ABSTRACT

CODESWITCHING IN AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS: ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICE

by Jairus-Joaquin R. Matthews

This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of African American college students regarding African American English (AAE) and codeswitching between AAE and Standard American English (SAE). The study included a survey that was distributed to students at Miami University (Oxford, OH), as well as an empirical language analysis of African American students during a speech and during an informal interview. Results of the survey revealed that students value the ability to codeswitching for social mobility. The empirical language analysis of codeswitching was determined to be unsuccessful. Limitations for the study are also presented as well as implications for future research.
CODESWITCHING IN AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS: ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICE

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Statement of the problem.

African American English (AAE) is a dialect of Standard American English (SAE) spoken mostly by African Americans in the United States. AAE consists of the “systematic, rule-governed phonologic, grammatical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic characteristics of language” (Terrell, Battle, & Grantham, 1998, p. 41). It is believed to be the used by most African-Americans in the United States (Washington, 1996). However, the use of AAE is not monolithic within the African-American race, nor is usage exclusive to African Americans. Other ethnic groups including Whites, Hispanics, and Asians may use AAE as well. The use of AAE by other is contingent on their levels and types of socialization and interaction with AAE speakers (Terrell, Battle, & Grantham, 1998, p. 53). AAE is not homogenous, and varies from speaker to speaker. Age, geographic location, occupation, income, education, and context are some of the factors that influence usage of AAE. Many sub-dialects of AAE, such as the Creole dialect, exist within African American English. Sub-dialects are influenced by interaction with other languages and migratory history (Haskins & Butts, 1973). Southern, Creole, West Indian, and Northern, are just a few of the sub-dialects that comprise AAE.

Many social, political, educational, psychological, and economic implications are associated with usage of AAE. The label associated with the dialect of African Americans has included “Negro Speech,” “Black English,” “Black English Vernacular,” “African American English,” “African American Vernacular English,” “Ebonics,” and several others. These name changes have reflected the changing political, social, and intellectual attitudes and beliefs of African American culture, the linguistic and academic communities, and the mass media. The language of a particular group of people is usually very closely tied to its sense of identity, culture, distinctiveness, and consonance, and this certainly holds true in the African American community. African American English connotes feelings of solidarity and unity within the race. It is the language of family, friends, and members of the general community. However, SAE is thought to be the language of the majority, and the highly educated and empowered. Because of political marginalization, the language of the majority culture, i.e. White dominant
society, has been thought to be superior to the language of less powerful minority groups such as African Americans. Within mainstream America, African American English has been stigmatized as “slang,” “mutant,” “lazy,” or “deficient.” Because a group’s language is usually invariably connected with the groups social status, speakers of AAE have also been labeled in such demeaning terms (Filmer, 2003). The American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) has proclaimed that “no dialectal variety of English is a disorder or a pathological form of speech and language, and that social dialects are adequate as a functional and effective variety of English” (ASHA, 2003). Similarly, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) has proclaimed that “the variety known as "Ebonics," "African American Vernacular English" (AAVE), and "Vernacular Black English" and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties” (Rickford, 1997). Yet, linguistic prejudice continues to persist, and language can pose an obstacle for many African Americans in their quest for educational and vocational obtainment and success.

Significance of the problem

African American university students often face problems when they do not speak SAE within the university setting. African American university students who maintain their cultural dialect may be viewed as “stupid,” “inferior,” or “rudimentary” by both their peers and professors. Peers and professors may assume that such a student comes from a low socioeconomic background, has received an inferior education, and does not deserve to be enrolled in an institution of higher education. White students who are speakers of SAE may resent matriculation of AAE speaking students, and may disregard them and label them as “an affirmative action case.” There may be covert or overt tension and conflict within the classroom, which may lead to feelings of inferiority and lowered self esteem for the African American student. Professors may also assume that AAE speaking college students lack an effective education, and the tools that are necessary for success in the university setting and beyond. Such assumptions may lead to lowered expectations for that student, or perhaps even unfair treatment. Taylor (1989) speaks about the attitudes of fellow faculty “They may very well judge a student’s grammatical interference from black English to standard English as ‘not intelligent enough’ and so make erroneous assumptions as to the speaker’s or writer’s intelligence,
unwillingly enacting the ‘cultural depravity theory’ of the past” (p.7). It may be perceived that these students are linguistically incompetent at best, and academically substandard at worse. This perception is based on both linguistic ignorance of the listener, and longstanding, persisting linguistic prejudice of society. The language of African American students has been continually been disparaged despite the fact that it has repeatedly been acknowledged as a valid and legitimate communicational system by ASHA, LSA, and linguists and communication specialists throughout the world.

The issue of the legitimacy of the language of African Americans was brought to the forefront of the national public audience in 1996 when the Oakland, California School Board approved a resolution to recognize “Ebonics” as the primary language of African American students within the district. The decision was highly scrutinized within the national public media, and ignited a highly emotional debate over whether Ebonics was indeed a language. The majority of the mass media portrayed the decision as ludicrous and absurd, twisting, misinterpreting, and misrepresenting what the decision was really about. The reasoning behind the resolution was first to address educators’ lack of knowledge about African American language, and secondly to educate the Oakland children on the history, nature, and rules of Ebonics/AAE, contrasting it with SAE, thus leading a pathway toward speaking and writing proficiency in SAE. The “Ebonics” debate focused mainly on the recognition of “Ebonics” as a language, and its usage within the educational curriculum, as opposed to the school board’s rationale behind the decision.

The “Ebonics controversy” certainly heightened awareness of linguistic attitudes and perceptions within the United States. The dialogue of many commentators on the issue were filled with denigrating descriptions of AAE such as “sloppy,” “ungrammatical,” “lazy,” and “broken.” Many cited the decision as an attempt to “legalize slang.” The actual term “Ebonics,” (a combination of the word ‘ebony’ and ‘phonics’) was frequently attacked, mocked, and satirized though it were a neologistic term made up by the Oakland school board. The term was actually coined in January 1973, (twenty four years before the Oakland resolution) at a conference of Black scholars in an effort to recognize African American language as a poetic and beautiful form of language, and to “liberate” Black Language from the continual attacks and
disparagements on the language. The aforementioned position released by the Linguistic Society of America in 1997 was in response to the Ebonics debate. The statement highlighted the previous thirty years of sociolinguistic research on African American English, and reaffirmed their stance on the legitimacy of AAE/Ebonics.

*Purpose of the study.*

Many African Americans have been observed to vacillate between usage of African American English and Standard American English (Haskins & Butts, 1973). In doing so, the speakers are choosing the linguistic style most appropriate for a specific situation. The speaker makes a conscious or unconscious judgment about the message and attitude that he or she is sending. This phenomenon is a major pragmatic feature of AAE, and is known as code-switching or style-shifting. The notion of being capable of easily shifting back and forth between dialects such as AAE and SAE is known as bidialectalism. Though it is known that many African Americans do code-switch, there is very little empirical research concerning why, or what factors prompt speakers to choose what linguistic style they utilize when speaking.

SAE is the language of the empowered majority, who control the social, political, and economic current within the United States. Haskins and Butts (1973) state that AAE speaking students may be viewed as cognitively retarded, and inferior, and are thus denied social mobility. In a study of college faculty attitudes, it was noted that most faculty looked upon AAE negatively (Harrold, 1995). Williams (1991) found that nonstandard speakers with equal qualifications were rated as less employable than Standard American English speakers. Many socio-linguists, speech pathologists, and educators believe that codeswitching is an important indication for previously described African American students and that the capability to switch between the two dialects is a key component in educational and social mobility (Seymour & Seymour, 1979; Smitherman, 2000; Taylor, 1999; Filmer, 2003).

A limited number of studies have evaluated African Americans’ own perception of their language. Taylor (1975) suggests that this scarcity is due to paternalism, ethnocentrism, and racism on the part of White scholars who discredit the opinions of the Black community because of African American’s presumed ignorance of linguistics. The purpose of this study is to gather objective data concerning the linguistic perceptions of
African American university students regarding African American English, codeswitching, and those factors prompt them to codeswitch. This study had two completely separate, yet related components. The components of the study are: a.) A survey of African American college students pertaining to their beliefs and feelings about AAE and codeswitching. b.) An empirical analysis of codeswitching behaviors of African American students enrolled in a public speaking class. The survey questioned students’ beliefs about AAE, the factors that influence their usage of AAE, and the factors that prompt them to shift between AAE and SAE. It is important to understand the perspectives of African American students regarding AAE and codeswitching in order to understand the potential of bidialectalism as an appropriate tool for success.

An empirical study of codeswitching was completed by comparing the linguistic performance of African American students in an informal one-on-one interview, versus their performance in a public speech as a requirement for a public speaking class. Labov (1966) speaks to the formality of public addresses, which are thought to promote more standard forms of language. It was hypothesized that the students will utilize SAE more frequently than AAE in a public address, and AAE more frequently during an informal interview with an African American peer. This study involves an investigation of students’ beliefs on codeswitching, and an analysis of codeswitching behaviors as observed outside of and within a university classroom. The study should allow the researcher to evaluate the perception of students on the issue, and contrast them with the reality of actual performance in an academic environment that could prompt codeswitching.
Chapter II.
Review of the Literature

*Societal perceptions and linguistic attitudes.*

In a study evaluating linguistic attitudes, it is important to realize the impact of perception. Edwards (1999) in his essay *Refining Our Understanding of Language Attitudes* points out that often commonly held social perceptions can be viewed in two ways; as stereotypical generalizations, or as culture itself. Because of social stratification among different groups in society, power and status can translate social difference into social deficiency. Many linguists and scholars acknowledge that this has certainly taken place in the United States in regarding African American English (Filmer, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997). Edwards (1999) states that the traditional historical linguistic perception that one language variety is superior to another has been dispelled by linguistic research revealing that these linguistic perceptions have been based on “imposed norms” and not on the intrinsic value of either language. The listener invokes certain attitudes and internally evaluates the speaker based on the dialectal or language variety presented. Broad categorical evaluations such as the speaker’s level of social status, competence, integrity, and solidarity are formulated. Edwards (1999) reveals that many social psychologists, socio-linguists, and others have often found that "lower class" minority speech styles may be viewed as possessing integrity or attractiveness, but that speakers are typically viewed as ‘less competent,’ ‘less intelligent,’ and ‘less ambitious.’ The implication of this stereotypical assessment is that an individual, despite his or her own strengths and weaknesses is viewed in terms of a group. When in the case of a minority status group, such as African Americans, these stereotypes allow for educational, political, and social discrimination and marginalization. Such detrimental hegemony against African Americans could affect their own perceptions of their dialect and cause them to make strides toward bidialectilism and codeswitching.

Society holds traditional norms regarding the effects of a nonstandard dialect on obtaining and maintaining employment. It is commonly believed that a person’s language reflects his or her intelligence (Franklin & Hixon, 1999). Therefore, language may be an important factor in obtaining employment. In Shuy’s (1972) study a tape of
two adult and two teenage African American speakers representing four social classes was played for 16 professionals who did the hiring for various Washington D.C. employers. Seven of the employers judged one or more of the speakers as unemployable. Using seven sequential job categories, the employers ranked what sorts of jobs would be suitable for each speaker. The lower ranking jobs, and the ones with little public contact, were consistently assigned to the “lower class” speakers. The more professionals jobs were given to the more standard speakers.

Terrell and Terrell (1983) examined the employability of AAE speaking and SAE speaking African American women. Six undergraduate women aged 20-22 interviewed 100 personnel managers of large businesses offering clerical positions on local newspaper staffs in a large Southwestern metropolitan area. The six women were divided into two groups: three speakers of AAE and three speakers of primarily SAE. Each interviewee carried three favorably written letters of recommendation and reported to the interviewer that they had two years of prior clerical experience. The results revealed significant differences in the average amount of time spent with the AAE speakers (17.34 minutes compared to 24.64 minutes). AAE speakers were offered 8 positions compared to 17 for the SAE speakers. In addition speakers of AAE who were offered a position were offered significantly lower salaries.

Harrold (1995) investigated the attitudes of 136 faculty members on Black English usage at 12 public and 4 private two-year college level institutions in Michigan which assist AAE speakers with improving their usage of SAE. The majority of the faculty made negative associations of students who speak AAE, and believed that it should not be used in the academic setting. The majority of faculty members believed that AAE is a part of Black culture and heritage, but that it is a deficient form of SAE and denotes an inability to use SAE. Ninety-eight percent indicated that they would support programs that help African American students acquire proficiency in SAE. There were no significant differences in faculty perceptions between African American and Caucasian faculty members, nor were there significant differences between public and private institutions.
Taylor (1975) interviewed 183 African American parents representing four geographical areas (New York, Washington D.C., Louisville, and Chattanooga). Eighty percent of the parents held jobs below the semiprofessional level, and had a high school education or less reporting themselves as relatively uninvolved in school affairs. Fifty-two percent of the parents interviewed said that there are times when non-standard English was more appropriate than Standard English. Thirty-seven percent said that there were times when AAE was more appropriate. Eighty percent indicated that they wanted their child to speak Standard English in order to obtain a good job. Sixty percent indicated that nonstandard dialects are inferior to Standard English versus 28% who felt as though it was not inferior. Sixty-five percent said that others felt that nonstandard dialects of English are inferior to Standard English.

In this same study Taylor (1975) interviewed 70 black ninth-graders from working class neighborhoods. Thirty-six percent of the students said that they usually used Standard English, while 56% used nonstandard English. However, 70% indicated that they could switch dialects easily. Thirty-one percent said that they would have to change their speech to obtain the type of job that they wanted versus 60% who said that they did not.

The results of Taylor’s study indicated that African American parents and students value the ability to codeswitch. Parents believed that there are times when nonstandard English can communicate an idea more affectively, but still valued the ability to switch between standard and nonstandard form of English, particularly to obtain employment. Yet, 60% of the parents felt that nonstandard forms are inferior to standard forms of English. The Black students offered more conflicting opinions in that 56% indicated that they usually use nonstandard English, however 70% indicated that they could switch dialects easily. Black students also felt that Standard English was less important in obtaining employment in comparison to parents. However, the interview was limited by the use of only nine and ten questions which limited the depth of the analysis of linguistic attitudes.

Hoover’s (1978) study of parents’ linguistic attitudes makes a distinction between vernacular Black English and standard Black English based on Taylor’s (1971)
model. Taylor describes Standard Black English as traditional Black English characterized by a standard syntax. Taylor sought to differentiate between the various levels of usage of African American English in order dispel the misconception that AAE is homogenous and does not vary depending on social situations. Interviews were conducted with first and sixth grade parents from East Palo Alto, and Oakland, California. The interviewers were one male and one female speaker of vernacular Black English and standard Black English. Parents were played two tapes consisting of a series of paired sentences-- one in vernacular Black English, and one in standard Black English. Parents responded to whether or not they objected to either form. Then they hierarchically reported their objection of the utilization of either form in 22 hierarchically designed leveled variations. These variations consisted of the use of the language forms in three domains—home, school, and community—and two situations—formal and informal. Four realms of usage were defined—speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The results of Hoover’s (1978) study revealed that 85% of the parents accepted standard Black English in all domains. Vernacular Black English was accepted in the realms of listening and speaking channels, but not reading and writing. Vernacular Black English was generally accepted in the home and community, but not in the school. Vernacular Black English was generally accepted in informal situations, but not in formal ones. Parents indicated that Black English is important for purposes of solidarity and preservation of Black culture. However, they also indicated that the ability to switch between the two is important for communication with all people, to achieve educational and vocational success, and to overcome obstacles.

Hoover’s (1978) study also addressed several variables that may impact linguistic perceptions—social scale, positive Black ethnicity, and several other various components that may affect linguistic perceptions. The results showed that higher-income Blacks possessed similar attitudes to those of lower-income Blacks. The components of positive Black ethnicity were as follows: Black consciousness, political involvement, cultural behavior, and attitudes toward Black English. There is a significant correlation between these variables and preference towards vernacular Black English. Parents with more positive Black ethnicity ratings demonstrated more positive attitudes toward vernacular Black English. Additionally, those born in the South had a lower preference for Black
English as did single parents.

Linn & Piche (1982) attempted to describe the attitudes of Black and White, male and female, middle class and lower class adolescents and preadolescents in response to tape-recorded samples of Standard English (SE) and Black English (BE). The subjects were twelve high school senior English classes and twelve sixth grade English classes in the Richmond, Virginia area. A data form with semantic descriptions was composed using a preliminary study. The subjects listened to written speech samples of SE and BE from five middle class, male bidialectal Black speakers, and rated them using the form. The categorical factors used were School Failure, Popularity, and Athletic Prowess. Black students regarded BE more favorably than White students, and Black preadolescents regarded BE more favorably than Black adolescents. When there were differences in mean scores, BE identified from the descriptors of being braver, dumber, a better fighter, Black, more prejudiced, and using poorer English. SE was generally rated as being nicer, smarter, better educated, and using good English. Both Blacks and Whites rated BE more favorably than SE in the Athletic Prowess category. SE was rated higher by both Black and Whites on the Education Factor. Black students rated BE higher in the Popularity category, while White students rated SE higher. The results suggested stereotypical views are held by both Blacks and Whites, and that these views inconsistently vary with age.

Doss and Gross (1994) evaluated the perceptions of college students on AAE, SAE, and codeswitching. Sixty-three males and 63 females African American college students listened to a bidialectal African American male speaking in three language varieties in different situations. The subjects were told that tapes were of an African American male using three dialectal varieties. The model used distinct speech rhythms, voice inflections, varied tonal patterns, AAE vocabulary, and the morpho-syntactic adaptations for the AAE variety, and used the more standard speech rhythms, voice inflections, and so on for the SAE variety. For the codeswitching variety the model initially used SAE and then switched to AAE. The subjects completed the Interpersonal Evaluation Inventory, (IEI) a rating questionnaire that assess interpersonal attraction and likeability. Contained within the IEI are factor 1, items that are concerned with likeability, and factor 2, items that are concerned with diplomacy (honest, tactful,
assertive, truthful, etc). Additional items asked the subject how much would you want to get to know the model, and how much would you want to work with the model on a committee.

The results of Doss and Gross’s (1994) study revealed that the SAE variety was rated more likable than the AAE or CS model. The authors view the findings not necessarily as rejection of AAE, but for SAE as the goal for middle class professional goals and values in order to achieve social mobility. In addition the males expressed a greater desire to get to know and to work with all three models on a committee, an indication of their likeability ratings for the model. Perhaps subjects tended to be more comfortable with the same gender. The authors also indicate that the females may have been influenced by traditional media stigmatization of the African American male ‘as unsuccessful,’ ‘incompetent,’ and ‘non-work oriented’. The limitation of this study is the inaccurate representation of a codeswitching speaker. African Americans usually codeswitch between AAE and SAE based on the speaking situation. The codeswitching variety rendered in the sample contained an SAE speech pattern followed by an AAE speech pattern in the same utterance. This mix of AAE and SAE may have led to subjects’ inability to identify the sample as a codeswitching speaking pattern.

Franklin and Hixon (1999) sought to ascertain whether there is a perceived connection between dialectal usage and intelligence in African American speakers. A tape was made of a bidialectal female providing answers to questions in educational issues in Black dialect. Another tape was made by the same speaker with the same answers in SAE. The tapes were taken to her home where family and friends of all ages listened to them. Unanimously all listeners regarded the tape of the SAE variety as a smart educated person, while most considered the AAE variety as an uneducated person. None of the listeners were able to detect that the tapes were of the same person, and nor were they able to detect that tape of the AAE variety was their family member or friend. Various faculty members at the university listened to the tapes with similar results. A questionnaire was then composed inquiring about the speaker’s intelligence, education, occupation, employability, qualifications, and other background information. The questionnaire was given to middle school, high school, and college students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds and ages totaling 833 persons.
The results of Franklin and Hixon’s (1999) study yielded some major discrepancies in the intelligence rating of AAE and SAE speakers specifically related to subjects’ ethnicity and age. The majority of all subjects indicated that the speaker of AAE possessed no college education, (92%) while few indicated the same for Standard English speaker (4%). Four-point nine percent of the subjects rated the AAE speaker as being “above average intelligence” compared to 75.6%. Subjects less than 30 years of age rated the SAE speaker significantly higher in intelligence, and the AAE speaker lower in intelligence than subject over 30. White subjects under 30 rated the SAE speaker higher in intelligence than Blacks under 30. Black subjects over 30 rated the SAE as having more intelligence than others over 30 did. Black subjects under 30 rated the AAE speaker slightly higher than others under 30. However, for those above 30 Blacks and other minority groups rated the AAE speaker as less intelligent than Whites.

Garner and Rubin (1986) conducted interviews of 10 “highly successful” Black attorneys in order to evaluate their perceptions of Black dialect, SAE, and style-shifting. The interviews were conducted by a bidialectal Black male, and then transcribed verbatim. In addition to analyzing for content, the tapes were also analyzed to determine if the subjects demonstrated codeswitching behaviors through the interview. The interviewer’s followed the lead of the participants regarding dialectal usage. In other words, if they spoke AAE, then he did, and if they spoke SAE, he did as well. Midway through the interview the interviewer was instructed to switch speaking styles in order to determine if the informants were in fact bidialectal. However, all of the informants codeswitched spontaneously without being stimulated to do so.

All of the participants reported that they changed their speech styles in response to different situations, with the exception of one participant. However, when evaluating this participant’s interview it was determined that she was a speaker of AAE and SAE. The rest of the informants indicated that the main criteria for style-shifting is familiarity with the speaker, and not race. They used SAE primarily in professional speaking situations, in order to establish credibility. They did indicate that they may utilize nonstandard speaking styles to accommodate nonstandard dialectal speakers in order to build rapport with them.
The majority of informants in Garner and Rubin’s (1986) study identified SAE as the language of the educated, socio-economically advantaged, and ‘what we’re all taught in school as being the correct way to talk.’ In contrast, AAE was viewed as the language of poor lower socio-economic Blacks with limited educations. However, ambivalently, they held the AAE in high esteem as a communicational system. They touted AAE as a descriptive, highly effective and accurate way to communicate, and as a source of cultural identity. The study revealed that these participants do not view SAE as White English, but rather as a language of the professional world. Thus acquiring proficiency in SAE is method of surviving in the professional world, without having to disavow their Blackness.

The main limitations of Garner and Rubin’s (1986) study are the small sample size, and that it does not account for the views of the majority of African Americans. As highly educated attorneys, these participants represent a small percentage of the population of African Americans. Also a primary component of their occupation is the ability to communicate, thus they are probably more cognizant of linguistic style shifting. *Analyses of codeswitching.*

Analysis in variation of language styles has been a frequent topic of sociolinguistic research. Linguists consider style-shifting to be the term usually associated with variation in monolingual speakers. Codeswitching is more often used to refer to bilingual speakers. However for the purposes of this study, the two terms are interchangeable. Labov’s (1972) analysis stratified stylistic variation into two conversational styles—casual and formal. Casual style speech is the product of lower self monitoring and attention paid to one’s speech. Formal speech is an increase in the amount of self monitoring and attention. Therefore, the dialectal variation is based on the situation and tone of the conversation.

Bell (1984) states that in intraspeaker variations in language patterns, speakers are responding to other people. Variation is based on social variation between speakers. The speaker assesses and shifts his language based on one or a combination of the following variables: a.) personal characteristics of the addressee, b.) general style level of their addressees’ speech, c.) their addressees’ levels for specific linguistic variables. Thus, speakers modify their style based on personal/social characteristics, and/or the linguistic
Bell’s theory was put to the test in and Rickford and McNair-Knox’s (1994) study of the language variation of an 18-year old African American female in response to different interviewers. The first interviewer was a 41-year old African American lecturer who was familiar to the subject from previous interviews, and as a community resident. The second interviewer was a 25-year old European American graduate student who was not familiar to the subject. The study analyzed the subject’s style shift across the two interview contexts in regard to five dialectal AAE variables: zero copula, invariant be, plural –s, third singular present –s, and possessive –s. The subject utilized these variables more frequently with the African American interviewer. However, the variation in the use of possessive –s absence and plural –s absence was not statistically significant. This could be attributed to lower rates of usage in the speech samples.

Morrow (1988) measured style shifting rate across speech situations by computing a proportion-of-difference between frequencies of occurrence for two speech situations. This is calculated by subtracting F (frequency of occurrence of a dialectal feature in a formal situation) from I (frequency of occurrence in an informal situation), and dividing it by I.

\[
\text{Style Shifting Rate} = \frac{(I - F)}{I}
\]

Morrow (1988) elicited the speech of four college freshman enrolled in a basic writing course in formal and informal conversations. The formal situations were two public addresses, and a formal interview. The informal situations were small group discussions of a book that was assigned for class. Morrow divided the dialectal components into exclusive features, that are not shared with SAE, and alternative shared features that are shared with SAE. Although this study provides an alternative method of measuring style-shifting, the focus of the study is more related to the relationship between speech situations and writing error.

*Social and political implications of code-switching.*

Baugh (1983) offers his analysis that most African Americans are required to function in two societies—one Black and the other White. Thus African Americans are taught at early age that mainstream society requires a more “educated” way of speaking in order to succeed. Baugh states that use of Black vernacular dialect or a more standard
form is based on the interactional relationship between the speaker of the dialect and the listener. Baugh divides speech events into four subdivisions to explain these levels of interaction. Type 1 involves speech events with familiar participants who are “natives” of Black vernacular culture. These are people with whom the speaker has had a long term relationship. Type 2 involves speech events where participants are not well acquainted but they are assumed members of Black vernacular culture. Type 3 speech events involve listeners with whom the speaker is well acquainted, but do not share membership in Black vernacular culture, thus African American English is not utilized. Type 4 speech events occur between listeners with whom the speaker is not well acquainted, nor are they participants in Black vernacular culture.

Baugh (1983) presents the various forms of dialectal shifting that occur among African American speakers in formal and informal settings. Throughout this work Baugh uses the term “street speech” to indicate speakers of African American English. Specific lexical markings utilized during informal encounters include topic-related shifting, syllable contraction, and expansion, forestressing of bisyllabic words, and hypercorrection. “Autonomous Black street syntax” is also more likely to be present in vernacular speaking contexts than in formal situations. Forms commonly used include invariant be, perfective done, future perfective be done, stressed been, multiple negation, and aspectual steady. In regards to phonological variation, Baugh implicated that the suffix /s/, postvocalic /r/, followed by /t/ and /d/ were the most common variants utilized during informal speech.

The literature reiterates a notion that African American English is highly stigmatized as an inferior substandard form of communication. Regardless of race, most people typically judge person’s utilizing AAE as being less intelligent. Usage of AAE is often viewed as less desirable by employers and can hinder an individual’s potential in acquiring a vocation. On university campuses, an African American student’s usage of AAE may automatically invoke characterizations, generalizations, and judgments of that student by both professors and peers. African Americans’ perceptions of AAE greatly vary. While most African Americans value AAE as an important part of cultural identification, preservation, and solidarity; many still feel that the language is inferior to the standard. Some African Americans feel that AAE is acceptable in informal
situations, but not in formal ones. Many feel that the acquisition of SAE is important in obtaining a desirable vocation. Though African American English has been a highly researched topic in the field of linguistics and speech pathology, few studies have questioned the attitudes of African Americans regarding AAE and their variation in usage, particularly students. Following the 1996 Oakland School Board resolution, many people who were previously unaware of African American dialect may have developed strong feelings about African American English (Ebonics), its usage, and its appropriateness, though these feelings are likely to be highly influenced by the media. This study examines the attitudes of African American university students through a survey. In addition, an empirical case analysis examines the amount of language variation of African American students during a public address and during an interview.
Chapter III.
Methods

Participants

The participants of the survey of linguistic perceptions were 65 African American students attending Miami University (Oxford, Ohio). In order to participate in the study, subjects were required to be natives of the United States and to speak English as their primary language. Linguistics or speech pathology majors were excluded from this study because they may have gained knowledge of cultural linguistic principles through their coursework that may influence their perceptions.

The participants for the empirical analysis were three male and one female African American student enrolled in Public Expression and Critical Inquiry (COM 135) at Miami University. COM 135 is a typical public speaking class within the Department of Communication in which all students are required to give at least four speeches. The students must participate in an activity outside of class as a part of the course requirements. Permission to recruit students for this portion of the study had to be sought and obtained from the Department of Communication. The individual professors of each section of COM 135 were asked to identify African Americans, and to give them an envelope prepared by the researcher containing information about the opportunity to participate in the research. The director of the course agreed that participation in this research would help the students meet the obligation for an outside activity mandated within the course requirements. The African American males and females who contacted the researcher after having received the information in the envelope and consented to participate were selected for the study.

Procedures

The linguistic perceptions questionnaire was distributed to African American students at periodic events in the 2005-2006 academic year sponsored by the Black Student Action Association (BSAA) and the Multicultural Enrichment Program (MEP). The questionnaire was distributed to every third student at these events. After completing the questionnaire, the subjects returned it to the researcher. The questionnaire contained 31 questions; 26 ranking and 5 open-ended (See AAE Survey in Appendix B). The 26 ranking questions were hierarchically arranged from one to five according to the Likert
scale. The first four ranking questions pertained to the subject’s familiarity, knowledge, and identification with AAE and frequency of usage. The rest of the ranking questions pertained to the intrinsic variables that may influence codeswitching. These variables were categorized into situational influences, attributes of the speaker, and effects of usage. The majority of the ranking questions had paired null questions which helped to ensure validity. The open-ended questions required the subjects to express personal beliefs about African American English, association with AAE, factors that prompt usage, and situational contexts of usage.

After the subjects for the empirical study contacted the researcher via email, the researcher explained to them via email that their speeches would be recorded, and set up a time to meet for the interview. At that time they were told that the study’s purpose was to examine the public speaking skills of African American students. The subjects were told that their persuasive speech would be audiotaped, and that they would later meet with the researcher for a scheduled interview. No further explanation of what was to be evaluated in their speeches was given at this time to prevent influencing the subjects’ speech patterns. The subjects filled out the consent form, and handed it in to their instructor.

On the day of each subject’s speech the instructor audiotaped the speeches. The researcher then obtained the audiotape from the instructor. The researcher and subjects met for a pre-scheduled interview that was also audiotaped. During the interview the researcher asked the subject questions about his or her personal background, hobbies, interests, and goals, and opinions about certain issues. Following the interview, the subjects were given a debriefing statement that was read by the researcher more thoroughly explaining the true purpose of the study, and the variables that were to be examined in both speaking contexts.

Research questions and hypotheses
1.) Are African American college students familiar with the cultural dialect African American English?
2.) How often do African American students use AAE?
3.) Do African American students value AAE as a legitimate language and is it a part of cultural pride and identity?
4.) Does the conversational listener affect usage of AAE by African American students?
5.) Does the conversational situation affect usage of AAE by African American students?
6.) How do African American university students feel their usage of AAE will affect others' attitudes and perceptions of them?
7.) Do African American university students utilize certain dialectal forms of African American English more frequently with an African American peer than during a formal address?

It was hypothesized that the African American students in this study are familiar with the cultural dialectal African American English. It was hypothesized that they utilize AAE frequently and that their usage is affected by the conversational listener and the conversational situation. It was hypothesized that African American students believe that their usage of AAE will negatively affect other's attitudes and perceptions of them. It was hypothesized that African American students will utilize AAE more frequently with an African American peer than during a formal address.

*Data Analysis*

In the survey of linguistic perceptions, each of the first twenty-six questions were analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Analysis Program (SAS) Version 8. Most of the questions in the survey contained a paired null question. A cross-tabulation was performed between the paired questions to evaluate the consistency of the answers that were reported. For the open-ended questions, a qualitative analysis was performed in which responses were totaled up, and divided to formulate the most frequently occurring responses.

In the empirical analysis, the five variables that were to be assessed were zero copula, invariant be, plural –s, third singular present –s, and possessive –s. The decision to analyze these variables was based on Rickford and McNair-Knox’s (1994) study that indicates that these variables are sensitive to style-shifting. The persuasive speeches and interviews of the subjects were transcribed. With the exception of habitual be, all of the dialectal tokens were to be counted and divided by the amount of potential tokens.

*Informed Consent and Confidentiality*

Each questionnaire for the survey of linguistic perceptions contained a cover letter informing participants of the purpose of the study (Appendix A). The subjects were
informed of their right not to complete the questionnaire or any portion of it without any penalty. Data for the survey was anonymous and contained no identifiable information on the forms. Data from all surveys from the randomly selected participants was recorded, and then destroyed. Any surveys from participants who did not meet the requirements for participation in the study were excluded and destroyed.

The subjects for the empirical analysis were required to sign a consent form (Appendix C) allowing the researcher to audiotape their speeches and their individual interviews. The audiotapes of the subjects’ speeches for the empirical analysis were labeled with number codes, and not names. The subjects were asked not to indicate his or her name at any time during the individual speech or interview. The subjects were given a copy of his or her consent form and debriefing statement (Appendix D).
Chapter IV.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The survey participants included 44 female and 21 male African American students. The students’ ages ranged from 18 years to 33 years. The average age was 20.48 and the standard deviation was 2.89.

Statistical Analysis

The results were computed using the (SAS) Version 8 program. The survey used a Likert scale where each response corresponded with a score from one to five. For the purpose of the data analysis and summary, the Likert scale was divided into a dichotomy where a score of 1-3 was considered an infrequently occurring score and a score of 4-5 was considered a frequently occurring score. Tables 1-14 in Appendix A summarize the responses obtained for questions 1-26. The base questions are paired with their null questions where applicable. The percentage of agreement between each base and null question was also computed.

Summary of Results

Eighty-eight percent of the students surveyed reported that they were familiar with AAE, and none of subjects reported they were unfamiliar with AAE (see Table 1). Sixty-three percent of the students disagreed that AAE is a valid and legitimate form of communication (see Table 2). However, only 13.85% agree with the statement that AAE is not a legitimate way in which to communicate, resulting in only a 41.54% cross tabulation agreement between the two questions. Approximately 54% of students felt that AAE was a part of cultural pride and identity while 46% disagreed (see Table 3). Fourty-three percent of the subjects indicated that they used AAE frequently, while approximately 57% reported that they use AAE infrequently (see Table 4). Seventy-eight percent (see Table 5) of the students agreed that their usage of AAE is dependent on who they are talking to. Sixty percent of the students reported that they only used AAE with people with whom they are familiar (see Table 6). Approximately 26% of the students reported that they only use AAE when conversing with African Americans while 74% disagreed (see Table 7). However, in the null question only 13.85% reported that ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence their usage of AAE, and 86% disagreed.
with this statement. This yields a low cross-tabulation agreement of 36.93%. Seventy percent of the students reported that they do not use AAE when conversing with someone over the age of 60, while inversely almost 97% disagreed with the statement that they do use AAE with an elderly person (see Table 8). Almost 97% of the students denied using AAE with a professor or authority figure (see Table 9). Over 82% of the students reported that their usage of AAE is influenced by the conversational situation (see Table 11). Ninety-eight percent of the students disagreed with using AAE in formal situations such as presentations or interviews (Table 12). Eighty-three percent of the students felt that usage of AAE will negatively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans (Table 13). Eighty-nine percent reported that usage of AAE can affect the employability of African Americans (Table 14).

Questions 26 through 31 were open-ended questions, therefore a qualitative analysis was performed. Question #27 read as follows: “What words come to mind when you think of African American English (AAE)/ Ebonics?” Fifty of the 65 participants answered question #27. The answers provided by the participants were categorized based on the aspect of AAE that it fit into. For example a response that was based on a semantic aspect of AAE, such as the use of the word “dope” to mean good was categorized as a semantic term. The four categories that were reported were semantic terms of AAE (28%), phonological aspects of AAE (27%), grammatical aspects of AAE (20%), and connotative descriptions by respondents concerning how they felt about AAE (24%). Many respondents provided a combination of these categories. Each response was added into a category, and totaled up to obtain a percentage of the most frequently occurring responses based on the category.
Figure 1

What words come to mind when you think of African American English?

Responses

Percentages

Semantic terms
Phonological features
Connotative descriptions
Grammatical features

Series 1
Question # 28 read “Do you believe that AAE is appropriate in certain situations, but inappropriate in others? If so describe when it is, and when it isn’t.” Fifty-five of the 65 respondents answered this question. Out of the 55, Fifty subjects (approximately 91%) responded that it was appropriate or inappropriate in a given situation. Many described that situation in their answer. Questions 30 and 31 asked the subjects to describe these situations in greater detail.
Do you believe that AAE is appropriate in certain situations, but inappropriate in others?
Question # 29 read as follows “What are the three biggest factors that influence your usage of AAE?” Fifty-four of the 65 respondents answered this question. The subjects were not required to rank the order of their responses. The responses were totaled and then categorized. The categories resulted were a.) setting or environment (23%), b.) listener/audience (22%), c.) race/culture (13%), family/friends (9%), comfortability in the situation (9%), and a category labeled “other” which consisted of a variety of different answers (11%). Some responses in the “other” category included time, gender, age, socio-economic status, geographic location, and media.
Figure 3

What are the three biggest factors that influence your usage of AAE?

- Environment
- Listener/Audience
- Race/Culture
- Familiarity/Comfortability
- Friends/Family
- Others

Influences

Percentages
Question # 30 read “Name three situations in which usage of AAE is appropriate.” Fifty-three out of the 65 participants responded to this question. They were not required to rank these in any order. The answers were totaled and grouped into the following categories: a.) With friends and family (42%), b.) social gatherings (12%), c.) home (10%), d.) in the “hood/streets (10%),” e.) with Blacks (6%), f.) during discussions about AAE (6%), and g.) others (16%). Answers that fell into the “other” category included in the classroom, never, during sports, when effective, and when comfortable.
Figure 4

Name three situations in which the usage of AAE is appropriate

- Friends/family: 45%
- Social gathering: 10%
- Home: 15%
- the "hood/streets": 5%
- with Blacks: 25%
- during discussions: 5%
- Others: 0%
Question #31 read “Name three situations in which the usage of AAE is not appropriate.” Fifty-four of the 65 participants responded to this question. These answers were not ranked but totaled and placed into the following categories: a.) during an interview/presentation (27%), b.) school/class (22%), c.) at work (16%), d.) with a professor/authority figure (13%), e.) with elders (11%), and f.) others (11%). Responses in the others category included with “sadity Blacks,” with nonusers, with unfamiliar people, with Whites, when ineffective, and never.
Figure 5

Name three situations in which the usage of AAE is not appropriate.

- Interview/presentation: 30%
- School/class: 25%
- Work: 15%
- Professor/authority: 10%
- Elders: 5%
- Others: 5%

Situations
Empirical Analysis of Codeswitching

Four African American students enrolled in Public Expression and Critical Inquiry (COM 135) participated in the empirical analysis. Their usage of a select number of AAE variables was evaluated across two settings. One was during a public address as a part of their class, and the other was during an informal interview. The five variables that were assessed were zero copula, invariant *be*, plural *–s*, third singular present *–s*, and possessive *–s*. However, the subjects were not speakers of African American English and utilized the five variables very infrequently, thus this portion of the data collection was not completed.
Chapter V.
Discussion

This study sought to discern the attitudes and perceptions of a select group of African American college students regarding African American English and codeswitching. The method of research was a questionnaire completed by students at Miami University (Oxford, OH). An attempt was also made to observe codeswitching practices of a separate group of African American students at this same university. This attempt was unsuccessful due to an inability to find speakers for the study who used African American English.

*Familiarity With AAE*

Eighty-eight percent of the subjects surveyed reported that they were familiar with AAE, and none of the subjects agreed with the statement that they were unfamiliar with AAE. The wording of the question read “Are you familiar with cultural dialect African American English (AAE) also known as Ebonics.” The researcher felt that it was important to word the question in that manner so that the subjects would know that the more popularly used term “Ebonics” was the same as AAE. The results may have been grossly different had the alias “Ebonics” not been used. The national media brought the term “Ebonics” to the forefront of the public eye following the Oakland School Board controversy in 1997 even though the term was conceived in 1973, and much research had been done on the language of African Americans since the early 1960’s. Most of the subjects probably remember remnants of that debate and certainly the national backlash and comedic satirizations on public television and in movies that continued in the years following the debate. Since the subjects were African Americans, and their race is suggested within the nomenclature of the term “AAE” then it is logical that most subjects would report familiarity with AAE and would not likely agree with being unfamiliar with AAE.

*Validation of AAE as a legitimate form of communication*

Approximately 37% of the subjects agreed with the statement that “AAE is a valid, legitimate, and rule-governed form of communication.” Even though most of the subjects indicated that they are familiar with AAE, the majority did not recognize that AAE is a structured and rule-governed language. The national media did little to affirm
that AAE is a highly researched rule-governed language. Unless these students had taken a course in linguistics it is unlikely that they had ever been exposed to the structure of AAE. Only 13.85% of the subjects agreed with the null statement “AAE is not a legitimate way in which to communicate” resulting in only a 41.54% cross tabulation agreement between the two questions (See Table 2). The inconsistency in the way that students answered questions on the legitimacy of AAE may be due to the way that the null question was worded. Question #17 did not include the words “rule governed” and students may have agreed that AAE was legitimate but not rule-governed. These conflicting results could also be due to the ambivalence of students on whether or not AAE is actually legitimate communication.

AAE as a part of cultural identity and frequency of usage

Approximately 54% of students felt that AAE was a part of cultural pride and identity while 46% disagreed (see Table 3). The question then arises that if 54% believe that AAE is a part of cultural pride and identity, why is it that only 36.92% (see Table 2; question #2) believe that it is a valid, legitimate, and rule-governed form of communication? Do these students not believe in the validity of something that is a part of their own culture? Is the use of AAE something that they are ashamed of within their culture? Some scholars seem to believe that this is true within the African American community. “Black language is largely an uncontested arena of Black shame (Perry & Delpit, 1998, p.6). The Ebonics debate and controversy following the Oakland, California resolution may contribute to these attitudes. The misinterpretation of the news media may have left many people including African Americans with a negative and misconstrued impression of African American English.

Forty-three percent of the subjects reported that they use AAE frequently (see Table 4). If these students are not aware of the structure and rules of AAE, they may not be aware of their usage patterns. Yet, they may be aware of times when they use more casual language that contains more of the more obvious aspects of AAE. Therefore, students may be using AAE at times and may not be aware of it. Miami University is a predominantly White affluent institution located in the Midwest. Many of the African American students attending Miami University may have had higher levels of socialization with Whites than other African American students who may have been
reared in more segregated or diverse communities. Terrell, Battle, & Grantham (1998) stated that usage of AAE is contingent on levels of socialization with African Americans. It is likely that many of the subjects who were surveyed are not speakers of AAE. They may be highly cognizant of this as such may have been around other African Americans in social settings who point out that they “talk proper” or “talk White.”

*Effect of the listener/audience on usage*

Seventy-eight percent (see Table 5) of the students agreed that their usage of AAE is dependent on who they are talking to. Inversely almost 65% disagree with the statement that the listener has no influence on their usage of AAE. Thus it can be stated that generally the listener/audience has a definite impact on the usage patterns of the students who responded. This is in accordance with Bell’s (1984) analysis that language variation is based on social variation and attributes of the listener. Thus, the personal and social and characteristics of the listener/audience affect the conversational style that the speaker uses.

Sixty percent of the students reported that they only used AAE with people with whom they are familiar (see Table 6). Inversely 73.85% disagreed with the statement that they may use AAE when conversing with someone that they did not know that well. This yields a cross-tabulation between question agreement of 67.89. The subjects displayed a minor amount of inconsistency in their responses to statements regarding the impact of familiarity with the listener. Baugh (1983) divided speech events into four subdivisions to explain these usage patterns of AAE. Types 1 involved speech events with familiar participants who are “natives” of Black vernacular culture, while Type 2 involved unfamiliar speech events with unfamiliar participants who were assumed to be members of Black vernacular culture. Approximately 26% of the students reported that they only use AAE when conversing with African Americans while 74% disagreed (see Table 7). However, in the inverse question only 13.85% reported that ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence their usage of AAE, and 86% disagreed with this statement, yielding a low cross-tabulation agreement of 36.93%. The subjects’ inconsistency may be due to the way that the questions were worded. Question #10 expressed a narrow opening in the usage of the word “only,” and almost 74% of the students disagreed with that. However, Question #20 is more open in that it states that
ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence AAE at all, as 86% of the students disagreed with that. Baugh (1983) said that African Americans function in two societies; Black and White. Type 3 and Type 4 speech events occur with members of are not assumed to be members of Black vernacular culture. Due to the increase in the population of middle class Blacks the two societies are no longer as segregated as they were at that time. More and more Blacks have integrated into mainstream society and may not speak necessarily speak AAE or codeswitch. Other ethnic groups who live within the Black community may be speakers of AAE. The implication is that while ethnicity and race do play a major role in the usage patterns of African American students, it cannot be generalized that they never use AAE with anyone outside of the African American race.

Seventy percent of the students reported that they do not use AAE when conversing with someone over the age of 60, while inversely almost 97% disagreed with the statement that they do use AAE with an elderly person (see Table 8). The slight inconsistency in these two questions could be due to ambivalence or even students not reading the questions thoroughly. The researcher found this to be surprising given that in personal experience, the majority of elderly African Americans are speakers of AAE. It would seem that students would be more likely to utilize AAE with elderly African Americans who are speakers. Perhaps the students when answering this question only thought of the notion of respecting the elderly, and would not want to use AAE with them. Again, if students are not aware of the rules and structure of AAE, they may not be aware that many elderly African Americans are speakers.

Almost 97% of the students denied using AAE with a professor or authority figure, and inversely 84% agreed that they do not use AAE with authority figures (see Table 9). Almost 88% of the students denied using AAE with a professor authority figure if that person is African American (see Table 10). However, almost 68% of the students disagreed with the statement that race or ethnicity does not influence their usage of AAE with professors or authority figures. Thus again it can be hypothesized that while African American students may not use AAE with an authority figure even if that person is African American, ethnicity and race does still play a role in their usage patterns with authority figures. Other variables may play a role in these usage patterns.
such as familiarity with the authority figure and/or age.

Effect of the conversational situation on usage

Over 82% of the students reported that their usage of AAE is influenced by the conversational situation (see Table 11). Similarly, over 84% disagreed with the statement that their usage of AAE is not influenced by the conversational situation. Ninety-eight percent of the students disagreed with using AAE in formal situations such as presentations or interviews (Table 12). Most students feel that AAE is inappropriate during formal situations, so they are probably more likely to monitor their speech in these situations. This affirms the notion that codeswitching is a very important pragmatic aspect of AAE and African American culture in general.

Effects of usage

Eighty-three percent of the students felt that usage of AAE will negatively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans (Table 13). Only 9% agreed with the inverse question that usage of AAE will positively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions. Eighty-nine percent reported that usage of AAE can affect the employability of African Americans (Table 14). An even greater percentage (Over 95%) disagreed with the inverse that usage of AAE does not affect the employability of African Americans. Though questions 15 and 26 do not state how the employability of African Americans will be affected, it can be assumed that respondents felt that employability would be decreased. This assumption is based on previous question pertaining to usage of AAE in formal situations, usage of AAE with professors and authority figures, and the effects of usage on peers and professors perceptions of African Americans. Students at this university feel that codeswitching is important because they may be judged for being a speaker of AAE. This is consistent with the literature that reiterates that most African Americans feel that codeswitching is important for educational, social, and vocational mobility.

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Question Number 27 (see Graph 1) read “What words come to mind when you think of African American English (AAE)/Ebonics? This question allowed students the flexibility to write anything related to how they felt about the dialect. Seventy-five percent of the students used terms that they perceived to be components of African
American English. These responses were categorized into semantic descriptions, phonological attributes, and grammatical attributes of AAE. The other respondents implicated or described how they felt or what they thought about African American English.

Semantic descriptions are lexical meanings of specific words or ideas in African American English that represent another idea. An example is the use of the term “bad” to mean “good”. Semantic attributes of African American English are the most variable differing by age, geographic location, class, and preference. Slang is causal speech that is “made up of short-lived coinages and figures of speech that are deliberately used in place of standard terms” (http://www.dictionary.com). The use of slang is highly generational and geographical. So slang from the 1970’s is likely to be different than that of the 21st century. Slang and semantic features of African American English are related and often intertwine. For the purposes of this question, slang and AAE lexicon were grouped into the same category of semantic descriptions. Some lexical forms are mutually intelligible among all AAE speakers, and others are slang terms that are more transient. A forty-year old African American may not understand the slang of a fifteen year old, but there are certain specific lexical forms that both will likely understand. For example the use of the term “ashy” to refer to dry skin, or the use of the term “shoutin” to mean outward physical or emotional demonstrations in church (Terrell, Battle, & Grantham, 1998). The majority of the semantic responses from subjects were slang terms. There was so much variability in the semantic responses that no one term predominated over the others.

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents identified phonological characteristics of AAE. Phonological features of AAE refers to the diverging articulation of sounds that contrast with the sound system used in Standard American English. The most common phonological feature that respondents selected was the use of /d/ for the /th/ sound, i.e. dis/this. Closely following was the deletion of the /ng/ sound on the ends of words as in “walkin” for “walking.”

Twenty percent of the respondents reported grammatical components of AAE. Grammatical components are the morphological and syntactic structures that differ from that of SAE. The most commonly reported grammatical form was the use of the word “ain’t.” This word is commonly used general preverbal negator. It can be used in the
place of “isn’t.” “aren’t,” “hasn’t,” “haven’t,” or didn’t. For example “I ain’t goin over there,” or “She ain’t told me the truth.” Other commonly selected answer was the use of the invariant “be.” This habitual “be” is used to identify something that is frequently done. For example “I be on the phone” to mean that “I am usually on the phone.

Twenty-four percent of the students described how they felt about AAE. There was a great amount of variability in these responses. Some students indicated that AAE was simply “slang,” “ghetto tongue,” “improper English” or “not enunciating words.” Others connected AAE with hip hop culture, rap music, and inner city violence. One student implicated that AAE was a “legitimate language that deserves recognition.” Overall, most students did not make an attempt to legitimize AAE as a cultural dialect or language with historical roots but rather a more transient way of speaking that is utilized by African American youth and not accepted in mainstream society.

Question Number 28 (see Graph 2) pertains to whether students feel that AAE is appropriate in certain situations, but inappropriate in others. Ninety-one percent of the respondents of the question answered yes to this question. Five of the students reported that AAE is never appropriate. Most of the students then described the particular situations in which they felt usage was appropriate or inappropriate. This data was not specifically analyzed as respondents had further opportunity to describe this in detail.

When students were asked students to list the variables that influence their usage of AAE (see Graph 3), the two most frequently occurring influences listed were the setting or environment (23%), and the listener/audience (22%). The next three factors were race and culture (13%), family and friends (9%), and comfortability in the situation (9%). There is some overlap between these responses as family and friends are generally a part of an individuals culture and/or race. Individuals are also generally comfortable around his or her family and friends and within one’s race or culture.

Question Number 30 asked the subject to list three situations in which usage of AAE is appropriate (Graph 4 on page 36). The most frequently chosen answer was with friends and family (42%). Other frequently chosen answers were at a social gathering (12%), at home (10%), in the “hood/streets” (10%), and with Blacks (6%). Again, there was some overlap in these responses. Individuals often interact with friends and family
in social settings, and at home. Also individuals will generally interact with friends in the neighborhood, and if that person lives in a Black neighborhood, then that interaction generally takes place with Blacks. Based on the responses to this question, the students reported that the usage of AAE is primarily appropriate around other African Americans. However, only 26% of the students had previously reported that they only used AAE with Africans. The results suggest that the subjects were uncertain about the role of race in the usage of AAE.

Subjects were asked to list situations in which the usage of AAE is not appropriate (Figure 5). The top four answers were during an interview/presentation (27%), in school/class (22%), at work (16%), and with professors/authority figures (16%). One common variable that these situations suggest is that the individual will be judged, and there may be possible benefits or consequences of these judgments. In the survey questions the majority of the students had already indicated that the usage of AAE would negatively affect perceptions of African Americans and employability. Perhaps it can be hypothesized that students feel that usage is inappropriate in these situations because it will negatively affect them. The subject’s attitudes are consistent with the previous literature that iterates that employers and other authority figures do hold a negative regard for AAE and that usage may negatively affect their perceptions of individuals who use it.

Limitations Of This Study

Several limitations of this study must be considered. The sample size of the subjects (65 participants) was too small to be generalized to the entire population. As it was previously mentioned, the environment where this study took place is that of a conservative, predominantly White, affluent, fairly rural university. The opinions of these students may or may not differ from that of African American students in a more diverse, urban community. Also the questionnaire was fairly lengthy (31 questions), and some students may have become fatigued or rushed through without thoroughly answering each question. The empirical analysis of codeswitching behaviors was discontinued due the low number of African American students who agreed to participate in the study, and the fact that those few students were not speakers of AAE. Future research of this nature should be conducted in a setting where students are more likely to
be speakers of AAE. A brief pre-interview of potential participants could also be conducted to ascertain if they are speakers of AAE.

Summary of Research

The majority of students indicated that they are familiar with AAE and no students reported being unfamiliar with it. Yet only approximately 37% felt that AAE is a valid and rule-governed form of communication. The Ebonics debate enforced that Ebonics or AAE is little more than slang, and that the children in the Oakland school district were not capable of learning Standard English. Many people, including African Americans took offense to this, therefore Ebonics as a language was attacked. There was little discussion about the structure and origins of AAE. Therefore, few students would likely have knowledge of this structure. The booming popularity of hip hop culture in the United States has further exposed mainstream society to certain forms of Black language. However, this does not by any means encapsulate the complex and diverse language that AAE is. Yet many people, including many of the students who participated in this study believe that it is.

There was a fairly equal division between students who believe that AAE is a part of cultural pride and identity (54% versus 46%). If students are not knowledgeable of AAE, they may automatically associate it with hip hop culture and not African American culture. Or they may subscribe to the widely held conception that it is just “bad English.” The language of African Americans has been continually disparaged before, during, and after the Ebonics debate. African Americans have historically been oppressed by society through slavery, Jim Crowism, racism, segregation, and decreased access to education, housing, health care, and other civic services. Therefore, the language of an oppressed people is not likely to be celebrated and elevated but instead subjugated just as the people are (Taylor, 1999). As it was previously stated, many scholars believe that African Americans are ashamed of AAE (Perry & Delpit, 1998). Fewer students reported using AAE frequently (43%) than those that do use it frequently (57%). This could be a function of the student’s ignorance of AAE, or it could be truly representative of usage in this particular environment.

The questionnaire showed that the listener has a great effect on usage of AAE by students. This varies according to the familiarity, race, age, and position of the listener.
More students generally reported only using AAE with someone with whom, they are familiar (60%). African Americans are more likely to use AAE with members of African American culture, but may sometimes use it with people of other races if they are quite familiar with them. Few students reported utilizing AAE with elderly people or with authority figures, even if the authority figure is African American. Most students reported varying their usage of AAE based on the situation, and very few students reported using AAE in formal situations such as presentations or interviews. This is probably because most of these students feel that their usage of AAE will negatively affect others’ perceptions of them, and decrease their employability. Most of the students were knowledgeable about some aspects of AAE, but reported a narrow perspective of it. Some students reported that AAE is not a valid language; most reported that it should only be used in certain situations and with certain people. The main findings of this research are that this group of students does codeswitch between AAE and SAE. Though they may have mixed feelings and ideas about what AAE is and what it means, the overwhelming majority believe that it is necessary to be able to codeswitch to thrive in mainstream society.

Implications For Future Research

The majority of these subjects held a very narrow view of what AAE is. There was a tendency by the subjects not to uplift African American English, but instead to limit it as something that should only be used in the company of family or friends. The subjects did not implicate the many complicated forms of AAE, but instead focused on the limitations of AAE. These students felt that AAE is not appropriate in situations where African Americans are likely to be judged. Again, this relates back to the suggested inferiority complex that African Americans have about AAE (Perry & Delpit, 1998). This lends itself to a situation where members of a given culture are not knowledgeable their own language. Knowledge of AAE is important for those speakers who utilize AAE most frequently. This is because knowledge of AAE will help the speaker to codeswitch more easily and effectively in a given situation. Knowledge of AAE is also important so that the listener does not make erroneous assumptions about the speaker in a given context. It is also important for African Americans to be knowledgeable about AAE as it strongly impacts the education of African American
children. This is particularly true of African Americans who live and go to school in mostly Black areas.

Future research should focus more succinctly on African American students’ knowledge of the structure of AAE. Though they may feel as though they are knowledgeable about the language, it would be interesting to see if they really are. Most of the subjects of this study felt that codeswitching is very important for educational, vocational, and social mobility. An attempt was made to observe codeswitching patterns in a formal address versus during an informal one on one interview. This attempt was unsuccessful due to a lack of AAE speakers in the subject pool. More careful methodological research should also examine this area, and determine what dialectal forms do African American codeswitch on most frequently.
Appendix A. Tables

Table 1

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding Their Familiarity with AAE with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #1</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with the cultural dialect</td>
<td>87.69%</td>
<td>12.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American English (AAE) also known as Ebonics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question # 16</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not sure what AAE is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement between paired questions</td>
<td>87.69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding the Legitimacy of AAE with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 2</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAE is a valid, legitimate, and rule-governed form of communication.</td>
<td>36.92%</td>
<td>63.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question # 17</td>
<td>13.85%</td>
<td>86.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAE is not a legitimate way in which to communicate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement between paired questions</td>
<td>41.54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3
**Subjects Response to Statement Regarding AAE as a Part of Cultural Pride and Identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 3</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage of AAE is a part of Cultural pride and identity</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4
**Subjects Response to their Frequency of Usage of AAE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 4</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Not Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use AAE</td>
<td>43.08%</td>
<td>56.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5
**Subjects Response to Statements Regarding the Effect of the Conversational Listener When Using AAE with Cross Tabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 18</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My usage of AAE is dependent on whom I am talking to.</td>
<td>78.46%</td>
<td>21.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 5</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person with who I am speaking has no influence on my usage of AAE.</td>
<td>35.38%</td>
<td>64.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions 76.92%
Table 6

Subject Response to Statements Regarding the Effect of their Familiarity with the Listener on their Usage of AAE with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only use AAE with people with whom I am familiar.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I may use AAE when conversing with someone that I do not know that well.</td>
<td>26.15%</td>
<td>73.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions 67.89%

Table 7

Subjects Response to their Usage of AAE with African Americans with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only use AAE with African Americans</td>
<td>26.15%</td>
<td>73.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence my usage of AAE.</td>
<td>13.85%</td>
<td>86.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions 36.93%
Table 8

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding their Usage of AAE with Older Individuals with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 12</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use AAE when conversing with an older person (over the age of 60)</td>
<td>3.08%</td>
<td>96.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 21</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not use AAE when conversing with an older person (over the age of 60)</td>
<td>70.77%</td>
<td>29.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions: 73.85%

Table 9

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding their Usage of AAE with Authority Figures with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 13</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use AAE when conversing with a professor or authority figure.</td>
<td>3.08%</td>
<td>96.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 22</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not use AAE when conversing with a professor or authority figure.</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions: 84.62%
Table 10  
Subjects Response to Statements Regarding their Usage of AAE with African American Authority Figures with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 24</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use AAE when speaking to a professor or authority figure if that person is African American.</td>
<td>12.31%</td>
<td>87.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 8</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence my usage of AAE with professors or authority figures.</td>
<td>32.31%</td>
<td>67.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Agreement between paired questions | 38.46% |

Table 11  
Subjects Response to Statements Regarding the Effect of the Conversational Situation on their Usage of AAE with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 6</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My usage of AAE is influenced by the conversational situation.</td>
<td>81.54%</td>
<td>18.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 19</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My usage of AAE is not influenced by the conversational situation</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Agreement between paired questions | 75.39% |
Table 12

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding their Usage of AAE in Formal Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question # 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use AAE in formal situations such as presentations or interviews.</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>98.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

Subjects Response to Statements Regarding the Effect of their Usage of AAE on the Perceptions of Others with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question # 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage of AAE can negatively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans.</td>
<td>83.08%</td>
<td>16.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question # 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage of AAE will positively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans.</td>
<td>9.23%</td>
<td>90.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement between paired questions</td>
<td>73.85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Subject Responses to Statements Regarding the Effect of their Usage of AAE on Employability with Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 15</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage of AAE does not affect Employability of African Americans</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
<td>95.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question # 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # 26</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage of AAE does not affect employability of African Americans</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
<td>95.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement between paired questions 84.38%
Appendix B. Cover Letter For Survey

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a study of the beliefs of African American university students regarding usage of the cultural dialect African American English (AAE) also known as Ebonics. I am requesting that you complete a questionnaire that will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

The answers that you provide will be completely confidential, and no identifiable information is contained on the survey. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time or refuse to answer specific questions. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a participant. Please be aware that your agreement to complete this survey constitutes your consent to allow your answers to be used in the results of this study.

For any further questions or concerns you may contact Dr. Alice Kahn (513) 529-2508 kahna@muohio.edu, or Jairus-Joaquin Matthews (513) 529-3734 matthejr@muohio.edu. For answers to questions regarding your rights as a participant, contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3734.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix C.

AAE Survey

Age___________

Please circle your gender Male Female

Are you a native of the United States?

Yes No

What is your first or primary language?

________________________________________________________________________

What is your major?

________________________________________________________________________

Please circle what best describes your educational classification

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate student

1. I am familiar with the cultural dialect African American English (AAE) also known as Ebonics.

   1    2    3    4    5
   Unfamiliar Not Very Familiar Neutral Somewhat Familiar Quite Familiar

2. AAE is a valid, legitimate, and rule-governed form of communication.

   1    2    3    4    5
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. Usage of AAE is part of cultural pride and identity

   1    2    3    4    5
   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
4. I use AAE

1 2 3 4 5
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

5. The person with whom I am speaking has no influence on my usage of AAE

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. My usage of AAE is influenced by the conversational situation.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. I use AAE in formal situations such as presentation or interviews

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. Ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence my usage of AAE with professors or authority figures.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. I use AAE when conversing with my family and friends, but not with others.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. I only use AAE African Americans.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. I only use AAE with people with whom I am familiar.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
12. I use AAE when conversing with an older person (over the age of 60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. I use AAE when conversing with a professor or authority figure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Usage of AAE can negatively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Usage of AAE can affect the employability of African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. I am not sure what AAE is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. AAE is not a legitimate way in which to communicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. My usage of AAE is dependent on whom I am talking to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. My usage of AAE is not influenced by the conversational situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Ethnicity or race of the listener does not influence my usage of AAE
21. I do not use AAE when conversing with an older person (over the age of 60).

22. I do not use AAE when conversing with a professor or authority figures.

23. I may use AAE when conversing with someone that I do not know that well.

24. I use AAE when speaking to a professor or authority figure if that person is African American.

25. Usage of AAE will positively affect professors’ or peers’ perceptions of African Americans.

26. Usage of AAE does not affect employability of African Americans.

27. What words come to mind when you think of African American English/ (AAE) Ebonics?
28. Do you believe that AAE is appropriate in certain situations, but inappropriate in others? If so describe when it is, versus when it isn’t.

29. What are the three biggest factors that influence your usage of AAE?

30. Name three situations in which usage of AAE is appropriate

31. Name three situations in which the usage of AAE is not appropriate
Appendix D. Consent Form

Dear Participant:

Hello, my name is Jairus-Joaquin Matthews and I am inviting you to participate in a study of African American students in a public speaking class. As you know all COM 135 are required to have two outside class experiences drawn from participating in a research study, an audience debate forum, and/or the Allyn and Bacon COM 135 Showcase. This study would count as one of those experiences. As a part of this study, the researcher will be allowed consent to audiotape your a speech for COM 135. (I will not be present during the class period, but will obtain the audiotape from your instructor). Following the presentation of your speech, I will be conducting an interview with you which will also be audiotaped. In the interview I will ask you some questions about your speech and some other questions related to your personal background. The interview is expected to last approximately 30-40 minutes. You will receive a small gift as a courtesy for your time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as the participant. Your name will be kept confidential, as it will not be labeled on the audiotape, but will be coded with a number. The audiotapes will be handled only by the instructor and the researcher, and will be kept locked when they are unattended. Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time or refuse to answer specific questions without penalty. It is requested that you do not say your name at any time during your speech or during your interview to ensure confidentiality. If you would like to participate in this study please contact Jairus-Joaquin Matthews matthejr@muohio.edu as soon as possible. If you choose to participate in this study, the researcher will notify your instructor once you have completed your participation in this research. There are a very limited number of openings in this study, so the ability to participate is based on a first-come first-served basis. If you have additional questions you may contact myself, or Dr. Alice Kahn (513) 529-2508 kahna@muohio.edu. For answers to questions
regarding the rights of subjects please contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3734.

Subject Consent Form

I, __________________________ agree to participate in this study and willingly consent to the researcher access to the audiotape of my speech for COM 135, and consent for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

______________________________   __________________
Signature        Date
Appendix E.

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this study. At this time the I would like to provide a more thorough explanation of this study. The title of this study is Codeswitching in African American College Students: Attitudes, Perceptions, and Practice. The purpose of this study is to decipher whether codeswitching, or shifting between dialects, is viewed as a viable option by African American university students, and what factors prompt them to do so. Originally you were informed that your performance on your speech for COM 135 would be rated. However, you were not informed that your usage of the dialectal forms of African American English (AAE, also known as Ebonics) would be compared to the dialectal forms of AAE presented in our informal interview. This was thought to be a necessary precaution in order to obtain a natural language sample. The Institutional Review Board has approved this procedure on the basis that incomplete disclosure was necessary in order to accomplish the goals of this research. We respectfully request that you do not inform anyone of the purpose of this study, as knowledge of it may impair the validity of future results. For any further questions or concerns you may contact Dr. Alice Kahn (513) 529-2508 kahna@muohio.edu, or Jairus-Joaquin Matthews (513) 529-3734 matthejr@muohio.edu. For answers to questions regarding the use of subjects please contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3734.

I, __________________________ have been debriefed concerning the element of deception in this study. I have been informed of the purpose if this study, and why this element of deception was necessary to maintain the validity of the results.

________________________________________   ___________________
Signature         Date
References


