

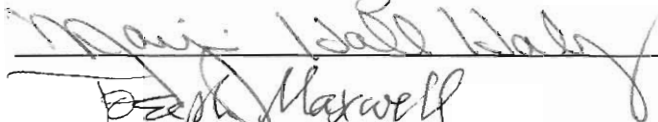
HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN
AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH INFLUENCE THEIR TEACHING

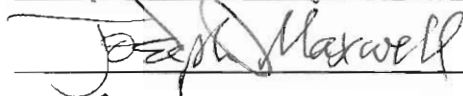
by

Gregory Jones
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

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Date: July 25, 2011 Summer Semester 2011
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Influence Their Teaching

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my mother, Jeanette Jones Dunston, my grandmother, Daisy Mae Pickett, and my aunt, Hattie Mae Ball– the wise ones.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The dissertation process can be a lonely and isolating experience, one through which I would not have been able to successfully navigate without the support and encouragement of numerous individuals. Words seem inadequate to express the depth of my gratitude to my family and friends who have stood with me and beside me from the inception of this journey toward my degree. Without the lifetime of unending love and support provided by my mother and grandmother this accomplishment and all others I have achieved would never have come to fruition. Thanks are due to my siblings, Yana, Willie, and Wanda, who have served as constant cheerleaders throughout this process and all other adventures I have undertaken in life. Each of you holds a special place in my heart, knowing everything about me and loving me still. Over the years I have been immensely fortunate to have acquired a collection of friends who have served as tremendous sources of encouragement and inspiration. They are too numerous to name them all here, but I must extend sincere thanks to Dr. Zollie Stevenson, my mentor and long time friend for planting the vision of pursuing a Ph.D. in my mind way back when we were college kids at UNC-CH. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Carl Foster, Kevin Brown, and Trevis Hall for their unwavering friendship and ceaseless support and encouragement. Dr. Melissa Hamilton and Gary Thomas, my dear friends and ACPS colleagues are due thanks for providing a listening ear and performing numerous acts of kindness to reduce my stress level at work. I would be remised if I did not extend my eternal thanks to Larry Crawford, a sage, thoughtful, and caring friend on whom I can always depend. I must also thank two members of my George Mason cohort, Vicki Montgomery and Theresa Beasley for the role they played in helping me arrive at this juncture in life. Knowing I could always seek your advice and help in times of crisis has been a constant source of comfort to me.

Without the assistance of Louisa Porzell, Ann Anderson, and Dr. Elizabeth Simons, I would never have made it through all the papers and the dissertation process. Sincere thanks to each of you for serving as editors extraordinaire and for being such dear friends and wonderful colleagues.

I owe an enormous debt of thanks to my committee members, Dr. David Brazer, Dr. Joe Maxwell, and Dr. Marjorie Hall-Haley for the guidance, expert advice, and professional wisdom they provided throughout my tenure at George Mason University. I am

especially grateful to Dr. Brazer, the chair of my committee, for believing in me and constantly availing himself to assist with questions related to my research and my academic program over the years. David thanks for serving as an outstanding teacher, mentor, advocate, and friend.

Without the contributions of the principals and teachers at “Martha Washington” this study would not exist. I am most appreciative of their willingness to grant me access to their professional lives. They could not have been more gracious and accommodating.

I could not end my acknowledgements without recognizing Bishop Alfred A. Owens and Co-Pastor Susie Owens for serving as my spiritual advisors throughout the pursuit of my degree and for keeping me grounded, encouraged, and inspired during the entire process. Because of them I realize the importance of giving God thanks in all we do. Thanks be unto Him for the great things He has done.

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ABSTRACT

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH INFLUENCE THEIR TEACHING

Gregory Jones

George Mason University, 2011

Dissertation Director: Dr. S. David Brazier

Schools are failing to meet the educational needs of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers. Consequently, the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, and African American students in general, trails that of grade-level peers. Teachers are key components to students' school success. However, many educators lack knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which can positively or adversely influence student achievement. Nevertheless, some African American teachers working with AAVE speakers find ways to value the rich cultural and linguistic patterns this group brings to school, thus positively impacting student achievement (Foster, 2002).

Using cultural ecological theory and social reproduction as theoretical frameworks, this study examines African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward AAVE and AAVE speakers, as well as the classroom practices teachers employ to support the learning of students who come to school with AAVE as their first language. Numerous studies have investigated teacher attitudes toward AAVE, but to

date, no research has been conducted to illustrate how, if at all, African American teachers' beliefs/perceptions of AAVE shape their classroom practices. In doing so, this study moves beyond existing research literature focused primarily on reporting teachers' attitudes toward AAVE on various language attitude surveys (Blake & Cutler, 2003; Hoover, et al., 1996a; Pietras & Lamb, 1978; Taylor, 1973). As evidenced in this study, there are inconsistencies in the expressed beliefs of teachers toward AAVE and their actions. Research participants' language attitudes toward AAVE are not consistently aligned with the classrooms behaviors they employ with AAVE speakers, that is, what teachers say about AAVE and what they actually do in the classroom, with respect to their perceptions, is not always in sync. As educators continue to ignore or discount the rich cultural capital AAVE speakers bring with them to schools, a fundamental implication of this research is that teachers need training to address their lack of knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Nationally, African American students' school performance lags behind majority and other minority students (Fryer & Torelli, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2002). For decades numerous obstacles have been identified as culprits in the mis-education of African American school children, including political, social, cultural, and linguistic barriers (Baugh, 2000; Lee, 2002; Ogbu, 1999). Scholars identify African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a specific linguistic barrier for many African American students in urban school districts across the country where AAVE is used as a means of communication with others in schools and in the broader community (Ogbu, 1998; Rickford, 2002; Smitherman, 1997). Because AAVE is often rejected as a legitimate or appropriate means of communication, many educators possess a deficit view of students who use this dialect of English in schools. Consequently, educators' negative perceptions of AAVE influence their classroom practices and ultimately hinder AAVE speakers' academic growth and school success (LeMoine, 2001).

When AAVE speakers enter schools, they often experience educational obstacles due to linguistic and cultural differences (Heath, 2000). In spite of the continued rate of underachievement among African American students, however, some in this group are realizing academic success. African American educators who are adept at assessing, understanding, and addressing the educational needs of AAVE speakers are experiencing

greater success in terms of student achievement (Delpit, 1995; Irvine & Fraser, 1998).

Many African American teachers working with AAVE speakers find ways to value the rich cultural and linguistic patterns this group brings to school, thus positively impacting student achievement (Foster, 2002).

Understanding why some African American teachers are successful in educating AAVE speakers is essential so that all educators can make better progress in bringing the achievement of these students in line with their majority grade level peers. Examining African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors—their classroom practices—as they relate to the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, is an important step to understanding how they impact the academic progress of this group.

Purposes for Research Study

Prior to conducting a study, and as it progresses, it is important to distinguish between personal, practical, and research purposes (Maxwell, 1996). Personal purposes center on what motivates a researcher to conduct a study, while practical purposes are aimed at meeting a specific need, changing a situation, or achieving a goal. Research purposes focus on understanding something, that is, gaining insight into what is happening and why this is taking place (Maxwell, 1996). Together, these three types of purposes help to justify, focus, and guide research studies.

Personal Purposes

As an African American educator in an urban district, I have a keen interest in exploring how fellow African American teachers help AAVE speakers negotiate their

way through schools. African American teachers are untapped resources when it comes to feasible solutions for preparing AAVE speakers to be successful in schools. They, as do I, resemble and share similar cultural and linguistic links with AAVE speakers that other teachers do not possess. I believe that these connections can lend themselves to establishing a level of trust between students and teachers that other educators working with them often do not enjoy. That is not to say that other educators are incapable of helping AAVE speakers succeed in school. Delpit (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1994) are clear that this is not the case; however, it should be noted that skilled African American teachers have and continue to work effectively at bringing AAVE speakers' academic progress in line with their grade-level peers (Irvine, 2002). With this in mind, I believe that, taken together, these teachers' views of AAVE and what they do in the classroom to support the academic growth of AAVE speakers will help educators respond more effectively to AAVE speakers' educational needs, and subsequently bring about more positive academic outcomes for this group.

From the inception of this research project I believed some African American teachers, including myself, impress upon their AAVE speaking students the importance of being able to use both Standard English and AAVE in the appropriate venues, thus encouraging them to become *bidialectal*. By *bidialectal*, I mean that students are able to employ the linguistic patterns and symbols acceptable for a given setting by shifting dialects or style within a given language (Baugh, 1999). Although I acquired AAVE as a young child from family and community members in a small rural town in the South, my working class mother was acutely aware of the importance of being able to use "proper

English” in school and in the workplace; she insisted that I learn to do so. Understanding the value of my home language, as well as the language employed in various social settings and institutions, is one of the most valuable lessons I learned as a child, without which I would never have been able to negotiate school and the world of work successfully. I implemented this study in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of how and when, if at all, African American educators employ the philosophical stance of an “appropriate time and place for the use of AAVE” to help AAVE speakers navigate and succeed in school.

Practical Purposes

Schools are failing to meet the educational needs of AAVE speakers. Consequently, the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, and African American students in general, trails that of grade-level peers. Teachers are a key component to students’ school success. However many educators lack knowledge of students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which can positively or adversely influence student achievement. Enhancing teacher knowledge and awareness in these areas, cultural and linguistic diversity, is a goal of this study, coupled with the desire to help teachers use this knowledge to support and improve the academic performance of AAVE speakers.

Research Purposes

Ultimately, this study is intended to move beyond existing research related to teachers’ attitudes toward AAVE speakers by investigating African American teachers’ perceptions of AAVE, analyzing what they say, and observing what they do in the

classroom to enhance the achievement of AAVE speakers. To deepen the understanding of how some teachers perceive AAVE and AAVE speakers, and to fill an existing gap in the literature with respect to how some teachers address the educational needs of AAVE speakers, this study investigates African American teachers' perceptions of the implications of AAVE use on student achievement, combined with the classroom practices they employ to support AAVE speakers academically. The ultimate goal of this study is to link African American teachers' behaviors to their perceptions of AAVE, and thus illustrate how their beliefs and perceptions of this dialect shape their classroom practices.

Significance of the Problem

Many members of the dominant culture view AAVE as sub-standard English. They insist that AAVE is not a language unto itself and has no place in the classroom setting (Baugh, 2000; Smitherman, 1998). Nevertheless, whether one views AAVE as a bona fide language or slang, the fact remains that teachers are confronted daily with the challenges of educating African American students who use AAVE as a means of communicating at home and at school. Whether students enter schools with Spanish or AAVE as their home language, teachers who cannot communicate effectively with students have little hope of providing these students the education to which they are entitled: the same quality education enjoyed by their grade level peers.

Stereotypes and Expectations

Educators across the country and members of the larger society still maintain misguided linguistic stereotypes about AAVE and AAVE speakers (Baugh, 1999; Baugh 2001; Rickford, 1999a; Wolfram, 2001). In the educational arena, such negative stereotypes may have unfavorable consequences for students who fall prey to them (Baugh, 2001). Researchers reveal that uninformed negative stereotypes of AAVE may lead educators to assign AAVE speakers to learning disabled or special education classes, and otherwise hinder their academic performance (Harris–Wright, 1999; LeMoine, 2003; Rickford, 1999b; Wolfram, 1999).

Self-fulfilling Prophecies

Educational research indicates that self-fulfilling prophecies tend to prevail when teachers hold low expectations for their students, particularly when those low expectations are based on the language/dialect students bring to school from their home communities (Baugh, 2001; Mohamed, 2002). Scholars believe the potential impact of teachers' negative stereotypes and attitudes toward AAVE speakers' education can be severe (Baugh, 2001).

Just as studies related to self-fulfilling prophecy reveal that teachers' beliefs about students' academic potential can impact their school performance, it is equally important to understand perceptions teachers have of students' language/dialect, and how these perceptions shape teachers' classroom practices and influence students' academic performance (Blake & Cutler, 2003; Cecil, 1988; Di Giulio, 1973; Foster, 1992; Hoover, McNair–Knox, Lewis, & Politzer, 1996b; Irvine, 1990; Tauber, 1997). Although it seems

logical that negative stereotypes can, and do, affect teachers' attitudes about AAVE speakers, and may subsequently impact student academic progress, research shows that what teachers do in their classrooms can have a more profound effect on student performance than the expectations teachers hold for their students (Goldenberg, 1992). This is not to say that teachers' expectations should be ignored in the quest to support the academic achievement of AAVE speakers. Perhaps by taking a more balanced approach of considering both teacher expectations and the classroom practices they employ to support the learning of all students, AAVE speakers included, researchers will be able to provide deeper insight into how to improve the educational process for students who arrive at schools with AAVE as their home language.

Teachers' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions

Teachers' attitudes with respect to AAVE are discussed extensively in the literature; however, little empirical documentation is available (Rickford, Sweetland & Rickford, 2004), excluding studies conducted by Johnson (1971), Taylor (1973), Hoover, M., Lewis, S., Politzer, J., Ford, J., McNair-Knox, F., Hicks, S., et al. (1996a) and Pietras and Lamb (1978), and more recently by Blake and Cutler (2003). Although valuable to the field, these seminal works are limited because they primarily report the results of language attitude surveys.

To date, numerous studies have focused on African American teachers' perceptions of the influences of AAVE on the achievement of AAVE speakers. However, few studies have attempted to connect African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE and the classroom practices they employ to support the learning and academic

achievement of AAVE speakers. Because of the lack of research, both qualitative and quantitative, on African American teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices related to AAVE use, there is a need for further study in this area. Such an investigation can provide a deeper understanding of how some African American teachers' views of AAVE influence how they interact with AAVE speakers to promote their academic success.

Additionally, because educators in general have limited linguistic knowledge, this study aims to help increase teachers' awareness of language variation and language use. It also aims to broaden the scope of teachers' understanding of how their own language backgrounds and ethnicity impact their perceptions of AAVE and AAVE speakers (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999). Such insights can provide educators, students, and parents with increased knowledge about linguistic diversity, and further the understanding that differences in languages do not equate to deficits (Baugh, 2001; Wolfram, 1999).

In an effort to address a remaining gap in the literature, this study will investigate teachers' perceptions of the oppositional stance often taken by AAVE speakers toward the use of Standard English in the classroom setting. The literature is replete with cases suggesting that AAVE speakers' rejection of the dominant discourse used in school can negatively impact their academic progress. However, little is said regarding how some African American teachers aid AAVE speakers in working through this stance of resistance to achieve school success. With this in mind, this study will contribute to existing knowledge on how, if at all, African American teachers promote academic

achievement among AAVE speakers who may embrace the “acting white” ideology (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Although studies investigating teachers’ attitudes are becoming more abundant, I have been unable to find studies that blend teachers’ perceptions of the influences of AAVE on students’ achievement with the classroom practices they employ to promote AAVE speakers’ academic achievement. Taken together, teachers’ perceptions/attitudes toward AAVE and what they do in the classroom to support the school success of AAVE speakers will contribute to existing literature and inform the practice of educators working with linguistically diverse learners.

Lessons learned from this study of African American teachers and their classroom actions in response to AAVE use can serve as resources for pre-service and practicing classroom teachers, as well as school leaders and those leading teacher training programs. Sharing the understanding that the language AAVE speakers bring to schools is an asset, rather than a deficit, and the importance of enhancing all educators’ linguistic knowledge is of paramount importance to helping AAVE speakers succeed in school (Bowie & Bond, 1994). These lessons can broaden existing research and provide practical examples that inform classroom practices designed to address the educational needs of AAVE speakers, and thereby provide increased opportunities for academic success for students who use AAVE.

Research Questions

The overarching questions for this study are:

- What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement?
- What specific instructional strategies do teachers employ when students use AAVE in the classroom setting?
- How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their teaching?

The first question is designed to explore how African American teachers view the impact of AAVE use on AAVE speakers' current educational status and their academic futures. The second question emerged as a result of the findings of this study. It highlights the pedagogical strategies African American teachers in this research project use to address AAVE use in their classrooms. The third question explores how teachers' beliefs about AAVE shape their classroom practice. Through an examination of teachers' beliefs and what they do in the classroom, this question sheds light on how some African American teachers who value the cultural capital AAVE speakers bring to the classroom setting are able to influence the academic progress of AAVE speakers.

Additional questions related to the three larger questions above are:

- How do African American teachers believe their cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their teaching?
- How do African American teacher's beliefs about AAVE influence their response to AAVE use inside and outside the classroom?
- How do African American teachers support the academic achievement of AAVE speakers?

In this chapter I present the rationale for investigating African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about AAVE and AAVE speakers, as well as the classroom practices they employ to support the academic achievement of AAVE speakers. In my presentation of the significance of the problem, I highlight the critical need for research such as this study to address educators' negative language attitudes and their lack of linguistic knowledge. I emphasize the importance of equipping teachers with knowledge on language variety and language use, as educators across the nation continue to have negative perceptions of AAVE, which can impede the academic progress of AAVE speakers. In the following chapter I present the theoretical framework grounding this study, along with the conceptual framework used to illustrate potential barriers AAVE speakers encounter in schools, and the approaches some African American teachers employ to help them navigate the educational environment to attain academic success.

CHAPTER 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The lenses of cultural ecology and social reproduction, which I discuss below, help explain how mainstream teachers often dismiss the cultural knowledge, skills, and behaviors AAVE speaking students bring to the classroom. These approaches highlight obstacles in the dominant society and schools that often hamper the academic progress and achievement of minority students in general, and more specifically that of AAVE speakers. Cultural ecology and social reproduction identify social structures and dominant ideologies that hinder the achievement of some minority groups, specifically AAVE speakers. These theories help to explain why some African American teachers working with AAVE speakers are successful, serving as cultural and linguistic mediators, while others instructing these students are less successful at enhancing their academic performance. Teachers armed with an understanding of AAVE and knowledge of its inextricable links to students' culture, community, and identity, are better prepared to meet the educational needs of AAVE speakers (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002).

Cultural Ecological Theory

Educational experiences of minority students are “influenced by complex social, economic, historical, and cultural factors” (Ogbu, 2000, p.190). Cultural ecological theory provides an explanation for the low academic achievement of some minority groups, to include AAVE speakers. Although Ogbu labeled his theory cultural ecology, it

should not be confused with the subfield of anthropology recognized by the same name that deals with a culture's relationship with its physical environment (Maxwell, 2005, personal communication). In Ogbu's cultural ecological theory, "ecology" refers to the setting, environment, or world of people, in this case minorities, and "cultural" refers to the way people, more specifically minority groups, see their world and behave in it (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The theory provides a framework for understanding the beliefs and behaviors of members of minority groups (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Cultural ecological theory emphasizes the relationships between minority and majority cultures and their implications for minority student achievement, including AAVE speakers (Ogbu, 2000). When investigating the achievement of minority students, it is important to understand that various minority groups' performances differ based on each group's relationship with the dominant culture. To comprehend why achievement differs for various minority groups, it is imperative to pay attention to minorities' responses to their history of integration into the social fabric of the United States and their subsequent treatment by the mainstream culture (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Some minority groups actively resist conforming to mainstream values, culture, and linguistic patterns, a feature of cultural ecology referred to as cultural inversion (Ogbu, 2000).

[Cultural inversion is] the tendency for involuntary minorities, minority groups who are a part of the United States as a result of slavery, conquest, or colonization, to regard certain forms of behavior, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of White Americans. (p. 194)

Cultural inversion is often referred to in the literature as “acting white.” Although there is little consensus on a precise definition of the term, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) set the stage for bringing the phenomenon of “acting white” to the forefront with their seminal study, *Black students’ school success: Coping with the burden of acting white*, when they argued for the existence of this oppositional cultural stance among African American youth who eschew behaviors traditionally viewed as the prerogative for whites.

Some AAVE speakers view the use of Standard English as “acting white” and resist this speech form, even in the classroom setting (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2000). Consequently, their opposition to using the dominant culture’s way of speaking often hinders AAVE speakers’ path to academic success and their chances for upward mobility in the nation’s work force, as demonstrated by Piestrup (1973, as cited in Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999). Two of three African–American teachers participating in a 2003 pilot study I conducted asserted that AAVE will have a negative impact on the futures of AAVE speakers who insist on using the dialect/language in inappropriate settings (Jones, 2003).

Social Reproduction

By drawing on elements of the theory of social reproduction, specifically cultural capital, one begins to define what some African American educators do that allows them to foster academic success in AAVE speakers. Bourdieu (1977) uses the concept of social reproduction to suggest “class structure and social inequalities of individuals in a capitalist society are reproduced by that society” (Casmir, 2002, p. 2). Social reproduction first occurs when children attend school. Accordingly, schools are

responsible for maintaining “the existing class structure and social inequalities of individuals in a capitalist society” (Casmir, 2002, p. 2). Thus, by recognizing the dominant culture and linguistic structures of mainstream society, schools tend to ignore the cultural background, knowledge, and language of AAVE speakers, their cultural capital. Dismissal of the cultural and linguistic assets children of color, and more specifically AAVE speakers, bring to the classroom only serves to relegate them to the social and economic status defined by the deterministic cycle of social reproduction.

Cultural Capital as an Asset

Cultural capital is a component of social reproduction theory. The concept refers to the “background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 13). AAVE is an element of cultural capital passed on from parents and other members of the community to children. The disconnect between the language a child employs at home and the language sanctioned by schools creates a major barrier for minority students (Heath, 2000). Nevertheless, some African American teachers are adept at recognizing and tapping into the cultural capital AAVE speakers bring to schools and using these assets to help students negotiate school. These teachers find ways to incorporate educational practices into classroom instruction that recognize and value the rich culture and linguistic patterns AAVE speakers bring to schools (Delpit, 2002; Foster, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

African American Teachers: Helping AAVE Speakers Navigate Schools

Some African American teachers serve as cultural and linguistic mediators for AAVE speakers, providing them with the skills and knowledge to navigate the institution of mainstream education, all of which is accomplished through valuing and using students' acquired cultural capital in classroom instruction. In doing so African American teachers help AAVE speakers to respect and sometimes embrace dominant cultural norms presented in the theory of cultural ecology, while simultaneously aiding them to hold their identities intact. Additionally, these educators help AAVE speakers to transcend social reproduction in schools by drawing on the students' background, skills, knowledge, and language, their cultural capital, to bring about increased academic achievement (Irvine, 2002).

Figure 2.1 below provides a graphic representation of the initial phase of the conceptual framework presented in the discussion above. The framework provides an explanation of how the cultural capital AAVE speakers bring to schools is often delegitimized and viewed from a deficit perspective by those working in educational institutions. The framework also illustrates how some African American students, specifically AAVE speakers, are sometimes resistant to the dominant cultural norms presented in schools. Positive and negative elements are contained within the same circle inside the school environment because this is how they often present themselves in schools. It is the African American teacher, at the center of the framework, who helps AAVE speakers navigate the dominant culture of schools, serving as a cultural and linguistic mediator. Teachers accomplish this by valuing AAVE speakers' cultural

capital, and using the skills and knowledge these students bring with them to classrooms to support their academic progress.

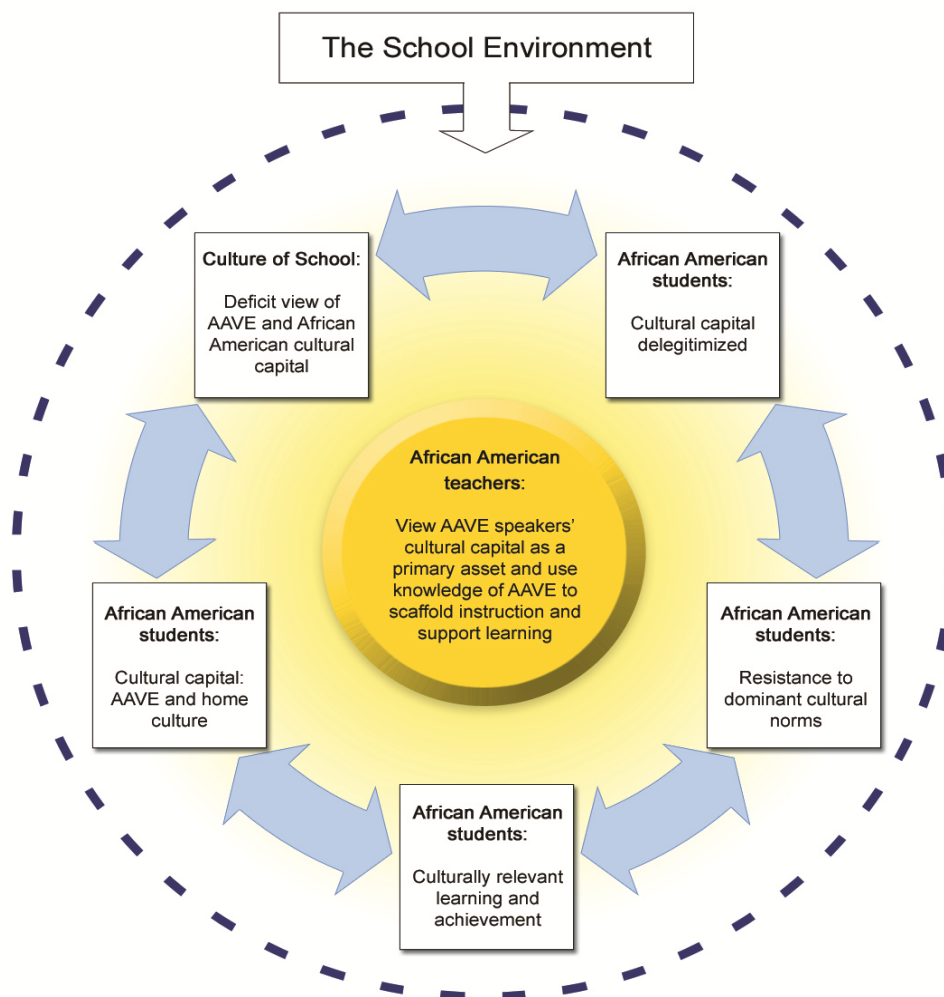


Figure 2.1 A conceptual framework of factors African–American teachers consider to support learning of AAVE speakers.

The theory of cultural ecology offers plausible explanations as to why AAVE speakers face serious challenges accepting and adapting to dominant ideologies held by schools, specifically those related to the language AAVE speakers bring to the classroom setting. Some African American teachers working with AAVE speakers are acutely aware of AAVE speakers' resistance to the dominant culture and the language employed in mainstream institutions such as schools. These teachers are able to use their knowledge and understanding of AAVE to support AAVE speakers academically. Drawing on their own experiences with navigating the dominant social structure of schools and the shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds they have with AAVE speakers, some African American teachers are able to apply the background knowledge, skills, and educational experiences they have acquired to support AAVE speakers academically.

Social reproduction theory, through the aid of the concept of cultural capital, demonstrates how some African American teachers are able to influence AAVE speakers' behavior and school performance, due to their understanding of AAVE and the role it plays in the culture of AAVE speakers. These teachers are aware of the importance of AAVE in the lives and communities of AAVE speakers, and how it factors into students' identities. Respecting and affirming the home language of AAVE speakers, some African American teachers use the language they bring to school to scaffold learning and help AAVE speakers acquire the dominant language. They know that AAVE speakers may view the rejection of their discourse as a direct rejection of them and what they bring to schools (Delpit, 2002). Some African American teachers apply this knowledge and awareness of cultural and linguistic differences to help AAVE

speakers succeed in schools. They create safe learning environments where students are not ridiculed or demeaned for their AAVE use, but provided opportunities to learn about language differences and alternative ways of conveying a message based on the audience with whom they are interacting.

Taken together, both theories provide a valuable perspective from which to study teachers' responses to AAVE and AAVE speakers. Combining these theoretical approaches, cultural ecology and social reproduction, permits one to drill down into teachers' attitudes and perceptions and link them to the classroom practices they employ to support AAVE speakers' school success.

The magnitude of the implications of social reproduction and cultural ecology cannot be ignored or trivialized, but once inequalities are acknowledged, AAVE speakers and other minority children need educators, researchers, and reformers to become proactive in helping them realize their academic potential. Capable African American teachers accomplish this by valuing the cultural and linguistic capital of minorities such as AAVE speakers.

I concur with Rickford and Rickford (2000) that acknowledging that AAVE speakers have valuable cultural capital will lead to its conversion into academic capital, and finally to economic capital. The application of this process has the potential to lead to greater possibilities for AAVE speakers to break the deterministic and oppressive cycles of cultural ecology and social reproduction. This end will be accomplished as AAVE speakers' language is validated as an important tool of communication that is simply different from mainstream English, not deficient. This validation will bring with it the

potential to boost student self-esteem, heighten cultural and linguistic pride, and ultimately impact academic achievement of AAVE speakers in a positive manner.

The above observations illustrate the critical importance of considering AAVE speakers' linguistic capital in classroom instruction.

Using the language that children bring to the classroom as a bridge to teaching new language systems is a widely used technique in second language instruction.

In no way does this technique lower standards or expectations for the acquisition of Standard English, for it sets the same goals for Standard English competency as do other teaching strategies. (Taylor, 1998, p. 39)

Some African American teachers work from this premise when engaging AAVE speakers in instructional activities (Irvine, 2002). They understand that AAVE intimately connects the lives and experiences of so many African Americans and can serve as a logical tool for providing scaffolding towards the acquisition of Standard English and ultimately improve their chances at success in the classroom setting (Baugh, 2000, Delpit, 2002).

Potential of Linguistic Knowledge

Language arts curriculum that promotes language awareness provides a program of study for students and teachers in which linguistic comparisons can be made (Wolfarm, 2001). Unfortunately, most schools do not engage in this type of practice. The literature emphasizes the importance of linguistic knowledge for experienced and pre-service teachers (Mercado, 2001). Without such knowledge, AAVE speakers' academic achievement will remain in jeopardy, particularly in cases where teachers hold

the perception that AAVE speakers' language is inferior (Baugh, 2000; Mercado, 2001). Although the importance of linguistic knowledge has been acknowledged for the past two decades in bilingual education and English as Second Language settings, little attention has been given to this concept for mainstream educators, with regard to teacher training and professional development programs (Baugh, 2000; Wolfram, 1999 see Mercado 2001 p. 682). Linguistic knowledge can help teachers understand key sources of variability in language use, distinguish between language differences and cognitive abilities, and illuminate the link between language and identity (Mercado, 2001). Studies show that some mainstream teachers tend to confuse linguistic differences with linguistic deficiency (Baugh, 2000). Providing teachers with linguistic knowledge can be a good first step to changing their attitudes toward linguistically diverse learners, AAVE speakers included, thus impacting teachers' perceptions of these learners, and possibly yielding more favorable academic achievement results.

Nationally, there are few educational programs focused on instructional approaches that address the specific learning needs of AAVE speakers. However, such programs have been set in place in DeKalb County, Georgia and Oakland, California (LeMoine, 2003). Both programs highlight the importance of providing teachers linguistic knowledge, as well as cultural background knowledge, regarding diverse learners.

What Teachers Do to Support the Educational Needs of AAVE Speakers

Many of the success stories regarding African-American student achievement come from classrooms where African-American teachers are the instructors. According

to Irvine and Fraser (1998), emerging research literature demonstrates that African–American teachers' distinct style is associated with achievement gains by black students. Researchers such as Gloria Ladson–Billings, Asa Hilliard, Michele Foster, Lisa Delpit, Etta Hollins, Joyce King, and others have described the characteristics and teaching behaviors of effective African–American teachers (Irvine & Fraser, 1998).

The literature reveals that caring is a characteristic that undergirds and explains many of the actions of dedicated and committed African American teachers (Irvine, 2002; Ladson–Billings, 1994). This ethic of caring demonstrated by African American teachers runs deeper than one simply professing that it is the job of the teacher to care for students (Irvine, 2002). In *Bridging Cultures Between Home and School: A Guide for Teachers*, Trumbull, Rothstein–Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) provide a model of the authors' “conception of how ‘Bridging Cultures’ can be expected to contribute to achievement” (p. 133).

Figure 2.2 is an extension of the conceptual framework introduced above, it presents an adaptation of Trumbull et al.'s (2001) model which illustrates how African American teachers who serve as cultural and linguistic mediators draw on their ethic of caring, cultural awareness, and distinct teaching styles to value and use the cultural capital of AAVE speakers to promote student achievement.

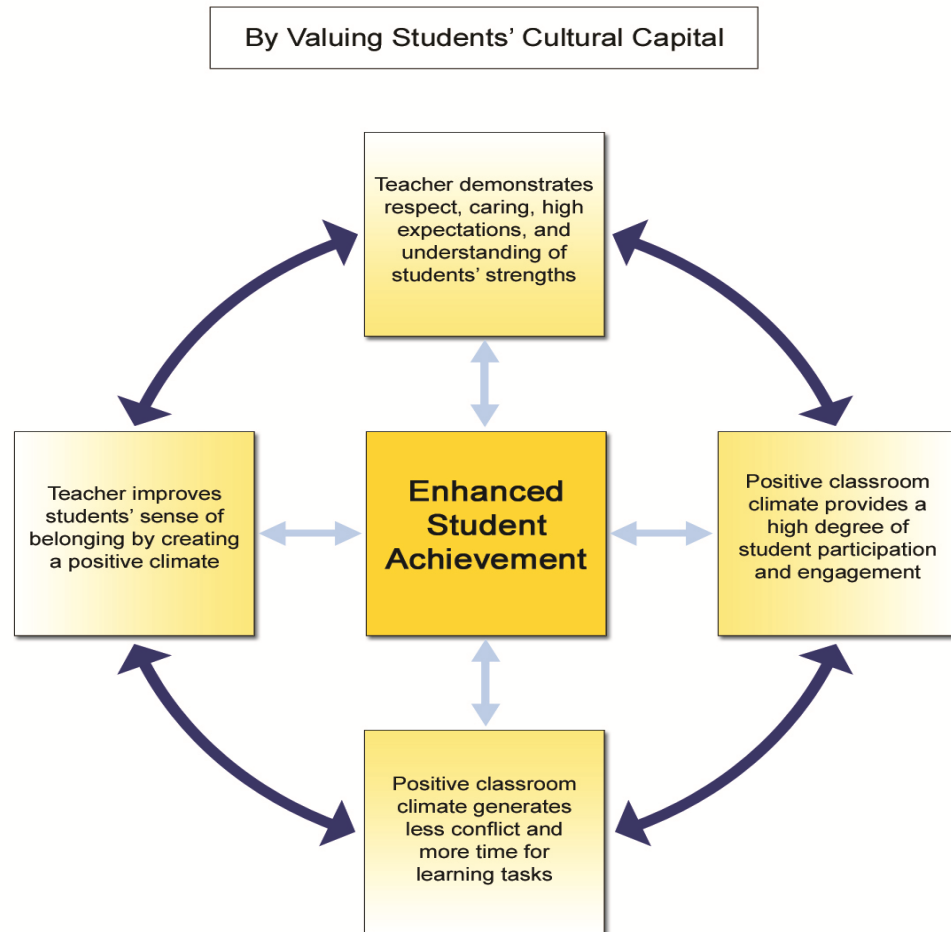


Figure 2.2 How valuing cultural capital supports conditions for academic achievement.

Some African American teachers working with AAVE speakers find ways to incorporate educational practices in classroom instruction that recognize and value the rich culture and linguistic patterns this group brings to schools (Foster, 2002). These

teachers acknowledge the cultural funds of knowledge, also recognized as the cultural and linguistic capital AAVE speakers bring to the classroom, and use it to impact student achievement/success. They are skilled at employing the knowledge and skills these students bring to school as a scaffold for future learning (Irvine, 2002; Ladson–Billings, 1994). Irvine and Fraser (1998) indicate that African American teachers who are culturally responsive to the needs of children who use AAVE do the following to bring about higher achievement in this group:

- They perceive themselves as parental surrogates and advocates for their African–American students.
- They employ a teaching style filled with rhythmic language and rapid intonation with many instances of repetition, call and response, high emotional involvement, creative analogies, figurative language, gestures and body movements, symbolism, aphorisms, and lively and often spontaneous discussions.
- They use students' everyday cultural and historical experiences in an effort to link new concepts to prior knowledge.
- They spend classroom and non–classroom time developing a personal relationship with their children, and often tease and joke with their students using dialect or slang to establish this personal relationship.
- They teach with authority. (p.56)

One possible explanation for the success of some African American educators working with students who use AAVE is that these teachers believe their students are participants in multiple worlds with varied perceptions of culture and language (Phelan,

Davidson, & Yu, 1998). Therefore students benefit from culturally and linguistically appropriate classroom instruction that aids in negotiating these worlds (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999). By providing such instruction, some African American teachers help to reduce problematic issues of communication and cultural differences in the classroom for AAVE speakers, thereby providing them the capacity to successfully negotiate mainstream educational structures and realize higher academic achievement. Delpit (1995) suggests that this is accomplished when African American teachers provide AAVE speakers and other minorities access to “codes of power,” or values, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, and language valued by the dominant culture, while remembering to also value and make use of the language and culture minority students bring to the classroom (p. xvi).

Thus, from an educational achievement perspective, all is not lost for minority students who arrive at school using AAVE as their primary means of communication, particularly because many African American educators are culturally familiar and sensitive to the needs of AAVE speakers and other minorities. This cultural awareness and sensitivity, coupled with the distinct teaching style of some African American teachers, allows them to view AAVE speakers’ cultural capital as an asset in classroom instruction, and in turn permits the application of culturally responsive pedagogy that enhances the educational experiences of AAVE speakers, which can result in higher school performance for these students (Irvine, 2002).

In this chapter I present the theoretical frameworks, cultural ecological theory and social reproduction, grounding this study which can help explain obstacles to academic

success AAVE speakers experience in school. By way of the conceptual framework I also illustrate and discuss how I believe some African American teachers working with AAVE speakers are able to use the cultural capital, a component of the social reproduction framework, students bring with them to school to help AAVE speakers navigate and succeed in school. I use the concepts embedded in the conceptual framework to inform and guide the implementation of this study. In the next chapter I present the implementation process and the research methods used to execute this research project.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conceived in light of gaps observed in the literature related to African American teachers' perspectives on the influences of AAVE use on the achievement of AAVE speakers. An additional motivation for conducting this study has to do with the dearth of research linking teachers beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions to what they do in the classroom setting, if anything at all, to support the achievement of AAVE speakers. The research design for this study is interactive and centers on Maxwell's (1996) model for qualitative research design. In this model, the research purposes, conceptual framework, methods and validity are generated from, and informed by, the research questions. Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Design shapes this study, as demonstrated in *Figure 3.1* below.

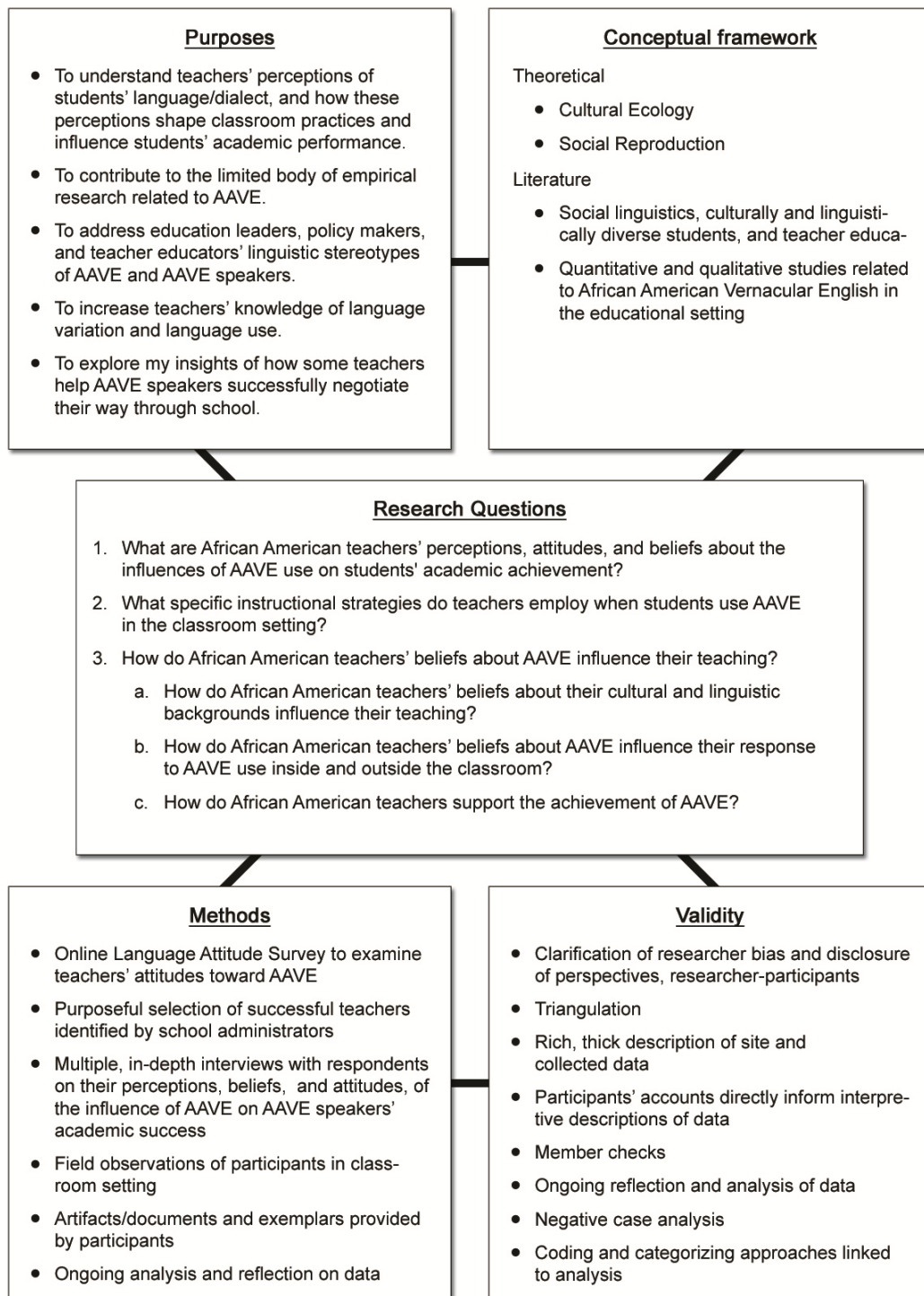


Figure 3.1 Research design map (Maxwell, 1996, p.5)

Research Context

Located in an urban district in the Mid–Atlantic, the site of this study is a secondary school, Martha Washington (pseudonym), with a diverse population. The demographic breakdown of students is 6% Asian Pacific Islander, 43% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 25% White. The ethnic breakdown of students in the school mirrors that of the school district. The faculty consists of four administrators, 65 teachers, and 27 support personnel. Martha Washington School is unique, in that it only serves students in grade nine. Nationally, there are an estimated 160 such schools (Matthews, 2005).

The concept of the ninth grade school in this division is the brainchild of a former superintendent. The impetus for the idea was the result of enrollment pressures at the division's elementary and junior high schools, coupled with the desire of teachers, educational leaders, and the community to provide academic support to students and to help them adjust socially at a pivotal time in their educational careers. Researchers report ninth grade is the year with a major influence on which students will prevail and which will fail to finish high school (Black, 2004). The primary goal and mission of Martha Washington School is to effectively educate each student, and thereby prepare all of them for successful transition to the high school setting.

Students at the school are assigned to six teams of approximately 120 students. Each student is also assigned to a Teacher Advisory (TA) of approximately 12–15 students. Teachers assigned a TA are charged with the responsibility of monitoring students' academic progress, and actively helping them obtain needed instructional support. Overall, the school is viewed as successful in that it has maintained full

accreditation for more than seven years in an era of increased accountability and the augmented importance of high stakes tests.

Selection of Participants

Data collection for this research project began in the spring of 2008. I initiated the study by obtaining permission from the district office to conduct research at Martha Washington School. Upon consulting with the school administration and receiving their approval to conduct the study I obtained consent from faculty members agreeing to participate in the study.

My intent was to recruit only African American teachers for this study for numerous reasons. First, because I believe their perceptions and professional insight are scarcely considered, and often undervalued when addressing issues related to the achievement of African American students in general, and more specifically AAVE speakers. Second, I selected African American educators because I believe these cultural insiders have much to contribute to the literature with respect to their perceptions and dispositions toward AAVE and AAVE speakers, and the potential influences of these perceptions on their classroom practices with AAVE speakers.

Here I present an overview of the participant selection process for this study, a full description of the selection process follows. This study took place in two phases; the first involved the administration of the Language Attitude Scale (LAS) survey¹ (see Appendix I) to all 18 African American faculty members present at the research site to

¹ The Language Attitude Scale is discussed in more detail in the Data Collection section below.

determine their attitudes toward AAVE and AAVE speakers. To begin the research participant recruitment process, I asked the principal of Martha Washington to provide me a list of all faculty members, on which I requested she identify all the African American teachers working at the school. I shared this list with the two current assistant principals at Martha Washington, who confirmed the accuracy of the principal's designation of those on the list as African American. The assistant principals agreed that the list was exhaustive and contained the names of all African American faculty members at the school, all of whom they agreed the principal identified accurately as African American. The assistant principals also verified that there were no African American teachers currently working at Martha Washington School omitted from the list.

After the principal and the assistant principals identified the African American faculty members, I visited the classrooms of all 18 teachers and recruited them to participate in this research project. All 18 of these secondary participants in this study were invited to participate in the survey and all 18 completed it. The next step of phase one involved the identification of five exemplary African American teachers, the primary participants in this research project, by administrators from the research site. In the second phase of this study the five primary participants, who also completed the LAS, took part in a series of interviews and observations (three each) to gain further understanding of their attitudes toward AAVE, and to ascertain how, if at all, these perceptions/beliefs influence their teaching.

During the first phase of the study, I interviewed five Martha Washington School administrators, three of whom are currently at the school, and two who recently accepted

new positions in other schools. I conducted one interview with each school leader. During interviews I sought to gather administrators' thoughts on the characteristics of successful schools and teachers. At the conclusion of each interview I supplied the administrator with a list of all African American teachers in the school and asked them to circle the names of five whom they believe are successful educators. I requested that administrators identify teachers based on the characteristics the administrators described during the interview (see Appendix E for interview protocol), along with their knowledge of students' demonstrated success on standardized tests and end of course results for these teachers. From the list provided by the five administrators, nine of the 18 teachers received votes as successful/exemplary educators. Nine teachers on the list received no votes at all. Votes assigned to the nine successful teachers are presented in Table 3.1, (pseudonyms are used to protect teachers' identities). The following is a distribution of votes assigned to participants by the five school administrators:

Table 3.1 *Participant Selection Process: Identifying Successful/Exemplary Teachers*

| Name | Administrators' Votes | Ranking by Votes | LAS Score | AAVE Attitude |
|-------------|-----------------------|--|-----------|--------------------------|
| Sheila B. | 5 | 1 | 38 | Negative |
| Margaret M. | 4 | 2 | 83 | Positive |
| Sarah S. | 3 | 3 | 67 | Negative |
| Tina B. | 3 | 3 | 103 | Positive |
| Matthew S. | 3 | 3 | 72 | Negative |
| Dana B. | 2 | 4 | 84 | Positive |
| Anna C. | 2 | 4 | 58 | Negative |
| Victor A. | 2 | 4 | 97 | Positive |
| Betty M. | 1 | 5 | 68 | Negative |
| Total | 25 | 5 votes = 1 teacher 4 votes = 1 teacher 3 votes = 3 teachers 2 votes = 3 teachers 1 vote = 1 teacher | | 4 Positive 5 Negative |

I used the data gathered from administrators to select five successful/exemplary teachers for participation in the second phase of the study. Selection of teachers is based on the number of votes assigned by administrators. I asked the first five educators receiving the highest number of votes (Sheila, Margaret, Sarah, Tina, and Matthew) to

continue with the next phase of the research project. My initial inclination was to select only teachers with positive attitudes toward AAVE to take part in the study, as I did not wish to engage in negative reporting on those in the African American community. However, in an effort to maintain validity, by attempting to remain cognizant of my own biases, and in keeping with the approach to purposeful selection laid out in the methodology section of this study, I considered the possibility that the exemplary teachers selected by administrators could very well exhibit negative AAVE attitudes.

Data Collection

All 18 teachers (100%) identified as African American working at Martha Washington participated in the Language Attitude Scale (LAS); none declined. The LAS is a validated instrument available in two forms, each of which is designed to solicit data on teachers' attitudes toward AAVE and non-standard English (Taylor, 1973). Each form of the survey consists of twenty-five questions and can be completed in approximately ten to fifteen minutes. I employed form one of the LAS in this study, as it is the one used most frequently in the literature I reviewed, and the one for which I have received permission to use by the developer of the instrument. I describe the purposes and limitations of the LAS in greater detail in the data analysis and findings section below, when examining primary participants' language attitudes toward AAVE.

To sort and analyze survey data, as well as tabulate final scores participants earned on the LAS, I used SPSS. In conjunction with the LAS, I also collected demographic data from all respondents to develop demographic profiles of each, using an instrument I created, after a review of those employed in the literature (see Appendix H).

I administered the LAS via an online survey program, PHPSurveyor. PHPSurveyor is an online survey tool used to develop, publish, and collect responses to surveys. Surveys hosted on PHPSurveyor can be strictly controlled to provide access to potential participants in a designated setting, in this case Martha Washington School. PHPSurveyor can also restrict the number of times participants complete a specific survey.

Using the knowledge I have acquired of qualitative methods, I used a qualitative inquiry approach in the second phase of this research project. I began by applying purposeful sampling, “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). Maxwell stresses that selecting the times, site, and informants who are capable of providing the information needed to answer the research question is the most critical consideration in qualitative sampling decision (Maxwell, 1996; Glesne, 1999). With this in mind, to collect “rich data” I conducted extensive interviews, three per teacher, with five African American teachers selected from LAS survey participants whom school administrators identified as successful teachers.

Interviews with both administrators and the five primary African American research participants were tape-recorded and followed what Miles and Huberman (1994) and Weiss (1994) describe as a guided or “prestructured” qualitative data collection format. Below I describe the process I employed.

Initially, interviews with primary research participants focused on African American teachers' educational and professional experiences, awareness and familiarity with AAVE and their own linguistic backgrounds, their views of the teaching profession, their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE on AAVE speakers' academic achievement. As interviews proceeded, I attended to related topics, themes, and categories generated by respondents to deepen my understanding of their accounts and to provide insights on what classroom practices they employ to promote the achievement of AAVE speakers. Ongoing member checks with all participants were conducted to gain greater clarity and understanding of previously collected data from interviews, observations, and artifacts.

To further inform the study, I also engaged in three prearranged field observations per interviewee, along with spontaneous observations, focusing on teachers' behavior in the classroom setting and other relevant situations and settings where there is interaction with AAVE speakers. Additionally, I used artifacts shared by teachers during interviews and field observations, such as samples of student work, communications to parents, and quarterly grade reports to inform interpretive meaning generated during the data collection process.















Interviews with administrators were conducted first, followed by the administration of the LAS Survey to all African American teachers, the secondary participants, in the school, after which initial interviews were conducted with the five primary participants, followed by observations. Artifacts were collected during both the interview and observation processes. Insight gained from field observations and artifacts











were incorporated into interviews to probe for further participant meaning on data collected.

I conducted member checks with all participants to solicit feedback on the data collected and the interpretations/conclusions drawn in the study. To ensure participants accounts were clearly documented, member checks included the joint review of my description and interpretation of accounts recorded in interviews and observations with participants. During initial and subsequent interviews I probed primary participants to explain their meaning regarding specific statements made during our discussions, to gain clarity and a deeper understanding of their accounts and the meaning they attached to them. After observations I asked primary participants to explain their beliefs about what was going on as various events took place in the classroom setting. I asked them to further elaborate on what they were thinking at that moment, and why they were thinking in this manner, as the events transpired. For additional member checking, I shared a copy of individual participant profiles generated from the data with each primary participant to seek clarity in the interpretations and conclusions I drew from the data.

Taken together, interviews, observations, artifacts, and member checks serve as multiple data-gathering techniques that are intended to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data collected in this study, a qualitative research strategy identified by Glesne (1999) and Maxwell (1996) as triangulation. Table 3.2 below provides an overview of the data collection techniques to be used in this study. Appendix I outlines the timeline for the implementation of these procedures.

Table 3.2 *Data Collection Techniques*

| Collection technique Research Question | Survey LAS | Initial Interview | Subsequent Interviews | Observations | Artifacts | Member Checks |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement? |  |  |  | | |  |
| 2. What specific instructional strategies do teachers employ when students use AAVE in the classroom setting? | |  |  |  | | |
| 3. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their teaching? | |  |  |  | |  |
| 3a. How do African American teachers' believe their cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their teaching? | | |  | |  |  |

| Collection technique | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research Question | Survey LAS | Initial Interview | Subsequent Interviews | Observations | Artifacts | Member Checks |
| 3b. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their response to the use of AAVE inside and outside the classroom? |  |  |  |  | |  |
| 3c. How do African American teachers support the achievement of AAVE speakers? | |  |  |  |  |  |

Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is a continuous process that should occur throughout any qualitative research study (Delamont, 2001). With this in mind, as I collected extensive data during interviews, which were transcribed on an ongoing basis along with field observations and my review of artifacts, I used memos as tools for reflective analysis throughout each phase of this study. These analytic memos helped me to review what I was doing, why I was doing it, and where I was going next (Delamont, 2001; Maxwell, 1996). I also coded data as I gathered it, using it to generate themes and

categories. Initially, I coded and indexed data densely. I began the coding process by using the conceptual framework presented in chapter two to generate etic codes related to potential behaviors I believe successful African American educators employ in the classroom to support AAVE speakers in their learning and with the process of navigating school. I used *emic coding*, the inductive assignment of codes based on patterns in the data itself, to fracture the data and rearrange it into categories that allow for comparison within and between these categories (Maxwell, 1996). I sorted collected data into files, and as a process of discovery and analysis, I regularly sorted and reviewed files.

Additionally, as part of the analysis process, I continued my review of the literature for ideas, models, parallels, and contrasts that informed this study.

Qualitative data analysis software (QDA) programs can aid in the analysis process, although they cannot do the analysis for you (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Because of the magnitude of the data I collected, and the need to store, label, and sort data quickly, I used NVivo to record field notes, interviews, observations, memos, and to assist with coding and *data linking*, that is, “connecting relevant data segments to each other, forming categories, clusters, or networks of information” (Weitzman, 1994, p. 805). NVivo is a QDA management system that allowed me to retain the context of initial data, while serving as a platform for theoretical testing, reflection, preparation for further interviews, and continuous analysis.

Validity

Researcher bias and participant reactivity are two broad types of validity threats that are often raised in reference to qualitative studies (Maxwell, 1996). When attending

to research bias, it is important to take care not to select data that fit existing theory or preconceptions regarding a study, as they are two important threats to the validity of qualitative conclusions (Maxwell, 1996).

To enhance the overall validity of this study and to further address researcher bias, I followed Maxwell's (1996) advice of constantly looking for alternative plausible explanations or interpretations generated from richly descriptive data I collected during the course of this study. I reviewed data for discrepant evidence and negative cases, constantly soliciting assistance of committee members to help with the identification of validity threats, including my own internal biases and assumptions, along with possible flaws in my logic or methods.

To remain cognizant of how respondents might influence the study, specifically in relation to researcher bias, I used ongoing reflection, in conjunction with triangulation, "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods" (Maxwell, 1996, p.93) –discussed above under data collection. I also employed member checks to obtain feedback from respondents about the data I collected and the conclusions I drew from them. I used respondents' words as often as possible to demonstrate findings. From the outset of this study, I shared my interest with participants in understanding their perceptions of the impact of AAVE use on students' achievement, avoiding preconceived notions about those perceptions, and focusing on capturing their accounts of their beliefs, behaviors, and experiences.

To attend to reactivity, the effect of the researcher on the setting or the individuals studied (Maxwell, 1996); I used memos, constant reflection, and feedback from

committee members to deepen my understanding of the influence I could potentially have on the study, so that data I collected would be used more effectively. Moreover, I chose to conduct research at Martha Washington because it is a former work location with which I am very familiar, and one that I believe provides access to a cadre of potential participants essential to this study. I served as a teacher in the school for eight years. I was also appointed department chair of an elective content area, and a member of the school's advisory committee. During my tenure, I established strong ties with the faculty, administrators, students, and the community.

Now serving as a district level administrator, I continue to maintain friendships and professional relationships with both teachers and members of the leadership team at Martha Washington. With this in mind, I realize it is impossible to eliminate reactivity in qualitative studies (Maxwell, 1996); however, understanding its influence was critical to this research study. I am aware that the change in my position from classroom teacher to administrator could have impacted the professional relationships and friendships I maintain with teachers and administrators at Martha Washington. To mitigate anxiety or suspicions on the part of participants, I only included teachers whom I did not supervise directly to participate in the second phase of the study, (primary participant interviews, observations, and member checks.) I attempted to become an integral part of the school community, attending faculty meetings, team meetings, and other school sponsored activities, in hopes of developing deeper collegial connections and trust with faculty members and administration. I took the above precautions to prevent reactivity, to the degree possible, from interfering with what I hoped to learn from this study.

Generalizability. Ordinarily, qualitative researchers study a particular setting, a single case, an individual actor, or a small group of people (Coffey & Atkinson, 19996; Maxwell, 1996). Such is the case with this study, which is aimed at creating analytical rather than statistical generalizability. Due to the nature of qualitative research, findings and conclusions are not readily extrapolated to any given population or site. However, qualitative data, when analyzed with close scrutiny and attention to detail, and understood with regard to their internal patterns and forms, can be used to generate “theoretical ideas about social processes and cultural forms that have relevance beyond those data themselves” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.163).

I employ Maxwell’s (1996) interactive research design model in this chapter to present the research methods employed to conduct this study. Research methods, including participant selection, data collection and data analysis techniques, and steps taken to attend to validity threats are guided by the research questions. In the subsequent chapter, I present findings related to the three overarching research questions and the sub-questions for this study. These questions focus on the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of African American teachers toward AAVE and AAVE speakers, and the classroom practices they employ when interacting with AAVE speakers.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In my exploration of African American teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors related to AAVE speakers and AAVE use, I found that participants' attitudes toward AAVE vary extensively, as do their reactions to students' use of AAVE, to include their perceptions of how AAVE use impacts students' academic futures. The data reveal that all primary participants in this study embrace the belief that all students can learn and that it is their duty to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the multiple worlds in which they live, serving as cultural and linguistic mediators. Overall, teachers in the research project acknowledge their student's use of AAVE. Additionally, most participants believe there is an appropriate time and place for AAVE use, with the essential understanding that AAVE speakers should be multilingual and empowered with the "codes of power" identified by Delpit (1995), that is, they are taught the values, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge and language of the dominant culture that will help them navigate school and other institutions in the larger society.

Some teachers participating in the research explicitly acknowledge the cultural capital students bring with them to the classroom and the importance of using it to scaffold learning. The data also indicate that teachers in this study express or demonstrate an ethic of caring through the cultivation of personal yet professional relationships with students, as a means of promoting their academic achievement. Some primary

participants are warm demanders—firm, but fair and consistent, setting high expectations for all students, and holding them accountable for their learning (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Ware, 2006). Others are supportive nurturers who place the ultimate responsibility of learning on students. Some participants serve as a surrogate parent or the other mother to their students (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). All teachers demonstrate a deep passion and dedication for teaching and an abiding ethic of caring for the learners in their classrooms.

To provide a broader understanding of the findings of this study I begin by presenting results from the demographic data collected below, followed by initial findings from the entire pool of participants invited to take part in the LAS survey. Data gathered from the LAS survey were used to answer the overarching research question (question one) of this study: What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement? Survey data was also employed to answer a sub question (question 3b) from the study: How do African American teacher's beliefs about AAVE influence their response to AAVE use inside and outside the classroom?

Demographic Questionnaire Results

The demographic questionnaire yielded the following data (see Tables 4.1–4.12 below) from the 18 survey participants. Of the 18 participants taking part in the survey, 17 identified themselves as African American and one as Native American. I invited all 18 teachers to participate in the survey based on administrators' identification of them as African American, all of whom upon meeting during the recruitment phase of the study appeared to be African American. When I explained to teachers my interest in conducting

research with African American educators regarding their attitudes toward AAVE, none indicated they were not African American. Thirteen of the respondents are female and five are male. Two survey participants were reared in rural home communities, while 12 were reared in urban areas, and four grew up in suburban areas.

Table 4.1 *Ethnicity of Participants*

| Ethnicity | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Native American | 1 | 5.6% |
| Asian | 0 | 0.00% |
| Black (non-Hispanic) | 17 | 94.4% |
| Pacific Islander | 0 | 0.00% |
| Hispanic or Latino/Latina | 0 | 0.00% |
| White (non-Hispanic) | 0 | 0.00% |
| Other | 0 | 0.00% |

Table 4.2 *Gender of Participants*

| Gender | | |
|------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Female (F) | 13 | 72.2% |
| Male | 5 | 27.8% |

Table 4.3 *Participants' Home Community*

| Hometown Community | | |
|--------------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Rural | 2 | 11.1% |
| Urban | 12 | 66.7% |
| Suburban | 4 | 22.2% |

The majority of respondents were 33 years old or older at the time of the administration of the survey. There were no participants between the ages of 21 and 24, one between the ages of 25 and 28, and one between 29 and 32 years old. With regard to participants' educational backgrounds, five hold a Bachelor's degree; however, 13 have earned a Master's degree. Twelve of those completing the survey attended a historically Black college or university, eight attended a predominantly white university, and two attended an ethnically diverse institution of higher learning.

Table 4.4 *Age Range of Participants*

| Age | | |
|-------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| 21–24 | 0 | 0.00% |
| 25–28 | 1 | 5.6% |
| 29–32 | 1 | 5.6% |
| 33 or above | 16 | 88.9% |

Table 4.5 *Highest Degree Earned*

| Educational Background | | |
|------------------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| Bachelor's degree | 5 | 27.8% |
| Master's degree | 13 | 72.2% |
| Doctorate degree | 0 | 0.00% |

Table 4.6 *Type of University or College Attended*

| Higher Education Institution Attended | | |
|--|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| Historically Black college/university | 12 | 66.7% |
| Predominately white college/university | 8 | 44.4% |
| Ethnically diverse college/university | 2 | 11.1% |
| Other | 0 | 0.00% |

The professional experience of participants varied greatly; however, the majority, ten, had 16 or more years of teaching experience. Three teachers had between six and ten years experience and two had between 11 and 15 years of classroom experience. Three participants have taught between one and five years.

Table 4.7 *Number of Years of Teaching Experience*

| Number of Years of Teaching Experience | |
|--|--------|
| Calculation | Result |
| Sum | 362 |
| Standard Deviation | 12.223 |
| Average | 18.89 |
| Minimum | 3 |
| 1 st Quartile | 8.50 |
| 2 nd Quartile | 18.50 |
| 3 rd Quartile (Median) | 31.25 |
| Maximum | 40 |

The number of years teaching experience participants had at their current school (Martha Washington School) also varied. Seven respondents have served between one and five years at the school. Five teachers have worked at the school between six and 10 years, and five have logged between 11 and 15 years at the site. Only one teacher completing the survey had 16 years or more experience at Martha Washington School.

Table 4.8 *Number of Years Serving at Martha Washington School*

| Number of Years at Martha Washington School | |
|---|--------|
| Calculation | Result |
| Sum | 160.5 |
| Standard Deviation | 5.321 |
| Average | 8.03 |
| Minimum | 1 |
| 1 st Quartile | 3.00 |
| 2 nd Quartile | 8.00 |
| 3 rd Quartile (Median) | 14.25 |
| Maximum | 16 |

Participants recorded exposure to AAVE in their home communities accordingly; only two reported they were reared in home communities where AAVE was mainly spoken. Six teachers indicated that Standard English was mainly spoken in their communities, while 10 grew up in communities where AAVE and Standard and English were spoken equally.

Table 4.9 *Variety of English Spoken in Home Community*

| Dialect of English Used in Home Community | | |
|--|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was mainly spoken | 2 | 11.1% |
| Standard American English (SAE) was mainly spoken | 6 | 33.3% |
| Both AAVE and SAE were spoken equally | 10 | 55.6% |

None of the survey participants indicated AAVE was presented extensively in their teacher training programs. In fact, nine out of the 18 participants had no presentation

of AAVE at all in their teacher training program. Seven reported limited exposure to the concept of AAVE in teacher training, while only two were in enrolled in programs where AAVE was presented often.

Table 4.10 *AAVE Addressed in Teacher Training Program*

| Extent to which the Topic of AAVE was Presented Teacher Training Program | | |
|--|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Not at all | 9 | 50.0% |
| Very little | 7 | 38.9% |
| Often | 2 | 11.1% |
| Extensively | 0 | 0.00% |

Teachers reported English literature, linguistics, multicultural education, and Black history and culture as courses in which AAVE was a topic of discussion. Some teachers indicated they also discussed AAVE in other courses; unfortunately, the survey instrument did not permit participants to specifically state the courses in which they addressed the topic of AAVE.

Table 4.11 *Courses in Which AAVE was a Topic of Discussion*

| Courses in which AAVE was Addressed | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| English literature | 3 | 16.7% |
| Linguistics | 2 | 11.1% |
| English as a Second Language | 0 | 0.00% |
| Bilingual Education | 0 | 0.00% |
| Multicultural Education | 4 | 22.2% |
| Black History and Culture | 6 | 33.3% |
| Other | 4 | 22.2% |

When asked to share their level of participation in professional development or workshops related to AAVE, few teachers cited such participation. Only one teacher indicated that she/he often takes part in staff development focused on AAVE. Fourteen survey participants have never participated in staff development linked to AAVE.

Table 4.12 *Degree of Participation in Professional Development Related to AAVE*

| Extent of participation in Staff Development or Workshops Related to AAVE | | |
|---|-------|------------|
| Answer | Count | Percentage |
| No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Not at all | 14 | 77.8% |
| Very little | 3 | 16.7% |
| Often | 1 | 5.6% |
| Extensively | 0 | 0.00% |

Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions of AAVE: LAS Results

To answer the initial research question of this study (What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement?), I found it important to examine primary participants' attitudes toward AAVE and Standard American English (SAE). The 18 LAS survey participants are the same for which demographic information is presented above. I assigned values to each of the five potential response-types for each question: strongly agree = 5, mildly agree = 4, neutral = 3, mildly disagree = 2, or strongly disagree = 1. The results of the LAS for all participants are located in Appendix J.

A majority of respondents in the study strongly (38.9%) or mildly (16.7%) disagree that teachers should permit students to use AAVE in the classroom setting, while a smaller, but significant percentage (33.33%) mildly agree that students should be

allowed to use AAVE in class (# Q 20). Overall participants disagree (66.6%) that AAVE sounds as good as Standard English (# Q 19) and they mainly agree (61.1%) that a teacher should correct the non-standard use of English in the classroom (# Q 31). These findings are not surprising, given the dominant status Standard American English occupies in the larger society as the acceptable means of communication in work, school, formal, and certain informal social settings.

Survey respondents hold differing beliefs regarding AAVE use by AAVE speakers. They are decidedly divided (almost evenly distributed) over the notion that AAVE is simply a misuse of Standard English, with 16.7% strongly disagreeing, 33.3% mildly disagreeing, 11.1% mildly agreeing, 27.8% strongly agreeing, and 11.1% revealing a neutral attitude (# Q 16). Respondents expressed conflicting attitudes with respect to the discouragement of AAVE use. Teachers largely disagree (16.7% strongly disagree and 38.9% mildly disagree) that AAVE should be discouraged in general (Q21), but they mainly agree (55.6%) that AAVE use should not be permitted in the classroom. This contradiction may signal teachers' philosophical views toward an "appropriate time and place" for the use of AAVE.

Survey results revealed that participants hold overall positive attitudes toward AAVE in several areas. As noted above, respondents mainly disagree that AAVE should be discouraged (# Q 21), and they largely disagree (33.3% strongly disagree and 22.2% mildly disagree) AAVE is an inferior language system (# Q 23). Further, participants mostly agree (38.9% mildly agree and 27.8% strongly agree) that a child who speaks AAVE is able to express ideas as well as a child who speaks SAE (# Q 24). Respondents

also mainly agree (44.4% mildly agree and 16.7% strongly agree) that AAVE is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language (# Q 28). Moreover, participants further agree (38.9% mildly agree and 22.3% strongly agree) AAVE should be considered an influential part of American culture and civilization (# Q 25).

These positive attitudes expressed by respondents suggest some teachers in this study view AAVE from a difference rather than a deficit vantage point, that is, they hold beliefs that AAVE is simply a different manner of communicating a message to others, and that AAVE is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language through which ideas can be expressed just as well as one does in SAE. A plausible explanation as to why respondents don't view AAVE as wrong, but simply a different way of communicating with others, may be linked to the majority (55.6%) of participants growing up in homes and communities where AAVE and SAE were spoken equally, or where AAVE was mainly (11.1%) spoken (# Q 11). The collective data above suggest that although some teachers in the study hold positive attitudes/dispositions toward AAVE use, they may also hold the philosophical stance that there is "proper time and place" for the use of AAVE, and AAVE speakers should be provided guidance and instruction as to when it is appropriate to employ this dialect of English. The stance of a "proper time and place" for AAVE use is further supported by participants' overall agreement that teachers should correct student use of non-standard English (# Q 31), and their agreement (22.2% mildly agree and 27.8% strongly agree) that non-standard English should be accepted socially (# Q 36).

I used SPSS to sort and analyze survey data, as well as tabulate final scores participants earned on the LAS. These scores represent participants' overall attitudes toward AAVE across four broad categories, 1) the structure and inherent usefulness of AAVE, 2) the consequences of using AAVE in instructional settings, 3) philosophies concerning the use and acceptance of AAVE, and 4) the cognitive and intellectual abilities of AAVE speakers. A final score of 76 and above indicates an overall positive attitude toward AAVE across the four categories outlined above. A LAS score of 75 represents a neutral attitude toward AAVE. Scores below 75 indicate a mostly negative AAVE attitude. Final scores and teachers' collective attitudes toward AAVE are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 *Teacher Attitudes toward AAVE, as Determined by the LAS*

| Participants | LAS Score | Collective AAVE Attitude |
|--------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 84.00 | Positive |
| 2 | 89.00 | Positive |
| 3 | 83.00 | Positive |
| 4 | 67.00 | Negative |
| 5 | 103.00 | Positive |
| 6 | 38.00 | Negative |
| 7 | 58.00 | Negative |
| 8 | 77.00 | Positive |
| 9 | 68.00 | Negative |
| 10 | 49.00 | Negative |
| 11 | 34.00 | Negative |
| 12 | 72.00 | Negative |
| 13 | 96.00 | Positive |
| 14 | 64.00 | Negative |
| 15 | 57.00 | Negative |
| 16 | 86.00 | Positive |
| 17 | 88.00 | Positive |
| 18 | 97.00 | Positive |
| Total (n=18) | | Positive= 9 Negative = 9 Neutral = 0 |

Of the top five successful teachers identified by administrators as primary participants for this research project, two exhibited overall positive attitudes (Margaret M. and Tina B) and three (Sheila B., Sarah S., and Matthew M.) presented mainly negative attitudes toward AAVE on the LAS. Interestingly, the two teachers receiving the most votes from administrators as exemplary educators exhibited markedly different attitudes toward AAVE. Sheila B's LAS score (38) was the second most negative of any of the teachers, but Tina B's score (103) demonstrated the most positive attitude toward AAVE. The LAS scores for the remaining teachers participating in this research project are: Margaret M.: 83; Sarah S.: 67; Matthew M.: 72. So as not to oversimplify primary participants' language attitudes toward AAVE, as recorded by the LAS, it should be noted that Tina B's score on the LAS was highly positive, Sheila B's score was highly negative, and LAS scores for Margaret M, Matthew M, and Sarah S fall in the middle of the range of scores for the five primary participants in this study. It should also be noted that Matthew's LAS score of 72 is closer to the neutral range of 75. It is also important to note here that although the LAS continues to be used as an instrument for determining individual's language attitudes toward AAVE, it is an old instrument, developed nearly four decades ago. As demonstrated by the findings below, the results of this study move well beyond the language attitude scores rendered on the LAS.

Background and Beliefs of Primary Participants Toward AAVE

The second phase of the study involved interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts from the five primary participants. I used these data points to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' backgrounds and expanded beliefs regarding their

perceptions of AAVE and AAVE speakers, as well as the classroom practices employed with AAVE speakers. I used the aforementioned methods to answer the overarching and sub-research questions for this study:

1. What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement?
2. What specific instructional strategies do teachers employ when students use AAVE in the classroom setting?
3. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their teaching?
 - a. How do African American teachers believe their cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their teaching?
 - b. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their response to AAVE use inside and outside the classroom?
 - c. How do African American teachers support the academic achievement of AAVE Speakers?

In this section I present data gathered from interviews, observations, and artifacts which inform the research questions for this study. I begin with individual profiles of the five primary participants of this research project: Margaret, Sheila, Matthew, Tina, and Sarah. I follow profiles with a presentation of emerging themes generated from interviews and subsequent observations. Next, I present a thematic overview to examine common themes that cut across primary participants.

Participant Profiles

Because I served as a classroom teacher at Martha Washington for several years, with all (Margaret, Sheila, Matthew, and Sarah) but one of the primary participants of this study, I share the unique bond of school community insider with them. I also have a professional connection with the other participant, Tina, whom I worked with as a colleague in a middle school setting, and during several sessions of summer school at the high school level. I believe the collegial rapport cultivated between us as colleagues facilitated open, honest, intriguing, and often lively conversation, as participants freely shared with me background information about their home and community life, educational and professional experiences, views of their roles and expectations as educators of students, thoughts on AAVE, and classroom practices.

A summary of participant profiles, along with relevant excerpts illuminating common themes, provide context for a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of AAVE, as well as its potential influence(s) on student achievement, and the classroom practices these teachers employ to support the academic achievement of AAVE speakers.

Margaret. Born and raised in a major urban mid-Atlantic city, Margaret describes her childhood community as lower income, consisting of a sizable number of public housing projects, violent, and with a notable gang presence. She reports that her home life was rather dysfunctional, coming from a family of mostly high school drop outs. She also tells of joining a gang herself at a young age.

Despite the many challenges encountered in her early home life, Margaret thrived in the face of adversity, noting that school was very important to her and that she had an

immense passion for reading and learning from childhood. An exceptional grade school student, Margaret acknowledges her teachers as her best friends and advocates. She credits her selection and acceptance into one of the elite all-girls high schools of the city to teachers. Margaret excelled at the school and describes her high school experience as one which opened her up to the world around her.

[T]he school virtually turned my world upside down. I found out that there was life beyond the city I lived in. I found that – that was the first time I realized I was poor. I didn't know it until it was pointed out to me demographically. I learned that there were African Americans whose parents were judges, and lawyers, doctors. I found that there was far more than had been presented to me within my community – I found that the books had different qualities– that certain schools got certain books – certain schools got certain teachers. I found that there was a certain quality to teaching, it was an art form to it that I hadn't always been exposed to in my birth community, and so the whole world of education began to be revolutionized for me – from the way I looked, the way I dressed, the way I talked, the literature I read, the exposure to certain literature and the exposure to African American teachers who were well qualified to do what they did. I also got an exposure to teachers from other ethnicities and many of my high school teachers were Jewish and they had a certain style and a certain way of teaching that demanded excellence and they demanded you become a citizen of the world...

Upon graduating high school, Margaret attended a Historically Black College in her home state; again teachers were responsible for helping her navigate this path to higher education. She earned a degree in Political Science, initially contemplating a law career. Subsequently Margaret earned a Master's degree in history from an elite university, opting to pursue teaching as a profession over law, after some deliberation with a mentor.

Margaret boasts 35 years of teaching experience. She began her career in her home community in a school plagued with many of the issues typically faced by large urban school districts, overcrowded classrooms, limited and out dated resources and materials, chronic discipline issues, and sparse parental input. Nevertheless, she believes the experiences from her early home and community life prepared her sufficiently to deal with the many obstacles encountered in her early teaching career.

Margaret describes herself as a teacher in this manner:

I am a student of the world – I'm always learning – always growing I never know it all – I believe that there's a wealth of information that children bring with them about their world and what the world looks like to them – I like to color their world so that there's endless possibilities for them, and I think whatever you teach and whatever content area, it should color the world with possibilities for young people so that they take what they have and make it work for them – to improve the world that they're in and improve the world for other people.

In her description of herself as a teacher, Margaret alludes to the importance of valuing the cultural capital students bring to the classroom setting and using it to support their learning.

Spontaneous participation in a job fair landed Margaret a position at Martha Washington School as a Human Growth and Development teacher. She has 15 years of service at this location, working at the site since its inception as a ninth grade school. Although Martha Washington School is located in an urban school district, it is noticeably different from Margaret's initial teaching assignment. Class sizes are reasonably small (on average 20:1) and educational resources, to include technologies, are readily available. Parental support is also strong, among certain groups.

Margaret describes her role as an educator of African American students as follows:

I think African American children come into the room – come into any educational setting with a set of beliefs about who they are not, before they ever demonstrate who they are – so you have to take more time and more patience to weed through who we are not and dispel all those myths and then get down to the core of who they are – and if you are not aware of that, you will misread everything that they do, how they approach the world, how they interact with one another, how they see you as an authority figure, how they see you as a woman, how they see you as an African American, how they see you as an educator – you will misread it all if you don't take some time to understand that there's a whole platform they come in on based on who they are not.

Although not explicitly stated above, Margaret's words suggest she sees her role as an educator of African American students as one who builds relationships with students, casting aside preconceived notions or judgment calls, and viewing African American students from a difference, rather than deficit perspective.

Margaret's expectations of her students are simple, that is, she expects that students will come to her class prepared to learn. She puts it best by saying:

I expect them to respond to my expectation that this is a place of learning – that we will respect one another – that they matter – that they are important to themselves, to other people and to me – they matter to me – I expect that they can take something out of here when the bell rings.

To set the stage for subsequent questions related to AAVE and to get an understanding of Margaret's perception of the skills she believes are necessary to successfully educate African American students, I asked her to describe what she believes are the characteristics of effective teachers of African American students. She stated an effective teacher of African American students "must be open and willing to embrace other ways of communication, and relating." Margaret also indicated one must be willing to "do some background and research on the culture of African American people in this country in particular" to be an effective teacher of African American students.

Sheila. An individual of proper demeanor, Sheila is a sophisticated and refined product of a small town in the segregated South, with fond memories of her upbringing. She describes her home community as safe, caring, and close knit. Her grandparents and

a great grand–mother reared her and her two older sisters during most of their young lives, while her parents took jobs in an urban metropolis offering greater economic opportunities to African Americans. She beams with pride, relating the fact that her grandparents owned their home, a modest and well furnished three bedroom structure, with a large dining room and kitchen, explaining that this was an unusual feat for the time. Sheila describes herself as the teacher’s pet throughout grade school and high school. She was well liked by her teachers, all of whom had high expectations for her. Sheila’s high school, the only one open to her and her sisters, was also a junior college, which was later converted to a four year accredited university. Sheila consistently earned outstanding grades throughout her educational career, as was the expectation of her grandparents. According to Sheila, neither grandparent was highly educated, but they could read and write, and shared their passion for education with their grandchildren. Sheila’s great–grandmother also served as a source of encouragement and inspiration for her educational pursuits, earning a degree from a Historically Black College, an unusual accomplishment for African Americans of her generation. She talks about how growing up in the segregated south impacted her way of thinking as a child:

I grew up not giving God a color – I just thought that there was a Black God and there was a White God, and because my granddaddy would always talk about this wooly headed man and what does a sheep look like and wool on a sheep and it was brazen – and all of my Sunday school cards had this brown Jesus on it and so

I thought okay there's a White Jesus and a Black Jesus and there's a White Santa and a Black Santa.

Upon graduation from high school, Sheila left her small town home to attend a prominent Midwestern university. After a challenging year of attempting to adjust to the new environment, Sheila returned to her home town to earn a degree, graduating with honors.

Sheila's rationale for choosing teaching as a career is simple. She explains it as follows:

My granny was the person who anointed all of us in to whatever. I was to be the teacher, the middle sister was to be the nurse and, my oldest sister was to marry well – and from a little old thing I would teach Sunday school...[I] just have a love for it [teaching], and [I] loved my teachers and wanted to emulate them.

Sheila began her 35 year teaching career in the same urban area where her parents sought jobs, after fleeing the segregated South, when she was still a small child. She states her first two assignments were in very difficult schools, and quite different from those she experienced in her small home town. Sheila later moved on to yet another school in a different region of the city with significantly more resources and fewer discipline issues than those in her initial worksites. Sheila enjoyed her teaching stint at this location, but she marveled at the differences that existed between schools in the same city.

After serving several years in her former school district, Sheila moved to a neighboring school system, working in every secondary school site before settling at

Martha Washington School. A self-professed lover of the classics and an avid reader, she teaches English/World Literature to grade nine students.

Sheila describes herself as a teacher as “dynamic and wonderfully blessed to have an opportunity to just share knowledge with so many wonderful children who are sometimes a challenge.” She expresses a love for teaching and a sincere passion to motivate and encourage her students. Sheila believes it is important that teachers share their enthusiasm for their subject matter and learning in general with students. She also believes it is critical for teachers to get to know their students, establishing a professional yet caring relationship with them. With regard to her expectations of her students, Sheila says:

I expect them to do well, I expect them to succeed, I expect to accept them where they are and to take them where they need to be – I don’t expect miracles, I have learned over the years that you can’t reach every one, but I make a concerted effort to let them know I’m here and I’m going to help you.

In our discussion about how she views her role as an educator of African American students, Sheila shares that she sees her role as varied.

I have to be sometimes a mother to them, a role model to them. I have to be their teacher, their counselor. There are just so many things that I have to be to them. I just can’t say that my role is just to be your teacher and that’s it. Sometimes I have to encourage, and sometimes I have to say “I don’t know if I’d do that if I were you.” Sometimes just a listening ear, because they just want to talk– just a sounding board, just many things to them – introducing them to social skills as

well, “please” and “ thank you” and “good morning” – just to be polite and treat other people nice... so much of that has always been my role, as it relates to African American children – let them see that you too can rise above whatever your circumstances are "you’re not relegated to stay where you are for the rest of your life” and you can do other things.

Sheila explains that she believes characteristics of effective teachers of African American students are the same, no matter what the ethnicity of the teacher. She states:

I think effective characteristics of teachers, be it African Americans, whatever the race –are effective characteristics. But certainly with them [African American students], they look for leadership. They want you to be strong; they want you to be consistent and fair... just be upfront with them about what your expectations are... I think that may be some of the characteristics, but you have to know your subject matter– just letting them see more than one side of you, that I accept you as you are. I’m not here to judge you, but I do want you to do well and I have expectations of you that you can do anything. I think it’s important to let children to know that I have expectations of you and I am consistent and I want to be fair...

Matthew. A native of an island in the Caribbean Sea, Matthew and two of his nephews were reared by his mother. His educational experience began in a primary school based on the British system of education. Matthew recalls his teachers were extremely strict and that corporal punishment was administered liberally. According to Matthew, his early days in school were sometimes fun, but he readily admits he spent

much of his time in grade school afraid that at any point he could receive a spanking for the slightest infraction.

Matthew began his high school studies in a public setting, but eventually transferred to a private school, from which he graduated. His nephews moved to the United States with their mother, who had relocated earlier to live with Matthew's eldest sister, leaving him and his mother alone on the island.

Upon graduating high school, Matthew had aspirations of becoming an agronomist; he earned an Associate's degree in agriculture, with a specialization in agronomy from a local school of agriculture on the island. With his degree in hand Matthew obtained a government post as an Extension Officer, which required him to advise farmers with the planting of various types of crops, providing them with financing for their endeavors, and monitoring the crops from the planting stage to their harvest, to ensure appropriate use of allocated funds.

After working three years as an Extension Officer, Matthew came to the U.S. to attend a Historically Black College in a Southeastern state. Here, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Agronomy. He tells of his adjustment to his new environment below:

It was a bit of a culture shock, I mean I remember coming from the airport – I'd always wanted to come to the United States because my sister was here, my nephews were here, and I remember driving from the airport and I had an image of the United States in my head and I remember when the taxi passed some little houses, some little shanty houses boarded up – you know like they had little canvasses, pieces of tin or aluminum something like that –you know covering up

little parts of their houses. That was a shock to me; I never expected to see housing like that in the United States. That really shocked me, and then when I got on campus, I had to adjust to American students who were curious about me and wanted to know things about me... – changes in the climate, the temperature, I didn't realize I needed a heavy coat to stay warm.

Matthew returned to his island home to serve as a supervising Extension Officer after earning his degree. Completing a year in this position, he came back to the U.S. to pursue a Master's degree in Agronomy, while simultaneously satisfying teaching certification requirements. Matthew began his graduate studies at the same institution where he earned his Bachelor's degree, but later transferred to a program with a more diverse faculty, in the Southwestern portion of the nation. He describes his experience at this new university as vastly different from his first U.S. college experience. He attributes this to the fact that his earlier higher education opportunity helped acclimate him to U.S. life and culture. Matthew describes his interaction with professors at the latter Master's degree program in this manner:

I remember we had professors of every race. I had black professors, I had professors from India. I had one from Pakistan; I had white professors – also I remember my physics professor was from Pakistan and they were always very helpful – I can't remember having a bad experience with a professor.

Matthew says he elected to go into the field of education due to his love for teaching, and because many of his peers with degrees in Agronomy were only being offered positions in the Midwest after graduate school, a place where he had no desire to go. He

notes another reason for going into teaching is because educators were highly respected in his home community and that teachers are prevalent in his family.

Matthew has 22 years of teaching experience, with fifteen of those years at Martha Washington. He has been at the school since its inception instructing Biology and Earth Science. With regard to his profession, Matthew describes himself in this fashion. “[I am] patient to a fault, almost maybe a little too patient – very anxious to see my students learn, and I really feel down when they don’t.”

Matthew’s expectations for his students are that “they do their best, work as hard as they can, and try and accomplish the goals that are set for them.” He views his role as an educator in this fashion.

I see my role, to all students as a guide, as an advisor, as an academic educator.

African–American students have some specific issues that, well other kids have, but not to that degree. Many of them come from single parent homes. Mostly single mothers, some are raised by grandparents, and I have a few raised by their fathers alone. And the way they relate to me, I noticed to a great extent is based on their life experiences at home.

Matthew believes characteristics of effective teachers of African American students include “let[ting] students know that you really care about them, or they’re not going to give you the time of day. Matthew explains:

[F]or me it’s a type of holistic approach – I’m not just teaching Biology, I’m teaching life skills, I’m advising, encouraging, confronting, telling them about the

trials and tribulations they're going to face in life, how they should behave, following rules.

Tina. Growing up in the segregated South, Tina attended grade school and high school in her small hometown community. Although she describes her elementary school experience in a positive manner, she recalls that the teachers were strict and held high expectations for all students. Tina began her high school education in grade eight, in a predominately African American school in her local community. Beginning with her ninth grade year, she switched to an integrated high school. She describes the setting and her experience there below:

So from ninth grade, nine through twelve, I was at the all-White school and that was an experience in itself. I really felt kind of left out and lonely because there were about 1500 students in this building, and there were about 30 of us minority [students]; so it was somewhat of a challenge. There were undercover police people in the building just to make sure that nothing happened to us.

When Tina prepared to leave high school, she only applied to two universities, both of which are Historically Black Colleges. One university is located near in her hometown, and the other is an urban center in the Southeastern region of the U.S. Tina's mother encouraged her to attend the university closer to home, convinced that the school in the urban setting might be a bit much for a young lady from a small town environment. With that, Tina explains she enrolled in the university in her hometown, with the intentions of pursuing a degree in music education. She speaks of the challenge of having to enroll in remedial courses (English and Mathematics) upon entering the university,

citing that she did not test well. Nevertheless, Tina takes pride in the fact that despite these initial obstacles, she was able to complete her degree in four years. She holds fond memories of her college years, from her participation in the renowned band program, to the transition from a predominately majority school setting back to one which was mostly minority.

Tina began her 30 year teaching career as a band director of an elementary and high school music program in a rural town neighboring her home community. Responsible for teaching students throughout the entire county to play all types of instruments, she traveled among several schools. After two years in the position of band director, Tina moved to a pacific coast state and took a job as director of the marching band, concert band, and jazz band in a high school in urban school district. She describes the student population in the west coast school as predominately minority (Hispanic and African American), and different from the ethnic make-up in her first teaching position, although she states she received excellent parental support in both communities.

Tina eventually moved back to her home state and continued her teaching career in an urban school district with a diverse student population. She indicates she spent more than 24 years teaching mathematics in a middle school in her current school district, prior to moving to Martha Washington where she teaches Algebra 1 and Algebra 1 Part 1. She has been a teacher at Martha Washington School for four years.

When I asked Tina what prompted her to choose teaching as a career, she said:

I think it really had to do with — to be perfectly honest, when I was in high school I had no idea what I wanted to be. I was just floundering. I had not a clue.

But my mother made a statement one day, and said that she would like to have a teacher in the family. So I figured why not me. I mean, you know it wasn't anything else that motivated me other than, again you know, just watching how those teachers in my elementary school were just such fine women, and they had such character about them. They were real good examples for someone to emulate.

Tina describes herself as no nonsense teacher, as strict as her elementary instructors, but open-minded and not opposed to having students become relaxed and comfortable in class within reason. Tina says structure in the classroom is important to her and a necessity. She believes in giving her students respect and expects the same in return. She exclaims that she is "from the old school, because you [students] know they still have to say yes or no to me, yes ma'am or no ma'am and you know sometimes they slip but it's okay."

In expressing her expectations of her students, Tina states that she believes all students can learn. She relates "...if they open up their minds enough they can put anything in that brain, if they choose to, and my desire is for every student to do the very best they can in my class; it's just that in a nutshell."

Tina believes her role as an educator of African American students is to prepare her students academically as much as she possibly can, but also to instill in them that they can do whatever it is they choose in life. She says she finds that one of the most critical detractors for African American students is their lack of confidence. Tina believes it is

her duty to offer students support in this area, striving to boost the confidence of all students, including that of African American students.

In our discussion about the characteristics of effective teachers of African American students Tina explains:

I think that an effective teacher of African–American students has to know something about the history of the African–American students. They have to know something about their culture, their lifestyle, where they come from. I mean because you know it’s a unique culture. It’s so different than anything else...so if a teacher is going to be able to relate to an African–American child, that teacher will have to know something about the background, history where these children come from and how they really think.

Tina goes on to explain why she believes it is important to understand the cultural background and history of African American students:

I think that’s important because if you don’t — I think it’s important because we’re misunderstood. Our mannerisms, we can be loud at times, we can be boisterous at times, but we aren’t trying to be offensive. But if somebody doesn’t know that we speak with our hands, or we talk with our eyes, or we talk with our face, or whatever, we’ll be misunderstood. And before we know what our child is, the minority student will be characterized and labeled as being something that they really are not, because the teachers just didn’t understand that, that’s part of our culture.

Here Tina relates the necessity for educators to be aware of the cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds students bring with them to the classroom, essentially their cultural capital, to be able to effectively address their academic needs.

Sarah. A child of a complex family unit, Sarah grew up in an urban center in the Southeast. Her mother died when Sarah was four, at which time she, a younger sister, and her father left their Southern home for a new life in the city, with a new step-mother. Sarah recalls that the youngest child in the family went to live with relatives, while two older sisters remained in the South with a grandmother.

Sarah recalls growing up in the basement level of a building which was divided into three floors. She speaks of the close bonds that existed among the families in her building and those in her neighborhood, which at the time was considered a vibrant and thriving African American community. Sarah recalls her neighbors were very much involved in her life, explaining that:

[I]f grown people said something to you, you responded politely, because otherwise they would tell your parents and then you would get it. It was an interesting little community, you know, you had the little grocery store at the corner, where you could get stuff on time and then they'd pay it off on pay day.

Sarah describes herself as an average student, not the sharpest student in her classes, but always meeting her father's expectation that she maintain acceptable passing grades. During tenth grade she was stricken with a serious illness which forced her parents to withdraw her from school. A tutor provided Sarah instruction for the remainder of her tenth grade year through grade eleven. She explains the unfortunate decision to

drop out of school in twelfth grade, due mainly to extended hospital stays which resulted in her falling further and further behind in her studies.

After dropping out of school, Sarah indicates she left home and not long after had a child. She explains that she returned to school after the birth of her child and earned her GED. Sarah subsequently enrolled in a Junior College where she earned an Associate's degree. She then transferred to a four year university where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Administration Justice. She spent time working in the private sector in sales, until the tragic death of her child, at which time she did not work for nearly two years. Upon returning to the workforce, Sarah entered into the field of education as a substitute teacher, working with students from kindergarten to grade twelve, as a paraprofessional, and then as a full-time teacher of mathematics at Martha Washington School.

Sarah indicates that a career in education was not her plan for a profession, but with the loss of her son, she did not believe she had the drive/excitement needed to remain in sales. With the suggestion of a friend that she consider a position as a substitute teacher, Sarah moved into the teaching field. She has 10 years of full-time teaching experience, all at Martha Washington School.

Sarah describes herself as a serious, but honest educator with a sense of humor. Comparing the quality of her work with that of colleagues, Sarah says "I have seen how some other teachers operate. I feel I'm with the upper crust; I feel I can hold my own." Her expectations of her students are straightforward; she wants them all to succeed in her class, leaving with basic concepts of how numbers work and why they are important.

In our discussion regarding her perception of her role as an educator of African American students Sarah explains:

There's a certain amount of, I mean I work with all the children, but there's a certain thing that just goes through me when it's our kids, because that's our kids. I mean, and it's not that I would do less for other nationalities, but for our kids, I just think, I know we got to work harder. They've got enough things they got to compete against, and they don't realize how much competition they got out here now. They got more than I had. When I came along, I got a job as being one of the two Blacks being hired; that ain't the case no more. So they've got to be better; they've got to understand it too.

For Sarah, effective teachers of African American students have a strong desire to work with children. They are honest and dedicated to their craft. According to Sarah, effective teachers of African American students have a drive and passion for teaching, as she puts it, "they [teachers] are not there [in the field of education] just for the cash."

All of the primary participants in this study bring with them their unique backgrounds and life experiences, which help frame their attitudes toward AAVE and AAVE speakers. The individual profiles of participants presented above illustrate details of their backgrounds and characteristics they possess as classroom teachers. The table below (4.14) provides a snapshot of profiles discussed above, with the infusion of data recorded in the demographic portion of the LAS survey.

Table 4.14 *Snapshot of Primary Participant Profiles*

| Participant | Home Community | Dialect of English Used in Home Community | Attended HBCU | Approach to Teaching | Perception of AAVE as Measured by LAS |
|-------------|-------------------|---|------------------|---|--|
| Margaret | Urban | Both AAVE and SAE | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values students' cultural capital • Demonstrates an ethic of caring • Creates opportunities for student success • Warm demander | LAS Score: 83 (Positive) |
| Sheila | Rural | SAE | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches teaching as a calling— possess a passion for sharing knowledge • Serves as a surrogate mother (other mother) • Demonstrates an ethic of caring • Belief in the importance of teaching the “codes of power” • Warm demander | LAS Score: 38 (Negative) |

Table 4.14 (Continued)

| Participant | Home Community | Dialect of English Used in Home Community | Attended HBCU | Approach to Teaching | Perception of AAVE as Measured by LAS |
|-------------|----------------|---|---------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Matthew | Suburban | Both Jamaican Creole and SAE | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an ethic of caring • Serves as an advisor and guide to students • Belief that students must take responsibility for their learning • Warm demander | LAS Score: 72 (Negative) |
| Tina | Suburban | Both AAVE and SAE | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values students' cultural capital • Demonstrates an ethic of caring with a focus on reciprocal respect • Belief in the importance of building student confidence • Possesses knowledge of students cultures and backgrounds • Warm demander | LAS Score: 103 (Positive) |

Table 4.14 (Continued)

| Participant | Home Community | Dialect of English Used in Home Community | Attended HBCU | Approach to Teaching | Perception of AAVE as Measured by LAS |
|-------------|-------------------|---|------------------|---|--|
| Sarah | Urban | SAE | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses a passion and dedication for teaching • Demonstrates an ethic of caring • Teaches with authority and confidence • Warm demander • Belief in the importance of teaching the “codes of power” | LAS Score: 67 (Negative) |

The Influence of AAVE on Academic Achievement

The primary participants of this research project have varying attitudes toward AAVE use, both positive and negative. They also hold differing views of the potential influences of AAVE on the academic achievement and futures of AAVE speakers. To unearth participants' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement, I asked teachers to provide me with a description of AAVE speakers in their classrooms.

Margaret, Matthew, and Sarah explain that students who use AAVE in their classrooms span a broad spectrum; however, they all acknowledge that many of their AAVE speakers face academic challenges. Margaret describes AAVE speakers in her classroom in this manner.

They generally are students who prefer social interaction as opposed to one-on-one [instruction] in an academic setting. These are students who typically embrace the more out spoken positions of culture, meaning their interest in music. They grab a hold of whatever the icons are. They are very icon conscious of what's going on in the culture.

Margaret goes on to further elaborate her description of the AAVE speakers in her classroom.

They [AAVE speakers] struggle. You have a small percentage maybe about two percent who are resilient enough to come in and out of different worlds. And they can speak this over here and hang out with this group over there, still be popular, still embrace what the school offers academically, and still get involved. It's about

two percent. The other group struggles academically because of written language, spoken language, an inability to assess where those things are going to be pertinent to them. They can't make those connections. They can't connect the dots. So academically they are always challenged because they don't really see the connections.

Tina provides a layered description of the AAVE speakers she instructs, with regard to the influence of AAVE on students' academic achievement. On the one hand she firmly states her belief in the academic potential of AAVE speakers, and on the other, she points out equity related boundaries which may hinder AAVE speakers' academic achievement.

I think that the students who use vernacular English in my classroom are just as intelligent as the students who choose not to use it. Unfortunately, a lot of the students who use vernacular English have been placed in situations that have not allowed them to be as productive academically as they could be, and what I mean by that is, I have taught talented and gifted students, and my talented and gifted classes were predominantly White. Sometimes I feel like the minority students are left out of that environment at an early age, elementary school on. So a lot of the students who use vernacular English are those students who have not really had the opportunity to be as successful academically as they could be.

Sheila indicates that the majority of her students are AAVE speakers, to include some who are of Latin American descent. During our initial interview Sheila shared that the students in her classes were invited to participate on her team because they were

identified as not working up to their academic potential in middle school, that is, their grades did not match achievement levels demonstrated on high-stakes tests. Sheila expressed immense pride in a class I sat in on prior to our first interview, which had recently demonstrated significant gains in their reading levels, as recorded by a reading intervention program Sheila identified as Achieve 3000². Although not explicitly stated, this event reinforces Sheila's belief that all her students, to include AAVE speakers, can achieve academic success when given the necessary guidance and support.

The Influence of AAVE use on Students' Futures

To further explore primary participants' beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on AAVE speakers' academic achievement; I examined teachers' perceptions of the impact of AAVE use on students' futures.

Margaret indicates she believes the use of AAVE will not have a significant impact on the futures of AAVE speakers; she goes on to suggest that it is her job to scaffold learning for students who come to her classroom as AAVE speakers, embracing their linguistic cultural capital and using it to support learning.

I don't know if it's [AAVE use] going to have a huge impact on their future.

What I have begun to do in past years is really become familiar with multiple intelligences, and so through those channels of being able to evaluate and create lesson plans and tap into intelligence – it ends up being a bridge between those who are challenged with their vernacular and those who are not....So, experiential

² Achieve 3000 Solutions is a web-based reading intervention designed to differentiate language arts instruction based on students' reading levels, allowing an entire class to receive the same assignment tailored to the individual reading level of each student.

learning is very important for them [AAVE speakers] and for many of our students, if they haven't succeeded academically, they have more tactile ways of learning. So touching, moving, projects, sharing, that kind of thing, helps to bridge the gap until they can build up enough confidence to know – I may not do this real well, but I do this real well.

Matthew also believes the use of AAVE will not impact the futures of AAVE speakers, that is, as long as they acquire Standard American English and can use it in appropriate settings. However, Matthew also supports the notion of AAVE speakers maintaining their linguistic and cultural connection to AAVE, asserting that it is important for AAVE speakers to communicate in a way that is comfortable and acceptable to those in their linguistic/home communities.

Similar to Matthew, Sarah believes as long as AAVE speakers learn Standard American English and are able to use it in the proper settings, the use of AAVE will not adversely affect their futures.

Well, I think unless they recognize when to use it [AAVE], and when it's not time to use it – it's just like us – we used slang as we were growing up, but you knew when we went on a job interview that wasn't the place to use it. You knew that when you were in the company of certain of your colleagues, or your people, that was not the time to use it. You were selective when you used it. Even today I use slang, but I'm not going to say it in the presence of my colleagues when that's not appropriate. So unless these kids understand, or learn when to use it and when not to use it, and understand that this is not the acceptable thing – the system doesn't

look at it as being acceptable. Then they'll be okay, if they don't understand that, then they're going to have a hard time.

Like Matthew and Sarah, Sheila believes AAVE speakers will fare well in their futures, as long as they become proficient in Standard American English and learn in which settings it is acceptable to use AAVE. Additionally, Sheila views it as her responsibility to make sure her students know when AAVE use is appropriate and when it is not.

I think my goal, and I always say to them, that there are two levels of usage, formal and informal. Now, it's okay for you to say it's "me" perhaps when you're speaking informally with your friends, but when the time comes to say "I," I want you to be able to make that transition, and I think African American students have done a wonderful job in making that transition. Because usually if it's written, they know what to write on the paper, but because of being a part of that community [African American], being accepted by your peers is so important. It's almost as if, "Man I can't go out and talk like this. I gotta man up." So with them [AAVE Speakers], they will do fine, but they definitely need to know when to make the transition...I think they'll be okay. Because I grew up with peers who..., I was always told how well I spoke. I don't know, but I was always told about how well I spoke, but my friends who didn't speak as well, they're doing fine.

Tina does not believe the use of AAVE will negatively impact the futures of AAVE speakers. Unlike her colleagues participating in this research project, Tina

suggests AAVE speakers will instinctively know when to use AAVE and Standard English in the appropriate settings.

...I know our children are smart, intelligent and bright, because they are able to shift horses in the middle of the stream. I honestly do believe that they will be able to cope. I honestly do believe that they will be able to know when I need to use this language, and when I need to use this particular language.

Influence of Teachers' Beliefs about AAVE on Teaching

To fully answer research question three, "How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their teaching?" it is important to examine the core beliefs teachers in this study possess about student learning in general. It is equally important to examine the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants, as well as their beliefs about AAVE use both inside and outside the classroom, and what they do to support the achievement of AAVE speakers.

Core Beliefs about Student Learning

It is well documented by scholars that teachers' beliefs can shape their expectations, and that their expectations can impact student engagement, which can ultimately influence student achievement (Tauber, 1997).

All students can learn. Research on the beliefs of successful/exemplary African American teachers about themselves as professionals, and the profession in general, indicates that such teachers profess a strong belief in the potential of all children to

succeed in school, specifically African American students, including AAVE speakers, that is, they maintain a deep and sincere belief that all children can learn (Irvine, 2002).

Teachers in this research project hold fast to the core belief that every student in their charge is capable of learning and achieving academic success.

For example, when asked about her expectations of her students, Margaret expressed her belief in their potential to be successful in school in this manner.

I expect that every student comes into the classroom prepared to learn – meaning that they are aware of what’s going on in the classroom. So my expectations have been set for them. I expect them to respond to my expectation that this is a place of learning – that we will respect one another – that they matter – that they are important to themselves, to other people and to me. They matter to me. I expect that they can take something out of here when the bell rings. At the end of every class period I’d say how many people learned one thing today. How many people learned two things today, and sometimes you get I learned five things and let me tell you, they’ll say but – I don’t want you [the students] to walk out of here without saying what we did today. I expect that you grab a hold of something to take out of here with you.

In a discussion with Sheila about the strategies she employs to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all students, she articulated the belief that all students can learn with the statements below.

Just accept students where they are. Have high expectations for all students. Offer assistance as needed, rewarding or at least acknowledging small accomplishments

and ...just having activities where every child will have an opportunity to succeed.

As a result of our discussion on how she addresses the academic needs of the typical student in her classroom, Sheila further affirms her belief in all students' capacity to learn and succeed in school with the statement provided below.

If I am hearing this correctly, usually the typical — I don't know if there is a typical student, especially with our teen population. But usually just being accepting of where they are, again, going back to that old thing of having clear expectations, encouraging them, "Yes you can do this. Okay, let's break it down into smaller parts," and just that thing of believing in children. It seems to work. [Saying to students] that you can do this, being enthusiastic about something myself. I find that often times that's very contagious with young people. They see your enthusiasm for whatever it is, [and say] well maybe this thing isn't so bad after all.

Similar to his female counterparts in the study, Matthew also expresses a belief in all his students to learn and succeed in school. In his description of himself as a teacher, Matthew elaborates on his beliefs about his students' potential.

I believe all students can learn, but not all students are interested in every subject, so that makes it a challenge. I wish we had a system where after ninth grade, or at ninth grade we could start allowing kids to dwell in more specialization in what they really like, or what they're more adapted to because I think there are many kids who basically just waste that year. They're not academically inclined the way

academics are being presented to them. As a consequence, you get behavioral issues from them. If it were up to me I would try to have different outlets or facilities where these students would be channeled and challenged in a way that would suit them better.

Tina espoused her belief in students' potential to learn and succeed in school in this manner.

Well, I believe that all students can learn and it's just something I believe. I mean if they open up their minds enough, they can put anything in that brain, if they choose to, and I [my desire is] for every student to do the very best they can in my class. It's just that in a nutshell.

When speaking with me about what she believes to be the most important lesson she shares with students whose first language is AAVE, Tina expands on her belief that all students can learn with these words:

I make it a point to let them know three things. I always tell them, you are smart, you are intelligent, and you are bright and don't you let anybody tell you otherwise.

She explained her students' reaction to this statement of her belief in them in this fashion.

They are dumbfounded. They really are. They just — some of them just can't believe [it] and I have to keep telling them that over and over again, until it gets in their spirit. That they are smart, they are intelligent, and they are bright... You know, I would tell them I have a friend who can read a book, a book that's about a

couple of inches thick, in about a couple of days. Whereas it may take me three weeks to read that same book, but the end result is we both read the book. And I want them to know it may take you a little bit longer to grasp a concept, but it's Okay.

In a description of her expectations of students, Sarah also presents her belief in the ability of all her students to learn.

I want them all to pass my class. I want them all to learn the basic concepts, because that's really all I'm trying to get across – the basic concepts of how numbers work and why they're important. I want them all to succeed.

Exploring Teachers' Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds shape their beliefs, which shape their perceptions of and interactions with their students. With the exception of Matthew, all primary participants report growing up in predominately African-American communities (rural, suburban, and rural) in which they were exposed to AAVE. Although the degree to which participants acknowledge using AAVE differs, all but Matthew indicate an understanding of and ability to communicate in AAVE. Margaret, for example, states:

I grew up with people speaking the very same way, so I have no problem communicating or understanding exactly what they're talking about.

Both Sheila and Sarah admit to AAVE use with close friends and family members in relaxed informal settings; however, Sarah indicates that she rarely finds herself in such social situations and therefore uses AAVE on a minimal basis. When interacting with me

during interviews, I found that we both occasionally lapsed into unconscious instances of AAVE use; such was also the case with Tina and Margaret.

Because Matthew spent the early years of his childhood growing up in the Caribbean he does not readily communicate in AAVE. He does however have an understanding of AAVE and the ability to speak the dialect of English employed by many in his homeland.

Primary research participants indicate they hear AAVE used in the school in which they work and in various sectors of their communities, to include locations such as malls, supermarkets, barber and beauty salons, churches, and libraries. However, Matthew notes that because his immediate community is multi-cultural, it is not often that he hears AAVE spoken in his neighborhood.

The Awakening: Standard and Nonstandard Communication

There may be some truth to the old adage “first impressions are lasting impressions,” as it suggests we quickly make decisions and judgments about others based on their appearance and our initial interactions with them, to include the manner in which they communicate. The participants in this research project have vivid recollections of when they became cognizant of the differences between formal and informal speech and their awareness of the impact of their way of speaking on others’ perception of them.

Both Margaret and Tina recall becoming aware of the differences between formal and informal speech as a young adolescent in the setting of school. Margaret relates her memory of the experience below:

I think I had a teacher to point that out to me. I started on this academic...gifted and TAG (Talented and Gifted) piece probably around fourth or fifth grade, and that separated me from a lot of other kids in the school, in my elementary school. Those teachers who worked with me, allowed me to be me, but interjected various pieces of conversation and vocabulary that opened me up. But in junior high school I got it full blown, because then I was in all TAG classes. Those teachers, the youngest teacher had to have been like maybe a 150 [years old]. And so there we were, she was speaking from the Charles Dickens' era, and she spoke that way all the time... it was a wonderful experience. [It] [o]pened me up.

Tina also learned about the differences between formal and informal speech at an early age.

Ever since I can remember, particularly the elementary school that I attended had predominantly Black teachers. They were very, very particular about how we spoke, even though we had our own little jargon that we would use. But they just wanted to make sure that we spoke correctly, [that] we spoke correct English. So, when did I first realize the difference between formal and informal, it probably had a lot to do with this... So as a youngster, yes, I was very much aware of the formal and informal.

Matthew makes the claim that he became aware of the difference between formal and informal communication between the age of twelve and his lower teens.

Informal speech to us was, you know, what you do when you're just talking to your friends, and for a significant amount of time that was just kind of [typical] communication for us. But you got [came] to understand over a period of time

that if you wanted to make it in this life, if you wanted to become professional, then you had to learn to speak proper grammar and write proper grammar, and be able to compose in proper grammar and so on.

Sarah and Sheila speak of becoming aware of the differences between formal and informal speech as young adults. Because she was on her own at 17, Sarah was forced to take on adult responsibilities early in life, and with that came the necessity to be able to communicate with others in a manner deemed acceptable by the larger society. Sheila recounts a story from her college days which triggered her awareness of the differences between formal and informal communication. When explaining to me that people have always remarked about her refined manner of speaking, Sheila shared:

One of my sisters will sometimes refer to me as Miss Ann. Well, it's a term of endearment. Rather than say acting White, they would just say Miss Ann. But what's so ironic about that is the middle sister who gave me this name was the person who was always on me about the importance of speaking correctly. I remember writing a letter to her. She corrected the letter, sent it back to me with "You are a freshman in college. We don't write like this, nor speak like this." Yes, she did. "I expect you to correct this letter and send it back to me." Ms. [Nancy] as we call her.

An awareness of what we say and how we say it matters. The language one speaks is a readily identifiable marker of social class membership (Delpit, 2002). As soon as we open our mouths, the words emitted, standard or nonstandard dialects, are often triggers that shape other's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about us. The participants in

this study are acutely aware that the manner in which one speaks impacts others' perceptions of us. Margaret demonstrates her understanding of this concept through the admission of her belief in the importance of adjusting her speech/language to meet the expectations of the audience being addressed.

I am sure that as educators we use a lot of different voices. When you step into the classroom it's just public persona, and so you have to be who you say you are. They are paying you and you are a representative of a very elite group of people that go all the way back to Socrates and Aristotle... So having understood vernacular differences growing up, makes it very easy for me to come in and out of vernacular when I am talking to students on a private level. But it does make a difference [the way one speaks] and I know that I am perceived by students, as well as parents, as well as peers, colleagues, my superiors, those who are under me— All of them may have different perceptions of the way I address, the way I speak, the way I am purposeful in my language...[Y]ou have to learn to master that in the field that we're in, you have to.

Tina learned through the examples of her mother and grandmother about the influences of one's speech pattern/language on the way we are perceived by others.

My mother would answer the telephone for my father, and he had his own business. So, people who called the house were predominantly White, but they did not know my mother was Black because of the way she spoke on the phone. Her dialect was not distinguishable at all. And it's so ironic because my mother didn't have a high school education, but people were hard pressed to determine

what her ethnicity was. But at times, I do – for lack of a better way of putting it; I get down on the same level with my students. I can talk just like they talk– let them know– and I guess it’s a way of communicating with them and letting them know that I’m not all that high and mighty– that, and it really is a way of communicating, a way of putting them at ease... [B]ut I think my grandmother probably had more impact because she probably knew that in order to survive in a society that was multi-cultural, there were certain things like our traditional dialect that would not work for us in all places. So, I think my grandmother and my mom would just try to let us know that there is a time and a place for everything and when we had to put on that — it’s not really a show, but when we have to be more refined with our speaking they just wanted us to be prepared to be able to function in all walks of life.

Similar to Tina, Matthew indicates his mother was instrumental in cultivating his understanding of how the language he uses shapes others’ views of him.

...its funny, my mother always tried to instill in me the importance of speaking properly. And so when I would speak Jamaican dialect, she would correct me you know. And over time you realize that how you speak influences the way you are perceived, and so even though I know Jamaican dialect to a great extent, depending on my environment, I would speak proper English or proper grammar. And I learned that at a very early age ...I would say, eight, nine, ten [years old] was the first time I learned that.

Sheila asserts from a young age, she, like Tina and Matthew, became aware that the way one speaks impacts the views/perceptions of those with whom we interact of us.

Early on I learned that how I was perceived by other people was directly connected to the way I spoke. I remember growing up, as I said to you in that little...town, and when I would go in [the local store] and say what my grandmother, Mrs. Cleveland sent me here and they would always stand. And then, in other areas, applying for jobs I was always described as articulate. And I came to learn that that was how other people described us if we spoke well. It was almost always on all of my evaluations, my presence, not just my physical presence, but my presentation. So I learned early on that how I spoke definitely had some connection to how people perceived me, even my own people.

Sarah is unable to identify a specific moment in time when she learned that language we use influences others' perception of us, but she expresses her awareness of this phenomenon in these words:

I've always believed that I had students competing within the society, this White society, and therefore I had to speak the language that the society expected. So, I carried myself in a manner that you know, I was supposed to be the good girl.

And I have always believed that you could be what you want to be, but there are certain behaviors that you must display when you are out in the public.

Interaction with AAVE speakers in the community. To further understand participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the context of their immediate communities, I interviewed primary participants with regard to their interactions with

AAVE speakers in the local community. When I asked participants about their exchanges with AAVE speakers in their communities, all but Matthew acknowledge the use of AAVE with individuals who initiate conversations with them in AAVE. Margaret responded to the inquiry regarding her use of AAVE with those in the community in this manner:

I accept people for who they are, where they are... Depending on the situation, if it is more appropriate to use vernacular, yes. I don't walk around being a teacher of English all day long...

Sheila answered to the question about her interactions with AAVE speakers in her community and her use of AAVE with community members below, similar to Margaret:

Well, I'm always a firm believer that all words are good words and they are used to communicate. Some are more appropriate than others. I don't ever want to make people think or feel that I'm looking down on them... Yes, I guess, I do [use AAVE] because I'm very conscious of the two levels and I'm bilingual.

Sarah also admits to using AAVE with AAVE speakers in her community, although on a limited basis. Her response to the question about the use of AAVE with those who speak the dialect follows:

Not so much. I mean, because that's not really my language. Let me take that back; that's not something I use on a regular basis, so consequently, it's just not a norm for me.

Tina simply affirms, "Usually, I will talk just like they talk," when interacting

with AAVE speakers. Whereas Matthew asserts, in his response to the question about AAVE use with others in the community: “Not really..., but they [AAVE speakers] will use it. I just accept it that that’s how they speak, that’s how they communicate. That’s fine with me.

An Appropriate Time and Place: AAVE Speakers Must be Bilingual

When sharing their thoughts above on the potential influences of AAVE use on students’ futures, research participants in this study allude to their belief that there is an appropriate time and an appropriate place for the use of AAVE and Standard American English, coupled with this belief, primary participants in this study hold to the conviction that students who come to school with AAVE as their primary language should also acquire the language of the majority, that is, Standard English. Teachers in this research project ultimately express the belief that AAVE speakers should be bilingual, if they are to succeed in school and the larger community. However, participants do not endorse the notion that AAVE should be wiped out of students’ linguistic backgrounds, but instead, it should be acknowledged as a valuable component of a student’s identity.

Although she does not state explicitly that AAVE speakers in her classes should be bilingual, Margaret suggests her belief in this concept with these words:

Children need to understand that they need to be understood by everyone. So if you’re speaking to me, or you’re speaking to someone that’s African American and you want me to understand what you’re saying, that [the use of AAVE] may be fine one on one. But if you’re trying to explain a viewpoint or a lesson to the entire class and [you are going to] be rated by peers ...well, they may not have

understood what you were trying to say. So getting them [AAVE speakers] to understand that— that's a whole, another degree of thinking, another level for them to realize, you mean they don't understand what I'm saying – no they don't understand you.

When discussing the most important lesson she shares with AAVE speakers in her classes, Sheila espoused her belief that AAVE speakers must be bilingual.

I think sometimes with them, accepting them, but saying to them you need to know when and how to make the transition. I know you know slang expressions, I know when you speak with your friends you don't want to come off as a bookworm, or acting and speaking White, but we need to know how to make the transition from speaking informally and speaking using formal acceptable language...Usually they are accepting of that, as long as it's, I don't think they see it as a put down...because I've had them ask, do you talk like that all the time with your friends? And I'll say sometimes and sometimes it depends. I say, I go back and forth, if we're just having a good old hand slapping good time, I come out of my bag too, and they are accepting.

Similarly, Tina and Sarah believe AAVE speakers should be bilingual, although Tina indicates it does not concern nor bother her when AAVE speakers use AAVE in the classroom setting. She insists students who use AAVE will know intuitively when it is appropriate to use dialect and when it is not.

I think a good example of it, begins with dress; kids know, and I believe if the kids know that there's a time to be a casual dresser and there's a time to dress up—

well, church for example, they [AAVE speakers] know, a lot of kids know that when they go to church, or even when they are going for a job interview, they know what to wear. So I think the same thing is applicable when they have to change from standard to vernacular, or from vernacular to standard, I think they know, I think it's something innate... They are living and stepping in two different worlds.

Of all the primary participants in this study, Matthew comes closest to explicitly articulating the belief that AAVE speakers should be bilingual.

So, I think it is great when they know both [AAVE and Standard American English], and I have a lot of students— I don't want to call their names but I know I have this girl, as a matter of fact, sometimes she does announcements on TV, but she speaks African—American Vernacular all the time, but when she is on TV, her grammar is perfect. You know, so I can tell that she knows both. She is a dual speaker. When it's like that, I think it's absolutely okay.

Teachers' Reaction to AAVE Use During Class Time

Throughout the interview process, all teachers in this study, with the exception of Tina, reported that their reaction to students' use of AAVE during class time was to correct, restate, redirect, or rephrase what was said by students to Standard American English. Tina, however, indicates when she hears AAVE in class, her approach/reaction is to do nothing at all, that, is she accepts students' use of AAVE in the classroom.

For Margaret, Matthew, Sheila, and Sarah, all of whom admit to correcting students' use of AAVE to Standard American English, there are variations to their approaches as to when and/or if any action is taken at all.

Margaret indicates she tends to rephrases AAVE statements made by students to Standard American English.

Off the top of their head a student might just blurt out something, and sometimes it is incorrect, even though we have guidelines for how we're going to speak in this classroom. We'll use standard language as much as possible. We don't use slang. We don't use four-letter words. But off the cuff a kid will just say something. And I'll say, hmm, so you mean — and then the student will look for the word that is a standard word that they will all understand.

Matthew states he typically corrects students who use AAVE in his classroom; although he admits he is not always consistent with this approach. He notes that there are occasions when he does not offer corrections at all.

I find myself correcting them back to Standard English. I don't do it all the time, but it happens on occasion. Mainly because I am wondering do they know what Standard English should be, not because they can't use it as a method of communication, but I figure in the real world, they're going to have to know standard grammar, if you're writing reports, trying for a job, whatever. They have to know standard grammar. They have to speak it well... So, I correct them and things like that... The truth is I don't know whether that's wrong or right. I remember as a kid growing up, that's what my mother used to do to me, and that's

what my teachers used to do to me – if I spoke Jamaican dialect, which is patois, which is similar in a sense to African American vernacular. They would always correct me, and so I do the same with my students because I want them to know standard English – if I was confident that they knew standard English well enough I would leave it alone, but I’m not so sure of that and so they’re going to have to communicate in English, apply for jobs and things like that – so it’s okay for them to know both, but because I’m not so sure sometimes I’ll correct them... As I said before, if it’s blatant like “Who do you think you is?” I just reflectively correct it, but sometimes I don’t because I realize that’s how they communicate with each other. If a kid walks up and says “What you be doing?” I don’t correct them when they ask me that because I know what they’re saying, what they’re trying to find out. But when I hear it, the first thing that comes to my head is, “Is this how they communicate at home? Is this what this kid knows? Is that how he’s going to try to communicate as a professional?” – You know, I mean he’s not at that stage yet, but I want to make sure that he can speak proper grammar, proper English, in addition to his regular way of communicating with his African American friends.

Sheila, like Matthew, expresses that she corrects students when they use AAVE in her classroom, but her approach is to rephrase, restate, or redirect, as she puts it. Again, similar to Matthew, Sheila also admits she does not apply these methods at all times. She explains her reaction to students’ use of AAVE below.

It is so unfortunate that the damage of 15 years can’t be corrected in nine months. I need children to feel as if this is a place where we can make mistakes, and

dwelling on correcting their grammar will not help them in learning how to express themselves. So what I do is sometimes simply rephrase it and let them hear it, or basically I rephrase it. ..Usually what I might do is restate what they have said, and usually if I restate what they have said correctly, sometimes they pick it up, sometimes they don't. But I don't do it every time. It's just periodically I will restate whatever it is they have said correctly. Some students will repeat it correctly, others, it's just over... Or asking, reminding them that this is an English class, I need you to speak appropriately. I need you to know how to do this, demonstrate that you can make the transition.

Similar to her colleagues above, Sarah asserts that she also makes corrections when AAVE speakers use AAVE in the classroom setting.

I can deal with it, but I just correct them. When they use the "yo" or something, I say excuse me, then they get the point... I just make corrections if I think they are needed. And I don't make a big deal.

Interestingly, Sarah suggests if she had a class of only African American students and AAVE were used, she would use the opportunity as a teachable moment to address AAVE use.

I mean it would be one thing if I had a classroom full of all Black kids.

I have never had a classroom full of all Black kids. So, I mean I might say something to the class, or group, whereas I wouldn't do it [with my current classes]. Somebody may say something and I may make a correction, give them a

correction and keep on going. I may take that as an opportunity to address [AAVE], if it were just all Black students.

Tina's reaction to AAVE use in the classroom is counter to her colleagues in this study. In fact, she purports that she is accepting of students' use of AAVE in class.

...It really doesn't bother me at all. Because I know that even though students may use Vernacular English in class; they do know that there is a difference. And, it really is, when they do use it in the class, it seems as [if], as I said earlier, it's like camaraderie. They feel comfortable using it and they know they aren't going to be reprimanded for it. And for me, it's a way of letting them know, that you know, because the subject area I teach, it can be very challenging. And I'll try to use whatever mode I can to get these kids involved. If that's what they have to do to feel relaxed, comfortable, and open up their minds for learning, then use it.

Theory in Action: Observation of Teachers' Reaction to AAVE Use in Class

The data collected below during observations present a snapshot of primary participants' reaction(s) to AAVE use in their classrooms, and provide an opportunity for comparison of teachers' espoused reaction to AAVE use with their actual behaviors observed during instruction. As reported above, the response(s) of primary participants in this study to AAVE use in the classroom setting varies from correcting, rephrasing, redirecting, and/or restating AAVE speakers' words to Standard American English, to no reaction at all, or general acceptance of AAVE use.

Observations: Margaret in the Classroom Setting

I conducted three observations of each primary participant's classroom. During the first visit to Margaret's classroom I observed her in action with one of her Human Growth and Development classes, which largely consisted of a discussion guided by Margaret that centered on students' reactions to and thoughts about a recent visit of HIV/AIDS patients to their classroom who shared their stories with the class. As the class progressed, I witnessed five instances of students, all of which were African American females, using AAVE (see Table 4.15 below for details). Only once during the class did Margaret acknowledge and address a student's use of AAVE. This occurred when the class discussion moved to some of the illegal activities in which one of the patients had been involved. During this phase of the discussion Margaret shared a brief story with students regarding a recent missionary trip she made to South America, at which time she had the opportunity to visit a women's prison and meet, in her words, one of the most dangerous individuals held captive there. As she told the story of holding a conversation with the prisoner, a student, an African American female student, asked "Was you scared?" Upon hearing this statement, Margaret promptly responded with a simple "hum," in a nonjudgmental and nonthreatening tone, causing the student to restate her question, "Were you scared?" in Standard American English.

Table 4.15 *Margaret, Observation 1: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | When describing a female prisoner she visited in South America. “Watch me what I’m a do.” “Watch me I’m a take his money.” “She don’t know what I done– what I could do?” Number of Instances= 2 | AA (female) “Was you scared?” AA (female) “These eight girls jumped another girl, all ovah a boy though.” AA (female) I done seen...” AA (female) “She ain’t got no nails...” AA (female) “Her skin strong.” *AA males rarely contributed to the discussion. Number of Instances= 5 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the following statements: AA (female) “These eight girls jumped another girl, all ovah a boy though.” AA (female) I done seen...” AA (female) “She ain’t got no nails...” AA (female) “Her skin strong.” | Prompting student to rephrase statement– “Was you scared?” Changed to “Were you scared?” when the teacher responded with “hum?” |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 9 W= 7 H= 2 NA=0 AP= 0 ME=2 |
| Total Number of Students | | 20 |

In the next observation I conducted of another one of Margaret’s Human Growth and Development classes, which the patients diagnosed with HIV/AIDS also visited, I witnessed only one occurrence of AAVE use, as depicted in Table 4.16. On this occasion,

the student employing AAVE was a Hispanic female who responded to another student's observation about the type of relationships the patients had with their parents. Margaret stated, "So they didn't have a strong relationship with their parents. Her statement was followed by these words from the student: "No, but that don't have nothing to do with it, cause some people don't have good relationships with their parents." Margaret offered no rephrased version of the statement into Standard American English, nor did she acknowledge that there was any AAVE use on the part of the student at all.

Table 4.16 *Margaret, Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | Number of Instances= 0 | Hispanic (female) "No but that don't have nothing to do with it, cause some people don't have good relationships with their parents." Number of Instances= 1 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | No reaction to AAVE use by Hispanic female above. | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 8 W= 6 H= 3 NA=0 AP= 0 ME=3 |
| Total Number of Students | | 20 |

During the third observation of Margaret's classroom, I monitored her interaction with yet another group of students. On this occasion, I noted five instances of AAVE use, all by African American students, both male and female, but the majority (four of the five cases) of which were produced by the male students. As the class completed an

assignment using their individually assigned laptop computers to view a video clip, an African American student entered and prepared to begin the lesson. She pointed out to Margaret, “Ain’t no more headphones.” Margaret responded, “Huh, there aren’t any more headphones,” rephrasing the student’s words to Standard American English. As shown in Table 4.17, this is the only time during the class period that she addresses AAVE use.

Table 4.17 *Margaret, Observation 3: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
|--|--|---|
| | | AA (female) "Ain't no more headphones." AA (male) "I 'on know how to write this." AA (male) "Mines did to" (referring to a video clip which repeated itself). AA (male) "He git one shot everyday in his eyes." AA (male) "David (pseudonym), He said uh, member when you ...talking about people with the skin that was like plastic." Number of instances= 5 |
| | Number of instances= 0 | |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the following statements: AA (male) "Mines did to" (referring to a video clip which repeated itself). AA (male) "He git one shot everyday in his eyes." AA (male) "David (pseudonym), He said uh, member when you ...talking about people with the skin that was like plastic." | Rephrases AA female's statement to "There aren't any more headphones." |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 11 W= 3 H= 3 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 17 |

The three observations of Margaret's classroom reveal consistencies with her purported approach recorded above during interviews, regarding her reaction to AAVE

use in the classroom. Margaret admits to rephrasing students' statements to Standard American English when AAVE is employed during class. However, it became clear during observations that this is not a practice exercised each time AAVE is used in class, as Margaret only implemented this approach once during the numerous instances of AAVE use cited above. She did, however, employ an additional technique during observations not mentioned during interviews, that is, Margaret prompted a student to rephrase her own AAVE statement, by simply using a verbal cue such as "hum," and waiting for the student to restructure her words to Standard American English.

Interestingly, observations also uncovered on a rare occasion that Margaret employed AAVE in the classroom setting. This occurred twice, during the initial observation, as Margaret told her class the story of her meeting with an inmate in a South American prison. She presented the story in the voice of the female prisoner, that is, Margaret used the words of the inmate, not her own. This is an interesting finding, given that it is highly unlikely the first language of the inmate is English. The question remains, why did Margaret present portions of her statements in AAVE? During the second and third visits to Margaret's classroom I witnessed no use of AAVE on her part.

Observations: Sheila in the Classroom Setting

When I conducted my first observation of one of Sheila's World Civilization classes, she and her students were engaged in the reading and a lively discussion of the classic national epic of France, *The Song of Roland*. Initially during class Sheila posed a series of closed questions to students, later shifting to more open ended questions as she

and students delved deeper into the details of the story and reviewed the characteristics of epic heroes.

Presented below in Table 4.18, I noted seven occurrences of AAVE use during this lesson. However, there were only two occasions during which Sheila rephrased the statements made by an African American male and an African American female.

Table 4.18 *Sheila, Observation 1: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
|--|---|--|
| | | AA (male) "What that got to do with yesterday?" AA (male) "There was a worksheet? Ain't get no worksheet." AA (male) "He bout to get beat up (the character Roland)." AA (male) "Ain't he sposed to be like that dude? He like the head dude." AA (male) "He ain't never need..." AA (male) "He don't care." AA (female) "Even if Oliver was concerned, he should have took out his horn. He should have did something." Number of instances= 7 |
| | Number of instances= 0 | |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the following statements: AA (male) "What that got to do with yesterday?" AA (male) "There was a worksheet? Ain't get no worksheet." AA (male) "He bout to get beat up (the character Roland)." AA (male) "Ain't he sposed to be like that dude? He like the head dude." AA (male) "He will never need..." | Rephrases the statement "He don't care" to "He doesn't care." Rephrases "He should have took out his horn" to "He should have taken out his horn." |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 10 W= 0 H= 1 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 11 |

I conducted the second observation of Sheila, during one of her World Literature courses. She had students begin the class by reading an article entitled *Saving Baseball in China* and then writing a summary of it using their laptop computers. To activate students' thinking about the article, Sheila opened the lesson by asking several students to explain why they believed it would be important to save baseball in China. Sheila followed her question by having students identify specific aspects of an effective summary. Sheila and her students ended the lesson with an introductory reading and discussing of *Dante's Inferno*.

Similar to observation one above, I noticed several (four) instances of AAVE use. However, unlike the initial observation, Sheila did not acknowledge student's use of AAVE nor did she make attempts to rephrase AAVE statements made by African American or Hispanic students to Standard American English, as noted in Tables 4.19 and 4.20 below.

Table 4.19 *Sheila, Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | | AA (male) "Mine comin' along alright." H (female) "He be playing..." AA (male) "She swear he go hard..." AA (female) "I had seen a movie like the night before. It was like on my way home, there was like evil Care Bears, and they was like chasin' me- and they was all black and black and red..." Number of instances= 0 Number of instances= 4 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 5 W= 3 H= 2 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 10 |

The final observation of Sheila took place with the same group of World Literature students I observed during my initial visit to her classroom. Because of their high level of achievement on Achieve 3000, an online reading intervention program, Sheila prepared a special incentive for the class, a breakfast treat celebration. Prior to commencing the celebration, Sheila asked students to complete the same warm-up activity assigned to students during the second observation, that is, students were instructed to read the story *Saving Baseball in China* and then complete a brief summary

of the article. While in the classroom, I observed three instances of student AAVE use. Again, just as in interview number two above, Sheila made no effort to rephrase or otherwise correct AAVE speakers' words to Standard American English.

Table 4.20 *Sheila, Observation 3: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
|--|---|--|
| | Number of instances= 0 | AA (male) "Oh so you was right." AA (female) "He don't know when to stop talking" AA (male) "My baby don't feel good." Number of instances= 3 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 8 W= 0 H= 1 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 9 |

Sheila's report of her reaction to AAVE use in the classroom during interviews is in sync with her response to AAVE use during observations. On occasion she opted to rephrase or restate AAVE speakers' words in Standard American English, but as she stated above, this is not an approach she employs whenever AAVE is spoken, in fact for the 14 occurrences of AAVE use observed in Sheila's classroom, only twice did she make attempts to restate students words. This is consistent with what she relates in interviews regarding her reaction to AAVE use in the classroom, as she indicates she does not always correct AAVE speakers' words.

Unlike, Margaret, at no time does Sheila employ AAVE in the classroom setting. This is not surprising, as she is an instructor of English Literature, and therefore more apt to pay attention to the manner in which she presents her thoughts to students.

Observations: Matthew in the Classroom Setting

In the course of my initial visit to Matthew's classroom, I observed his interactions with students enrolled in one of his biology courses. Shortly after the bell sounded, upon entering the classroom, I observed Matthew engaged in a discussion with a small group of students seated near the front of the classroom regarding one of the many assignments posted on the board they were responsible for completing. Several students worked in pairs, some in small groups, and others individually to complete various assignments ranging from plotting the population of light and dark moths over time, comparing and contrasting different types of embryos, as well as the bone structure in the hands and feet of various organisms, and completing a lab activity related to the human genetic system. As revealed in Table 4.21, I noticed two instances of AAVE use during the observation; however, Matthew exhibited no reaction to the statements, nor did he address them in any manner.

Table 4.21 *Matthew, Observation 1: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | Number of instances= 0 | AA female “Yes they is.” AA (female) “I ‘on know.” Number of instances= 2 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 8 W= 5 H= 2 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 2 |
| Total Number of Students | | 17 |

While in Matthew’s classroom for the second observation of a different biology class, I noted seven occurrences of AAVE. However, unlike the initial observation above, on one occasion Matthew did address a student’s use of AAVE during class. As illustrated in Table 4.22, when a female African American student asked Matthew “What this be?” as he distributed a handout to the class, he immediately prompted her to rephrase her statement by posing a verbal cue, “Huh?” When the student did not provide an immediate rephrased response, another African American female restated her words in Standard American English. Matthew then asked the first “You want to ask me that again,” at which time the original student posed her question in Standard American English. Ironically, on another occasion when a Hispanic male used AAVE in class, Matthew displayed no reaction.

Table 4.22 *Matthew, Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | | AA (female) "I ain't get no..." AA (female) "You gon have ants." AA (female) "I ain't say nuthin'." AA (female) "You is crazy." AA (female) "You was knocked out." AA (female) "What this be?" H (male) I didn't get no paper Number of instances= 7 |
| | Number of instances= 0 | |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction the following statements: AA (female) "I ain't get no..." AA (female) "You gon have ants." AA (female) "I ain't say nuthin'." AA (female) "You is crazy." AA (female) "You was knocked out." H (male) I didn't get no paper | When AA female said "What this be?" The teacher redirected her twice, until she restated the sentence in Standard American English. Initially the teacher responded with "Huh?" Then another student AA (female) put the statement in SE. The teacher then asked the first student "You want to ask me that again?" She then repeated the statement in Standard English, "What is this paper?" |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 10 W= 2 H= 6 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 18 |

During the third observation of Matthew's classroom depicted in Table 4.23, I saw him in action with the initial group of biology students observed above. Similar to

observation two of Matthew's classroom, I witnessed numerous (five) events of AAVE use, but only one occasion when Matthew reacted to an AAVE speakers use of AAVE. When a student stated "It's what you think gonna happen." Matthew simply restated the student's words in Standard American English and quickly moved on with the lesson at hand, with no pause and seemingly no expectation for the student to rephrase the statement, unlike his response in observation two above when he prompted and waited for the student employing AAVE to rephrase her statement in Standard American English.

Table 4.23 *Matthew, Observation 3: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | | AA (female) “The results is the conclusions” AA (female) “It’s what you think gonna happen” AA (female) “She be tryin’ to lie.” AA female “They was in my face...” AA (female) I’m a be in D.C. all Day. Number of instances= 5 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Number of instances= 0 | |
| | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the following statements: AA (female) “The results is the conclusions” AA (female) “She be tryin’ to lie.” AA female “They was in my face...” AA (female) I’m a be in D.C. all Day. | The teacher restates the student’s statement “It’s what you think gonna happen” to Standard American English– “It’s what you think is going to happen.” “Based on what?” |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME= Middle Eastern | | AA= 8 W= 4 H= 2 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 2 |
| Total Number of Students | | 16 |

In interviews, Matthew indicated his reaction to AAVE use in the classroom setting is to make corrections when students employ the dialect. However, he also expressed this is not always his response, as he sometimes does nothing when AAVE speakers use AAVE during class. Matthew’s espoused reactions to AAVE use are consistent with his actions witnessed during observations. Similar to Margaret and Sheila, he occasionally rephrased students’ AAVE statements to Standard American English, but

this transpired on a limited basis, only twice out of 14 instances of AAVE use. Also like Sheila, at no time during observations did Matthew use AAVE.

Observations: Sarah in the Classroom Setting

Of the three observations I conducted of Sarah's Algebra Support classes, two were with the same class, observation one and three. Students enrolled in Algebra Support courses at Martha Washington School are provided instruction aimed at equipping them with the prerequisite skills needed to successfully meet acceptable benchmark scores on required state and grade-level high stakes math tests. As noted in Tables 4.24–4.26, I witnessed students using AAVE during each visit to Sarah's classroom. Only during observation two did Sarah address AAVE use in her classroom. While participating in a review activity involving two teams of students, a Hispanic male stated "Can we try again? We don't got nothing." Sarah promptly restated his words in Standard American English, actually beginning the statement with a Southern Vernacular expression, "Y'all don't have anything at all."

Table 4.24 Sarah, *Observation 1: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | <p>“If you had a bigger number like 50 what are you going to do, you ain’t got but 10 fingers.”</p> <p>“It’s either greater or less, and ain’t nothing left but equals. The only thing left is equal to...”</p> <p>“Everything ain’t gonna be fun, this is high school.”</p> <p>Number of instances= 3</p> | <p>AA female: She ‘on go here no more</p> <p>AA female: It waitin’ right here</p> <p>AA (female) “You spose to multiply 108 times...”</p> <p>AA (male) “I ‘on like it when you stand up there and just talk.”</p> <p>AA (female) “See Ms. S., did you talk to Brenda? She still go here.”</p> <p>AA (female) “She in school and then...”</p> <p>Number of instances= 6</p> |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above: | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| <p>AA= African American</p> <p>W= White</p> <p>H= Hispanic</p> <p>NA= Native American</p> <p>AP= Asian/Island Pacific</p> <p>ME= Middle Eastern</p> | | <p>AA= 5</p> <p>W= 0</p> <p>H= 4</p> <p>NA=0</p> <p>AP= 0</p> <p>ME= 0</p> |
| Total Number of Students | | 9 |

Table 4.25 Sarah, Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | <p>“It ain’t over yet...”</p> <p>“We don’t got no money.”</p> <p>“It ain’t too late, you are absolutely right.”</p> <p>Number of instances= 3</p> | <p>H (male) “Can we try again? We don’t got nothing.”</p> <p>AA male: “Got a big smile on his face like he done bin to Chucky Cheese.”</p> <p>AA (male) “They done took my paper.”</p> <p>AA (male) “It a be buggin’.”</p> <p>AA (male) “On my 30 Gig, it got everything.”</p> <p>AA “male) “Nobody told me bout no test.”</p> <p>Number of instances= 6</p> |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | <p>Exhibits no reaction to the following statements:</p> <p>AA male: “Got a big smile on his face like he done bin to Chucky Cheese.”</p> <p>AA (male) “They done took my paper.”</p> <p>AA (male) “It a be buggin’.”</p> <p>AA (male) “On my 30 Gig, it got everything.”</p> <p>AA “male) “Nobody told me bout no test.”</p> | <p>Y’all don’t have anything at all– in response to a Hispanic male saying “We don’t got nothing.”</p> |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| <p>AA= African American</p> <p>W= White</p> <p>H= Hispanic</p> <p>NA= Native American</p> <p>AP= Asian/Island Pacific</p> <p>A=African</p> | | <p>AA= 3</p> <p>W= 0</p> <p>H= 5</p> <p>NA=0</p> <p>AP= 0</p> <p>A= 2</p> |
| Total Number of Students | | 10 |

Table 4.26 Sarah, Observation 3: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | “I don’t want you eating it, you are already charged up, you don’t need no more charge. Put it away.” “Take that thing (hood) off your head baby. Are you cold? I know you are not cold? You ain’t cold you just trying to look cool.” Number of instances= 2 | AA (female) “I ain’t even cuss, that was him.” Number of instances= 1 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME=Middle Eastern | | AA= 5 W= 0 H= 5 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 10 |

Sarah’s behavior during observations reflects the reaction she reported in interviews regarding AAVE use in the classroom setting, that is, similar to Margaret, Sheila, and Matthew, she tends to occasionally correct/rephrases AAVE statements to Standard American English. As noted in the observations of Sarah’s classroom above, only once out of 13 instances of AAVE use did she rephrase an AAVE statement to Standard American English.

Although Sarah employed Standard American English throughout the majority of the instructional time, she occasionally used AAVE with students during each

observation, unlike Margaret who used AAVE once during her initial observation and Sheila and Matthew who did not employ AAVE at all during classroom visits.

Observations: Tina in the Classroom Setting

Unlike the observations with the primary participants above, I observed Tina in the classroom setting with three different classes of Algebra students. During each of the three visits to Tina's classroom, I noted students using AAVE on numerous occasions, as reported in Tables Table 4.27–4.29. In the first observation, when a student asked the questions "It's gone be difficult," Tina rephrased it in Standard American English, "Is it going to be difficult?" However, this is the only instance during the class when she responded to AAVE use. Moreover, unlike Margaret, Shelia, or Matthew above, Tina did not prompt nor did she appear to wait for the student to restate his words in Standard American English. There were three additional occurrences of AAVE use in Tina's initial observation, to which she exhibited no reaction. During the second observation of Tina's classroom she showed no reaction to the only instance of AAVE use. Similar to observation one, students used AAVE several times (seven) during the third visit to Tina's classroom. Unlike her reaction in observation one, she responded to the one case of AAVE use by first repeating what the student stated and eventually moving on with the lesson, seemingly more concerned with the student's understanding of the mathematical concept in question than with her use of AAVE, as she does not attempt to prompt the student to rephrase her words in Standard American English.

The second occasion of AAVE use during Tina's third observation, came when she asked a student what she learned in the class that day? The student answered "I learnt

a lot,” and Tina simply restated her words in Standard American English “Did you learn a lot?”

Table 4.27 Tina, Observation 1: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | “We ain’t got all day.” “Class ain’t over with yet.” Number of instances = 2 | AA (male) “It’s gone be difficult?” AA (male) “I ‘on know.” AA (male) “Don’t you gotta like times it by two.” AA (female) “How you do uh...?” AA (female) “I ‘on like that.” Number of instances = 4 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the following statements: AA (male) “I ‘on know.” AA (male) “Don’t you gotta like times it by two.” AA (female) “How you do uh...?” AA (female) “I ‘on like that.” | Rephrases the student’s question “It’s gone be difficult?” to “Is it going to be difficult?” |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME=Middle Eastern | | AA= 12 W= 4 H= 2 NA=0 AP= 0 ME= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 18 |

Table 4.28

Tina, Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting

Table 4.28 Tina, *Observation 2: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | “Spell it one mo time.” “Where my 50 cent at?” Number of instances= 2 | AA (female) “It was Sumthin’ like that, never mind.” AA (female) “I Still ain’t gittin’ it.” Number of instances= 2 |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non-affirming |
| | Exhibits no reaction to the AAVE statements above | |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| A= African AA= African American W= White H= Hispanic NA= Native American AP= Asian/Island Pacific ME=Middle Eastern | | A= 2 AA= 5 W= 6 H= 7 NA=0 AP= 0 A= 0 |
| Total Number of Students | | 20 |

Table 4.29 *Tina, Observation 3: AAVE Use in the Classroom Setting*

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| AAVE Use | Teacher | Student(s) |
| | <p>“Read slowly now, we ain’t rocket scientist here” (as a student read from a card related to a math game the class played).</p> <p>“Ain’t say you were retarded.”</p> <p>“You blind? You can’t see?” (stated playfully to a student male having difficulty seeing the board). The teacher wrote large numbers on the board to accommodate the student.</p> <p>Number of instances= 3</p> | <p>AA (male) “Yes you is... you all up in here.”</p> <p>AA (male) “Give’ my pencil.”</p> <p>AA (female) “We wuz working with a partner.”</p> <p>AA (male) “I member that–member.”</p> <p>AA (male) “Fifty–fo”</p> <p>Hispanic (female) “Don’t that thang always equal one?”</p> <p>AA (female) I Learnt a lot.</p> <p>Number of instances= 7</p> |
| Response/Reaction to AAVE Use | Affirming | Non–affirming |
| | <p>Exhibits no reaction to the following statements:</p> <p>AA (male) “Yes you is... you all up in here.”</p> <p>AA (male) “Give’ my pencil.”</p> <p>AA (female) “We wuz working with a partner.”</p> <p>AA (male) “I member that–member.”</p> <p>AA (male) “Fifty–fo”</p> <p>AA (female) I Learnt a lot.</p> | <p>Teacher responds to the AAVE statement “Don’t that thang always equal one” by asking “What” and then repeating a portion of the student’s initial statement (“That thang”), followed by “Not that thang.” The teacher goes on to say “Alright, four to the zero power is how much? Any number based to the zero power is always one? Not that thang, but it’s one.”</p> |
| Ethnicity of Students | | Ethnicity of Students |
| <p>A= African</p> <p>AA= African American</p> <p>W= White</p> <p>H= Hispanic</p> <p>NA= Native American</p> <p>AP= Asian/Island Pacific</p> <p>ME=Middle Eastern</p> | | <p>A= 1</p> <p>AA= 7</p> <p>W= 1</p> <p>H= 6</p> <p>NA=0</p> <p>AP= 0</p> <p>A= 0</p> |
| Total Number of Students | | 15 |

Tina’s reaction to AAVE use in the classroom during observations is not altogether consistent with her reported response in interviews, during which she indicated

her acceptance of AAVE use in class and her tendency to do nothing when students use the dialect, because as she stated, it [AAVE use] does not bother her. Although Tina did not appear concerned when students employed AAVE in the classroom setting, as noted during observation one and three, she did react occasionally to students' use of the dialect, by rephrasing their statements in Standard American English.

Similar to Sarah, Tina employed Standard American English throughout the majority of the instructional time. Likewise, she occasionally used AAVE with students during each observation, unlike Margaret who used AAVE on a rare occasion during her first observation and Sheila and Matthew who did not employ AAVE at any time during classroom visits.

Supporting the Achievement of AAVE Speakers: Teaching Styles and Classroom Practices

The literature is replete with research suggesting teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of students of color can impact their performance in school (Baugh, 2001; Blake & Cutler, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Harris–Wright, 1999; LeMoine, 2003; Rickford, 1999b; Tauber, 1997; Wolfram, 1999). Not only are these factors, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, important toward fostering high levels of student achievement, but what may be equally, if not more, important is what teachers do in the classroom setting to support students' academic success. To illustrate what primary participants in this study do to promote the achievement of AAVE speakers in their respective classrooms, this section presents findings related to teachers' individual and collective

teaching styles and the instructional practices they apply to support the learning and achievement of AAVE speakers.

Distinct Teaching Style

Scholars investigating exemplary African American teachers in their classrooms have identified varying components of their distinct teaching styles which contribute to the academic success of students of color, to include those who are AAVE speakers (Delpit, 2002; Foster, 2002; Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson–Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006). As noted in the literature, some of the characteristics of these successful African American teachers which manifest themselves in their distinct pedagogical styles include 1) a professed and demonstrated passion for teaching, 2) a deep and abiding ethic of caring, 3) maintaining a warm demander stance with students, 4) and undertaking the role of surrogate parent or the other mother (Ladson–Billings, 1994; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Irvine, 2002), all of which emerged as prominent themes during the course of this research project . Not all primary participants possess all four of the above characteristics as a part of their individual teaching styles, but as alluded to earlier in the profiles of primary participants and reported below in more detail, there are several which are shared across the group.

Passion for teaching. Much like teachers Ladson–Billings (1995) describes in her work centered on culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers in this study identify strongly with the craft of teaching. They are by no means ashamed or embarrassed about their chosen vocation. In fact, primary participants in this study possess what some may perceive as a considerable passion for teaching. They are deeply committed to their work

of helping all students achieve school success. While each participant demonstrates a zeal for teaching, Margaret, Sheila, Sarah, and Tina most explicitly articulate their conviction for working with students.

Margaret recalls early educational experiences from her youth which helped to shape her passion for teaching: “I was in love with teaching and books from a child and high school created a fire in me that just couldn’t be, the fire just couldn’t be put out.”

Sheila describes her passion for teaching in this manner:

...I would teach Sunday school. I would teach Bible school and [I] just had a love for it, and loved my teachers and wanted to emulate them. I do believe that it is my gift and my calling. I really do... I really love what I do, I have a passion for it and I love the subject matter that I teach. World Literature is so exciting, and I think when you bring that excitement into the class, or that enthusiasm, children pick up on you. If you are enthusiastic about it, and you think it’s the best thing since slice bread, children will buy into it.

During my second interview with Sheila, she recounted an instance in her classroom when she shared her passion for teaching with her students. She explains:

I remember the first time, I don’t know where it came from, I said that to someone and a student just said to me, she said, you know I have never heard a teacher say that –that this is their calling and this is their gift. And she was just taken by it, and periodically she would say “This is my calling,” imitating my voice and my mannerisms. And I would say “Yes, this is my calling, this is my gift”.

Similarly, Sarah expresses her love for teaching as follows: “There’s got to be some kind of internal dedication, some kind of drive, some kind of passion that you have. I think that you have to really, really want to work with our children.”

When asked how she demonstrates her dedication to the educational needs of her students, Tina described her passion for teaching as follows:

I don’t know...I think a lot of it is, it could just be innate, you know. It’s just something that’s rooted [within]... I probably demonstrated it to them [students] on a daily basis, but to really verbalize it. I mean, it’s something that’s within, it’s like the soul. It’s like a passion that you have, and sometimes it’s really difficult to put into words what it is, but it’s the determination that you want all your students to succeed. So, how do I go about demonstrating that to my students, by not being short with them, not being curt with them, making them aware that they are all valuable and any question that they have is important...

Similar to African American teachers in research conducted by Irvine (2002), I found that teachers in this study exhibit a strong and resolute sense of spirituality. They employed religious expressions often heard in the Black church such as “my calling,” “something that’s rooted within,” and “my gift” to describe their passion teaching. In fact, Margaret, a minister in her local church, Tina, a deaconess in her place of worship, along with Sheila and Sarah are all women of faith, attending church regularly. Their spirituality often appeared to manifest itself in the classroom setting. Irvine (2002) best describes their actions:

These teachers served as spiritual mentors and advisors for African American students. Sometimes their teaching became preaching when these teachers thought it necessary to bolster these children with their sermonettes about hard work, achievement, hope, appropriate behavior, and respect. (p. 144)

During classroom observations, primary participants demonstrated their passion and dedication to the teaching profession through various practices and behaviors, for example, they maintained a professional appearance and demeanor with students and colleagues at all times. For each interview and observation, Matthew was always clad in a tie and a freshly starched shirt and neatly pressed trousers. Margaret, Sheila, Sarah and Tina were always professionally and fashionably dressed, during all of my interactions with them throughout this research project. Teachers maintained safe, inviting, comfortable, neat and well organized classrooms, decorated with posters, student work, and educational resources reflecting their content area. Research participants further illustrated their passion for their craft through the level of preparation devoted to each lesson taught. They all exhibited evidence of planning, each posting learning/mastery objectives linked to national, state and local standards and benchmarks, instructional activities, and homework assignments on the board, prior to class and revisited them throughout the instructional period. Margaret, Matthew, and Sheila, took matters a step further, posting assignments on their individual Blackboard sites. Out of 15 classroom visits (three per teacher), only once was I unable to locate the learning/mastery objectives posted on the board, and even then, the second visit to Margaret's classroom, she verbally

framed the lesson for the day and seamlessly guided her students through the instructional process.

Participants also illustrate their passion and conviction for teaching by sharing their enthusiasm for their content area with students, as well as their extensive knowledge and understanding of the disciplines they teach.

Ethic of caring. In her work regarding African American teachers' perceptions of their professional roles and practices, Franita Ware (2002) acknowledges that the body of literature identifies "caring" as a key characteristic which underpins and explains many of the classroom practices and behaviors of dedicated and committed African American teachers. Tolliver (1993) further asserts caring is the foundation of good teaching which takes on many forms in the classroom setting. For example, scholars (Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2002) affirm that exemplary African American teachers demonstrate their ethic of care by cultivating personal yet professional relationships with students, often spending classroom and non classroom time with students listening to and addressing their problems, as a means of developing trust and mutual respect between teachers and students, with the ultimate goal of bolstering students' academic growth. Teachers also exhibit an ethic of care by providing students honest and truthful feedback and encouraging problem students to grow academically (Irvine, 2002).

On numerous occasions, throughout interviews and observations, the primary participants in this research project displayed an ethic of caring for their students in manners similar to those depicted by above. A few instances of this practice are captured below.

Margaret, for example, in her statement below, demonstrates an ethic of care by establishing professional and trusting relationships with her students.

...My classroom is my living room in many ways. While there's a healthy distance and respect that kids have for me, most of the time they don't find me so unapproachable that we can't get real about what's going on, and even to the point that kids get comfortable enough to say – 'I know what you gone say , I know what you gone say. Go ahead, go ahead and say it.' And I say, well, do you want me to say it in front of the class, the whole class, or do you want to talk out in the hall? 'No you might as well say it in front of everybody.

Margaret further illustrated an ethic of caring during the third observation I conducted of her classroom. As the lesson concluded, three students (African American females) eagerly gathered around Margaret and engaged her in a conversation about a fund raising activity in which they were participating. Margaret took the time to respond to their questions, while simultaneously joking around with them.

Not unlike Margaret, Sheila, Tina, and Matthew also exhibit an ethic of care through their cultivation of trusting professional relationships with students. However, the process of building such relationships varies across participants.

Sheila and Tina, for example, spend time establishing familial type bonds with students by sharing with them information about themselves and their families. Sheila states "They want to know about things, my family and what I do at home. They want to know about it. I think to get a better picture of who I am." Tina, expresses the notion of building kinship like bonds with students similarly:

Not only do they share, but I share with them too, because I think sometimes students think that we come from a different generation, which we do, but some of the same things [that] happened to us [happened] as well as with them. So, I'm just trying to get a connection between them, so they can feel comfortable in learning.

Sheila further demonstrates an ethic of caring through her celebration of her students' successes. After an observation I conducted of one of her classes, Sheila explained her rationale for providing students with breakfast treats:

I did that celebration for those students because that class, their reading levels had improved tremendously. Almost every kid in that class had improved by at least one grade level, a full grade level. I was very proud of them, and they had struggled so... I was so pleased with their scores... I promised them a treat. I love that group, and some of my hardcore behavior issues are in that class. More of those students have been suspended than any of the other students.

Tina also builds trusting professional relationships with students by attending to matters of importance to them. She terms her spontaneous departures from the immediate topic of a lesson to concerns related to students' personal lives a discussion of "life issues."

Tina outlines this approach as follows:

During the course of a lesson, just to get them to relax, I may ask them 'Oh, I heard you were talking about your being interviewed for a job, What happened with the job interview?' Or just something so that we can all chill out for a

minute, and let them know that it's okay, and then we'll go back to the topic.

Usually, if we are talking about something that may not be math's related as such, it sets a tone for the classroom, and it allows the students to feel even more free to express themselves and to— it really opens up an avenue for them to grasp the concepts I think. So periodically, I'll just talk about life issues with them.

Additionally, Tina demonstrates an ethic of care for her students by connecting with their parents to build and strengthen rapport between them (both parents and students).

...[S]ometimes parents will — well they have the email address and they know that they can email. And if I have had a discussion with one of the students, I have had parents to email me back and say thank you so much for talking to my daughter. She knows that she needs to get on the right track, and things like that. So they are extremely appreciative about the kinds of things I had done, attempted to do, and attempted to convey to their students. I don't recall ever having a negative email or letter from a minority parent. So they seem to be extremely appreciative.

Matthew frames his ethic of caring below in his explanation of how he demonstrates his dedication to the educational needs of his students as their teacher:

Well, by consistently being there and addressing their needs as you see them and never giving up on them...[T]hey have to know that you care about them and you want to see them do well, and you have to be constantly there with them in the

struggle for their education. So, just being there and working with them on a consistent basis, I think helps...

During my initial observation of Matthew he also illustrated an ethic of care, interacting with students and attending to their numerous questions during the lunch break which occurred half way between the instructional block. Several students remained in his classroom during the lunch period, all of them at some point posing questions to Matthew, some of which were school related and others which were not. Matthew took great care to respond to each of the students, to include a special needs student with difficulty speaking. To his credit, Matthew had no problem discerning the student's words and often provided elaborate responses to the student's questions.

Warm demander. To facilitate the school success of students of color, Irvine and Fraser (1998) suggest some exemplary African American educators adopt an educational stance referred to as the “warm demander,” through which they “provided a tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured, and disciplined classroom environment for kids whom society has psychologically and physically abandoned” (p. 1). Although it may be interpreted as harsh to the untrained or uninformed observer, according to Bondy and Ross (2008) the warm demander stance “communicates both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect” (p. 1).

With this in mind, all participants in this study demonstrate warm demander characteristics, which are borne out of an ethic of caring, as discussed above, which aids them in fostering relationships of trust and mutual respect with their students. These positive relationships are in turn used to leverage student achievement.

Below, Margaret illustrates how she operationalizes a warm demander stance in her classroom from the first day of class, via her description of how she develops trust and mutual respect with her students.

I think it's from number one; they get [from me] a sense of what's going to happen, and what's not going to happen. Just from number one, and number two, another method or methodology is allowing kids to be kids. Meet them where they are and then giving opportunities for successes and failures— for kids to be able to redeem themselves when they have fallen behind. When they've offended each other, we must apologize. There is enough of me that allows me to be me in front of them and so therefore, I allow myself to make mistakes. And I let them know that I can make mistakes. I also let them know that they don't know all of me. What you see is just a small portion of it. Hopefully you will see all the good sides, but there is another side, and so we can deal with that when the time is appropriate.

Margaret's caring, no-nonsense, and structured educational stance is reflected in Sheila's, Sarah's, and Tina's explanation of how they develop trust and respect with students, which suggests they also embrace elements of the warm demander stance.

Sheila exclaims:

I always try to remember to treat other people's children the way I want people to treat my child. And I remember [what] being in ninth grade [feels like], and for young people, usually disrespect comes in when they feel the need to save face. So, if you don't get in the habit of getting into sparring matches with them, verbal

battles with them, it's just clear that it's [a specific situation] over. [I] just [establish] very clear expectations. "No, you cannot talk to me that way. You cannot talk back to me." And sometimes I use sarcasm; [I] start looking around the room to see who's sitting behind me and say "Were you talking about me? No. Don't talk to me like that. We don't email each other and call each other by first name. No, that's not how you talk to adults". I am putting it back on them.

Sarah's approach of being forthright with her students, as well as establishing a method for them to save face before peers demonstrates how she cultivates trusting and respectful relationships with students as a warm demander. Sarah expresses that she gains and maintains student respect and trust in this manner:

By being straight with them. By telling them what my purpose is as a teacher, and I may have to say it over and over again, and I do ...in different situations. But then, when there is something that goes down in my classroom, I always take them [students] out of the class. I don't generally discuss any specific matter about them in the presence of the rest of the class. I always take them out in the hall. I talk to them one-on-one. And I tell them the reason I am doing one-on-one [is] because I am not talking to the class, I am talking to you [the student].

Tina also displays a warm demander stance in her account of how she nurtures trusting and respectful relationships with students.

I'm really have [maintain] the philosophy that in order to get respect you really have to give it. So I'll treat them like this, – that they're students of my own,

could possibly be my own children, and my own child. So, I have a lot of respect for them. I try and refrain from putting them down or making them feel incompetent, so that they'll feel comfortable in coming to my class.

In Matthew's elaboration of how he develops trusting and respectful relationships with students, he too displays characteristics of a warm demander.

One of the main things you have to do is to keep your word. They [students] have to know that when you tell them you are going to do something that you are going to do it. The other thing is that you have to be fair, you have to be fair to all of them, and they are very discerning. They pay attention to every little detail and so knowing that, you have to make sure that whatever you do for one, you do for all of them. But I would think that keeping your word and being fair and treating them with respect are the main things that are required.

The literature indicates warm demanders adopt a "no excuses" mentality and relentlessly insist that students complete tasks necessary for academic success (Bondy & Ross, 2008). In my initial interview with Sarah she skillfully articulated this aspect of the warm demander stance when recounting the interaction below with one of her students.

...[O]ne of the kids said to me...why do you think I'm passing in here and I'm not [passing] algebra? And I said this is not algebra, I'm talking about stuff that's going to help you with the algebra, but [if] you apply what you learn in here to the algebra concepts and you should be able to pass. There's no reason why you shouldn't. She said, well you're strict. You discipline me. You won't let me just not do anything... It seems to me, and when I think about it, the children that give

me the hardest time at the beginning of the year are usually the ones who love me at the end of the year. Because those are the ones that I give back the hardest time. because I expect them to do x, y, z and I keep saying the same stuff over and over and over again and eventually it seems like they buy into it – the behavior it changes, it may not change with all the teachers, they may not end up being be B students, but it changes with the way they perceive me and receive what I had to say to them and they're not the nasty, rude young people that they were at the beginning.

Shelia, Tina, and Matthew also exhibit the “no excuses” mentality identified as a component of the warm demander stance, each consistently insisting students complete all assignments necessary for academic success. For example, during my initial observation of Shelia, I witnessed her engaging in this practice, the application of the “no excuses” mentality, when she insisted in a firm but encouraging manner that a student with his head down on his desk participate in the class as they read and discussed the *Song of Roland*, saying to him, “Albert (pseudonym), I need you to wake up and read. You are so much a part of this [lesson]. And you are so good at analyzing literature. I need you to help us. Book 83, just read through it.” With that, the student sat up and began following along, as Sheila read a portion of the passage aloud.

Tina demonstrated the “no excuses” mentality of the warm demander stance in my first observation of her classroom. As the class reviewed for an Algebra I chapter exam, she called a student to the board to work out a math problem. When the student began explaining his answer to the class in a nearly inaudible voice, Tina asked him in a

firm but matter-of-fact tone “Who you talking to, that board or are you talking to everybody? Are you talking to that board?” The student replied “no” and subsequently explained the answer to class in a louder and more convincing and self-assured manner. Upon finishing his explanation, Tina thanked the student as he took his seat.

Matthew presented evidence of the “no excuses” mentality inherent in the warm demander stance during my third observation of his classroom. While reviewing for an upcoming high-stakes science exam using online sample released items, Matthew asked a student to explain the purpose of meiosis. After a moment of hesitation, the student indicated she did not know the response and that she didn’t want to be embarrassed by attempting an explanation. However, Matthew insisted she venture a guess and did not move forward with the review until she attempted to do so.

Irvine and Fraser (1998) explain that warm demanders “teach with authority,” that is, they push their students to achieve, limit classroom disruptions, and conduct their classes in a manner that contributes to students’ achievement (Bondy & Ross, 2008). In a study conducted by Ware (2006), she explains discipline is an essential facet of the warm stance. Irvine (2002) reports that the process of maintaining discipline and creating safe and secure classroom settings is an important part of the instructional repertoire of African American teachers examined in the literature. Moreover, Irvine (2002) affirms that scholars such as George Nolbit and Kay Tolliver report the importance of consistent discipline and classroom management for some African American teachers, noting that after establishing procedures early on in the school year, teachers in the literature “were not overbearing with the issue of discipline” (Irvine, 2002, p. 44).

In Margaret's description of how she approaches discipline in her classroom, similar to African American teachers in the literature mentioned above, she asserts that she establishes classroom management routines early in the academic year and that her style is not to delay, but to attend to discipline related matters immediately:

I just have ground rules at the beginning of the year. This is what's expected, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. [The] first time, anybody can slip up. Second time, we probably need to go out in the hallway and talk about it to find out what maybe going on, so I can help you with whatever it is you're wrestling with. Third time, we probably need to stay after school for about an hour to really work through what this is. It could be you misunderstanding what you thought I meant when I wrote what I wrote, or when I said what I said. It could be that you are dealing with something else and you're not talking about it. And I also let the parent know the child may be staying after school with me. Ironically I don't keep many kids after school. I probably have fewer than, five [detentions] a year. That's because we deal with it right then and there.

Comparable to Margaret's approach to discipline, Sheila explains that she sets discipline routines early on in the school year as well, stating, "Usually in the beginning of the year we establish some class rules, maybe three, four, and I choose my battles very carefully."

Tina's approach to discipline is akin to Margaret's, declaring she addresses discipline matters immediately as they occur:

How do I handle discipline in my classroom? ...I'm going to deal with it right then. I'm going to deal with it right then, I'm not going to — and I try hard not to send students out to the administration. I usually take them outside of “my office” which, is usually right by my classroom door. And we'll have a discussion. Sometimes I might have to, you know, say something to the students in front of the class, but generally I'll just tell them could you please step outside for a moment, and then I'll have a discussion with them at the door, as to how they ought to behave themselves and conduct themselves in the classroom in a learning environment.

Like Tina, Matthew also believes in allowing his students to save face, taking them into the hallway to settle discipline issues; however, Matthew's approach to discipline is somewhat different from all other primary participants, in that his initial classroom management tactic is to appeal to students' common sense understanding of the importance of education in general:

Discipline in my classroom, I generally try to work from persuasion. I try to persuade them that this [an education] is very important for their future. That they need to do the best they can. And if they become a little belligerent, then I do the one-on-one out in the hall. I'll talk to them, try to get them to understand that this is not getting them anywhere and if they really want to make progress, their behavior will have to change. And for some kids it works, for others it has no impact at all. And that's when you bring in the parents. I have parent conferences and use the progress reports as much as I can.... If you know the kid is coming in

and you see a certain behavior, you try to nip it in the bud. So, that's my general approach, try to make them understand the importance of work, try to talk to them one-on-one, let them understand that they need this education, and then if that doesn't work, then I bring in the parents, team meetings and so on.

Sarah applies the following approach to discipline:

Discipline, I mean sometimes — it is done in different ways. Sometimes I'll ignore something that's being said, and they know I am ignoring them.

Sometimes it may mean that you end up with a detention....The last resort for me is usually the principal's office. Now, I might even take you to the library to make you work in there by yourself,...but for some of my children, I can just look at them, and with my tone of voice, they know that I am serious and they will straighten up. And that probably is used more than anything else, just the tone of my voice or the shortness of the statement I make.

Although Sarah's technique of sometimes ignoring something a student says is not voiced by other primary participants in this study, they do embrace some methods she employs. For example, during observations, Margaret, Sheila, and Tina often shot off-task students a stern no-nonsense look to redirect off task behavior. Additionally, Matthew, Margaret, Sheila, and Tina habitually employed a firm matter-of-fact tone when urging students to get back on track with the lesson at hand.

Participants in this study are similar to those African American teachers in the research who view teaching as disciplining, and disciplining as caring for their students (Ware, 2006). As Irvine (2002, p.145) notes, "it is not surprising that these African

American teachers [those in the literature and those in this research project] also tended to be strong yet compassionate disciplinarians who were admired, not resented by their pupils.”

Sarah presented a persuasive example of the strong yet compassionate disciplinarian during my second observation of her classroom. As students completed an activity centered on weights and measures, she assertively yet respectfully redirected students she assigned to a group to get back on track with the lesson. Immediately after Sarah’s admonishment a student from the group asked “Why are you so mean.” Sarah responded to the question stating, “Because if I were any nicer you all [the class] would take advantage of me.”

Sarah illustrated how she is admired by her students, despite her authoritarian like presence when explaining that many former students return to visit her at Martha Washington.

Oh, they’ll come back and hug you. When they see you, their eyes light up and they’re glad to see you. – I guess they want you to be real, even though I think a lot of times they act like they don’t want to hear that. But I think they appreciate you being honest with them. I think they appreciate that.

Surrogate parent/other mother. Scholars (Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006) describe African American teachers who feel a sense of personal kinship to their African American students, often acting as extended family members to them. As cultural insiders sharing the same cultural background as their African American students, participants in this study admit to having a strong sense

of connection and commitment to addressing the educational, social, and physical needs of their African American students.

Coming from the perspective of cultural insider, Tina describes how she serves in the capacity of the “other mother” for her African American students.

Well, it’s really interesting because with African–American students the language that – the way we communicate with each other is so different. I could say something to an African–American student, and I know you’ll probably ask me to give you an example, but I wouldn’t dare say to another ethnic group, or they may say something to me, in that regard. But I think for a lot of African–American students, I remind them of either their parents, their mom or grandmother and they have a level of respect for me because of that, because of my sheer presence, because of who I am, because I look like them. You know, so that they feel more relaxed around me, and it’s like they want to do well. And it’s like they don’t want to disappoint me, and I don’t want to disappoint them. So yes, it’s a special kind of a bond, it’s a unique one too.

Sarah, in her personal profile above, in the description of her role as an educator of African American students, presents herself as a cultural insider serving as a surrogate parent, stating:

There’s a certain amount of, I mean I work with all the children, but there’s a certain thing that just goes through me when it’s our kids, because that’s our kids. I mean, and it’s not that I would do less for other nationalities, but for our kids, I just think, I know we got to work harder.

Sarah's statement above illustrates her belief in emotionally adopting and caring for the African American students in her charge as her own, referring to them as "our kids."

Continuing the description of her role as a teacher of African American children, Sarah outlines how she acts as another mother to them:

You have to have the ability to really get a point across to the students in a manner they can receive as well. And that's different from time to time. And sometimes it sounds like you're fussing and sometimes it's just you putting your arm around a kid. Sometimes you are talking softly to them, it's just different. It comes out in different ways, but I think the kids see it. The kids understand when you're sincere or not. They understand your motivation.

Sarah also demonstrates her other mothering skills in the account below, providing students sage advice regarding public decorum.

[When] the girls are cussing and stuff walking down the hall, I say honey your face is just too pretty to be saying that kind of stuff. I say first of all you're a lady and ladies don't walk around cussing out loud. I'm not going to tell you that we don't cuss, but I'm going to tell you we don't cuss out loud for the general audience to hear. Because it's about how you carry yourself. Because then [if we continue to act in such a manner] people don't call us a lady no more.

In her description of her role as a teacher of African American students, Sheila implies also that she serves as a surrogate parent with varied roles to her students, stating:

I have to be sometimes a mother to them, a role model to them. I have to be their teacher, their counselor. There are just so many things that I have to be to them. I just can't say that my role is just to be your teacher and that's it. Sometimes I have to encourage, and sometimes I have to say "I don't know if I'd do that if I were you." Sometimes just a listening ear, because they just want to talk— just a sounding board, just many things to them – introducing them to social skills as well, "please" and "thank you" and "good morning" – just to be polite and treat other people nice... so much of that has always been my role, as it relates to African American children.

Shelia further demonstrated her other mothering capacity during the third observation of her class in which she celebrated students' gains in reading, providing them breakfast treats to acknowledge their academic growth. As students prepared to partake of the breakfast items, Sheila coached them on skills of social grace, demonstrating to how to cut bagels in half. When students began consuming the food, Sheila admonished a student not to speak with food in his mouth.

Serving in the capacity of surrogate parent, Sheila occasionally uses terms of endearment with students, as does Sarah. For example, when the bell rang and students departed Sheila's classroom at the end of my second observation of her classroom, she stood at the door telling each student good bye. As one African American male student in particular exited the class and said good bye, Sheila responded "Bye, bye baby. Have a good weekend. Behave."

Sarah employs terms of endearment with her students as well, as seen above when addressing a student using inappropriate language in school, stating “I say honey your face is just too pretty to be saying that kind of stuff.” Another example of this occurred during my third observation of her classroom, when she chastised a male student for changing the background images on classmates’ laptop computers. In her reprimand she exclaimed, “Do you understand, we don’t want them changed sweetie.”

Margaret broadens her scope of other mothering to all students, to include those whose culture she does not share.

Okay. But understand that first they’re kids; they’re someone else’s children and my babies. Were they my babies, I’d want them to be treated in a certain way and have every opportunity. So no matter the color, or where they are academically, this is what has been given me to work with this year.

Margaret demonstrated how she takes on the role of surrogate parent during the second observation I conducted of her classroom. While guiding a discussion with students regarding their reactions to and thoughts about a recent visit of HIV/AIDS patients to their class, Margaret capably applied her other mothering skills as a wise advisor/counselor. As the class discussion progressed to the topic of making “smart choices,” Margaret infused a story about successful people she had integrated in her life over time into the lesson, telling students of a former boyfriend who is now a police commissioner and a female friend with whom she attended high school who is now the deputy mayor of a large urban area. During the discussion, Margaret admonished students to choose friends who are “going somewhere and who make good decisions.” She

reminded students “Don’t always choose the cutie or the hottie.” To emphasize her point, Margaret also told the story of a friend who made bad choices with whom she still interacts on a limited basis.

Matthew did not exhibit signs of taking on the role of surrogate parent to his students, although he demonstrates immense care for students he teaches and recognizes the importance of forging relationships with them, Matthew views himself more as a guide who helps students understand the importance of a good education and one who facilitates the process of successfully navigating school. It is important to note here that the difference between the male and female participants in this study in adopting the role of surrogate parent is not necessarily linked to gender, as Irvine (2002) identifies males in her research who possess this distinct teaching characteristic.

Cultural and linguistic mediator. The primary participants in this study see it as their duty to serve as cultural and linguistic mediators for AAVE speakers in the educational environment and beyond. They strive to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to negotiate school and the larger society, while at the same time allowing students to hold their identities intact. The teachers in this study accomplish this goal by valuing the cultural capital their students possess and using this invaluable asset, cultural capital, to promote school success for their students (Irvine, 2002).

Combining their passion for teaching, ethic of caring, warm demander stance, and surrogate parent/other mother posture, all primary participants in this study serve as cultural and linguistic mediators for their students who are AAVE speakers, with the

ultimate goal of helping them attain academic and career success, although the approaches to serving in this capacity varies to across participants.

For example, throughout this chapter, Margaret, Sheila, Matthew, Tina, and Sarah demonstrate how they serve as cultural and linguistic mediators for African American students in general, and more specifically for AAVE speakers, teaching them the appropriate times and places to use AAVE and Standard American English, and through the application and combination of the various components of their distinct teaching styles.

In his description below of how he prepares students to negotiate the content of high stakes tests, essentially explaining vocabulary in practice tests in a manner that renders it accessible to students, Matthew further illustrates his cultural and linguistic mediator capacity, through the application of his passion for teaching, ethic of caring, warm demander stance, and fervent conviction that all students can learn.

It [students' knowledge of standard grammar and vocabulary] really needs to be significant because of the tests that they take nowadays. They are written at a certain level that requires very good reading comprehension skills. And many of the kids who we're talking about, the AAVE kids, when they read some of these questions, it's not that they don't have the knowledge and the brain power to analyze and answer the question, it's that they don't know what the question is asking them to do. They might read the question, [and] they have a general sense [of its meaning], and then there is a word in the question that throws them off completely. Now they are not so sure. And so if you take the question [and frame

it by saying], well, they are asking if so and so and so and so...They'll say, "Oh?" It happens so often. You know, like if you are in day-to-day activities. And they are bright kids. They are bright kids, but because of their circumstances, because of where they grew up, because of how their parents might speak to them, and their relatives might speak to them, and their friends might speak to them, this is what they know. And they are capable of learning anything else, but this is the—it's a little insular, in the sense that they are coming from this little cocoon of their communities. That is why school is so important. We are the window for them to the world I think.

Sarah employs her skills as a cultural and linguistic mediator beyond the realm of the academic arena, asserting her surrogate mother, ethic of caring, and warm demander stance, as revealed in a discussion with students during my third observation of her classroom, in which she coached students through the identification of the appropriate attire for an end of year dance.

As the lesson for the day drew to a close, Sarah asked students if they had their tickets for the dance. Several students replied "yes." However, one student, an African American male, indicated he would not attend. "I no, I am not going to that." Another student suggested he did not see the need in attending, since it wasn't a significant occasion, stating. "It's not going to be your Prom, you can't even wear jeans." With that, Sarah explained. "All you have to do is wear a nice pair of slacks and a shirt; you don't have to wear a suit, as long as your shirt is on the inside of your pants." At the conclusion of Sarah's remarks the student expressing no desire to participate in the dance commented

he could attend the dance if he wanted to do so. Sarah's response to him was "I hope you will go."

Tina displays how she acts a cultural and linguistic mediator to her students and their parents below, as she puts into operation her ethic of caring and surrogate parent posture.

It's like, you know, you try to guide the Black student through this lifecycle and the parents sometimes have a tendency of not being — they feel they can't reach them. It's just like they need a second hand or something to guide us [them] through, [to] help them guide their students....I'm always smiling, and I like to extend my hand and tell them, like I tell the students, that they can do this. And if there is a student who might feel that he was more capable of being placed in another math class to excel, I'll tell them [parents] that too, and they are extremely appreciative.

Acting White: Addressing a Barrier to Academic Success

Premised on the notion that there is a black–white achievement gap, and as a means of explaining why it exists, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) introduced the phenomenon of acting white into the academic literature (Starkey & Eaton, 2008). The authors, Fordham and Ogbu, posit that African American students and others they describe as involuntary minorities, form an oppositional stance toward school, owing to their observation that those in their ethnic group experience limited social and economic success in the larger society. "This, Fordham and Ogbu contend, results in

African–American students devaluing the necessity of schooling,” and consequently hampering opportunities for school success (Starkey & Eaton, 2008, p.6).

Scholars are not consistent in their definition of acting white, although most definitions reference situations where minority students are ridiculed by minority peers for participating in behaviors seen as characteristic of the dominant society (Fryer, 2006). Such behaviors include speaking Standard English, earning good grades, enrolling in an honors or Advanced Placement course, and wearing clothing from establishments perceived as appealing to the larger community, such as the Gap, or Abercrombie & Fitch (Fryer, 2006).

Participants in this study are well aware of the phenomenon of acting white, and each capably describes the meaning of the concept based on their personal experiences.

Margaret recalls she first encountered the term acting white in high school, stating:

...[H]igh school really did it for me, because I went to a school that was all girls and mostly Jewish. So trying to figure out how to interact, you know, engage my environment was like really a tough thing. I had to take three or four buses to get from the school to home every day. So, [in] the process of going from one end of town to the other, I would change up many times.... By the time I got into the school building, I had to be transformed into a person who could engage the environment, and do it well, write well, [and] be courteous.

From the perspective of a cultural insider in the African American community, Margaret states “I only heard it [the term acting white] in my socio–economic group.”

She describes what those in her home community meant when they suggested an individual was acting white.

And it meant you were trying to be someone that you were not. You were working too hard at being someone that you were not, and if you kept it up, you're going to be locked out of where you were.

Margaret's comments above speak to the dilemma that many African American students face when attempting to adopt cultural norms of the larger society, and at the same time trying maintain acceptance by peers with whom they share the same cultural background.

Matthew's personal experience with the phenomenon of acting white came via his children.

I've never heard it [acting white] referred to me, but I've heard people – and my kids have complained that they were accused of that in school, of Acting White....because they tend to focus more on their work [and] they speak a certain way. My kids rarely speak African–American Vernacular English and I can't tell you why it turned out that way, but they rarely do. But they have often complained to me that other kids will accuse them of acting White and talking White.

Matthew's statement is aligned with Fryer's (2006) definition of acting white above. Matthew further elaborates on the meaning of acting white, as it relates to his children, below.

Well, to them it's because of how they speak. If they speak proper grammar or standard grammar, so to speak, or if they are serious about their school work and try to do well, and there are lots of general attitudes, if you see African American kids act a certain way, generally speaking, and if they don't act that way, then they are accused of Acting White. If they have a lot of White friends, they will accuse them of acting White too. I mean that's the sense that I get from it.

Sarah describes those accused of acting white similar to Matthew.

It means that they perceive them as, using proper English generally, middle class generally, and a lot of times I think that they don't really, they are just like [saying] you are in a different place than I am. They are in a different place than the person they are talking about.

Sarah goes on to express her frustration with those labeling others as acting white.

...[What] is acting White? We all want to strive – we want to all speak good English. We want our children to have the best chance, and let's face it, this is not a Black country, so consequently we've got to mingle and we've got to get what we need so we can compete, so that's foolish to even say somebody is acting White. I mean if a child's been educated in a White environment, how else are they gonna talk, I don't know.

Sheila presents her awareness of the phenomenon of acting white in her explanation of the meaning of the concept.

Well, here at school I hear kids say that. If a student comes to class prepared, is well-mannered, speaks well, is not taken by the latest fashion and she is Black,

then she is acting white. And I have heard them [students] say that because I will ask, ‘What do you mean acting White?’ ‘You know!’ They always expect me to know what they mean when they say someone’s acting White...if you don’t find whatever the joke is that they tell funny, [and] you seem to practice self-control, then they will say that about you. I have had classes where Black students were in the minority and other kids that I might have had in a general class would come back and say, “Oh they [think they] White.

Tina provides a first-hand account of being accused of acting white as she left the schools in her home community to attend an integrated high school.

Well, you see in my ninth grade year I went to a predominantly White school. So even with the dress, and I left all of my friends at the predominantly Black school, so even the way I dressed during that time was a little bit different than my peers at the Black school. So, whenever they would see me, or occasionally when we would get together, they’d say well you are acting White. Not only by my dress [did accusation of acting white come about], but also by the way I talked occasionally. But it was just something that I had picked up. Because I was trying to survive, really in both worlds and it was difficult. And sometimes it was hard trying to shut down one world and pick up another world. So yeah, occasionally I’ve heard that [the term acting white].

Tina offers an explanation of what it means to be accused of acting white from the perspective of a cultural insider.

Well, you know we had this thing that if someone said that you are acting White, that meant that you — not so much that you are better, well yeah that you probably felt like you were better than they were, or you knew something that they didn't know, or you really weren't a part of us. Your thinking wasn't exactly the way we think, and things like that. But nobody liked that comment “you are acting White.” Because when they said that to you, it made you feel as if, it was really a put down in the environment that I lived in. [If] somebody said “you are acting White” It's like “Me, you really think I'm acting white?” It was something that you didn't want anybody to say to you, but people just said it to you.

According to Starkey and Eaton (2008), in his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Barack Obama placed the acting white phenomenon under a national spotlight, admonishing citizens to;

Go into any inner-city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach kids to learn. They know that parents have to parent, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. (p. 5)

Although none of the primary research participants in this study identify situations when students in their classrooms use AAVE as means of resisting dominant cultural norms, some admit to confronting and/or addressing instances when students make accusations of acting white about their peers. Matthew readily expresses his aversion to the accusation of acting white.

Well I think it's insulting. I think to say that somebody is acting white because they try to do their work, because they speak standard grammar, to me is ridiculous. Because it's not an issue of color, it's an issue of, to me, what is required to get a standard education and to function professionally in the world that we live. So to me, it's not White or Black or any other color. It's how you have to train yourself, or how you have to be trained, in order to function as a professional person in this world, in this society.

Matthew explains that students in his classroom labeled as acting white tend not to respond to those making the allegation. He also suggests that out of the fear of being labeled as acting white, capable students will occasionally attempt to camouflage their ability from peers.

Generally they don't react much. They sheepishly will maybe say a little something to counter, but pretty much they don't reply or say much to defend themselves. Maybe they are just fearful. Maybe they want to be accepted by other kids too. And I think they feel that if they speak up, that's just going to isolate them even more from kids they would like to be friends with. And you can find kids who are pretty smart and can do the work and are quite capable of, not wanting to. And if they make a good grade in something, they don't want you to publish it. They don't want you to tell other students that they're doing well.

Matthew states that when students have been accused of the acting white phenomenon in his classes his reaction has been to confront the matter head-on.

So I found it very insulting to those kids who were trying to educate themselves and make something of themselves. And I'd often speak up and say, you know, that's a ridiculous thing to accuse another kid of. I mean, I wish you would show some discipline and do some work. Because there seems to be a culture where if you work hard, you try to do well, then something is wrong with you.

Margaret notes that in recent years she has not heard students in her classroom accusing peers of acting white.

[I have heard it] [l]ess and less over the years. I think back maybe 30 years ago I would have heard it, but I would not have heard it so much in a general classroom setting. I would have heard it more among students who were on a fast academic track. Interacting with their peers, that was extremely difficult for them. And to be plucked out of where you are and put into a setting that people you are with, people who were on a racial-socio-economic level that was different than yours, puts a lot of stress on a child. But as time has gone on, because of integration... thirty-five years ago if you were a Black teacher you taught Black kids for the most part. Nowadays it's among heterogeneous classroom settings, so I hear it less.

Margaret's comments suggests the acting white phenomenon occurs less frequently in integrated classrooms, which is a direct contradiction to what is reported in the research literature, which finds that the acting white phenomenon is most prevalent in ethnically diverse public schools (Fryer, 2006).

Margaret states that in the past, over the span of her 30 year career as an educator, when she witnessed students accusing others of acting white, those accused tended to ignore their peers remarks.

If they were acting white, they just totally ignored people who put labels on them, because they were affirmed where they were. They had no need to even respond to someone throwing this kind of label at them.

This reaction is similar to what Matthew reports above, with regard to the response of students in his classes classified as acting white.

Sarah acknowledges that she has witnessed students in her classes being accused of acting white. She also expresses her belief in confronting students responsible for placing such labels on classmates.

I've heard that [students accused of acting white]. What do you mean by that, I would say? And generally it's been like, well so and so used these big words, you know. [I would say] "big words," we all want to be able to increase our vocabulary. You [the student] probably know some words that we don't know. Do see yourself like that? That kind of thing, you know. [I would] [j]ust [have] a conversation, but I wouldn't let it slide. ... I think sometimes you say things to students and they don't appear to respond to them, or hear you. But they do hear you. And at some point in time that one little thing you said may make a big difference later on in their lives, maybe a year, maybe two years.

Sheila's reaction to the accusation of students acting white is similar to Sarah's response above, confronting the allegation and having students explain what they mean

by their remarks, and ultimately attempting to help them understand that doing what it takes to succeed in school should not be perceived as a negative, or acting white.

I usually ask them what you mean. How do you act White? So, are you acting Black now? [And the student will respond] You know what I mean Ms. B., you know what I mean. [And my response would be] No, I don't know, tell me. And then they will... Always be sittin' like this. They do, they attempt to tell me. You know, like this, have always got their work. [And I say] Oh, but I expect all of you to do that...

Resembling Margaret's observations above, Tina admits to having heard students accuse their peers of acting white, but she notes the term acting white somewhat antiquated, as her current students employ different expressions to convey its meaning.

I probably have [heard it], but I don't know if they [students] use that expression anymore, acting White. They may say something else now. Because not only did we say stuff like acting white, we'll [now] say you have gone over to the other side or you act like an Oreo, you know black on the outside and white on the inside.

Tina's approach to dealing with the accusation of acting white in her classroom is comparable to Sheila's and Sarah's responses above. Tina states her strategy is to have students explain what they mean by the remarks and following up with a discussion.

Well, we would have a discussion because I don't ever want anybody under any circumstances to feel— put upon and then feel like, because to some students it really would be a put down. They would feel as if they're being put down. So I

would try to intervene, and not so much reprimand. And we may even have a discussion about it. Okay, so what do you mean by this? Because I'd know what I perceive it to be, but I don't know what they would perceive it to be. So we would have to have some kind of dialogue going on to get it out in the open. And then I might even have one of them apologize to the other one, because who wants to be looked upon like that?

The findings of this study suggest teachers' language attitudes toward AAVE and AAVE use are complex, in that they vary across the 18 secondary and five primary participants. The complexity of teachers' attitudes are further revealed in the findings related to the primary participants in this study, as teachers' espoused views and reaction to AAVE use conflict with the classroom practices they employ.

In addition to findings focused on teachers' language attitudes, the results of this study reveal that the primary participants exhibit distinct teaching characteristics that are mostly shared across the group. For example, all primary participants share a passion for teaching, an ethic of caring, a warm-demander stance, and all but one share the surrogate parent/other mother characteristic. The next chapter of this study illuminates these findings and their implications and provides recommendations based on the results.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section revisits the purposes and attends to the areas of significance outlined in chapter one of this research project. It reexamines the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual framework used to illustrate how primary participants support the learning and academic progress of AAVE speakers, as they relate to the research findings. Here I also present notable findings related to the research questions and highlight implications for educators and policy makers based on the results of the study. Additionally, I offer recommendations for future actions for these entities.

It is important to keep in mind that the goal here is not to overextend the unique and individual experiences of the primary participants of this study on to the general populations, but, as suggested by Maxwell's (1996) Interactive Model of Research Design represented in Figure 1.3 above, to merely employ the data collected to gain a deeper understanding of participants' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of AAVE speakers and AAVE use, as well as the practices or behaviors the participants make use of to support the school success of AAVE speakers. I am not suggesting that the results of this study generalize to all African American teachers, but that they apply only to the participants in this research project.

Purposes Revisited

As stated in chapter one of this research, I used my personal, practical, and research purposes to justify, focus, and guide this study (Maxwell, 1996). Below I return to these purposes to clarify how they are addressed by this study.

Discussion of Personal Purposes

Scholars note the disparity in the school performance of African American students and their majority peers (Fryer & Torelli, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 2002). Some researchers point to political, social, cultural, and linguistic barriers as plausible causes for the poor school performance of African American students, to include AAVE speakers (Baugh, 2000; Lee, 2002; Ogbu, 1999). AAVE is considered a linguistic barrier that often hinders the academic progress of AAVE speakers (Ogbu, 1998; Rickford, 2002; Smitherman, 1997). It is surmised by researchers (Baugh, 2001; Wolfram, 1999) that this is due largely because some educators view AAVE from a deficit rather than a difference perspective. As AAVE speakers enter school they often experience educational roadblocks due to cultural and linguist differences (Heath, 2000). However, the literature posits that there are African American educators skilled at assessing, understanding, and addressing the educational needs of AAVE speakers to support their school progress and achievement (Delpit, 1995; Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Based on my interest in understanding how some African American educators, as cultural insiders, help AAVE speakers succeed in school AAVE, I addressed my personal purposes by designing and implementing this research project, which permitted me to explore African American teachers' attitudes and beliefs about AAVE and what they do

to help AAVE speakers navigate and succeed in school. With respect to my personal purposes, this research project presented, as noted in the literature, the opportunity to observe skilled African American educators who work effectively at bringing AAVE speakers' academic progress in line with their grade-level peers (Irvine, 2002). This study also permitted me to test my theory that in an effort to help AAVE speakers succeed in school, African American teachers in this study would likely impress upon AAVE speakers that there is an appropriate time and place for AAVE use, emphasizing the importance of being bidialectal, that is, possessing the ability to use the appropriate speech pattern in the appropriate settings (Baugh, 1999).

Discussion of Practical Purposes

Knowing that teachers are a key component to students' school success, this research attended to my practical purposes by illuminating the cultural and linguistic knowledge primary participants in this study possess about AAVE speakers, and how they leverage this awareness and background knowledge to support the academic progress of their students. This research project highlights the need to enhance educators' understanding of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds their students bring to schools, to better support them in achieving academic success.

Discussion of Research Purposes

The research purposes for this study focus on linking African American teachers' behaviors to their perceptions and attitudes toward AAVE, and thus illustrating how teachers' beliefs and perceptions of this dialect may shape their classroom practices. This

research is unique in that it uses a language attitude survey to identify all perceptions of all African American teachers in one school setting toward AAVE and then applies qualitative measures to probe deeper into the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of five purposefully selected teachers from the group, to better understand how their perceptions of AAVE influence the classroom practices they employ to support the learning needs of AAVE speakers. In doing so, this study moves beyond existing research literature focused primarily on reporting teachers' attitudes toward AAVE on various language attitude surveys (Bronstein, Dubner, & Raphael, 1970; Blake & Cutler, 2003; Mohamed, 2002; Hoover, et al., 1996a; Pietras & Lamb, 1978; Taylor, 1973).

Discussion of Significance

Due to the negative connotation of AAVE in the larger society, it is no secret that students who come to schools with this variety of English as a primary mode of communication are often viewed from a deficit perspective by educators. Teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and/or beliefs about their students' linguistic backgrounds can influence their expectations, and consequently, positively or adversely impact students' academic performance/achievement. Because AAVE is spoken by at least 85 percent of African American students (Smitherman, 1998), it is imperative to uncover and make teachers aware of their perceptions of this dialect, as well as the implications of their beliefs and dispositions toward AAVE for student achievement. Arming educators with such knowledge, along with deepening their understanding of varying dialects of English, are good first steps toward shifting negative perceptions and expectations regarding AAVE speakers' academic potential and setting them on a path to school success.

Studies related to self-fulfilling prophecy reveal that teachers' beliefs about students' academic potential can impact their school performance. Equally important, and heretofore not reported in the literature, this research is aimed at understanding African American teachers' perceptions of AAVE speakers' home language, and how these perceptions shape teachers' classroom practices and potentially influence students' academic performance (Blake & Cutler, 2003; Tauber, 1997).

Reexamining the Conceptual Framework

In chapter two of this study I present my theoretical and conceptual framework. I use the lenses of cultural ecology and social reproduction to highlight obstacles in the dominant society and schools that often hinder the academic progress and achievement of students of color, specifically that of AAVE speakers. Taken together, these theories offer explanations as to why some minority groups, involuntary minorities, are not as successful in school as other minorities, voluntary minorities (Ogbu, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998), and how mainstream teachers in the dominant society often dismiss the cultural knowledge, skills, and behaviors AAVE speaking students bring to the classroom, their cultural capital, to support their academic growth.

Constructing my conceptual framework in two stages, I initially present educational hindrances and supports AAVE speakers may encounter in school, with the teacher at the center of the image (see *Figure 2.1*) who serves as a bridge between the students' home and school cultures to facilitate students' academic progress in school. The second segment of the two-part conceptual framework depicts how the teacher values AAVE speakers' cultural capital and uses it to help students navigate and succeed

in school. Both segments of the conceptual framework remain unchanged for me, after applying them in this study, in that the primary participants, Martha, Matthew, Sheila, Sarah, and Tina readily acknowledge that some of their students enter school with AAVE, but do not view them from a deficit perspective. The second segment of the conceptual framework also acknowledges that there are skilled African American teachers who help to bring about substantive academic gains for African students. Sharing cultural and linguistic backgrounds with their African American students, these successful teachers acknowledge the cultural capital AAVE speakers possess, while at the same time applying a distinct teaching style associated with achievement gains for students of color (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). As depicted in the conceptual framework, the primary teacher participants in this study demonstrate respect, caring, high expectations, and an understanding of students' strengths through the application of teaching behaviors characteristic of effective American teachers (Foster, 2002; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These pedagogical characteristics, a passion for teaching, an ethic of caring, a warm demander stance, and the surrogate parent/other mother role are consistent with the results of this study, with all manifesting themselves in the classrooms of the primary participants.

Summary of Findings

I used the research questions of this study as filters through which I sifted the data I collected to examine of African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about AAVE speakers and their use of AAVE, as well as the classroom practices they

employ to support the academic growth of students who use AAVE to communicate at home and at school. The research questions are:

1. What are African American teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the influences of AAVE use on students' academic achievement?
2. What specific instructional strategies do teachers employ when students use AAVE in the classroom setting?
3. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their teaching?
 - a. How do African American teachers believe their cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their teaching?
 - b. How do African American teachers' beliefs about AAVE influence their response to AAVE use inside and outside the classroom?
 - c. How do African American teachers support the academic achievement of AAVE Speakers?

Summary of Survey Results

I employed the Language Attitude Scale (LAS) to determine the language attitudes of all African American teachers present at Martha Washington. Although my assumption that all 18 participants recruited to participate in the study were African American, one female participant indicated her ethnicity as Native American. Many African Americans reference Native Americans/First Americans in their family backgrounds, as do I. However, I found it curious that one of the participants, all of whom I presumed to be African American, would identify herself as Native American. It

would be interesting to know what others in her immediate community and the larger community perceive as her ethnicity. It would be equally fascinating to know the types of interactions that exist between this individual and others, based on the declaration of ethnicity. Fordham and Ogbu (1998) classify African Americans and First Americans/Native Americans as involuntary minorities, both groups, the authors explain, have experienced oppression and discrimination that may, in turn, impact the way they view institutions of the dominant culture. It is noteworthy to mention here that another survey respondent, a male identifying himself as African American, is of Caribbean Island descent. In Fordham and Ogbu's terms, he is considered a voluntary minority, and one who enjoys a more favorable relationship with the dominant society than involuntary minorities. Although there are other plausible alternatives, it may be that by identifying herself as a First/Native American, the female respondent is taking an oppositional stance against dominant institutions, by attempting to shape and maintain her own identity. Because of time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to probe this assumption further.

Survey results revealed that respondents' attitudes toward AAVE varied extensively, with nine of the 18 teachers reporting overall positive attitudes and nine reporting mostly negative language attitudes. These findings are consistent with those in Taylor's (1973) seminal work related to teachers' language attitudes toward AAVE, which also points out variability in language attitudes within and across various ethnic groups.

The majority (38% strongly disagree with AAVE use and 16% mildly disagree) of survey respondents believe teachers should not permit AAVE use in the classroom, while a smaller percentage (33%) believe students should be allowed to use AAVE in class. Similar to previous research (Mohamed, 2002; Rickford, 1999a) focused on AAVE attitudes, participants in this study hold Standard English in high regard. Overall respondents (66.6%) don't believe AAVE sounds as good as Standard American English (SAE) and they support teachers correcting a student's AAVE use in the classroom setting.

Although survey results reveal that 50% of secondary participants hold overall negative attitudes toward AAVE they also reveal positive dispositions toward AAVE in several areas, as respondents (55.6%) do not believe students overall use of AAVE should be discouraged. Also, participants (55.5%) mainly agree that AAVE is not an inferior language system, and that children who use the language variety are able to express ideas as well as peers who speak SAE. Respondents mainly agree (44% mildly agree and 16% strongly agree) that AAVE is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language. They also agree (61.1%) that AAVE should be considered an influential part of American culture and civilization. The positive attitudes respondents express above appear to suggest that some teachers in this study view AAVE from a difference rather than a deficit perspective, that is, some respondents don't view AAVE as wrong, but simply a different way of communicating with others.

Overall, for the survey respondents of this study it appears that dismissing AAVE as irrelevant and having no place in their lives and the lives of their AAVE speaking

students would be a sign of disrespect and betrayal of their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This assertion is supported by the LAS results mentioned above, as 54% of respondents do not believe AAVE use by AAVE speakers should be discouraged and 55% of respondents do not view AAVE as an inferior language system. Moreover, 66.7% of respondents believe children who use AAVE are able to express ideas as well as children who speak SAE and 61.1% of survey respondents believe AAVE is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language. Delpit (1995) puts the assertion above in perspective, suggesting that denigrating the home language of AAVE speakers, or suggesting that the language form is wrong or ignorant is akin to implying something is wrong with those that use it or their families.

The collective data above along with the data collected from the five primary participants during interviews and observation suggest that although some teachers in the study hold positive attitudes/dispositions toward AAVE use, they may also embrace the philosophical stance that there is an “appropriate time and place” for the use of AAVE, and that AAVE speakers should be provided guidance and instruction as to when it is appropriate to employ this variety of English. The stance of an “appropriate time and place” for AAVE use is further supported by survey participants’ overall agreement that teachers should correct student use of non-standard English as well as their agreement (22% mildly agree and 27% strongly agree) that non-standard English should be accepted socially. Interestingly, these latter two findings are consistent with beliefs and approaches primary participants employ with regard to AAVE use, as they all engage in

some form of correction of students AAVE use, although not on a consistent basis, and they all indicate an acceptance of AAVE use during non-instructional time.

Summary of Interview and Observation Data

Primary participants in this study, Margaret, Sheila, Matthew, Tina, and Sarah, acknowledge that they serve students who come to school with AAVE as their home language. Participants do not object to AAVE use at the appropriate time and place, nor do they attempt to eliminate the language of AAVE speaker. However, in this research study, the approach primary participants employ to address AAVE use in their classrooms is to sporadically (9 times out of 65 instances of observed AAVE use) redirected AAVE speakers to rephrases their AAVE statements in Standard American English, or to present students with a Standard American English version of the AAVE statement themselves. It is worth noting that during observations in Margaret's, Matthew's, Sheila's, Tina's, and Sarah's classrooms it was not only African American students, but Hispanic students who also employed AAVE. I recorded AAVE use by Hispanic students at least once in each primary participant's classroom. However, only Sarah reacted to the use of AAVE by a Hispanic student, promptly restating the student's words in Standard American. Smitherman (1998) claims AAVE use is not exclusive to African Americans. This research confirms the author's assertion. A deeper investigation into teachers' reactions to AAVE use by speakers from various backgrounds would extend this research and offer insight and understanding as to why AAVE use by some students elicits teacher reaction, while its use by others does not.

The primary participants in this research bring with them their unique backgrounds and life experiences, which help frame their attitudes toward AAVE and AAVE speakers and the behaviors they exhibit when interacting with AAVE speakers. These factors are discussed below as they relate to the findings of this study.

With the exception of Matthew, all the participants grew up in predominately African American communities. Participants' childhood home communities varied from small towns in the segregated South, to urban cities, to suburban locations. The teaching careers of participants in this study range from 10 to 35 years of service. All report attending a Historically Black College at some point in their education careers. According to results from the LAS, two teachers, Margaret and Tina hold overall positive language attitudes toward AAVE. Three teachers, Matthew, Sheila, and Sarah have negative language attitudes toward AAVE, although Matthew's language attitude is closer to the neutral range. Interestingly, Margaret and Tina report growing up in communities where both AAVE and Standard American English were employed in their home communities. Perhaps this may attribute to these teachers' positive language attitudes toward AAVE.

Even with their differing language attitudes toward AAVE, the findings of this study reveal all primary participants believe AAVE use will not negatively impact the futures of AAVE speakers, that is as long as students acquire Standard American English and can use it in appropriate settings. However, Tina, unlike the other participants of this study believes AAVE speakers will instinctively know when to use AAVE and Standard American English in the appropriate settings, without explicit instruction. This is a

noteworthy finding, in that Tina is the only participant in the study who indicates she takes no action when students use AAVE in her classroom. Conversely, as noted during observations, she occasionally corrects students who employ AAVE. Even with her positive attitude toward AAVE, through her actions, it appears Tina is not willing to leave it to chance that her AAVE speakers will acquire Standard American English instinctively, as she stated.

Research suggests a strong correlation between teachers' attitudes toward AAVE speakers and their expectations of these students (Hoover et al., 1996a; Taylor, 1973). Additionally, research conducted by Taylor (1973) demonstrates a correlation between teachers' negative attitudes toward AAVE and their lowered expectations and evaluations of AAVE speakers (Blake & Cutler, 2003). These assumptions are not supported by this research, as participants in this study exhibiting mainly negative or almost neutral language attitudes, Matthew, Sheila, and Sarah, toward AAVE all share some consistent philosophical beliefs with those primary participants with overall positive language attitudes, which appear to override their negative perceptions of AAVE to some degree. The results of this study reveal the uniform belief and conviction across participants in all students' ability to learn.

In addition to the implications of negative teacher expectations toward AAVE, research indicates when students' home language differs from the language used in school, and neither students nor teachers are aware of the significance of these differences, problems in communication can occur which may lead to school failures (Heath, 2000; Moore, 1998). As cultural insiders sharing linguistic and cultural

backgrounds with AAVE speakers, Margaret, Sheila, Sara, and Tina are well aware of the status of AAVE in the larger community. Because he also speaks a dialect of English not embraced by the dominant society, Matthew too has an understanding of AAVE's place in the larger community. All teachers in this research are aware of the barriers AAVE can pose for AAVE speakers in achieving school success and ultimately gaining entry and acceptances into the dominant culture. Participants are keenly aware of the differences between students' home language and the language of the school, each possessing vivid recollections of when they became aware that the way they speak impacts other's perceptions of them. Even with their differing attitudes toward AAVE, the primary participants in this research appear to value AAVE as important cultural capital for AAVE speakers. Margaret, Matthew, Sheila, Tina, and Sarah view this dialect of English, AAVE, from a difference rather than a deficit perspective, which permits them to help AAVE speakers keep their identity intact, while at the same time providing the instructional support need to allow students to attain academic success.

Distinct Teaching Style

Consistent with research regarding successful teachers of African American students, the primary participants in this research exhibit distinct teaching styles which are believed to contribute to the academic success of students of color, to include those who are AAVE speakers (Delpit, 2002; Foster, 2002; Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Among the participants, four areas emerged as components of their distinct styles, 1) a passion for teaching, 2) an ethic of caring, 3) a warm demander stance with students, 4) and a surrogate parent or the other mother role. With the

exception of the surrogate parent/other mother component, which Matthew does not exhibit, all primary participants possess the above characteristics as a part of their individual teaching styles.

Passion for teaching. As described in chapter 4, all primary participants in this study identify strongly with the craft of teaching and are deeply committed to helping all students achieve school success. They demonstrate this passion and dedication to the teaching profession by maintaining a professional appearance and demeanor with students and colleagues at all times, sustaining safe, inviting, comfortable, neat and well organized classrooms, preparing well for each lesson taught, and by sharing their enthusiasm for their content area with students.

A noteworthy finding from this research regarding primary participants' passion for teaching is they exhibit a strong sense of spirituality. Margaret, Tina, Sheila, and Sarah all employ religious expressions often heard in the Black church such as "my calling," "something that's rooted within," and "my gift" when describing their passion for teaching. Irvine (2002) identified similar expressions among teachers describing their passion for teaching in research she conducted regarding teachers' distinct teaching styles.

Ethic of caring. Ware (2002) acknowledges "caring" as a key characteristic which underpins and explains many of the classroom practices and behaviors of dedicated and committed African American teachers. Tolliver (1993) further suggests caring is the foundation of good teaching which takes on many forms in the classroom setting. As is the case in the research literature(Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware,

2002), all primary participants in this study demonstrate their ethic of care by cultivating personal yet professional relationships with students, as a means of developing trust and mutual respect between teachers and students, with the ultimate goal of bolstering students academic growth. Margaret for example, employs joking to build rapport and respect with students. Tina and Matthew take the time to attend to matters of importance to their students to foster trust and respect, while Sheila spends time sharing information about herself with her classes to establish rapport. Teachers in this research also exhibit an ethic of care by providing their students honest and truthful feedback and encouraging problem students to grow academically. This practice is consistent with those employed by African American teachers identified as skillful educators of African American students (Irvine, 2002).

Warm demander. Irvine and Fraser (1998) describe warm demanders as tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured, and disciplined. According to Bondy and Ross (2008), teachers who are warm demanders communicate both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and performance and mutual respect. Although demonstrated in varying manners, all primary participants in this research take a warm demander stance with their students. They possess a “no excuses” mentality and persistently insist that students complete tasks necessary for academic success, as is the case of warm demanders identified in the literature (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Consistent with warm demanders in the research literature (Irvine & Fraser, 1998) participants in this study “teach with authority.” They apply discipline in a manner that limits classroom disruptions, while pushing students to achieve academic success (Bondy & Ross, 2008).

While discipline is a critical component of the instructional repertoire of African American for teachers in this research, and those in the literature identified as skilled instructors of African American students (Irvine, 2002), primary participants in this study are not obsessed with the issue of discipline.

Similar to teachers in the literature (Irvine, 2002), all primary participants in this study are strong yet caring disciplinarians. Also like African American teachers in the body of literature, Sarah is "admired, not resented," by her students for her strong sense of discipline (Irvine, 2002, p. 145). As illustrated in her recalling of a story in chapter four, students acknowledge and appear to appreciate her strict approach to discipline.

Surrogate parent/other mother. As demonstrated in the findings section, the participants in this study have a clear sense of connection and commitment to addressing the educational needs of their African American students. Researchers (Irvine, 2002; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006) document that African American teachers who feel a sense of personal kinship to their African American students often act as extended family members to them. Margaret, Sheila, Sarah, and Tina, all take on the other mother role with their students. However, a notable finding in this research is that Matthew, the only male primary participant, does not exhibit signs of taking on the surrogate parent role. Nevertheless, he demonstrates immense care for his students and recognizes the importance of fostering positive relationships with them. Matthew views himself more as a guide who helps students understand the importance of a good education and one who facilitates the process of successfully navigating school. Perhaps his involuntary minority status (Ogbu, 1998) influences his adoption of this

approach, as unlike the remaining primary participants in this study, he is not a true cultural insider with his African American students, as he does not share their specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Cultural and linguistic mediator. As theorized in the conceptual framework of this study, African American teachers who acknowledge and respect the cultural capital AAVE speakers bring with them to school are able to use this valuable asset to help students achieve academic success. This theory is borne out in this research, as all primary participants see it as their duty to serve as cultural and linguistic mediators for the AAVE speakers in their care, although the approaches to serving in this capacity varies across participants. This finding is noteworthy, in that the participants in this research project appear to combine the various components of their distinct teaching style, their passion for teaching, ethic of caring, warm demander stance, and surrogate parent/other mother posture to achieve the shared goal of helping AAVE speakers attain academic and career success. It should be mentioned that although Matthew does not exhibit the surrogate parent role as an element of his distinct teaching style, he is able to combine the remaining components of his teaching style to serve as a cultural and linguistic mediator for AAVE speakers. A plausible explanation as to why Matthew is able to serve as a cultural and linguistic mediator is that not all of the characteristics of the distinct teaching style mentioned above need to be active for the teacher to respond to AAVE and AAVE speakers in a manner that students receive as positive.

Acting White

Fordham and Ogbu (1986), suggest African American students form an oppositional stance toward school, due to their tenuous relationship with those in the dominant culture and their observation that those in their ethnic group experience limited social and economic success in the larger society. “This, Fordham and Ogbu contend, results in African–American students devaluing the necessity of schooling,” and consequently impeding opportunities for school success (Starkey & Eaton, 2008).

Surprisingly none of the primary research participants in this study identify situations when students in their classrooms use AAVE as means of resisting dominant cultural norms. However, Matthew, Sheila, Tina, and Sarah admit to confronting or addressing instances when students make accusations of acting white about their peers.

Matthew indicates that out of the fear of being labeled as acting white, he has capable students who will occasionally enlist his assistance, in attempts to camouflage their ability from peers. This finding is consistent with those in the research suggesting that some students of color attempt to conceal their academic success from fellow schoolmates (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Margaret and Tina make important observations regarding the decline of the use of the term “acting white” by students in their classrooms in recent years. Tina indicates that students now use terms such as “you have gone over to the other side” and “Oreo” to describe the acting white phenomenon. Margaret claims that the acting white phenomenon is occurring less frequently in the integrated classroom setting in which she currently teaches at Martha Washington. This claim is in contrast to what is reported in

the literature, which suggests the acting white phenomenon is most prevalent in ethnically diverse educational settings (Fryer, 2006).

Implications

Research suggests teachers' misguided attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of AAVE speakers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds can hinder students' educational attainment (Baugh, 2001). As educators continue to ignore or discount the rich cultural capital AAVE speakers bring with them to schools, a fundamental implication of this research is that teachers need training to address their lack of knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Such training would provide teachers an understanding of how their individual linguistic and cultural backgrounds can influence their perceptions of students and their ability (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999).

As cultural insiders sharing linguistic and cultural backgrounds with their AAVE speaking students, the primary participants of this study offer educators, administrators, and education policy makers valuable insight as to how to help AAVE speakers navigate school to achieve academic success. Taking this insight into consideration, an important implication of the findings of this study is that pre-service and in-service teachers, especially non-cultural insiders, can learn from the successful teachers in this study the ways in which they employ components of their distinct teaching styles to cultivate positive respectful relationships with students to promote their academic progress. It is important to note here; however, that not all cultural insiders will possess favorable language attitudes toward AAVE and other less dominant varieties of English, as this is not the case with all primary participants in this research project. With that said, cultural

insiders with little or no knowledge of AAVE can also learn from the teachers in this study, with regard to how they use their distinct teaching style to support AAVE speakers academic growth. As minority enrollment continues to escalate in schools across the nation and fewer teachers share the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, it is imperative that school districts and institutions of higher learning provide practicing and pre-service teachers with tangible and practical instructional strategies they can use to support the learning of AAVE speakers, such as the culturally relevant pedagogy employed by primary participants in this study, the various components of their distinct teaching style.

Teachers in this study subscribe to the notion that there is an appropriate time and place for AAVE use. Occasionally when AAVE speakers employ AAVE in the classroom setting, participants correct or rephrase the statement in Standard American English. Out of the 65 instances of AAVE use recorded during observations, teachers responded with corrections only nine times. According to the literature simply correcting or rephrasing AAVE in Standard American English is not a best practice for helping students to acquire the language of school; as such interruptions to the presentation of a student's message may lead to an oppositional stance to school and the standard discourse (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999). Some researchers (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999; LeMoine, 2003) suggest that rather than constant correction, a more effective manner of helping AAVE speakers acquire Standard American English is through methods of contrastive analysis; an approach employed extensively in the field of second language acquisition. Contrastive analysis is a careful study of a pair of

languages, with the intent of identifying their structural differences and similarities (Wheeler & Swords, 2004).

Research participants' language attitudes toward AAVE are not consistently aligned with the classrooms behaviors they employ with AAVE speakers, that is, what teachers say about AAVE and what they actually do in the classroom, with respect to their perceptions, is not always in sync. There is research suggesting what teachers do in their classrooms can have a more profound impact on student performance than the expectations they say they hold for their students (Goldenberg, 1992). However, this observation does not suggest teachers' expectations should be ignored in the quest to support the academic achievement of AAVE speakers.

As evidenced in this study, there are inconsistencies in the expressed beliefs of teachers toward AAVE and their actions. For example, with the exception of Tina, all primary participants in this research project state they correct AAVE use in the classroom setting; however, this approach is used sparingly, as it is witnessed in only nine out of 65 occurrences of AAVE use during observations. Tina is an example of a negative case in this study, in that she indicates during interviews she doesn't respond to AAVE use in the classroom setting. However, during observations she responded to AAVE as much as Margaret, Sheila, and Matthew, all of whom corrected or rephrased AAVE statements twice during observations. Despite Tina's theory of action, her admission that she is supportive of AAVE and that it doesn't bother her when students use it in class, she makes attempts to help AAVE speakers toward the use of Standard American English.

Even with Tina's reaction to AAVE use in class, her students still respect her and work positively with her, that is, they show no signs of resistance or rebellion.

The comparisons made between primary participants' espoused perceptions and their attitudes toward AAVE with their classroom behaviors present the complexity of their language attitudes. The results of this study suggest that teachers' language attitudes, whether categorized as negative or positive, are somewhat ambiguous and perhaps best viewed as multi-dimensional, in that teachers' attitudes and espoused beliefs do not necessarily align with the behaviors they exhibit in the classroom.

With the above in mind, the results of this study imply the need for ongoing and consistent professional development and courses focused on the influence of attitudes and perceptions on student performance, language variation and language use, culturally relevant pedagogy, and the "acting white" phenomenon for experienced and pre-service teachers alike.

Recommendations

Research indicates teachers' uninformed attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about their students' linguistic backgrounds can influence their interactions with students, and consequently adversely impact student performance (Harris-Wright, 1999; Hoover, 1998; LeMoine, 2003; Rickford, 1999b; Wolfram, 1999). However, educators continue to have limited linguistic knowledge and awareness of language variation and language use (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999). There is still much work to be done to help educators understand that differences in languages do not equate to deficits (Baugh, 2001; Wolfram, 1999). Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that teacher

education and training programs in colleges, universities, and school districts provide pre-service and in-service teachers courses and/or professional development focused on language variation. Teachers with more knowledge in this area tend to have more positive attitudes toward less dominant varieties of English such as AAVE.

A second recommendation guided by the findings of this study is that school districts investigate and replicate, if appropriate, programs such as the Academic English Mastery Program in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LeMoine, 2003) and a similar program in DeKalb County, Georgia (Wheeler & Swords, 2004) designed to provide extensive professional development and training related to the language and culture of African American students. Such programs are designed with the intention of helping students who come to school with a different dialect of English become proficient in Standard English, by incorporating the cultural capital they bring to school to support their learning.

A third recommendation is that prospective and experienced teachers participate in courses or professional development focused on culturally relevant pedagogy, with the opportunity to explore components of the distinct teaching styles of the successful African American teachers present in this study, as well the phenomenon of “acting white,” which is purported to impede academic achievement among minority students.

An additional recommendation is the replication of this study, with a larger and more diverse sample size, and extensive interviews and observations conducted over a longer period of time. This approach will provide the opportunity to more deeply investigate, and potentially better understand the relationship between teachers’ attitudes

and perceptions of AAVE and AAVE speakers, and the classroom practices and behaviors they employ.

Negative perceptions and attitudes toward a student's home language and culture can translate into lowered teacher expectations, which can negatively impact educational outcomes. The findings of this study suggest that the primary participants acknowledge and respect the cultural and linguistic capital their students bring to school. Serving as cultural and linguist mediators, these teachers employ a distinct teaching style compatible with the learning needs of their students, with the potential of augmenting their level of achievement.

APPENDIX A

Explanatory Letter (Administrators) Supplemental to Informed Consent Form

Dear Mrs./Mr. _____

I am requesting your participation in a research study I am conducting related to African American Vernacular English (AAVE). As a doctoral candidate, I am carrying out my research under the guidance of faculty sponsors, Dr. David Brazer, Dr. Joseph Maxwell, and Dr. Marjorie Hall–Haley, of George Mason University, Graduate School of Education. The findings of this study will contribute to the completion of a doctoral dissertation in the field of education, as well as add to the body of literature regarding African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Your participation in this study is voluntary and would be greatly appreciated.

Purpose of this Study

When AAVE speakers enter schools, they often experience educational obstacles due to linguistic and cultural differences. Consequently, the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, and African American students in general, trails that of grade–level peers. There is little research examining how African American teachers’ perceptions of AAVE shape their classroom practices. Examining African American teachers’ perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors— their classroom practices— as they relate

to the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, is an important step to understanding how they impact the academic progress of AAVE speakers.

I hope that lessons learned from this study will serve as resources for pre-service and practicing classroom teachers, as well as school leaders and policy makers striving to address the educational needs of minority students in general, and more specifically AAVE speakers.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to give your written consent to the researcher to participate in the research study on the enclosed Informed Consent Form. Your participation will include:

- An interview lasting approximately one hour at a time and location of your choosing. You will be asked to provide general background information about you and your school. You will also be asked to describe characteristics of effective schools and successful teachers. Additionally, you will be asked to identify five successful African American teachers at your school, from a list provided by the researcher.
- Although I don't anticipate the need, a follow-up interview may be needed to gather additional details or to solicit further clarification of previously provided information.
- Examination of any materials (artifacts) you believe will help the researcher understand your school environment.

- A profile of your school will be developed based on information you provide, along with that of other research participants. You will be asked to provide feedback either in person, by email, or written correspondence, regarding the accuracy and clarity of the profile. No information specifically identifying you or Minnie Howard will be included.

Potential Risks and Discomfort

The researcher does not anticipate any risks to you for your participation in this study. Pseudonyms will be used for you, the school, and the district. No specific identifying information will be used. You also do not have to share any information that you decide is confidential or private. You have the right to withdraw at any time for no stated reason. All audio tapes and audio files will be stored in my locked office. You and I will be the only people who have access to the transcripts from your interviews.

Potential Benefits to you and society

You will have the opportunity to contribute and expand the body of research related to AAVE, as well as help to deepen practitioners' understanding of how teachers' perceptions of AAVE influence their teaching.

Payment for Participation

You will not receive payment for participation in this study.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You may also refuse to respond to any specific question and still remain in the study.

Confidentiality

The following measures will be taken to protect the confidentiality of your participation in this study:

You will be given a pseudonym, which will be used throughout all phases of this research project, including the transcription of interviews, the analysis of data and reporting of findings.

- While you will identify possible teacher participants for this study, they will not know who suggested their inclusion, nor will you know which teachers actually participated.
- Any information contained in this study that can be linked to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. You will have an opportunity to provide feedback on your school's profile, with regard to confidentiality, accuracy, and completeness.
- Published or otherwise shared transcript excerpts, field notes, and findings will be disguised through the use of pseudonyms for the participants, school district, school site, and the individual participant.

APPENDIX B

Explanatory Letter (Teachers) Supplemental to Informed Consent Form

Dear Mrs. /Mr. _____

I am requesting your participation in a research study I am conducting related to African American Vernacular English (AAVE). As a doctoral candidate, I am carrying out my research under the guidance of faculty sponsors, Dr. David Brazer, Dr. Joseph Maxwell, and Dr. Marjorie Hall–Haley, of George Mason University, Graduate School of Education. The findings of this study will contribute to the completion of a doctoral dissertation in the field of education, as well as add to the body of literature regarding African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Purpose of this Study

When AAVE speakers enter schools, they often experience educational obstacles due to linguistic and cultural differences. Consequently, the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, and African American students in general, trails that of grade–level peers. There is little research examining how African American teachers’ perceptions of AAVE shape their classroom practices. Examining African American teachers’ perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors— their classroom practices— as they relate

to the academic achievement of AAVE speakers, is an important step to understanding how they impact the academic progress of AAVE speakers.

Lessons learned from this study are hoped to serve as resources for pre-service and practicing classroom teachers, as well as school leaders and policy makers striving to address the educational needs of minority students in general, and more specifically AAVE speakers.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to give your written consent to the researcher to participate in the research study on the enclosed Informed Consent Form. Your participation will include:

- Participating in an online survey related to AAVE. The survey will consist of twenty-five questions and should take approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete. Only the researcher conducting this study will have access to survey results.
- Three interviews lasting approximately one hour each, in a location of your choosing. You will be asked to provide general background information about yourself, including your educational and teaching experiences. You will also be asked to describe your perspectives regarding AAVE. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. No one will have access to transcribed interviews or notes, other than the researcher. Transcriptions will take place only in the researcher's home.

- Allowing the researcher to observe you teaching in your classroom, two to three times, for one block each, during classes of your own choosing. Observation notes will only be shared with you and will not be a part of any observation/evaluation process currently in place in your school. No videotaping will occur. All information, interviews, transcriptions, and observation notes will be kept off site and will not be accessible at any school.
- Examination of any materials (artifacts) you believe will help the researcher understand your school environment.
- You will also be asked to provide any feedback you wish regarding the school profile developed by the researcher.

Potential Risks and Discomfort

The researcher does not anticipate any risks to you for your participation in this study. Pseudonyms will be used for both you and the school and no specific identifying information will be used. You also do not have to share any information that you decide is confidential or private. You have the right to withdraw at any time for no stated reason.

Potential Benefits to you and society

You will have the opportunity to contribute and expand the body of research related to AAVE, as well as help to deepen practitioners understanding of how teachers' perceptions of AAVE influence their teaching.

Payment for Participation

You will not receive payment for participation in this study.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You may also refuse to respond to any specific question and still remain in the study.

Confidentiality

The following measures will be taken to protect the confidentiality of your participation in this study:

- You will be given a pseudonym, which will be used throughout all phases of this research project, including the transcription of interviews, the analysis of data and reporting of findings.
- No one will ever be told of your participation in this study.
- Any information contained in this study that can be linked to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. You will have an opportunity to provide feedback on your teacher profile, with regard to confidentiality, accuracy, and completeness.
- Published or otherwise shared transcript excerpts, field notes, and findings will be disguised through the use of pseudonyms for the participants, school district, school site, and the individual participant.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Administrator)

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH INFLUENCE THEIR TEACHING

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research project is being conducted to learn how African American teachers' attitudes and perceptions of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) influence their teaching. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in one to two one-hour interviews. Interviews will occur at a time and place convenient to you and the researcher. The researcher will ask your permission to record interviews. You will be told when taping begins.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation in this research project.

BENEFITS

There are no direct, tangible benefits to participants in this research, other than to further research on how teachers' perception of AAVE impacts their classroom practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to audio tapes and transcripts, which will be kept in the researcher's possession at all times. You will be provided transcripts throughout the research process to review for accuracy and clarity. Only the researcher will know your name and pseudonyms will be used in gathering and reporting data. A pseudonym will also be used for the school and the area of the United States in which your school is located. Published or otherwise shared transcript excerpts, field notes, and findings will be disguised through the use of pseudonyms for the school district, school site, and the individual participant.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate, or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Gregory Jones, a doctoral student at George Mason University, under the supervision of Dr. David Brazer. For questions, or to report research related problems, contact Gregory Jones at 703-824-6680 or via email at gjones@acps.k12.va.us. You may contact Dr. Brazer at 703-993-3634 or by email at sbrazer@gmu.edu. You may also contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your role as a participant in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this consent form and have been given a copy to keep. I agree to participate in this study.

I am willing to be audio taped: Yes_____ No_____

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Participant Signature | Affiliation | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher Signature | Affiliation | Date |

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Teacher)

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH INFLUENCE THEIR TEACHING

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research project is being conducted to learn how African American teachers' attitudes and perceptions of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) influence their teaching. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to engage in an online survey. You may also be asked to participate in a series of one-hour interviews, three, as well as three classroom observations, over the course of three to four months. The research project will conclude with a focus group. You will be invited to participate in the focus group with four additional teachers participating in the study. The focus group will meet in a mutually agreed upon location and at a time of the groups' choosing to provide feedback on data collected during the study and the interpretations drawn by the researcher. The online survey will be taken in a location and at a time of your choosing. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmissions. Interviews will occur at a time and place convenient to you and the researcher. The researcher will ask your permission to record interviews. You will be told when taping begins. Observations will take place during an appropriate class time.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation in this research project.

BENEFITS

There are no direct, tangible benefits to participants in this research, other than to further research on how teachers' perception of AAVE impacts their classroom practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be kept confidential. Only the research will have access to audio tapes, transcripts, and observation memos, which will be kept in the researcher's possession at all times. At the completion of the study, audio files, interview transcripts,

and audio tapes will be destroyed. Only the researcher will know your name and pseudonyms will be used in gathering and reporting data. A pseudonym will also be used for the school and the area of the United States in which the school is located. Published or otherwise shared transcript excerpts, field notes, and findings will be disguised through the use of pseudonyms for the school district, school site, and the individual participant.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Gregory Jones, a doctoral student at George Mason University, and under the supervision of Dr. David Brazer. For questions, or to report research related problems, contact Gregory Jones at 703-824-6680 or via email at gjones@acps.k12.va.us. You may contact Dr. Brazer at 703-993-3634 or by email at sbrazer@gmu.edu. You may also contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your role as a participant in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this consent form and have been given a copy to keep. I agree to participate in this study.

I am willing to be audio taped: Yes____ No____

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Participant Signature | Affiliation | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher Signature | Affiliation | Date |

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ADMINISTRATORS)

1. Tell me about your educational and professional backgrounds, including teaching and administrative experience?
2. How long have you served as an administrator at Martha Washington?
3. Describe your school in terms of students and faculty. Talk about the demographics of both groups– number of students, and number of faculty members.
4. What are your duties as a school administrator and what do you believe is your chief mission as a school administrator?
5. What do you believe are the main challenges you face in accomplishing this mission?
6. Describe the general atmosphere of your school, including what you believe are your school's strengths?
7. What is your role with teachers in your building?
8. What do you believe are the characteristics of an effective school?
9. What are your expectations of teachers in your building and what do you believe are the primary roles of teachers in your school?
10. Describe characteristics of effective teachers?
11. How do teachers in your school address the learning needs of diverse learners?
12. How does the leadership team support the professional growth of teachers in your school?
13. How do you involve parents of minority students in school?
14. How do you approach student discipline in your school?
15. Describe some successes your school has achieved.
16. What support is provided for struggling students?
17. What support is provided to teachers experiencing challenges in the classroom?
18. What options are available for high achieving students?
19. Describe the relationship between minority students and teachers in your school?
20. How does your school address teacher burnout and morale concerns?
21. Tell me what you know about AAVE? Do you believe there are AAVE speakers in your school?
22. How do administrators and teachers address their academic needs?
23. What measures are in place to ensure that all students are making academic progress?
24. What social and extracurricular activities are available to students?
25. What supports are in place to help students address personal and academic matters?

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)

1. Let's begin with some general information. Where did you attend grade school and high school?
2. Talk about your educational experiences in these settings?
3. Describe your childhood home community.
4. Tell me a little about your educational background. Describe the college/university you attended.
5. Did you attend a historically Black college/university?
6. Talk about your teacher training preparation at your college/university.
7. Tell me a little about your professional background. Where did you begin your teaching career?
8. What prompted you to choose teaching as a career?
9. How long have you been teaching?
10. How long have you taught at this location, and what subjects do you teach?
11. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
12. What are your expectations of the students you serve?
13. What do you see as your role as an educator of African American students?
14. What do you believe are characteristics of effective teachers of African American students?
15. When your African American students communicate with you and their peers in class, do they always use Standard English?
16. Do they use AAVE?
17. Can you give some examples of some of the things they say?
18. How do you do feel when students use AAVE in the classroom?
19. What do you do feel about students' use of AAVE before or after class?
20. What do you do when students use AAVE before or after class with peers, with you?
21. What do you do when students use this dialect in your class?
22. Describe the students who use AAVE in your class.
23. Talk about the academic status of students in your classes who use AAVE in your classroom.
24. How do you believe the use of AAVE will affect the future of students who use this language in your classroom?

APPENDIX G

Online Survey Informed Consent Form

Gregory Jones
George Mason University Research Proposal
November 12, 2008

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Teacher)

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN
AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH INFLUENCE THEIR TEACHING

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research project is being conducted to learn how African American teachers' attitudes and perceptions of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) influence their teaching. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to engage in an online survey. You may also be asked to participate in a series of one-hour interviews, three, as well as three classroom observations, over the course of three to four months. The online survey will be taken in a location and at a time of your choosing. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmissions. Interviews will occur at a time and place convenient to you and the researcher. Audio-taping of interviews will occur. You will be told when taping begins. Observations will take place during an appropriate class time.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation in this research project.

BENEFITS

There are no direct, tangible benefits to participants in this research, other than to further research on how teachers' perception of AAVE impacts their classroom practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be kept confidential. Only the research will have access to audio tapes, transcripts, and observation memos, which will be kept in the researcher's

possession at all times. Transcripts will be shared with participants throughout the research process to verify accuracy and clarity. Only the researcher will know your name and pseudonyms will be used in gathering and reporting data. A pseudonym will also be used for the school and the area of the United States in which the school is located.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Gregory Jones, a doctoral student at George Mason University, and under the supervision of Dr. David Brazer. For questions, or to report research-related problems, Gregory Jones may be reached at 703-824-6680 or via email at gjones@acps.k12.va.us. Dr. Brazer may be reached at 703-993-3634 or by email at sbrazer@gmu.edu. You may also contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your role as a participant in this research.

CONSENT

1. I have read this consent form and agree to participate in this study.

Yes

No

2. I am willing to be audio taped:

Yes

No

APPENDIX H

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS SUPPLEMENTAL TO ONLINE LANGUAGE ATTITUDE SCALE SURVEY

Directions: Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. For each item below, please select or provide the response that best describes you. After you have provided this information, the African American Vernacular English survey will appear.

1. I am

Native American

Asian

Black (non-Hispanic)

Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino/Latina

White (non-Hispanic)

Other (specify)_____

2. I am

Female

Male

3. The population of my hometown is

Rural

Urban

Suburban

4. My age is between

21–24

25–28

29–32

33 or above

5. The highest degree I hold is a

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate degree

6. I attended

An historically Black college/university

A predominately White college/university

An ethnically diverse college/university

7. I have ____ years of teaching experience (a pull down menu will be provided for 0–45 years).

8. I have worked at my current school for ____ years (a pull down menu will be provided 0–45 years).

9. I was raised in a home/community where

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was mainly spoken

Standard English was mainly spoken

Both AAVE and Standard English were spoken equally

10. To what extent was the topic of AAVE presented to you in your teacher training?

Not at all

Very little

Often

Extensively

11. If AAVE has been a topic of class discussion, in what course(s) did you encounter it?

English literature

Linguistics

English as a Second Language

Bilingual Education

Multicultural Education

Black History and/Culture

Other

12. To what extent have you participated in staff development training, or teacher workshops/seminars related to AAVE?

Not at all

Very little

Often

Extensively

APPENDIX I

ONLINE LANGUAGE ATTITUDE SCALE SURVEY

I am conducting this survey to determine how teachers view African American Vernacular English, the language used by many African American students. Please provide your honest opinion to each item below. All responses will remain anonymous and completely confidential.

*Note: African American Vernacular English is abbreviated as AAVE.

| | Strongly disagree | Mildly disagree | Neutral | Mildly agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. The scholastic level of a school will fail if teachers allow AAVE (Ebonics) to be spoken. | | | | | |
| 2. AAVE (Ebonics) is simply a misuse of Standard English. | | | | | |
| 3. Attempts to eliminate AAVE (Ebonics) in school will result in a situation that can be psychologically damaging to Black children. | | | | | |
| 4. Continued usage of a non-standard dialect of English would accomplish nothing worthwhile for students (society). | | | | | |

| | Strongly disagree | Mildly disagree | Neutral | Mildly agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 5. AAVE (Ebonics) sounds as a good as Standard English. | | | | | |
| 6. Teachers should allow Black students to use AAVE (Ebonics) in the classroom. | | | | | |
| 7. AAVE (Ebonics) should be discouraged. | | | | | |
| 8. AAVE (Ebonics) must be accepted if pride is to develop among Black children. | | | | | |
| 9. AAVE (Ebonics) is an inferior language system. | | | | | |
| 10. A child who speaks AAVE (Ebonics) is able to express ideas as well as the child who speaks Standard English. | | | | | |
| 11. AAVE (Ebonics) should be considered an influential part of American culture and civilization. | | | | | |
| 12. The use of AAVE (Ebonics) will not hinder a child's ability to achieve in school. | | | | | |

| | Strongly disagree | Mildly disagree | Neutral | Mildly agree | Strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 13. If the use of AAVE (Ebonics) is encouraged, speakers of AAVE (Ebonics) will be more motivated to achieve. | | | | | |
| 14. AAVE (Ebonics) is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language. | | | | | |
| 15. AAVE (Ebonics) is too imprecise to be an effective means of communications. | | | | | |
| 16. Children who speak AAVE (Ebonics) lack the basic concepts of plurality and negation. | | | | | |
| 17. A teacher should correct a student's use of non-standard English. | | | | | |
| 18. In predominantly Black schools, AAVE (Ebonics), as well as Standard English should be used. | | | | | |
| 19. Widespread acceptance of AAVE (Ebonics) is imperative. | | | | | |

| | Strongly disagree | Mildly disagree | Neutral | Mildly agree | Strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 20. The sooner non-standard dialects of English are eliminated, the better. | | | | | |
| 21. Acceptance of AAVE (Ebonics) by teachers will lead to a lowering of educational standards in schools. | | | | | |
| 22. Non-standard English should be accepted socially. | | | | | |
| 23. AAVE (Ebonics) has a faulty grammar system. | | | | | |
| 24. One of the goals of the American school system should be the standardization of the English Language. | | | | | |
| 25. The academic potential of AAVE (Ebonics) speaking students will not improve until they replace their dialect with Standard English. | | | | | |

APPENDIX J

LAS Survey Results for All Participants

| Field Summary for | Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Q15 | Now answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q15 | Strongly disagree | 4 | 22..2% |
| Q15 | Mildly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q15 | Neutral | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q15 | Mildly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q15 | Strongly agree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q16 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q16 | Strongly disagree | 3 | 16.73% |
| Q16 | Mildly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q16 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q16 | Mildly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q16 | Strongly agree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q17 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q17 | Strongly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q17 | Mildly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q17 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q17 | Mildly agree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q17 | Strongly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q18 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q18 | Strongly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q18 | Mildly disagree | 9 | 50.00% |
| Q18 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q18 | Mildly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q18 | Strongly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q19 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q19 | Strongly disagree | 8 | 44.40% |
| Q19 | Mildly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q19 | Neutral | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q19 | Mildly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q19 | Strongly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q20 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |

| Field Summary for | Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Q20 | Strongly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q20 | Mildly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q20 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q20 | Mildly agree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q20 | Strongly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q21 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q21 | Strongly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q21 | Mildly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q21 | Neutral | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q21 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q21 | Strongly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q22 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q22 | Strongly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q22 | Mildly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q22 | Neutral | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q22 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q22 | Strongly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q23 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q23 | Strongly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q23 | Mildly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q23 | Neutral | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q23 | Mildly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q23 | Strongly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q24 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q24 | Strongly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q24 | Mildly disagree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q24 | Neutral | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q24 | Mildly agree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q24 | Strongly agree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q25 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q25 | Strongly disagree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q25 | Mildly disagree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q25 | Neutral | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q25 | Mildly agree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q25 | Strongly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q26 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q26 | Strongly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q26 | Mildly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q26 | Neutral | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q26 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q26 | Strongly agree | 5 | 27.80% |

| Field Summary for | Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Q27 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q27 | Strongly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q27 | Mildly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q27 | Neutral | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q27 | Mildly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q27 | Strongly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q28 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q28 | Strongly disagree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q28 | Mildly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q28 | Neutral | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q28 | Mildly agree | 8 | 44.40% |
| Q28 | Strongly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q29 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q29 | Strongly disagree | 3 | 16.90% |
| Q29 | Mildly disagree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q29 | Neutral | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q29 | Mildly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q29 | Strongly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q30 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q30 | Strongly disagree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q30 | Mildly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q30 | Neutral | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q30 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q30 | Strongly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q31 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q31 | Strongly disagree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q31 | Mildly disagree | 2 | 11.11% |
| Q31 | Neutral | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q31 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q31 | Strongly agree | 7 | 38.90% |
| Q32 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q32 | Strongly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q32 | Mildly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q32 | Neutral | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q32 | Mildly agree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q32 | Strongly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q33 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q33 | Strongly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q33 | Mildly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q33 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q33 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |

| Field Summary for | Answer | Count | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|------------|
| Q33 | Strongly agree | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q34 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q34 | Strongly disagree | 8 | 44.40% |
| Q34 | Mildly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q34 | Neutral | 4 | 21.05% |
| Q34 | Mildly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q34 | Strongly agree | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q35 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q35 | Strongly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q35 | Mildly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q35 | Neutral | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q35 | Mildly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q35 | Strongly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q36 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q36 | Strongly disagree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q36 | Mildly disagree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q36 | Neutral | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q36 | Mildly agree | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q36 | Strongly agree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q37 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q37 | Strongly disagree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q37 | Mildly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q37 | Neutral | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q37 | Mildly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q37 | Strongly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q38 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q38 | Strongly disagree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q38 | Mildly disagree | 2 | 11.51% |
| Q38 | Neutral | 4 | 22.20% |
| Q38 | Mildly agree | 3 | 16.70% |
| Q38 | Strongly agree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q39 | No answer | 0 | 0.00% |
| Q39 | Strongly disagree | 5 | 27.80% |
| Q39 | Mildly disagree | 6 | 33.30% |
| Q39 | Neutral | 1 | 5.60% |
| Q39 | Mildly agree | 2 | 11.10% |
| Q39 | Strongly agree | 4 | 22.20% |

APPENDIX K

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY

| Activity | Task Analysis | Timeline |
|--|---|------------------|
| 1. Recruit research participants | 1) Contact Martha Washington faculty members and administrators (three current and two recently promoted to new assignments) with invitation to participate in study 2) Provide all research participants with lay summary outlining research purposes, time commitments, scheduling, and confidentiality 3) Provide faculty URL for LAS survey. | March–April 2008 |
| 2. Send follow–up email to potential participants | 1) Send follow–up emails inviting faculty and administrators to participate in research study 2) Thank survey participants for time | April 2008 |
| 3. Analyze survey results | 1)Enter data into SPSS 2)Use survey results to select participants to continue with study | April–May 2008 |
| 4. Conduct Interviews with current and former administrators | 1)Schedule Interviews 2) Sign consent form 3) Conduct interviews and identification of exemplary teachers by administrators 4) Record and transcribe interviews 5) Use memos to capture details of interview process, immediate thoughts, and insights to inform study | April 2008 |
| 5. Arrange interviews with five core participants | 1) Invite five participants identified as exemplary educators to continue with subsequent phases of research project, based on criteria outlined in study 3) Meet with participants to sign consent and set up schedule for initial and subsequent interviews | April–May 2008 |
| 6. Conduct interviews with five core participants | 1)Conduct interviews 2) Record and transcribe interviews 3) Develop coding categories from transcripts using Nvivo 4) Use memos to contribute to | May–June 2008 |

| | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 7. Collect Artifacts | 1) Solicit evidence representing participants beliefs and teaching practices 2) Discuss artifacts with participants 3) Code text artifacts using Nvivo 4) Use memos for reflection and analysis of artifacts 5) Employ analysis and reflection for subsequent interviews and member checks with research participants | May–June 2008 |
| 8. Conduct field observations | 1) Solicit suggestions for field observations, if none are readily provided, offer participants suggestions 2) Observe agreed upon scenario(s), while taking detailed field notes 3) Transcribe field notes and/or reflections upon completion of observation 4) Discuss observation with participant 5) Code field notes using Nvivo 6) Use memos for reflection and analysis of observations 7) Employ analysis and reflection for subsequent interviews and member checks with research participants | June, 2008–June–2009 |
| 9. Review and analyze memos and interview transcripts | 1) Review transcripts 2) Develop coding categories from transcripts using Nvivo 3) Extract data from transcripts | June, 2008–June, 2009 |
| 10. Write chapters 4 and 5 | 1) Draft and submit versions to chair 2) Revise 3) Submit to committee members | June 2009–June 2011 |
| 11. Prepare for defense | 1) Review notes, findings, conclusions, for presentation | May–June 2011 |
| 12. Defend dissertation | Defend dissertation | June 2011 |
| 13. Graduate | | August 2011 |

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Gregory Jones was born in Washington D.C., attending public schools in South Georgia and Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, North Carolina, graduating in 1979. He received his Bachelor of Arts in French from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1983, and his Master of Arts in Teaching, with an emphasis on secondary curriculum, from Howard University in 1986.

After graduate school, Mr. Jones worked as a high school French teacher in the District of Columbia Public Schools for five years, serving as the department chair of World Languages for three years. In 1991 Mr. Jones joined the Alexandria City Public Schools as an instructor of French and ESL. He served as a classroom teacher in ACPS until his transition to the district-wide position of Curriculum Specialist for World Languages. An avid supporter of language education, Mr. Jones is a member of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, has served two terms as president of the Virginia Foreign Language Supervisors' Association, and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Foreign Language Association of Virginia.

As a doctoral student, Mr. Jones had a variety of experiences related to his broad interest in language education and educational research. He worked as an intern at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition and afterwards served as a NCLB Peer reviewer.