning—that the status of AAVE in Composition Studies is not where it should be. What is also interesting about Marquise's previous excerpt is the way that he pays a shout-out to African American scholars who promote language rights, a discursive practice associated with both Hip Hop and the African American community more generally.

Perhaps the idea that I'm most fascinated by in Marquise's essay is the way that he is able to identify various AAR patterns and apply them at the same time in one entire essay! In fact, he makes use of all of the AAR patterns that he references from Ball's work ("Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students") in his essay. As previously stated, he uses "repetition to create formulaic patterning" (Ball 28). He also establishes "a link or sense of rapport with the audience" when he writes: "Now early in Balester's argument, she stated that she had no prior knowledge of the history of AAVE!" (28). Moreover, as previously discussed, Marquise establishes strong connections with his audience by "using interactive dialogue with the audience with phrases like" 'now' (28).

His text also takes on "a quality of performance in the style and delivery" as he styles shifts between Ebonics-based syntax, AAR, SE, and additional conventions of

academic language. In some instances, his text also exhibits a sermon-like performance when he writes: "By Ball being one the highest scholars of AAVE amongst others like Geneva Smitherman, the acceptation of vernacular language in the world shall soon come." The delivery of his text further employs "orally-based organization patterns in addition to the topic associations compare and contrast patterns" as he blends oral discourse with the written discourse associated with academia as he blends anecdotes and examples of AAVE with the scholastic arguments he aims to make (28). Consider the following statement from Marquise's essay:

> For example, how could a griot tell a West African story by using a Standard English translation, it would defeat the whole purpose! Or that's like an African slave historian trying to write the lyrics to old slave hymns using Standard English; this would cause the songs to lose their character.

Marquise draws on proverbial modes of oral discourse to link topics when he compares the necessity for writing Ebonics in the classroom on certain occasions to the necessity of West African griots needing their home language varieties to tell a story, an oral-based genre. He sets up this comparison to demonstrate that in order to keep it real and establish a more powerful and authentic voice, it is necessary to write in home language varieties because writing in SE would cause texts to lose their character or identity. What is also interesting about this passage is that it assumes an understanding of shared cultural experiences (28). It assumes that readers are familiar with the orality and storytelling that is associated with the West African griot tradition. It also assumes that readers are familiar with the song and dance rituals associated with the African American slavery tradition.

The final interesting pattern that Marquise uses (as identified by Ball) is by linking "topics through the use of personal anecdotes and narratives interspersed within

expository texts" (28). We especially see Marquise's linking of topics with personal anecdotes when he critiques works of referenced scholars, particularly in his work with Balester's text when he links her arguments with his status as a college freshman. In reference to Ball's work, he also links topics with her work by comparing his status as a "bi-dialectal" speaker who can switch back and forth between Ebonics and SE to the African American student participants in Ball's study. In the following passage, Marquise further links his own personal understandings of Ball's text by stating the following:

> As Ball pointed this out, I realized that this strategy could be traced back to Africa, specifically the western region, where griots, or village storytellers, intertwines the audience into the story, particularly when it comes to morals that should be followed to maintain stability in the community. Ball also notices how the students used repetition in their writing, creating a pattern. I'm not entirely sure what that means, in terms of being a strategy. Does that mean that she believes that students tie things together in their writing by using the same terms repeatedly?

Marquise's work with Ball not only demonstrates his engagement with the text, but also, demonstrates the ways that he links his own personal understanding of the text with the arguments that are written and expressed by the referenced scholar. He acknowledges his uncertainties with the text and raises critical questions about what exactly is meant by African American students' use of repetition because it is unclear to him whether the use of repetition refers to the repetition of certain words or phrases, or whether it refers to the repetition of certain ideas or concepts.

In sum, we can learn a great deal about the skills and knowledge that Marquise has gained regarding the study of Ebonics. As writing teachers, we can acknowledge the strengths of his texts, as well as the areas in which he needs work. As a teacher-researcher, I recognize the work and instruction still needed on citation systems, and I also recognize that additional instruction is needed in argument construction. While I applaud his engagement and strong attempts at scholastic critique, as writing educators,

we might encourage Marquise—and all of our students—to look more critically at the whole contexts of scholastic sources before selecting particular quotes, passages, or ideas to critique. For example, he criticizes Balester for her lack of familiarity with AAVE prior to doing research on her African American students; however, what he does not consider is that Balester was merely explaining her positionality as an origin story to her project. She had in fact, done her research on AAVE as she conducted research on African American student writers, but was unfamiliar with AAVE scholarship before the project began.

Despite some issues with his attempts to mimic the conventions associated with academic language and discourse, Marquise's text still offers many possibilities from the study of Afrocentricity and Ebonics as he mixes Ebonics phonological features and syntax purposefully with SE. His text also shows the ways in which he purposefully mixes AAR and additional oral-based discursive practices with the rhetorical practices associated with scholastic discourse. In some instances, AAR is necessary for stronger impact; in other cases, SE and citation practices as evidence are essential. Through the study of AAR and Ebonics Marquise's text provides us with an understanding of the ways that students may take the knowledge they gain from the study of AAR, Afrocentricity, and Ebonics and apply and appropriate it deliberately and rhetorically in particular writing situations, including literature review research papers.

4.6 Conclusions and Implications

In essence, this chapter provides evidence of the ways that African and African American students can manipulate Ebonics phonological, syntactical, and rhetorical

patterns across different writing assignments, contexts, and genres. From their texts, we find evidence of not only their knowledge of such Ebonics structural and discursive patterns, but more importantly, their ability to execute them in highly sophisticated ways. While students may or may not have been completely conscious of the structural and discursive patterns that they executed, what is clear is the fact that they can identify these patterns in texts besides their own, and appropriate them in their own texts. Students are also able to use such patterns with autobiographical writing in ways that help illustrate particularly ideas; students are capable of employing Ebonics to define words, phrases, or ideas; and they are skillful at using Ebonics to demonstrate the ways in which they code-switch. The fact that students can explain and provide specific examples of how they code-switch in academic writing requires a critical level of intellectual engagement. Students can also employ Ebonics structural and discursive patterns in genres besides personal narratives. Their texts illustrate their ability to employ such patterns across multigenre texts, where each genre requires its own rules and conventions; across research papers, where students must also follow the conventions associated with citation and research practices; and across texts, where either digital composing or analysis of digital texts is required.

Finally, we see how one student strategically employs multiple structural and discursive patterns in the most challenging of genres for students, the disciplinary literacies research paper. Marquise's text not only provides compelling evidence that Africanized patterns of expression are appropriate for research essays, but also, he demonstrates a profound ability to use these patterns and still engage many of the conventions necessary in academic writing. His text—like others—illustrates a repertoire

of contexts in which Ebonics can be used purposefully and strategically. Such work not only supports the argument that students have the right to their own language, but also, demonstrates that students are capable of discerning how and when to use the right to their own language. The fact that Marquise and other students are able to employ numerous African-based structural and discursive patterns provides composition teachers with compelling evidence that African American linguistic and stylistic choices are rich, sophisticated, and alive and well in college composition classrooms.

The next chapter shows the ways in which all students might benefit from an Afrocentricity linguistically-focused curriculum.

Chapter 5

AFROCENTRIC PEDAGOGY FOR ALL STUDENTS: TOWARD A PEDAGOGY OF INCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide discussion of what students have learned about Ebonics, writing, and Composition Studies and how their attitudes have changed toward Ebonics by the end of the semester. I further assess what students learned in relationship to my institution's Tier I Writing Program shared learning goals.[29] Because our Program's goals revolve around writing, reading, and research skills and processes (*Guidebook* 4), I am interested in how an alternative curricular approach still helps students meet these goals in relationship to writing, reading, and research skills and practices.

As discussed in Chapter 3, to assess the ways that Afrocentric pedagogy supports all first-year writing students, I rely on two methods of instrumentation. The first is a language-attitudinal questionnaire, designed to ask students questions about their attitudes toward Ebonics. The second method, textual analyses from students' disciplinary literacies essay assignments, assesses students' writing in relationship to programmatic learning goals. I focus on both methods because my course objectives aim to introduce students to Ebonics as a legitimate form of communication, to introduce students to the discipline of Composition Studies, and to fulfill the shared learning goals designated by the Tier I Writing program.[30] Thus, the connection between these methods

[29] Please see appendix for a list of the Tier I Writing Program's Shared Learning Goals.

[30] See Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of course goals and learning objectives.

is primarily pedagogical in nature: I wanted to find evidence that an Afrocentric curriculum supports all students in learning about Ebonics and accomplishing course and programmatic goals. The goals that I focus on later in this chapter require students to demonstrate the following:

- Writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry;
- Understand that various academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, voice, syntactical choices, use of evidence, and citation styles;
- Demonstrate the ability to locate and employ a variety of sources for a range of purposes;
- Understand the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles;
- Be able to critically evaluate a variety of sources in purposeful ways;
- Apply methods of inquiry and understanding to generate new knowledge; and
- Demonstrate competence with one citation/documentation system.

As also discussed in Chapter 3, I chose to look at the disciplinary literacies assignment in relationship to the learning goals because I believe this assignment to be the most complex and challenging since it reflects the work that they have done with the learning goals toward the end of the semester, and because this assignment requires that students execute more shared learning goals than the other three major writing assignments. Therefore, the disciplinary literacies assignment can best assess students' abilities to locate and engage critically in various forms of scholarly research, both of which are required by program's shared learning goals.

Furthermore, while students may demonstrate their proficiency with the learning goals differently in other assignments, I am most interested in students' abilities to execute the learning goals with a particular assignment that also requires them to demonstrate their knowledge of rhetoric and composition as a discipline. In the field, while students' work on Ebonics has been previously assessed in essay exams, creative writing genres, and digital composition's (Richardson and Gilyard; Ball; Canagarajah), disciplinary scholarship has yet to uncover the work that all students can produce in essays that require students to make sense of disciplinary conversations with Ebonics. Thus, in addition to my pedagogical rationale for selecting this assignment for assessment, I also find that a discussion of students' work with the disciplinary literacies assignment is a productive space for our field to begin thinking more critically about the ways that students make sense of the discourse and its conversations surrounding our discipline.

5.2 Language Attitudinal Questionnaire: Attitudes toward Ebonics

One way that I look at knowledge gained from the study of Ebonics is by discussing the ways that students' attitudes change toward its appropriateness. My hypothesis was that students would have less favorable attitudes toward its appropriateness at the beginning of the semester (in the pre questionnaire), and that these attitudes would be more favorable once students learned more about Ebonics being a legitimate linguistic system (in the post questionnaire). The language attitudinal questionnaire is a series of six questions that asks students to first reflect on their experiences being corrected with oral and written discourse, their writing styles and practices, and their attitudes toward

Ebonics. The purpose of administering the questionnaire, then, is two-fold: As a teacher, I wanted to get a sense of students' experiences and attitudes toward writing and linguistic practices, and as a researcher, I wanted to get a sense of the attitudes that they demonstrate toward Ebonics.

My hypothesis that students would hold less favorable attitudes toward the appropriateness of Ebonics on the pre and post questionnaires held true. Students' knowledge and attitudes reflected in the pre questionnaire often spoke to the expectation that the writer or communicator's linguistic patterns be consistent with the rules governing Standard English. Their responses in the pre questionnaire especially reinforce limited knowledge of Ebonics as a rule-governed (and legitimate) linguistic system. By addressing these forms of knowledge and attitudes, I designed questions that would allow me to see if attitudes toward Ebonics changed depending on whether or not the statement was written in Ebonics or spoken in Ebonics. For instance, questions 3 and 4 from questionnaire specifically address both spoken and written Ebonics:

3. Read the following passage and respond to the set of questions following this passage:
   Derrick is a fellow student in your English composition class. When the instructor asked for Derrick's response to a required reading, Derrick replied: "I ain' really get da gist of't. I mean de author just be goin' round and round in circles; he kinda be sayin' da same thang over and over. It just don' make no kind of sense to me."

   In the series of questions below, 1) circle the number which most closely corresponds to your reaction, and 2) explain your responses.

   KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

   1. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:

      1 2 3 4

      Explain:

   2. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class.

1 2 3 4

Explain:

3. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

4. Listen to the following audio recording and respond to the following questions:

KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

1. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

2. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

3. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

I interpreted any attitude that viewed Ebonics as not appropriate at all as a less favorable attitude toward the language, and any attitude that viewed it appropriately as a more favorable attitude toward its appropriateness. Figures 1.3 through 1.8 identify the differences in attitudes on pre and post questionnaires when looking at spoken and written Ebonics in particular contexts.[31]

[31] If a student gave two answers (e.g. circling both 2 and 3), I tallied one vote for each category.

Figure 1.1: Attitudes toward Spoken Ebonics in Class using Written Statement

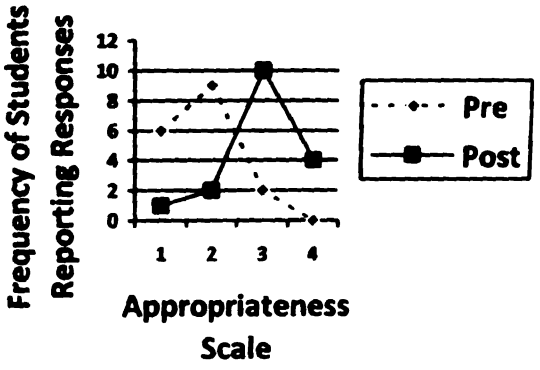


Figure 1.2: Attitudes toward Written Ebonics in class using Written Statement[32]

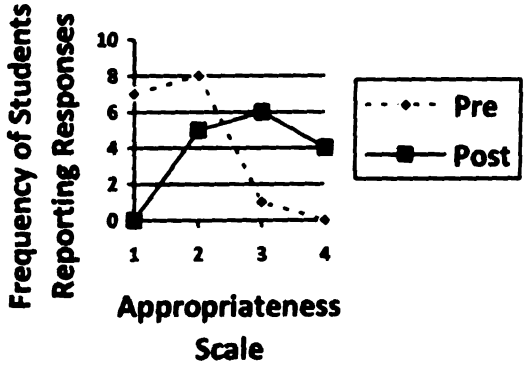
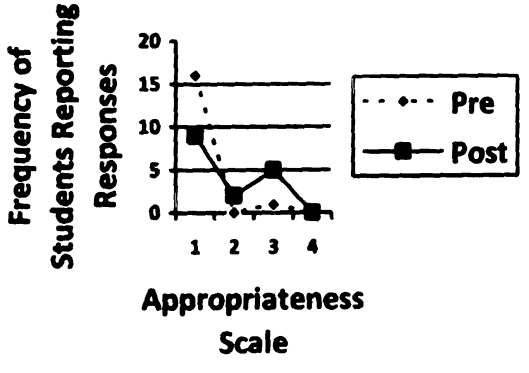


Figure 1.3: Attitudes toward Written Ebonics Formally Using Written Statement[33]



[32] One student chose not to answer the question in the post questionnaire.

[33] One student chose not to answer the question in the post questionnaire.

Figure 1.4: Attitudes toward Spoken Ebonics in class Using Audio-taped Statement[34]

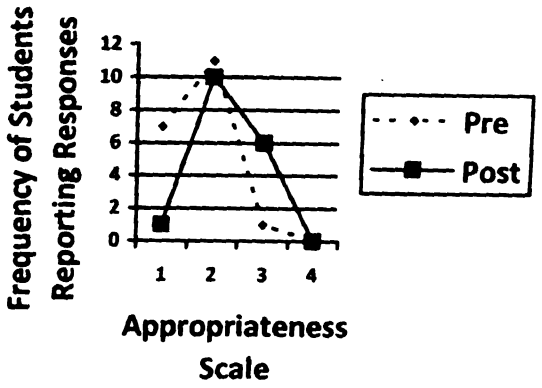
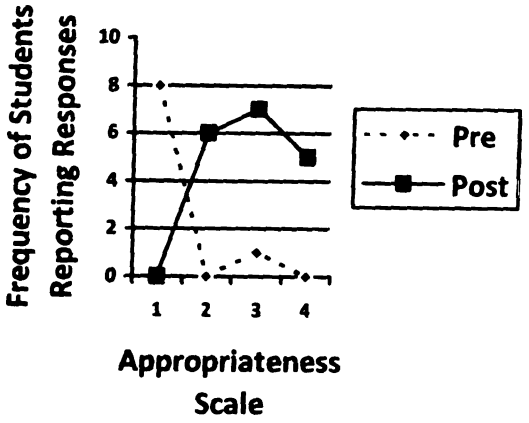


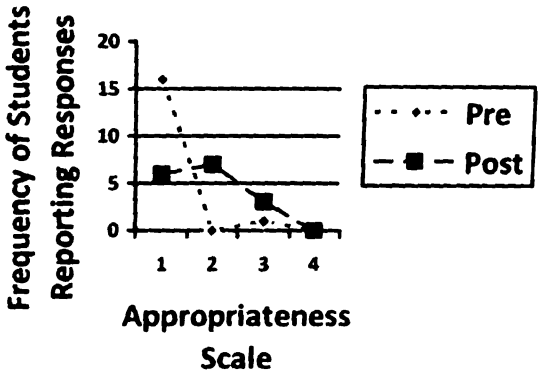
Figure 1.5: Attitudes toward Written Ebonics in class Using Audio-taped Statement[35]



[34] One student reported it as being both somewhat and definitely appropriate for Derrick to speak Ebonics in class in the post questionnaire.

[35] One student reported it being both somewhat and definitely appropriate for Derrick to write Ebonics in class in the post questionnaire.

Figure 1.6: Attitudes toward Written Ebonics Formally Using Audio-taped Statement[36]



What is important about these numbers is the direction of change. With the pre questionnaire, students' findings reveal that very similar attitudes exist toward both spoken Ebonics and written Ebonics, since the same number of respondents reported it being not appropriate at all to write formally in Ebonics after hearing both the spoken and written Ebonics texts when taking the pre questionnaire (see Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Students also bore slightly similar attitudes toward writing in Ebonics for class when hearing both the spoken and written texts (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4). With the written text, while seven students reported it being not appropriate at all for Derrick to write Ebonics for class (see Figure 1.3), eight students reported a similar attitude when hearing the spoken version on the pre questionnaire (see Figure 1.4).[37] What is clear from these findings is that the majority of students in my class initially reported having less favorable attitudes toward both spoken and written appropriateness of Ebonics, thus

[36] One student did not circle a response, but did note that it depends on the context.

[37] Because the data set is too small, a statistical test cannot measure whether or not there is significant difference between attitudes toward spoken and written texts. As a researcher, all that I can conclude is that students held similar attitudes since similar numbers of students responded similarly to both spoken and written versions of the statement.

making the work that we sought to accomplish in the class more challenging (with regard to changing students' perceptions and attitudes), yet definitely necessary.

What is also interesting, though, is the degree to which students' attitudes changed by the end of the semester. From these results, we see changes in attitudes toward both spoken and written Ebonics. While sixteen students in the first questionnaire reported that writing formally like Derrick was inappropriate when reading the written statement, only nine reported it as inappropriate in the post questionnaire (see Figure 1.5). Another interesting finding is the changes in students' attitudes toward the use of Ebonics in classroom. While eight students initially said it wasn't at all appropriate for Derrick to write in Ebonics for class when hearing the audio-taped statement, zero respondents reported it being not at all appropriate to write like Derrick in the post questionnaire (see Figure 1.6).

Perhaps many students' attitudes changed because they acquired more knowledge about the legitimacy of Ebonics, especially those acknowledging the appropriateness of Ebonics in a writing class. By the end of the course, however, once students acquired more knowledge about Ebonics, they adjusted their attitudes accordingly. For example, in the post questionnaire, some students commented on the legitimacy of Ebonics, while no respondents acknowledged its legitimacy as a language in the pre questionnaire. One student writes: "If the teachers [sic] ok with it then I think it's totally fine [...] Standard English isn't the only language. AAVE has rules too." Another student writes: "[Writing in African American Language (AAL) for class is extremely appropriate because] students should be able to write in AAL, as it is equal to SE." And, finally, another student writes: "[It's appropriate because] it's an Ebonics class." The fact that such

students recognize Ebonics as a rule-governed system and a legitimate topic appropriate for a language-focused class further shows that they have acquired more knowledge about the language and its legitimacy.

This does not mean that students' perceptions of Ebonics are clear, cut and dry, as we see some tensions associated with students' responses. In the post questionnaire, two students reported being more on the fence when determining whether or not Ebonics was appropriate to write for class and formal writing situations. Another student chose not to answer a couple of the questions when reporting attitudes toward Ebonics. The largest change, however, was in the number of students reporting that Ebonics was not appropriate at all to write in the class when hearing both the spoken and written Ebonics texts. When hearing the spoken text, zero students reported it being not appropriate at all, and when reading the written text, one student reported it being not appropriate at all. Although the number of students reporting writing in Ebonics as inappropriate for formal writing situations decreased when reading and hearing the spoken and written texts, more students still responded to it being not appropriate at all to speak and write formally than those students who reported it being not appropriate at all to speak and/or write in Ebonics exclusively for class. These tensions seem to suggest that while students are familiar with the legitimacy of Ebonics, they recognize that others who aren't familiar may make particular judgments on speakers who do not use Standard English. One student writes: "[Derrick] wouldn't be taken seriously just like I wouldn't be taken seriously if I wrote a formal piece in the way I speak with my friends."[38] Another student

[38] Because of the personal meaning associated with less favorable attitudes, I choose not to reveal the specific names corresponding to these attitudes.

writes: "It is ok for the students to speak this way in class but not ok for a formal writing piece. A formal writing piece is just what it says it is formal."

Other students justify their responses by arguing that in formal settings, since Standard English is most familiar, it should be expected that speakers and writers conform to these conventions. One student writes: "Writing a formal piece must be able to reach out to a broad audience. The use of informal dialects may not be understood correctly." Another writes: "Formal pieces usually use SE and don't have contractions." Thus, while students understand the legitimacy of Ebonics being appropriate for some contexts, by the end of the class, many of them concluded that it is not always appropriate to use in other writing and communicative contexts.

In sum, the pre and post language attitudinal questionnaires reveal that students possessed less favorable attitudes about the appropriateness of Ebonics on the pre questionnaire than on the post questionnaire, although some students still questioned the appropriateness of Ebonics in formal written contexts in the post questionnaire. Furthermore, students' comments about the legitimacy of Ebonics speak to the knowledge that they have acquired about Ebonics being a legitimate linguistic system and topic worthy of discussion in a language-focused course; their comments toward audience expectations to justify their choices also reveal that students are thinking critically about the politics of language and how they influence particular discourse environments. And, the fact that students provide reasons for their choices may further suggest their ability to argue toward the appropriateness of Ebonics in various contexts. What perhaps may be challenging is the fact that while students are familiar with its legitimacy, they may have a harder time convincing those less familiar of its legitimacy

that Ebonics is appropriate in various contexts. Nonetheless, students are still able to explain the decisions that guide when and where they determine Ebonics to be appropriate.

5.3 The Disciplinary Literacies Assignment: An Execution of Students' Writing Practices

In the previous section, I focused on students' attitudes toward the appropriateness of Ebonics in their language attitudinal questionnaires. Such changes in attitudes reflect students' knowledge of the legitimacy of Ebonics. In order, to prove this claim, however, it is also important to provide further evidence of the knowledge students have acquired when learning about Ebonics. Therefore, I assess their knowledge of Ebonics in relationship to the disciplinary literacies assignment. The disciplinary literacies assignment requires that students demonstrate knowledge of Ebonics and the field of rhetoric and composition, by addressing the ways that Ebonics is discussed in disciplinary scholarship. I also focus on this assignment because much scholarship on first-year writing students calls for students' writing practices to be studied empirically in relationship to academic and/or professional writing; many argue that such writing should also be relevant for the rest of students' collegiate careers and majors (Nelms and Dively; Bergmann and Zepernick; Wardle). Others argue that first-year composition be revised as an introductory course to the discipline of Composition Studies (Downs and Wardle). In "Disciplinarity and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write," Linda S. Bergmann and Janet Zepernick assess students' experiences with learning to write in disciplines related to their majors. They write:

> [Many teachers in other disciplines consider] English classes [to be] personal and expressive rather than academic or professional, and therefore think that teachers' comments and suggestions represent an unwarranted "intrusion" into students' own personal and intellectual territory. However, they consider writing in other classes as part of their socialization into the disciplines those courses represent... [Students'] failure to credit English classes with having taught them to write was not, therefore, grounded in students' belief that what they learned about writing in one setting could not be applied in others, but rather in their perception that the writing done for English classes was inherently not "disciplinary" or "professional" and therefore offered few features that could be transferred. (129)

The lack of disciplinarity in relationship to composition appears to be an interesting theme in relationship to writing assessment in the field. In addition to introducing students to the field and requiring that students have more knowledge of Ebonics, another purpose of this assignment was to assess students' execution of these goals in relationship to the disciplinary literacies assignment in order to respond to the call that first-year writing courses establish a clearer relationship between first-year writing classes and disciplinarity. Therefore, I am interested in how students engage scholarly knowledge in rhetoric and composition because I also believe that first-year writing courses should respond to the call for disciplinarity, where our discipline's practices are investigated as a source of scholastic inquiry.

A summary of the writing prompt used with the disciplinary literacies writing assignment reads as follows (a copy of the writing prompt also appears in the appendix of writing assignments):

For this essay, you'll be asked to develop an argument as to whether Composition Studies effectively discusses the usage of [African American Language]/AAVE as a language/language variety, and whether or not discussion on the topic has changed or evolved over time. To do this, you will also consider referring to specific journals (*CCC, College English, Teaching English in a Two-Year College, The English Journal, JAC* or others) to gain a sense of what is occurring more recently in the field...

Your analysis should include the following:

- An Argument/Thesis on how composition studies discusses issues of AAVE/AAL;
- A discussion of how AAVE/AAL has been discussed historically (1970's – 2000) through course readings[39]; and
- A discussion of how AAVE/AAL is more recently discussed in composition studies (2000-present) in related journals within the field.

To accomplish these requirements ...you'll want to draw on evidence of at least 2 course readings to make your claim. In your discussion and analysis of course readings, you might consider providing summaries of each reading and authors' stance, referring to specific examples from the readings to support the authors' main idea(s), and then shifting toward formulating your own argument that analyzes each authors' effectiveness in discussing AAVE/AAL within the field.

Next, you'll need to research more recent scholarship within Composition Studies, by consulting journals in *College Composition and Communication (CCC), College English, Journal of Advanced Composition (JAC)*, or *Teaching English in a Two-Year College*... Once you've searched and browsed articles within any of these journals regarding AAVE/AAL, you'll then select AT LEAST 2 to explain how they also support your overall argument/claim on the representation of AAVE...

In short, you should carefully analyze a minimum of AT LEAST 4 sources (2 reflecting course readings assigned in class and 2 reflecting scholarship demonstrated in recent journals from the online databases). In your discussion of each article, you should make an argument/thesis that demonstrates whether or not composition studies as a discipline effectively discusses scholarship concerning AAVE/AAL and whether or not such discussion has changed/evolved over time.

When making sense of the work that students produced with this essay, I first read each essay in order to identify patterns and themes that I found to recur frequently across students' texts.[40] From these recurring themes, I then selected those that identify the ways that students interpret disciplinary conversations. I chose themes relating to disciplinary conversations because they demonstrate the knowledge that students also have acquired of rhetoric and composition as a discipline, one of the primary goals for the course.

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[39] I begin with the 1970's because this decade marks the passage of the CCCC Students' Right to Their Own Language Resolution.

[40] By frequent use, I mean patterns that recurred in at least five or more students' essays.

Once I selected these themes, I categorized excerpts from students' essays that corresponded to each theme, and was able to place every student's work within one or more of these categories. In order to provide evidence of how students' texts are representative of the common themes, I include evidence from two or three student excerpts to illustrate these examples. Once I categorized excerpts from students' responses, I interpreted what was going on in their texts, and then assessed the quality of the arguments produced. Later in this chapter, I will demonstrate how students' responses with these themes were executed in relationship to the shared learning goals.

Based on the assignment, excerpts from students' essays reveal the following themes with respect to the field's disciplinary conversations regarding Ebonics:

- identified strengths and weaknesses of the CCCC Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) Resolution;
- an acknowledgment of explicit pedagogical and curricular approaches used for implementing Ebonics;
- the continued demand for changes in teachers' attitudes regarding Ebonics;
- identification of disciplinary progress and the need for more progress; and
- identification of research methods and methodologies used to study Ebonics.

Later in this chapter, evidence of these themes will be used to identify students' skills, knowledge, and areas for improvement in order to demonstrate the ways that Afrocentric pedagogy through the study of Ebonics supports students' writing practices.

An Assessment of the Strengths and Weaknesses of CCCC SRTOL

I begin with a discussion of SRTOL, acknowledging (as I did in Chapter 2) that SRTOL is not limited to the promotion of African American students' language rights;

however, I do believe that in order to discuss the promotion and enhancement of Ebonics-speakers' linguistic performances in the classroom, SRTOL need necessarily be addressed. When reflecting on the disciplinary conversations surrounding Ebonics, my students' research on the topic also reflects how SRTOL has directly and indirectly influenced these disciplinary conversations. Thus my work—and on occasions, students' work—with SRTOL is not intended to conflate the resolution with Ebonics; instead, it is intended to demonstrate how the resolution has historically (and continues) to influence Ebonics-based disciplinary conversations.

The following passages from students' texts reveal the relationships that exist between SRTOL and Ebonics, as they acknowledge the progress, strengths, and limitations of the document:

> Ryan:[41]
> This is where the Students Right to Their Own Language (STROL) comes into the picture. First suggested in 1972, it wasn't ratified by the members of CCCC until two years later. It states:
>
> > We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language-the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its-diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (CCC)
>
> Without actually mentioning AAVE, the CCCC wrote this resolution mainly to address speakers and teachers of AAVE. Teachers have the responsibility to become informed about AAVE. However, if the teachers remain uninformed about AAVE then what chance does it have at being accepted by the general public? This is especially true in the area of writing and composition where today most documents are written in standard English. Some may argue that even though you have the right to your own language, you have the responsibility to become familiar with standard English.
>
> Sheila:

[41] A pseudonym was requested by the student.

1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication or CCCC created a resolution called the "Students' Rights to Their Own Language." The CCCC's main purposes are to eliminate the prejudices of speakers of different dialects and give the students the right to speak and write in their own language. However, what's most remarkable about the resolution is that it wanted it to make the teachers adjust to how they teach students who speak a different dialect— a theme that would be recurring throughout my discussion. This resolution encourages the teachers to have background knowledge of different dialects and it's their responsibility to improve the students' language. These resolutions are very bold and ambitious and would really help the dialect speakers to express themselves better if followed correctly, however it doesn't mask what it doesn't do. These resolutions are good in theory but not in practice. It would be good if the teachers follow the resolutions, but in real life most of them don't. Also, these resolutions were done without the perspective of students; the perspective which should be considered the most important since they are the ones who would be affected directly. And thus, I think, this shows how AAVE was discussed during the 1970's—the time when the discussions of AAVE all started from. Student's perspectives were not taken into account, while all the responsibilities of improving the language of dialect speakers were put on the shoulders of the educators.

Carrie:
In 1974, the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" Resolution was published in an attempt to call attention to the fact that students should have the right to speak and write in their own language, no matter what language that may be... The SRTOL resolution was a huge step for the field of Composition Studies as it was the first time that it had been officially stated that a student should be able to speak or write in which ever language they choose. This section of the resolution says that it is unacceptable to prefer one language or dialect over another and that all teachers will have the knowledge to allow students to speak or write in their own language. In a country that has 311 languages spoken in it as of 2007(www.nctv.gov), it would be nearly impossible to think that there is only one adequate language. While the statements made in SRTOL were good in concept, they were rarely carried out in actual classrooms.

With each of these excerpts, students attempt (sometimes accurately, other times questionably) to assesses the strengths and shortcomings of the SRTOL document. In Ryan's response, although the idea that SRTOL was written "mainly to address speakers and teachers of AAVE," is up for debate, his response does establish a relationship between teachers' responsibilities to promote language rights, and the communicative patterns of Ebonics-speaking students whose language may deviate from Standard English. For Ryan (and other students), one of the first steps associated with SRTOL's progress is an acknowledgment of the legitimacies of alternative language varieties, including Ebonics.

Although students clearly understand some of the purposes of the resolution, we can still use SRTOL as a learning opportunity to teach students how to strengthen

arguments. While students do have a point that the document does not clearly present students' perspectives, and while the document may not provide explicit pedagogical strategies, none of these excerpts provide sufficient evidence to support these claims. Perhaps we might encourage students to identify and analyze specific points and ideas from the actual document in order to demonstrate where such gaps exist. We might also encourage students to consider other sources that build on SRTOL by including student perspectives and pedagogical strategies (Kinloch; Ball and Lardner). In these cases, students merely tell readers their impression of the document without showing or proving their claims.

As instructors, we might also encourage students to resist absolutes like, "most" or "always." Sheila assumes that most teachers still do not enforce SRTOL, a claim that while possibly accurate, is certainly debatable without sufficient evidence. To be clear, however, Sheila's discussion of SRTOL still makes meaningful contributions. Later on in Sheila's essay, she argues that SRTOL calls for teachers to adjust their attitudes toward language varieties that deviated from Standard English. She later states that "what's most remarkable about the resolution is that it wanted it to make the teachers adjust to how they teach students who speak a different dialect— a theme that would be recurring throughout my discussion." Later in this chapter, I further discuss students' identification of themes in the field that continue to demand a change in teachers' attitudes.

As previously described by students, everythang associated with SRTOL ain't hunky dory. Students' assessment of SRTOL also seems to echo Smitherman's discussion in "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Student Rights" where she states:

> By no stretch am I saying that compositionists have all been doing the right thing over the decade since the passage of the National Language Policy. What we are witnessing, though, is a developing sociolinguistic sophistication and political maturity about language rights issues. As the field of Composition-Rhetoric has evolved, so too has the language consciousness of CCCC professionals. Further, theorists now recognize the need to address realities relative to students' native language/dialect in the comp-rhetoric context, a posture that has, unfortunately, not always been the case. (369)

Smitherman's discussion of the CCCC's role with SRTOL is critical because not only does it highlight the progress that Composition Studies has made in relationship to SRTOL, but it also recognizes a need for continued progress. One way my students point out areas for progress is by mentioning potential areas of hypocrisy associated with promoting language rights while still teaching Standard English. As Ryan argues, although the document seeks to position alternative language varieties as equal to Standard English, there is still an assumption that students should still learn Standard English. This point suggests that if alternative language varieties are primarily acceptable for informal and low-stakes writing tasks and if Standard English is positioned as the primary language variety suitable for formal writing situations, then Standard English continues to remain the superior language variety to others, despite SRTOL's insistence that all language varieties are equal. This moreover demonstrates that attitudes toward the legitimacy of Ebonics need to be adjusted so that Ebonics may gain equal status to Standard English. Ryan's understanding of this argument might be strengthened, however, if he referenced more recent scholarship that similarly points out these

hypocrisies with their discussions of SRTOL. In other excerpts, students reference Canagarajah's "The Place of Word Englishes: Pluralization Revisited," a text that critiques the superiority of mainstream Englishes and the mere toleration of world Englishes and alternative language varieties.

As students also identify, another problem with the resolution is that while passed, there's no mandate requiring teachers in the discipline to actually support it. Despite the wide margin that SRTOL was passed by (Smitherman 358), according to the SRTOL document, the voter turnout was fairly low, only being approved by a 79-20 vote ("Students' Right"). Students' identifications of this problem is significant because when discussing SRTOL in class, many students concluded that if the voter turnout was this low, the CCCC would have no way of knowing the opinions of those who did not vote on the resolution, which were many. In light of this, students concluded that the lower turnout may suggest that the document lacks enforcement, and thus, many teachers of writing may still not support SRTOL. As such, writing teachers could potentially maintain pedagogical practices inconsistent with the document's philosophy.

Students' interpretation of this lack of mandate is also consistent with research conducted by the CCCC Language Policy Committee. In their 2000 "Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey Final Report," the committee found that teacher education courses in linguistics and language varieties were necessary because surveyed respondents lacked familiarity with both the SRTOL Resolution, as well as an understanding of alternative linguistic systems ("Language Knowledge"). Scott Wible specifically states:

> In fact, as the CCCC Language Policy Committee reported in its recent survey of members of the CCCC and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), many compositionists have never ever seen the ink and paper—let alone the substance—of the "Students' Right" policy, as two-thirds of the survey respondents were unfamiliar with the resolution (14-15). (443)

Thus, the idea that the majority of respondents (who are members of CCCC) were not familiar with the document, may suggest that there is no mandate that requires members of the organization support it. According to students, if the document is not enforceable, then SRTOL seems good in theory, but fall short of philosophical practice. In this case, the problem is not with students accurately identifying the lack of enforceability; instead, the problem lies with students' ability to provide evidence of this limitation, although such claims and limited evidence may suggest where students might look with additional research had students chosen to revise these essays a final time. The limitations associated with accuracy are also understandable because in order to prove this point, student-researchers would need to have a more extensive working knowledge of the CCCC, its committees, and the research that the organization has conducted in relationship to students' rights.

As also discussed, like the lack of philosophical practice offered from the document, students' analysis of SRTOL indicates, while good in theory, the resolution also falls short in providing explicit examples of pedagogical practice. Their findings are also consistent with what Smitherman has discussed in the "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Student Rights," and more recently, Valerie Kinloch's discussion in "Revisiting the

Promise of 'Students' Right to Their Own Language': Pedagogical Strategies."

Smitherman writes:

> It seemed that the Students' Right background document was welcomed because it was informative in terms of theory; however, it did not go far enough in praxis. CCCC leadership acknowledged the need for something more in the form of explicit teaching materials, sample lesson plans, and a more practically-oriented pedagogy. (365)

And, Kinlock states more recently:

> We must do more than theorize about student differences and language variation. We must use a rights rhetoric such as Students' Right to encourage students to become active learners and critical thinkers inside and outside of classrooms if we are, in the words of Smitherman, "taking care of business" (Talkin and Testifyin 216)... Let us affirm the rights of students to their own language by affirming the practices they bring into classrooms as they enhance their critical thinking, reading, writing, and performing skills. (109)

Kinloch's work with SRTOL is also significant because it identifies specific strategies for putting SRTOL into practice, using her own students' conversations about the resolution from class discussions as lenses. It also demonstrates how we can use the document (and disciplinary scholarship) to teach explicit pedagogical strategies related to writing, reading, and research. While students can make the claim (from Smitherman's analysis) that originally, the SRTOL did not sufficiently put theory into practice, more recent conversations like Kinloch's, however, provide evidence of increasing pedagogical strategies in support of SRTOL and Ebonics-speaking students.

An Acknowledgment of Explicit Pedagogies Used to Teach Ebonics

While many students argue that the SRTOL resolution stops short at the praxis level, and that it needs to be updated to discuss specific pedagogical strategies more extensively (beyond the bibliography that was updated in 2006 at the end of the document), they do acknowledge and identify the more recent pedagogies with respect to Ebonics-speaking students. Based on students' responses to the disciplinary literacies assignment, they have identified the following Ebonics-based composition pedagogies: Afrocentric pedagogy used to support self expression; contrastive analysis of Standard English and Ebonics; bridging from home languages to Standard English; the promotion of bidialectalism; and the promotion of code-switching. I classify these pedagogies into strategies that seek to implement African-based cultural practices, and those that are based on the teaching of linguistic phenomena, practices that can be applied to any language or language variety (e.gs. teaching bidialectalism, contrastive analysis, etc.).

Implementation of African-based Cultural Practices in the Classroom

> Justin:
> Elaine Richardson tells about a study done in 1996 about applying an African American type of curriculum to a major mid-western University. This study was done with 24 African American students. This new curriculum was trying to use the experiences that the students bring to the classroom and not treat them like black pieces of slate. By using their experiences I mean allowing the students to use their background in their writing in the class. By giving these students the ability to express themselves in their own styles was very empowering for these students. "The idea that black anything is nothing was so deeply embedded into their consciousness that their behaviors sometimes reflected this sad truth." Elaine Richardson, "Critique on the Problematic of Implementing Afrocentricity into Traditional Curriculum: "The Powers That Be'"[...] Elaine Richardson is saying that these African American students have been convinced to believe that their backgrounds and home languages are not considered credible for any type of formal writing. By allowing these students to use their home language and experiences in their writing these students seemed to be instantaneously liberated, with much self-confidence. The implication of African American curriculum can be very beneficial for students, through gaining self-confidence and exposing them to diversity.

> Kelly:
> [Elaine Richardson] explained that the African-centered composition curriculum is based in five theoretical traditions. The first being Afrocentricity, which "is an inclusive approach to phenomena that encourages knowledge of centeredness of self." Also, "African American

> students' literacy education should involve their experiences and be experienced by them," (198)... The second theory is "politicizing literacy instruction is highly compatible to the situation of the AAVE student," (Richardson 199). Black literacy has been political all the way back to slavery. This theory allows students to have knowledge of their heritage and the struggle that it included. This education will help students to strive to define their futures, (Richardson 199)... Today's classrooms however tend to approach students as though they are blank slates. Looking through the different scholarship on the field, it has been found that many students are taught to write in Standard English, and as thought they know nothing. Students are treated as students. Richardson is giving solutions to going against the idea that students are just students.

Both Justin and Kelly successfully identify the relationships that exist between the celebration and promotion of African American worldviews and culture, and African American linguistic practices. Justin specifically references Richardson's discussion of "Afrocentric" pedagogy and argues that because her curriculum focuses on African American students, the Afrocentric focus permits students to celebrate their home language and cultural practices. Kelly states that another way to position Afrocentric pedagogy in the classroom is by celebrating African American cultural and communicative practices in ways that politicize the concept of Black literacy, a practice that acknowledges the heritage and struggle of African American people. Each approach, then, acknowledges Afrocentric pedagogical roots.

Students' work with African-based cultural communicative practices not only demonstrates how they identify pedagogical practices, as they are discussed in the field, but also, demonstrates their ability to analyze the problems associated with disconnecting African American students from their home cultural practices. As my students suggest, African Americans' cultural practices should be not only tolerated, but also celebrated. Later on in her essay, Kelly writes:

> Too many classrooms have students who write what the teacher or professor wants to hear, and do not actually think about the assignment and make it their own. In her student research, Richardson found that many students accepted their oppression,(209). This fact that students have accepted this oppression is a daunting concept. The classroom setting is a place that should allow the student to grow as a person, and to learn more about their backgrounds.

Kelly makes an interesting point that it is often assumed that African American students are not familiar with Standard English just because many of them draw on Ebonics-based patterns on some occasions, when she writes, "Looking through the different scholarship on the field, it has been found that many students are taught to write in Standard English, and as thought they know nothing. Students are treated as students." In "Reading Past Resistance: A Response to Valerie Balester," Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams also point out the problems associated with scholars like Balester assuming that African American students are not familiar with the discourses and discourse communities that are often associated with the academy. They note:

> Balester labels students as alien (adjective) with regard to the production of academic writing and with regard to their cultural knowledge of life in universities. We see this view as different from students being alienated, as bell hooks so eloquently articulates it, by the social and political processes permitted to predominate in our thinking and in the systemic operations of university environments, regardless of the abilities of students to produce academic prose and regardless of whatever prior knowledge of university life they hold. (138)

I find that this is exactly the point that Kelly highlights: The conversations surrounding Ebonics-based discourse in the field at times operate with the assumption that culturally-relevant and linguistic-focused pedagogical instruction is primarily necessary because Ebonics-speaking students have limited exposure and practice with executing the conventions associated with academic discourse, including Standard English. This idea further demonstrates not only Kelly's knowledge of the discourse surrounding this conversation in the field, but also, an attitude that is consistent with the need to give

African American students—and all students—the agency to take ownership in their own learning experiences and writing processes.

Teaching of Linguistic Phenomenon

As students also identify, not all Ebonics-based pedagogies are exclusively derived directly from the study of Afrocentricity. Some pedagogies, however, represent an investigation of linguistic phenomenon that may be applicable to the study of other languages and language varieties as well. In other words, while contrastive analysis, bridging, bidialectalism, and code-switching methods have often been used for implementing Ebonics into composition curricula, these approaches have also been used to teach other ESL and ESD speakers.

> Brody (Contrastive Analysis):
> In J.R. Rickford's Linguists, Education, and the Ebonics Firestorm he discussed the 1996 Oakland School Board Ebonics Resolution and its "Contrastive Analysis" approach towards linguistic education. With a fresh and current perspective on the topic (published in 2006) Rickford stated that, "An approach that took students' language into account, as the Contrastive Analysis approach does, is still more likely to succeed than one that does not" (88).
>
> Brooke (Bridging from home languages to Standard English):
> In 1971, "The primary goal of The Language Curriculum Research Group at Brooklyn College is the teaching of Standard American English, with special emphasis on writing skills" (Gilyard 14). This trend was relevant in many other areas not just at Brooklyn College. Many scholars believe that in teaching students Standard English without incorporating their home languages is giving these students great advantage. They believe that Standard English is the language of the future and is needed to be successful in oral and written communication. At Brooklyn College, in the early 1970's, incorporated a coursed designed for students who used many AAVE grammatical features in their writing. This program was designed not to teach these students Black English but was developed because of their AAVE features in their formal writing (Gilyard 14). In doing this the students could feel more comfortable around their classmates and although the course did not include Black English, the teachers could recognize and help the students slowly develop Standard English in their formal papers.
>
> Nick (Bidialectalism and Code-switching):
> A way for teachers to incorporate code-switching of language varieties into classrooms is using Bidialectalism. "Here the procedure is to allow students to retain their language but to enhance their linguistic range by acquiring the standard form as a second languages, much as one would gain facility in using a foreign language" (Nembhard 435). Using this Bidialectal strategy will help benefit Ebonics speaking students by teaching them how to use standard language varieties without putting down their own home languages. This technique will help eliminate students from feeling that they need to fade in the background, and could progress them to become more successful in school. However, language varieties other than Standard English have not always been incorporated in schools and composition studies.

As is the case with students who identify African American-centered pedagogies, discussions on specific forms of linguistic instruction also demonstrate students' ability to identify key trends in the field's conversations. What we notice from this particular thread of student conversations, though, are the ways that students conflate different linguistically-based terminology in potentially problematic ways. While one linguistic term may be related to another and while one linguistic pedagogical approach may be used to supplement another, as an instructor, it is critical to point out the technical differences that exist between each of these terms. For example, while contrastive analysis is commonly used when teaching bidialectalism (perhaps this is why the terms are discussed together), one can promote bidialectalism without necessarily teaching contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis often requires comparison and analysis of the linguistic (often syntactical) differences between one language/language variety and another. Bidialectalism means being fluent in two different dialects. One can be fluent in two different dialects without being consciously able to identify the differences between the two language varieties. Students also conflate bidialectalism with code-switching. In linguistic terms, the difference between bidialectalism and code-switching is that code-switching involves subtler shifts in language choices employed by speakers and writers, where the communicator may shift back and forth simultaneously between two linguistic codes, languages, or dialects in a given context. Bidialectalism involves more significant changes in language patterns, thus resulting in the communicator completely changing his or her language variety depending on the particular context. I would also add that while related, code-switching suggests the speaker's and/or writer's ability to shift back and forth between languages/language varieties (codes), while making purposeful decisions

regarding these shifts. In contrast, one can be bidialectal (fluent in two different dialects) and not as skilled at identifying the appropriate occasions for code-switching; a bidialectal speaker may or may not be able to identify language variety differences even when he/she uses two different language varieties. The confusions associated with these pedagogies differ from those associated with the implementation of Afrocentric pedagogies.

Such confusion also seems to correlate with the limited discussion of specific attitudes toward these linguistic pedagogical approaches. In the previous section, students were more likely to analyze their *own* opinions (as illustrated through Kelly's example) in relationship to the identified Afrocentric pedagogies. In this section, however, students primarily summarize the linguistic-based pedagogies, and identify the *scholars'* opinions. When dealing with linguistic terminology, my findings illustrate how students often revert back to the summary-based discourse with which they are most familiar in attempt to understand and make sense of the disciplinary-based linguistic terminology.

Continued Demands for Self-Efficacy and Changes in Teachers' Attitudes

Another theme that many students traced was disciplinary discussions on the necessity for the teachers to change their attitudes regarding Ebonics. In *African American Literacies Unleashed*, Ball and Lardner argue that self-efficacy (through the exploration and examination of teachers' personal reflections and expectations) is a critical component to acknowledging, confronting, and changing teachers' negative attitudes toward Ebonics. Students also identify the necessities for teachers to acknowledge, confront, and change attitudes, a progression that they identify quite early on in disciplinary conversations (during the 1970's) and even more recently (from 2000-

present). In doing so, students' responses reveal that self-efficacy still needs to be acknowledged; while there is an acknowledgement of the progress concerning the legitimacy of Ebonics, a change in teachers' attitudes is still necessary. Comparable to the progress and need for continued change, as reflected through students' previous discussions of SRTOL, and comparable to Smitherman's discussion in "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Student Rights," the fact that conversations on Ebonics continue to call for changes in teachers' attitudes, suggests that everyone ain't convinced that students have the right to their own language:

> Tyler:
> At the end of the 70s, in 1979, P. A. Ramsey writes "Teaching the Teachers to Teach Black-Dialect Writers." [...] I agree with him when he argues that the problems are with the teacher not the student; teachers need to look past the color and read the paper. In addition, he believes that Black students should have the choice whether or not to learn Standard English...
>
> Kara:
> Richard Marback writes about Ebonics users as well. He identified that there are "'negative attitudes toward the language [Ebonics], lack of information about the language, inefficient techniques for teaching language literacy skills, and an unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to the needs of Ebonics speakers'" (Marback, 13). This statement is something that teachers need to take into account. With STROL in effect, teachers need to adapt their teaching styles to fit all of there students needs. The negative attitudes towards Ebonics need to be dropped so teachers can focus on their students as students and not as students of different race.
>
> Carrie:
> During the 2000's, however, there was still some linguistic prejudice against AAVE. In the article "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued" by A. Suresh Canagarajah, he shows that many teachers still do not believe AAVE is always appropriate in composition. In his article, Canagarajah puts AAVE into the category of "World English" (WE), and groups Standard English into "Metropolitan English" (ME)...
>
> [Canagarajah] says that most teachers believe that AAVE is suitable for informal, everyday communication, but not for formal and serious texts or interaction. By saying "WE for informal classroom interactions; ME for formal production," (594) Canagarajah is saying that he believes World Englishes, or AAVE in this case, are suitable for classroom interactions such as students working together, but not for formal productions like teacher instruction. This article illustrates that currently, AAVE is accepted as a language and most scholars believe that it can be used effectively in the classroom and writing but that many teachers do not implement these thoughts in their classrooms.

Tyler's discussion of teacher attitudes is significant because he illustrates the ways in which teacher attitudes and self-efficacy continue to be addressed in disciplinary

conversations, despite the fact that both of the sources from which he references were published nearly thirty years apart. With the discussion of his first source (Ramsey), he traces a progression that 1) acknowledges a problem (that teachers have to change their negative attitudes toward African American students, 2) offers a proposed solution to confront the problem (that according to Ramsey, students should have a choice in learning Standard English), and 3) moves toward the direct act of changing teaching teachers' attitudes (through dispelling linguistic myths). Kara's discussion also shows this progression, as she acknowledges the problem (lack of information about Ebonics), confronts it (stating that teachers need to account for this information) and explicitly calls for the need to change negative attitudes toward Ebonics.

What is interesting about students' claimed hypocrisy toward the legitimacy of Ebonics is the fact that many students held similar beliefs about the appropriateness of Ebonics in formal contexts in their post language attitudinal questionnaires. Thus, while students held the field responsible for tensions associated with the appropriateness of Ebonics, many of them bore similar beliefs about its appropriateness by the end of the course. In short, students' disciplinary literacies essays demonstrate their knowledge of the field's discourse, while also demonstrating particular attitudes toward the field's progress and lack thereof, many of which are similar to their own.

In relationship to acknowledging the change of teachers' attitudes, Ball and Lardner further state that

> One barrier to effective teaching of AAVE-speaking students is negative attitudes, compounded by the lack of information about the language system and effective techniques for teaching language skills, all of which is manifested in an

> unwillingness to adapt teaching styles to students' aptitudes and needs. A second barrier to change, though, is the lack of alternative models. Teachers' subjective perceptions of their work are difficult to change due to the lack of role models. Smitherman notes that changing language attitudes means changing worldview. This can be a difficult task. That being the case, we need to think more carefully about the dynamics of the change. (57)

Ball and Lardner not only point out the need for continued changes in teachers' attitudes, but also, the need for alternative pedagogical models to support these changes. Like Ball and Lardner's discussion, Carrie's discussion also demonstrates a continued need for progress regarding teachers' attitudes. For Carrie, although many scholars and compositionists acknowledge Ebonics as a linguistic legitimate system, many of them still possess the attitude that it is not appropriate for classroom discourse. This idea is consistent with Ball and Lardner's discussion that suggests that a lack of alternative models for implementing Ebonics into the classroom may in part be to blame. Carrie's reference to Canagarajah's essay "The Place of World Englishes" valuably demonstrates her understanding of how composition must continue to work toward accepting Ebonics in the classroom, even after teachers recognize and accept its linguistic legitimacy.

What is also interesting about my own students' work with the disciplinary literacies assignment is the fact that while students argue that SRTOL lacked an extensive discussion of explicit pedagogical strategies, their own understandings of disciplinary scholarship reveal that unlike Ball and Lardner's discussion, research does not necessarily point to the lack of teaching techniques. In fact, as previously demonstrated, students were able to identify specific pedagogies for teaching Ebonics students,

including those revolving around Afrocentricity, as well as those positioned in relationship with the teaching of linguistic methods. Thus, while I can accept the fact that there continues to be a need for explicit teaching techniques, as my students suggest, these techniques are no longer as scarce as the field once thought.

Acknowledgement of Disciplinary Progress and Need for Continued Progress

Like the discourse surrounding the changes and continued demand for change in teachers' attitudes, students also identify and acknowledge additional progress being made regarding the legitimacy of Ebonics and pedagogical strategies. Students' responses illustrate the following examples of such progress:

> Candace:
> Now we venture into the new millennium where the discussion goes further than the classroom, but to the composition studies field itself. The article's that are written in the 2000's are neither about the AAVE in particular nor the people who speak it. By this time, people are aware of AAVE/AAE, AAL, Ebonics, or Black Language. The discussions are now about how to imply AAVE in such a way to where it is not ignored or seen as "incorrect" but as a helpful strategic tool that can be implied in comp. studies or English writing classes. Scholars and linguists are aware of AAVE rhetorical and grammatical features now and see that there can possibly be a solution to eliminate the division of AAVE speakers and those who are not AAVE speakers, there are also more comparisons of those who speak AAVE and their reaction to writing in compositional courses.

> Katerina:
> From different terminology to different pedagogy, the explosion of opinions in discussing AAVE in composition studies could easily be traced back from the 1970s to the present. Many teachers, researchers, and compositionists have been evaluating the importance of bringing the Black English in the classroom spaces in order to provide the non-standard speakers learn how to compose in Standard English. Even though The Oakland Resolution didn't exactly resolve the problem to the extent where an actual decision for improvement was made, it brought to the surface the idea of the significant impact teachers have on students. It is crucial they learn how to interact with all types of students and become more familiar with their linguistic background. Year after year, more and more journals are popping up about the composition studies field and the analysis of what needs to be done for all students to be receiving equal opportunity education and competing against each other in the same level. [...] Writing a paper for a required college class, which focuses mainly on AAVE, and learning about its rhetorical and linguistic features, it is clear that there has definitely been improvement on appropriation of this English variety since the 1970s. There are still many more obstacles to overcome, but the first steps in providing the teachers with information and motivation on how to be successful in their job have been made; now it's up to the teachers to understand how important it is for them to put it to use.

> Justin:
> Recently in this field AAVE has been becoming more appropriated. I feel that many scholars in composition studies have expressed the importance of implementing AAVE styles into students

> learning. Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson in Students' Right to Possibility: Basic Writing and African American Rhetoric said, "Attempting to answer this question takes us beyond appreciation of AAVE and recognition of its equality to other language varieties to a consideration of AAVE's role in a creative, intellectually engaging, persuasive, and at times revolutionary discourse." [...] Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson are trying to emphasize the importance for students to be allowed to maintain their own language in today's education systems. Students use their language as a way of identifying who they are, and by trying to change this language does more than changing how the student sounds. This strips students of their ethnic culture and where they are from. We need to allow for students to use their own language like AAVE in the education system. This shows that AAVE is becoming more widely accepted as its own language allowing for it to become more appropriately discussed.

Based on students' responses, they identify the following forms of disciplinary progress: 1) an acknowledge of Ebonics as a legitimate linguistic system; 2) an increased awareness of the linguistic and rhetorical patterns of Ebonics; and, 3) an understanding of explicit pedagogies for implementing Ebonics. They further acknowledge that continued work on these areas needs to be done, as these issues have not been resolved. What is missing, however, are specific examples of areas in disciplinary scholarship where continued progress needs to be made. In many cases, students summarize historical progress, but provide limited discussions of where the field needs to go next. Students also assumed that most compositionists are familiar with the patterns of Ebonics, an idea that as previously discussed with SRTOL and the "Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey," raises concern. Although they accurately identify the breath of work done in both sociolinguistics and Composition Studies on the legitimacy, structure, and patterns of Ebonics, without further empirical evidence, they cannot assume that most compositionists and composition teachers are familiar with its legitimacy, structure, and patterns.

Identification of Disciplinary Research Methods and Methodologies

Perhaps, one of the most interesting findings of patterns in students' responses is not their discussion of disciplinary progress and needs concerning their identified

pedagogical strategies; rather, what is the most interesting finding are students' discussions of research methods and methodologies used to discuss Ebonics. The following discussions point to identified methodological trends in Ebonics-based disciplinary conversations:

Bryan:
As is the case with many AAVE speakers, these four students demonstrated an ability to skillfully manipulate and interchangeably use AAVE, mainstream, and academic English during discussions - style switching with ease depending on their degree of personal engagement in the conversation and the topic being discussed. These students tended to use more AAVE features in their speech when they were more engaged in a conversation and when talking with peers. (28) Arnetha explains that AAVE seemed to be more noticeable when the student was speaking than when he or she wrote. Ball concludes her research study by arguing that AAVE is an important aspect of writing for these students because it helps to bring out their personal and cultural experiences. When that happens, they will have the desire to continue writing.

Ray:
[Canagarajah] cites these words from another scholar, Mary Louise Pratt from her article *Arts of the Contact Zone*. Canagarajah uses it in the context of a study of a class he did. His study involved a first year college writing class he taught over the summer for ethnic minority students that was made to help them adjust to what he calls "'academic culture', in order to improve their retention rate". He noted that the African Americans, who were a 10-5 majority over students of other ethnicities in the class, formed Safe Houses (Canagarajah, 5). In the Safe Houses, the students could communicate about writing issues using their own rhetorical elements that come from AAVE. The point that Canagarajah makes, is that in order to really get the most out of writing from speakers of certain other dialects or languages (specifically AAVE in his article) the teacher must work to emphasize on the specific techniques and stylistic patterns that are found from their specific dialects, and through focusing on the students' culture work teaching basic writing skills.

Ivy:
The only research methodology scholar can do is to collect writing sample from students to prove that AAVE is better than SE in other discourse community in term of rhetorical feature. Nevertheless, AAVE has gained some recognition in academic institutions. As time goes on AAVE will make more progress in the near future as more research will be conducted by scholars... In 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, certain usages of AAVE were seen effectively used in composition studies. "*Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students*" published by Ball in 1996 concluded that teachers gave higher scores to students used discourse styles in their writing while considering syntactic features are errors in writing; The result derived from her case study has profound meaning because her comments were primarily based on her classroom teaching experience, being speech/language pathologist and collect writing samples from writing assignments of various groups, as well as defining their purposes in writing the pieces and selecting their own topics. When many scholars make unique comments on AAVE usage based *primarily* on research results, the methodology employed in a research plays an important role in establishing its validity. Ball discussed usage of AAVE from students' perspectives provided an effective way to uncover the usage of AAVE in academic writing. Students enrich their writing piece by skillfully integrate their daily language or discourse feature of AAVE...

> In Gilyard and Richardson's journals published in 2003 and 2001, both of them employed classroom research to compile an empirical data from students [...] The qualitative and quantitative data present in Richardson and Gilyard's journal provide concrete evidence to support the research result. Apparently, the earlier research has affect people's point of view to adopt AAVE in academic writing, mostly I think it also has to do with more and more people have gotten acquired with AAVE which has became rampant language among teenagers.

While students were less adept when developing analyses of the limitations associated with SRTOL and identified pedagogies, they more extensively identify and analyze research methods and methodologies used to study Ebonics in the field. Both Ray's and Ryan's discussions identify how case studies on African American students can be used to demonstrate pedagogical opportunities for implementing Ebonics into the composition curriculum. And, while they successfully identify the relationship between methodology and pedagogy, as instructors, we can provide opportunities for them to move beyond identifying and summarizing the research methods and methodologies toward developing a more thoughtful and thorough analysis of the significance of employing these methods and methodologies. Despite these summaries, though, it is still interesting to see how first-year writing students can begin identifying research practices. Such a skill can potentially serve useful as they write research papers and conduct additional research across their collegiate careers.

Ivy's discussion of research methods identifies trends in disciplinary scholarship to move from identifying the legitimacy, structure and patterns of Ebonics, toward conducting empirical research on Ebonics-based communicative practices. In the second paragraph of Ivy's discussion we see the beginnings of a rich and extensive analysis. What Ivy does quite skillfully is position different studies on African American students alongside each other (as I do in Chapter 3) not only to compare and contrast the difference in research methods and methodologies, but more importantly, to demonstrate

a relationship between research methods used to support students' successful use of alternative language varieties in writing, and the disciplinary scholarship that reflects empirical evidence for incorporating alternative language varieties into pedagogical practice. As instructors, we might encourage Ivy to explain more thoroughly the conclusions and large sweeping claims that she draws based on her methodological understandings, especially the claim she makes about the prevalent use of AAVE among teenagers. Nonetheless, Ivy's prose provides teachers with a starting point with which to work, as we see evidence of the beginnings of an analysis.

5.4 Relationship between Students' Writing and Programmatic Goals

As illustrated in the previous section, students' responses to the disciplinary literacies assignment reveal their ability to execute various practices relationship to the Tier I Writing Program's shared learning goals. An assessment of their writing practices also provides an indication of areas needed for improvement in relationship to these goals. The purpose of positioning students' work alongside institutional programmatic requirements is intended to show not only how Afrocentric pedagogical instruction can support all students, but also, how it can support students in accomplishing the writing, reading, and research goals necessary for the successful completion of students' first-year writing requirements. Table 2.1 offers a summary of the programmatic goals that students are most skilled at, as well as those that require additional improvement:

Table 2.1: Assessment of Students' Learning Goals

Goal	Skill	Some Skill, Some Improvement Needed	Improvement Needed
writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry	X		
Understand that various academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, voice, syntactical choices, use of evidence, and citation styles	X		
ability to locate ... and employ a variety of sources for a range of purposes	X		
Understand the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles	X		
Be able to critically evaluate a variety of sources in purposeful ways		X	
Apply methods of inquiry and understanding to generate new knowledge		X	
Demonstrate competence with citation/documentation system			X

Based on responses to the disciplinary literacies assignment, students possess the most knowledge of, and are most astute at executing the following Tier I Writing shared learning goals: using "writing for purposes of reflection, action, and participation in academic inquiry"; reading and understanding "that various academic disciplines and fields employ varied genre, voice, syntactical choices, use of evidence, and citation styles"; conducting research that demonstrates "the ability to locate ... and employ a variety of sources for a range of purposes"; and understanding "the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles" (*Guidebook* 4). Students' areas for improvement include the need to move toward "critically evaluat[ing] ... a variety of

sources in purposeful ways"; applying "methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding"; and demonstrating "competence with one citation system/document style" (4).

As a teacher-researcher, it is clear from students' responses that they understand that when writing about Composition Studies, they are reflecting on the work and scholarship produced in that discipline, as they participate in academic inquiry. We especially find evidence of such reflection when students connect disciplinary conversations with their own personal experiences and/or observations. Kelly reflects on the problems associated with assuming that African Americans have limited knowledge and exposure to academic discourse and Standard English. Another example of reflection is Ivy's discussion on how research in the field has changed. She writes: "Apparently, the earlier research has affect [sic] people's point [sic] of view to adopt AAVE in academic writing,[sic] mostly I think it also has to do with more and more people have [sic] gotten acquired with AAVE which has became [sic] rampant language among teenagers." Despite surface level issues (particularly in Ivy's case), with each example—as well as many others—students attempt to add to disciplinary conversations by connecting disciplinary themes with their own thoughts and personal opinions.

Through students' discussions we also find evidence that students read in ways that provide understandings of the discursive patterns and styles associated with Composition Studies. One example of their execution of this learning goal can be seen through the ways in which students refer to scholars in the field and adopt diction and additional terminology often used in sociolinguistic and Composition Studies journals. Candace writes: "Scholars and linguists are aware of AAVE rhetorical and grammatical

features now and see that there can possibly be a solution to eliminate the divisions..."

Katerina writes:

> From different terminology to different pedagogy, the explosion of opinions in discussing AAVE in composition studies could easily be traced back from the 1970s to the present. Many teachers, researchers, and compositionists have been evaluating the importance of bringing the Black English in the classroom spaces in order to provide the non-standard speakers learn how to compose in Standard English.

From both Candace's and Katerina's examples, it is clear that students have picked up on the language used to describe researchers in the field (linguists, compositionists, researchers, teachers, etc.). It is also clear that from reading scholarship in various academic journals, book chapters, and articles, students have identified pedagogy as a central role in disciplinary scholarship. Like the examples of mimicry offered in Chapter 4 where students' attempt to mimic the language and discourse often associated with Composition Studies, I argue that this mimicry could not be executed sufficiently had students not first read field-based scholarship and recognized the discursive practices associated with the field.

Because research execution is a critical skill associated with the disciplinary literacies assignment, it is expected that students' responses would illustrate their ability to engage in various forms of research. More specifically, in relationship to the shared learning goals, students' responses demonstrate their ability to locate sources for a range of purposes. With each theme in disciplinary conversations identified by students, we find evidence of their ability to identify and locate sources and apply them in ways that connect disciplinary themes and trends in research. For example, when dealing with pedagogy, students were able to locate different pedagogical techniques, both Afrocentirc

and linguistically-focused, and when dealing with methodologies, students were able to locate particular empirical studies.

Students are attempting to move toward "critically evaluat[ing] ... a variety of sources in purposeful ways" (4), but have not completely developed this skill yet. In many cases, students' responses merely summarize sources and disciplinary trends. Although, in some instances, we see the beginnings of analysis, critical evaluation of sources is still a skill where most students need some additional improvement. Perhaps students' inability and/or reluctance to critically evaluate disciplinary conversations and sources stems from the ways in which student discourse has traditionally been positioned in the field. Nancy DeJoy argues that student critique and analysis is traditionally seen in terms of students' identification of and with course texts. She notes that

> by the end of high school it is possible that students themselves perceive the use of such critical strategies as inappropriate and/or unexpected. It is possible that the fundamental split between identification of and with the terms for making meaning ... is foreign to most students by the time they graduate from high school. (19)

As an instructor, I take partial responsibility for students' analysis of disciplinary themes often being limited an identification of/and or with course texts, especially considering that the disciplinary literacies assignment prompt proposes that students begin with a summary of disciplinary texts. This is not to suggest that summary as an inventive strategy is not useful, nor is it to suggest that such summary-related strategies are not critical in order for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the field and its disciplinary conversations. Instead, the point that I emphasize here is that students'

limited development of analysis in many cases is also limited to their identification of and with sources. When students rely only on these invention, arrangement, and revision strategies, their discussions often summarizes course themes, and when claims are made based on referenced sources, their discussions are often not sufficiently supported with additional evidence.[42]

Along these lines, students need additional work with the learning goals that states that students should be expected to "apply methods of inquiry and conventions to generate new understanding" (4). Because students' responses often rely on summarizing and identifying disciplinary trends and themes, many of their discussions do not necessarily generate new knowledge that has not already been explored in the field, although one could argue that the summaries that students produced generated new knowledge for the students, even if this knowledge is not new to the field. While students summarize key conversations, and while those summaries often don't add anything new that hasn't been addressed in the field's published scholarship, the fact that students can identify various themes in disciplinary scholarship with such accuracy does indicate that they are attempting to generate some knowledge on their own. What students might build on, however, is how they can use these disciplinary themes to offer new recommendations for the field with respect to its methods, pedagogy, and philosophies toward the study of Ebonics.

In some cases, students' analyses also reveal their limited knowledge about the field and academic methodological practices. I offer students' discussions of the

[42] For an extended discussion of invention, arrangement and revision, see Chapter 2 and Nancy DeJoy's *Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies*.

linguistically-based pedagogical approaches and confusions/conflations with linguistic terminology as one example. Other examples stem from students' discussions of research methods. In Ivy's case, she seems to confuse research methods with methodologies when she writes:

> When many scholars make unique comments on AAVE usage based *primarily* on research results, the methodology employed in a research plays an important role in establishing its validity. Ball discussed usage of AAVE from students' perspectives provided an effective way to uncover the usage of AAVE in academic writing.

From this excerpt, it seems that Ivy is actually describing Ball's research methods, not her methodology (case study), as she discusses the ways that Ball collected and made sense of data gathered from students.

While students "understand the logics and uses of citation systems and documentation styles," responses also reveal that students need extensive improvement demonstrating "competence with one citation system/document style" (4). As acknowledged with Marquise's disciplinary essay featured in Chapter 3, many students offer frequent examples of incorrectly formatted citation systems. Some students also incorrectly document sources as journals when they are in fact journal articles and book chapters. Although a necessary thing to point out as an opportunity for pedagogical instruction, as both a teacher and a researcher, however, what is most important to me is the idea that students understand the necessity of using citation systems and documentation styles, as the reference academic sources.

Although the analysis provided from student texts in this section has been critical at times, this does not suggest that students did not produce significant or meaningful work. I also urge compositionists in the field not to be overly critical in acknowledging some of students' shortcomings. We should expect that students' responses reveal some

limited exposure and knowledge of the field, especially since WRA 125 (a first-year writing course!) is the first class in which they have encountered the field. Thus, the work that they have done with the disciplinary literacies assignment is exploratory, and for them, serves as an introduction to the field and its disciplinary conversations. As a teacher-researcher, I also acknowledge the complex intellectual work that they have done well with this assignment. They have successfully identified the shortcomings associated with SRTOL and various ways that research has been done. Their ability to identify disciplinary themes reflects common threads associated with disciplinary conversations, in addition to their engagement in our field's conversations, work that should be applauded.

5.5 Conclusions and Implications

Students' work with both the questionnaires and disciplinary literacies assignment reveal how my class has just begun scratching the surface with respect to personal and disciplinary attitudes toward Ebonics. They recognize the need to accept the language variety as legitimate and equal to Standard English, yet they also recognize that potential consequences for students who use their own languages in contexts beyond our classrooms and disciplinary conversations. As a teacher-researcher, although I did not expect as many of my students to view Ebonics still as inappropriate for formal writing situations by the end of the semester (especially given that African American students' work featured demonstrates that Ebonics can be used effectively in formal writing situations), their responses are certainly understandable. While I still feel that such attitudes should change, perhaps, it is unrealistic to expect these attitudes to change as

quickly and drastically in one semester, especially given the fact that those who are both members of our discipline and the public still hold similar perceptions toward the use Ebonics in formal contexts.

Students' work with the disciplinary literacies assignment not only reveals some tensions that are reflected in our disciplinary conversations, but also, reveals tensions and conflicts reflected in students' writing, reading, and research practices. Improvement is still needed in argument construction that moves beyond summary, the use of evidence, and citation practices. Despite the limitations associated with students' writing, reading, and research processes, Composition Studies can still benefit from students' understandings of the work that the field has done concerning Ebonics. Students' changes in attitudes point to progress that the field has made concerning linguistic prejudice. Their responses to the disciplinary literacies assignment not only identify themes in the field's conversations, but also, offer the field a reminder of where we are and where we need to be in the struggle for student rights. Although much of students' work reflects a summary of where the field was historically in the struggle, where it is now, and where it needs to be, there's nothing wrong with reminding the field once more of the problems and gaps in research on Ebonics and students' rights. The work that students produced with this assignment is merely a beginning for potential conversations that the field may continue have concerning students' discourse and contributions to the struggle. Perhaps subsequent work in this area may point toward a more critical analysis of the struggle that continues to generate new knowledge to and for the field. Nevertheless, findings reveal that Afrocentric pedagogy can still support students in meeting institutional required learning goals to a great extent.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: REFLECTING ON THE PROMISES AND LIMITATIONS OF TEACHER-RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

I consider the work done with first-year writing students in this project to be a work in progress. And, I am extremely grateful to my Fall 2008 WRA 125 class, for their cooperation and significant contributions to the work completed for this project. But, before offering concluding remarks concerning this project, I wish to reflect on the challenges and criticisms that have directly influenced the work completed for this project, as well as the limitations and surprises of this project.

This project is a project that almost never happened, as there were several ideological and methodological challenges and criticisms to the work that I've sought to do with African American students and all students. Therefore, I will devote space to the particular ideological criticisms directed specifically at this project. Later in this chapter, I will reflect on methodological criticisms. Although I touched briefly on some of the challenges and criticisms endured from my commitment to Afrocentric pedagogy and studying African American students in Chapters 1 and 2, I want to reflect more extensively on particular institutional challenges associated with obtaining human subjects (IRB) approval for this project. Because the study of African American students' language patterns is often uncharted territory when dealing with human subjects, there

were many misunderstandings from reviewers who were unfamiliar with the implications for doing qualitative Afrocentric work.

When applying for IRB approval to collect data analyzed in this project, there were additional misunderstandings about its ideological purpose. One reviewer took particular issue with my initially proposed Question 3 featured on the language attitudinal questionnaire (Results of the findings from this questionnaire were analyzed in Chapter 5.) The first version of this question that was proposed to IRB is presented below:

3. Read the following passage and respond to the set of questions following this passage:

> Dessie is a fellow student in your composition class. When the instructor asked for Dessie's response to a required reading, Dessie replied: "I ain' really get da gist of't. I mean de author just be goin' round and round in circles; he kinda be sayin' da same thang over and over. It just don' make no kind of sense to me."

In the series of questions below, 1) circle the number which most closely corresponds to your reaction, and 2) explain your responses.

KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

1. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:

   1 2 3 4

   Explain:

2. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class:

   1 2 3 4

   Explain:

In response to this item, a reviewer made the following comment:

> First let me apologize for commenting on method. But the quote from "Dessie" in the instrument is as stereotypically racist a question as I've ever seen. And in my years of teaching high school English in primarily black schools, I never heard Black students shove that much bad English into one response. So might it be that the underlying message of that question is, "this is how we think Black people talk, even in a formal English class?" Which does move the issue under IRB purview.

> And writing that comment, I considered the possibility that the researcher may him or herself be African American.

In many ways I was not surprised that the reviewer had taken a very common stance on the supposed illegitimacy of Ebonics. In fact, the comments here seem to support my hypothesis that students would take a similar attitude before being introduced to an Afrocentric curriculum and the study of Ebonics. But what troubles me most about this reviewer's response was the fact (s)he was attempting to advocate for African American students, and made inaccurate assumptions about stereotypes in African American culture. Since when is "Dessie" a stereotypical name? I happen to know more White "Dessies" (short for Desirée?) than African American ones. It also troubles me that the reviewer commented on something that IRB reviewers are explicitly told not to comment on (method), and even apologizes for breaking the rules! In response to all the hoopla over a dang name, the name was changed to Derrick on the questionnaire that students received during the Fall 2008 course. I assume that we can agree that there are White and Black Derricks?

When I responded to this comment, I told the reviewer how offended I was as an African American researcher, and then proceeded to lecture on the legitimacy of AAL etc., and concluded by telling him/her to read Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin*. I only lectured on the legitimacy of AAL because the reviewer inaccurately interprets Dessie's language as a "bad mouth full of English." Although I did not expect the reviewer to be familiar with AAL scholarship, since colleagues in the academy still are not, I was highly surprised that the reviewer made inappropriate comments on the researcher's methods

and accused me of using potentially racist methodological practices. I guess I expected a lil' more formal professionalism when dealing with IRB.

After reading my comment, the reviewer gave the following response:

> I anticipated the response. Let me add only that the language used by "Dessie" -- however stated -- portrays her as completely dismissive of an academic assignment. And equally dismissive of an instructor's attempt to engage her. Not a way one wants to see students portrayed. But I'll let that go and "approve" as soon as the other reviewers well-stated comments about using one's students as subjects are addressed. It's a topic the IRB reviewers spend a lot of time on.

This response troubled me even more than the initial one. How does (s)he even know that Dessie's comments are dismissive of an academic assignment, when the question is a hypothetical one, and the assignment has not been identified? And how does (s)he know that the instructor does not attempt to engage her? The reviewer assumes that this is the case, even though these issues cannot be determined. Such assumptions have inspired the discussion of Afrocentric pedagogy offered in Chapter 2 in order to demonstrate the pedagogical benefits associated with teaching Ebonics and Afrocentricity. Such benefits were also offered in Chapter 5.

While the reviewer claims to be commenting on "method" I consider his arguments to be more ideological than methodological in nature because the reviewer does not make references to any methodological implications reflected by the question. For example, the reviewer does not make mention of the relationship between validity and the overall purposes for the project. In other words, the reviewer does not question whether such a question measures what the research design expects it to measure. (S)he does not ask the researcher to explain any methodological decisions guiding the proposed question. The reviewer, instead, asserts himself/herself as the "final say" on ideological perspectives in relationship to both Ebonics and African American culture, and dismisses

my expertise and personal and cultural frameworks in attempt to not only speak for the African Americans participating in the study, but also for me. This is exactly the problem Jacqueline Jones Royster sees in "When the First Voice You Here is Not Your Own" when those unfamiliar with particular cultural experiences try to serve as the authority over such experiences. Royster states: "Seemingly, we have been forever content to let voices other than our own speak authoritatively about our areas of expertise and about us. It is time to speak for ourselves, in our own interests, in the interest of our work, and in the interest of our students" (39). Had the reviewers given me a sufficient chance to speak, perhaps things may have turned out differently?

I talk about IRB issues in this chapter to underscore the challenges associated with the ways that institutions interpret and respond to scholars of color doing research on their own folks. I also want to reemphasize the need for institutions to trust those of color to be ethically responsible for their own groups. By trust, I do not mean blind trust; I am not suggesting that reviewers automatically accept proposed projects when researchers of color propose to do research on their own ethnic minority groups. What is implicated by trust here is the notion that when scholars wish to do any research that involves a discussion of race, reviewers should proceed with caution before challenging racist assumptions or stereotypes they *think* may be present. Unless the study possesses the potential to cause obvious harm or adverse risks to the participants, scholars doing research on their own groups should be given some benefits of doubt and the authority to speak on what is best for their own people. While I understand that institutions must protect human participants and students at all costs, in doing so, they must acknowledge the limitations they possess when dealing with particular racial, ethnic, and/or gender

groups of which they are not a part. There are times, as previously described, when reviewers do not know how to protect particular populations. In these cases, reviewers must work effectively with researchers of color to see that participants are being protected while trusting researchers of color to deal ethically with their own groups.

6.2 Methodological Criticisms of Teacher-Research

As was discussed with reference to ideological criticism, I also wish to reflect on methodological criticisms that influenced the work completed for this project. Such criticisms specifically influenced the ways in which I approached the data gathered and analyzed with all students' texts featured in Chapter 5. Chapter 5's work was guided by a previous pilot study designed to show how all students can contribute knowledge concerning Ebonics, language rights, and pedagogy to the discipline of Composition Studies. In that pilot study, I draw on Nancy DeJoy's discussion of the consumption/adaptation model that characterizes how student discourse is often positioned in the field. DeJoy argues that "the major professional organizations of the discipline set aside issues of student agency and subjectivity as constructive in and of English studies, replacing them with arguments about the values of standard English given 'the way things are'" (2). She further adds that that while many scholars have effected positive change in Composition Studies, rarely has anyone attempted to revise the "unequal relationships that drive a situation in which literacy is, by definition, primarily an act of consumption and adaptation for some [first-year writers] and primarily an act of participation and contribution for others [teachers/scholars]" (9). DeJoy asks us why we don't ask students to approach writing scholarship as contributing participants in

the field, since they do have "significant contributions" to make (64). Using this understanding as a reference, I included responses to students' disciplinary literacies assignments from my Spring 2007 course, responding to key themes in Ebonics-based discourse that they identified in the field, similarly to the way I present themes in Chapter 5, although there were some differences in the themes that were found. By looking at student texts, I essentially argued that we can use these texts as references for understanding how students perceive conversations in our field, and how we might include students in our own conversations about our research and scholarship.

Although I submitted this article to three journals, so far, I have been unsuccessful making this argument (a revise/resubmit version of that article is still pending). Many of the criticisms with this article have been mostly methodological in nature. Some reviewers argued that the ways that student discourse as data was positioned in the article was nothing more than an expressivistic exercise: The texts were merely inserted throughout the article with limited analysis from me as the teacher-researcher. I'd argue, however, that there was analysis done with student texts. But, the analysis that reviewers were looking for were various forms of criticism and evaluation of student texts. Many reviewers argued that because students' responses focused more on explication than the generation of new knowledge, without constructive criticism from the teacher-researcher, students' texts were not strong enough to stand on their own.

Such a criticism, I believe, is a valid one. This is why I positioned student texts from my Fall 2008 course in relationship to the shared learning goals, where I could assess the strengths and limitations of these texts as a teacher-researcher. However, I am still concerned with the need to position student texts in relationship to evaluation and

scoring because even when objectionable, we still need to meet students where they are and listen to what they have to say. Nonetheless, in this project, I have attempted to compromise by evaluating students' texts in relationship to the shared learning goals offered in Chapter 5. I chose to look at their texts in relationship to the assessment of strengths and weaknesses identified from programmatic objectives because evaluation must be done for a pedagogical purpose. In other words, student texts should not be evaluated for the sake of evaluation; rather, the evaluation of student texts must be used to shape programmatic pedagogical practices. As a teacher, I am interested in exploring how Afrocentric pedagogy supports students' completion of program identified goals. As a researcher, I am interested in discussing the intersections between pedagogical and programmatic policies in relationship to disciplinary methodological practices. Thus, the evaluation of student texts was used not to criticize the work that students have done, but to understand where Afrocentric pedagogy supports them with particular writing, reading, and research practices, and where improvement in relationship to these areas is still needed.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, I understand this project to be a work in progress. In doing so, I acknowledge the methodological limitations of the work done with this project. Some might take issue with my argument of using African and African American students' texts to explain how they use Ebonics linguistic and discursive practices deliberately and rhetorically, as opposed to interviewing students directly to ask them about the strategic choices that guided their linguistic practices. The first reason that African and African American students were not interviewed is because only one student agreed to participate in an interview once the class ended. Other students chose not to do

interviews for a myriad of reasons. Despite the fact that I did not interview students, I do believe that the fact that many students explained and reflected on particular linguistic decisions both in the language attitudinal questionnaire, as well as their essay assignments, provide compelling evidence that they are conscious of such purposeful decisions that inform their writing practices.

6.3 Surprises

There were several surprises from the data results gathered in this project. As previously discussed in Chapter 5, I expected more drastic changes in attitudes with respect to the appropriateness of Ebonics. But these attitudes weren't the only surprises to come about. I also expected more students to use the terms AAL or Ebonics, but from the data gathered and analyzed, most students chose AAVE. I attribute this in part to the fact that the assignments (see Appendix) each use AAVE (although they also use AAL). Some might question why I included the term AAVE on the assignments, when I prefer the terms AAL and Ebonics, since I argue in Chapter 1 that my understanding of these terms is not synonymous. The reason for including this term is because AAVE remains one of the most common terms used in Composition Studies. By including assignments that require students to research the language in relationship to the field's discourse, I needed to include each of the terms that students might encounter in disciplinary scholarship. Students were in fact aware of the different terminology; we especially find evidence of students' uses of different terminology in the Ebonics and Composition Studies research activity discussed in Chapter 2. Despite the different terminology used

to discuss Ebonics in the field, and despite the fact that perhaps, AAL is the most recent term used in various sociolinguistics and education circles, most students used AAVE.

Another surprise that I didn't expect from this project was the prevalent use of Ebonics-based phonology. When I first began researching for this project, I initially sought to look only at syntax and AAR, because I didn't expect such a high use of phonology; however, once I began analyzing African American students' texts, I found Ebonics-based phonology to be used more frequently than its syntax. Such a finding benefits the field because Ebonics-based phonology in student texts has rarely been discussed or addressed in rhetoric and composition's scholarship. More importantly, we can use students' purposeful appropriations of the phonology to make an argument for its rhetorical use in composition classrooms.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of doing this project is to shift the direction back to a focus on the classroom. In shifting this focus I want to make it very clear that I am in no way dismissing any research that does not maintain a school-based pedagogical focus, quite the contrary. I actually believe that one of the strengths of Composition Studies, education, African American studies, and many other disciplines, is that there is rich diversity in our research practices and methodologies; that's the good part. The bad part arises when we rank and value certain research methods over others. And when we continue to base our hiring decisions, tenure promotions and other awards on the types of research scholars conduct, and not on the quality of research conducted, we risk rewarding and penalizing the wrong people. Therefore, this project also has implications

at both disciplinary and institutional levels that determine the types of research that gets valued, rewarded, and funded.

I also want to end this chapter by reflecting on my own experiences as a teacher-researcher. As a PhD candidate in Rhetoric and Writing wishing to do professional work with teacher-research, I was advised by some peers to abandon teacher-research and follow newer trends in Composition Studies. I have also been told that teacher-research is not rigorous enough, and that by conducting a teacher-research project, I am taking the easy way out, since teacher-research is supposedly done out of convenience. I too have been informed that by specializing in teacher-research, I will limit the types of job offers I will receive from research-extensive institutions. I of course, find fault with each of these suggestions and recommendations. I would argue that teacher-research is one of the most difficult types of research to conduct because of the teacher's closely knit relationship with her data, thus making it difficult to account for bias. Although as a teacher, it may be convenient to collect data, other methods (like using Survey Monkey to conduct a survey—click, click) and methodologies that don't require teacher-research are also often chosen out of convenience, but perhaps do not get critiqued as often. I would also add that there are still many unanswered questions that teacher-research has yet to address in the field, and this can produce severe effects for our students, especially our African American students.

I stand by teacher-research because of my commitment to African American students. Because African American students are more likely than their White counterparts to leave college without finishing, I feel that it is in part my responsibility as an educator to be a literacy sponsor to those who may otherwise leave the university due

to the absence of many African American support systems. This is why I do teacher-research; this is why I see composition as a space for supporting and mentoring African American students (in part due to smaller writing class sizes and the fact that I teach at a very large institution!). As for my future job, I am well aware that some of these institutions may value research and so-called more rigorous forms of scholarship, but I would also argue that this warning imposed on me, is similar to the argument that those in the social and natural sciences have traditionally accused those of us in the humanities of producing less rigorous scholarship. Despite these claims and accusations, and despite being a discipline in the humanities, those of us in rhetoric and composition still have enjoyable careers and jobs we love (well at least I love mine!). I therefore conclude by urging the call for us to go back into the classroom since there is more work to be done.

By completing this project I also hope to restart and continue conversations about teacher-research as an interdisciplinary methodological practice in various fields. From this study, I hope to demonstrate that teacher-research isn't just about teaching; it's also about research. In addition to those interested in Afrocentric education, writing pedagogy, and curriculum and instruction, I also hope that those professors of, and students in, graduate-level research methods courses find some value in examining the methodological arguments made in this project. Hopefully, various fields can begin to have more discussions about the methodological implications of doing empirically-based teacher-research, and hopefully these conversations will encourage practitioners from various disciplines to go back into the classroom.

APPENDIX

LANGUAGE ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Preliminary and Post Questionnaire (to be administered at beginning and end of course)

3. Has your spoken language ever been corrected or criticized? If so, please describe this particular experience.

2. Has your written language ever been corrected or criticized? If so please describe this experience.

4. Read the following passage and respond to the set of questions following this passage:

> Derrick is a fellow student in your English composition class. When the instructor asked for Derrick's response to a required reading, Derrick replied: "I ain' really get da gist of't. I mean de author just be goin' round and round in circles; he kinda be sayin' da same thang over and over. It just don' make no kind of sense to me."

In the series of questions below, 1) circle the number which most closely corresponds to your reaction, and 2) explain your responses.

KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

2. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

3. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

3. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

4. Listen to the following audio recording and respond to the following questions:

KEY: 1-not appropriate at all; 2-somewhat appropriate; 3-definitely appropriate; 4-extremely appropriate

3. The appropriateness of students speaking this way in class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

4. The appropriateness of students writing a formal piece in this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

5. The appropriateness of students writing this way for class:

1 2 3 4

Explain:

5. Please explain a time (in or out of school) when a writing style similarly to the one used above might be more suitable to write in than formal English.

6. If you were to describe your own writing style, what specific styles do you typically use and why do you use them? How might these styles strengthen your writing? How might they weaken your writing?

FOUR MAJOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Literacy and Language Autobiography

Background:

For this first unit, you will be introduced to the study of African American Language (AAL)/African American Vernacular English (AAVE) including its features, and how various writers use it both in school settings and outside of school settings. You will also have the opportunity to examine various regional dialects within the U.S. Hopefully, by the end of this unit, you will be able to associate yourself with a language or dialect community and describe how you encounter these languages/dialects in different settings.

Task:

As a frame for this assignment, we will draw from select chapters from Keith Gilyard's *Voices of the Self* literacy autobiography, in which he describes significant literacy events and practices, as he encounters his negotiation between his home language (AAVE/AAL) and school language, Standard English.

Your task for this assignment will be to construct your own literacy autobiography that gives a detailed and specific account of the various ways that you encounter language both in school and outside of school. For this essay, you may wish to construct a chronological literacy narrative where you describe your experiences with how your literacy practices reflect language usage, or you may wish to provide a non-chronological analysis. In either case, you'll address the following questions: What are the differences between the way you use language at home, and how you use it in school? What types of literacy practices do you use to read and write in both settings, and how do they reflect your choices in using home and school language?

To complete this assignment, you will want to refer to specific and detailed examples of how your home and school languages differ. In order to achieve these ends, you will be encouraged to explore oral communication, written communication, and/or written digital communication (including AIM, text messaging, writing on your facebook wall, or email). To do this, you might consider writing portions of your essay in your home language, and then, translating and analyzing the significance in Standard English, as Gilyard does in *Voices of the Self.* You'll also need to include an analysis of 1-2 course readings we have encountered so far this term. For your analysis, you can either compare and contrast your experiences to those of the authors/readings, or you can use the readings to "talk back" to your experiences, where you anticipate how the author would support, reject, or add to the experiences and literacy events you've previously outlined in this essay. In either case, a rich and extensive analysis that incorporates evidence from the readings is required.

Developing Work (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): These assignments are writing explorations that give you practice writing chunks that may or may not lead to ideas for your Essay 1. Each of these exercises is required and will be worth 10 points each.

a) For your first writing exploration, you will construct a literacy autobiography or narrative of 1-2 significant events in your life that identifies and analyzes the differences between the way you use language in school and the way you use it at home. Be sure to describe not only scenarios that deal with the differences between the way you speak at home and school, but also, note experiences with how your use of language to read and write differs from the way you read and write both in school and at home.

b) For your second writing exploration, you'll practice analyzing course texts. For this essay, select a specific quote/passage/idea that resonates with you from one of the readings. Summarize that passage or idea, and explain either how it is similar/different from the experiences outlined in your literacy narrative, OR use this exploration to analyze how you think the author(s) would support/reject or add to those experiences you've previously outlined.

Required Readings for this Assignment:

Gilyard, Keith. "Rapping, Reading and Role-Playing." *Voices of the Self: A Study of Language Competence.* 1991. Rpt. in *A Reader for Writers.* Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, and Nancy C DeJoy. Boston: McGraw- Hill, 2008. 25-40.

Redd, Teresa and Karen Schuster-Webb. Chs. 1-2. *Teacher's Introduction to African American English: What a Writing Teacher Should Know.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2005.

Smitherman, Geneva. "It Bees that Way Sometime: Present-Day Sounds in Black English." *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977.

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Zuidema, Leah. "Myth Education: Rationale and Strategies for Teaching against Linguistic Prejudice." *Journal of Adolescent Literacy* 48.8 (May 2005): 668-675. Rpt. in *A Reader for Writers.* Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, and Nancy C. DeJoy: Boston: McGraw- Hill, 2008. 351-366.

Optional Readings for this Assignment:

Anzaldua, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." *Borderlands: La Frontera = The New Mestiza.* 1987. Rpt. In *A Reader for Writers.* Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, Nancy Dejoy. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008. 3-11.

Assignment 2: Cultural Literacies

Representation of AAVE/AAL in Digital Spaces

Background:
Up until this point, we have looked specifically at the linguistic features of AAVE/AAL as we reflected on our own language practices. Some of you even provided analyzes of how you write differently in digital environments. People are now doing more writing on the web, including blogs (web logs), personal web sites, discussion forums and even on AIM. This project will then ask you to examine how AAVE exists in these spaces. In effect, you will address the following question: How is AAVE discussed and/or appropriated in personal, popular culture, and academic websites?

Task:
To complete this assignment, you'll select each of the following:

1) A personal or company website, web page, or web log (blog)
2) A popular culture site (like www.bet.com or www.people.com/people)
3) And an academic website or web page (like www.msu.edu or www.msu.edu/~smither4)

(We'll discuss the conventions of each of these web sites and define what popular culture, personal and academic web sites look like).

Once you've selected your three sites, you'll develop an argument or thesis that should reflect/address the above question. After you've formulated an argument, you will then complete a rhetorical analysis of these sites that draws on evidence from your selected websites, in addition to evidence from at least 2 sources we've discussed in class. All of the evidence you provide should speak to your major thesis or argument as

to how AAVE is discussed and/or appropriated in online spaces. You will also need to include a Works Cited Page, complete with full citations (both print and electronic).
Developing Work
DW3a (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): Select one of your three sites to analyze carefully. Here, you'll want to identify a major argument as to how AAVE seems to be discussed and/or appropriated, and then refer to specific examples, quotes, and passages on the web site to support your claim. We'll also talk at length as to how websites should be cited in MLA.

DW3b (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): Now that you have selected at least one web site, you'll want to compare the work that you did in DW 3a to at least one of the readings/web sites we've read in class. Do they represent AAVE similarly or differently in these spaces? In what ways?

Possible Readings to Use with this Assignment:

Banks, Adam. "Taking B(l)ack Technology Seriously." *Race, Rhetoric and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. 2005. Rpt. in *A Reader for Writers*. Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, and Nancy C. DeJoy. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008.

Kynard, Carmen. "'Wanted: Some Black Long Distance [Writers]': Blackboard Flava-Flavin and other AfroDigital experiences in the classroom. *Computers and Composition* 24.3 (2007): 329-345.

Nakamura, Lisa. "Cybertyping and the Work of Race in the Age of Digital Reproduction." *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. 2002. Rpt. in *A Reader for Writers*. Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, and Nancy C. DeJoy: Boston: McGraw- Hill, 2008. 396-432.

Spellers, Regina. "The Kink Factor: A Womanist Discourse Analysis of African American Mother/Daughter Perspectives on Negotiating Black Hair/Body Politics." Ed. Ronald Jackson and Elaine Richardson. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. 223-243.

Assignment 3:

Disciplinary Literacies Assignment

Representations of AAVE/AAL/Ebonics in Composition Studies

Background
In the last units, we focused more on the linguistic features of AAVE/AAL, and how it exists in digital environments; in this unit, we will focus more on the scholars who discuss AAVE/AAL features and student writing in composition studies. For this assignment, we'll learn more about AAL/AAVE, and how it affects language and educational policy, college writing, and the teaching of writing. For this, we'll read various articles within the field of composition studies as an introduction to the discipline of teaching writing and students who speak/write AAL/AAVE.

Task:
For this essay, you'll be asked to develop an argument as to whether composition studies effectively discusses the usage of AAL/AAVE as a language/language variety, and whether or not discussion on the topic has changed or evolved over time. To do this, you will also consider referring to specific journals (*CCC*, *College English*, *Teaching English at a Two-Year College*, *English Journal*, *JAC* or others) to gain a sense of what is occurring more recently in the field. You can gain access to these journals by going to www.lib.msu.edu, where you can search JSTOR or the Literature Online (LION) database. Your analysis should include the following:

- An Argument/Thesis on how composition studies discusses issues of AAVE/AAL;
- A discussion of how AAVE/AAL has been discussed historically (1970's – 2000) through course readings; and
- A discussion of how AAVE/AAL is more recently discussed in composition studies (2000-present) in related journals within the field.

To accomplish these requirements, you'll first want to refer to the course readings to make an argument or claim as to whether composition studies fairly and effectively addresses issues of AAVE/AAL. For this, you'll want to draw on evidence of at least 2 course readings to make your claim. In your discussion and analysis of course readings, you might consider providing summaries of each reading and authors' stance, referring to specific examples from the readings to support the authors' main idea(s), and then shifting toward formulating your own argument that analyzes each authors' effectiveness in discussing AAVE/AAL within the field.

Next, you'll need to research more recent scholarship within Composition Studies, by consulting journals in *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, *College English*, *Journal of Advanced Composition (JAC)*, or *Teaching English at a Two-Year College*. Access to these journals can be granted on campus through www.lib.msu.edu, JSTOR.com, Literature Online (LION), and additional MSU library electronic indexes (we'll work together as a class in learning how to navigate online indexes). Once you've searched and browsed articles within any of these journals regarding AAVE/AAL, you'll then select AT LEAST 2 to explain how they also support your overall argument/claim on the representation of AAVE. An annotated bibliography and Works Cited page will also accompany your work, and be included in the submission packet (more details later).

In short, you should carefully analyze a total of AT LEAST 4 sources (2 reflecting course readings assigned in class, and 2 reflecting scholarship demonstrated in recent journals from the online databases). In your discussion of each article, you should make an argument/thesis that demonstrates whether or not composition studies as a discipline effectively discusses scholarship concerning AAVE/AAL and whether or not such discussion has changed/evolved over time.

Developing Work:

3a) (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): For this assignment, you'll carefully work with one of the readings we've read so far. Here, you'll summarize the author's main idea, supporting evidence of that idea, and how you think it discusses scholarship of AAVE/AAL in composition studies. What does the reading seem to say about AAVE/AAL? Does it effectively make an argument about its role in composition studies? If so, how? If not, what's missing?

3b) (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): For this assignment, you'll respond to the same questions listed for DW2a, but this time using evidence from 1 recently published article in a related journal you found in the library databases (2000 – present).

Annotated Bibliography (to be printed out and turned in): For this assignment, you will produce a source description of AT LEAST four of the sources you intend to use. You will summarize each source, and then explain how they are relevant to your research. Correct MLA citation is required (more details later).

Possible Readings to Use with this Assignment:

Ball, Arnetha. "Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students." *The English Journal* 85.1(1996): 27-36.

Canagarajah, A. Suresh. "Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Coping Strategies of African-American Students in the Academy." *College Composition and Communication* 48.2 (May 1997): 173-196.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Students' Right to Their Own Language." *College Composition and Communication* 25 (Fall 1974): 25.

Gilyard, Keith and Elaine Richardson. "Students' Right to Possibility: Basic Writing and African American Rhetoric." *Insurrections: Approaches to Resistance in Composition Studies*. Ed. Andrea Greenbaum. Albany: SUNY UP, 2001. 37-51.

Nembhardt, Judith. "A Perspective on Teaching Black Dialect Speaking Students to Write Standard English." *The Journal of Negro Education* 52.1 (1983): 75-82. Rpt. in *A Reader for Writers*. Ed. Collin Craig, Staci Perryman-Clark, and Nancy C. DeJoy. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Smitherman, Geneva. "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Language Rights." *A Usable Past: CCC at 50, Part 1*. Spec. issue of *College Composition and Communication* 50 (1999): 349-376.

Assignment 4: Remix Literacies

Final Multigenre Project

Background:
The "multigenre" essay (MGE), a term coined by Tom Romano, asks students to see, understand, interpret, and know a subject through multiple genres. In employing genres as both a lens and a rhetorical tool, the multigenre research paper asks students to be explicitly creative and scholarly, to pay close attention to matters of style as well as matters of research.

Throughout the term, hopefully you have been collecting several themes pertaining to composition studies and AAVE. For this unit, you will be asked to compose a MGE that examines a theme pertaining to AAVE either in composition studies, in online spaces, or in other environments.

In order to complete this assignment, there are several key ingredients make for a successful multigenre essay (MGE):

1) *A focused research question or, even better, a focused thesis or theme. The genres in the essay should explore a common theme as to how AAVE is represented from multiple perspectives; you will probably want to draw from the past written essays to convey a new theme.

2) *A specific audience. You should choose genres that you think will most effectively communicate your idea to a specific audience and, ideally, share your work with that audience. You will need to consider the specifics of this audience when you make decisions about the purpose of each genre. In the reflective essay (4-5 pp.), you will write about how those considerations affect your decisions.

3) *A variety of sources from multiple perspectives. As above, the MGE should explore an issue from different perspectives. Therefore, collecting evidence from these perspectives is essential, so you will need to include at least 3 sources as evidence for this project. You may use evidence from sources we've read this term, or you may find your own. But in either case, the evidence you choose should appropriately reflect the genres you compose yourself. In your reflective essay, you will cite and analyze the evidence/sources you used to create your MGE and how you incorporated those sources into your genres.

4) *An understanding of the conventions of different genres. If you are going to choose to write "a news story," it needs to look, sound, and act like a news story -- or whatever genres you use.

5) *An overall design, template, or layout to assemble your entire project. Once you have decided on your individual genres, you'll need to choose how you'll want to group them together as a whole project or packet. Do you want the entire project/packet to be a handbook or guide (electronic OR print) for teachers teaching Ebonics speakers? A website with materials on Ebonics? A curriculum handbook (electronic OR

print) for students learning Ebonics? A handbook (electronic OR print) for teachers wanting to introduce hip hop or African American visual rhetoric into the classroom?

6) *Creativity! The MGE requires that you be creative about incorporating sources into your genres.
Task:

1) You will also provide an introduction/cover page (print OR electronic) that summarizes the genres you've composed and a brief abstract of their purposes (1 page). This introduction should also clarify what information the reader needs to know before reading your genres.

2) To complete this essay, you will need to compose a 4-5 page reflective (to be handed in separately from the MGE project) essay that describes the theme of AAVE/composition studies you've chosen, why you chose this theme, the evidence from at least 3 sources (can included course readings or other sources used to convey this theme), and an analysis of how the evidence supports your theme. A correctly formatted Works Cited page and full in-text MLA citations are required here.

3) In addition to your reflective essay and introduction, you will also compose four different genres (see categories) that represent your theme. We'll work extensively on how to master the conventions of these genres and what they should look like. But each genre should reflect your overall theme of AAVE and composition studies. These genres, then will be assembled as a packet, website, or your choice of template.

Developing Work:
DW4a Topic Proposal (approx. 500 words; to be posted on Blog): For this essay, you discuss the main theme/thesis argument you want to convey about AAVE and composition studies. You'll discuss why you've chosen this theme, the evidence you'll draw upon, and how that supports your theme. Full MLA citation and a Works Cited page are required.

DW4b: (To be printed and handed in): For this DW, you'll compose two different genres that you intend to incorporate into your MGE. The genres should clearly convey the main thesis/theme you want to make about composition studies and AAVE/AAL.

Genres: You will choose 4 different genres from 6 different groups (You CANNOT choose 2 genres from the same group). Remember, each of these genres can be done in electronic form (i.e. on the Web) or print:

Group One—Newspaper/Magazine Writing (at least 2 pages if printed)
News Story (like something on p.1)
Feature story (like in an entertainment section)
Editorial Magazine Feature
Series of (at least 3) letters to the Editor Sensational News Story
Obituary Sports Story
2-3 Comic Strips Editorial Cartoon Advertisement
Something else you clear with me

Group Two—Imaginative Writing (length depends on choice)
Monologue (by one person) (2 pp.) Dialogue (between 2 people) (2 pp.)
Scene from a Play/Movie/TV Script (3 pp.) Children's/Fantasy/Other Fictional Story (in a particular genre) (2-3 pp.)
Poetry (1 p.) Creative Non-Fiction piece (2-3 pp.)
Song Lyric (with or without music) (2-3 pp.)
Something else you clear with me
Group Three—"School" Writing (at least 2 pages if printed)
Worksheet for Students

Writing Assignments for Students
Scholarly Article (like those we've read)
Textbook Introduction or Partial Chapter
Other Course Text Dictionary/Glossary
Class Plan
Something else you clear with me

Group Four—"Personal/Private" Writing (at least 3 pages if printed)
Journal Entry Letter Exchange between 2 or more people
Email exchange between 2 or more people Diary Entry
Recipe
Book Club Report
Photo Album or Scrapbook
Something else you clear with me

Group Five—Workplace/Professional Writing (at least 3 pages if printed)
Memo Workplace
Report
Exchange of Professional Letters between 2 or more people
Resume
Something else you clear with me

Group Six—Visual Pieces (all must include 1 page-- if printed--explanation or link to project)
Map Collage (with explanation of theme)
Drawing/Painting Video
Poster Book or CD Jacket
Photographs (with explanation of theme)
Something else you clear with me

Possible Readings:
Your readings
Past course readings
Sample MGE Projects

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