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**AAE and Identity:**

**Constructing and deploying linguistic resources**

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AAE and Identity:  

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Abstract:  
Work among African American respondents in an Inland Northern city with a more integrated pattern of at least school populations than many larger cities suggests that one of the varieties employed by higher-status African Americans makes use of a divided vocalic system. The vowel system of upper middle class speakers (younger women in particular) is at once reflective of on-going local changes in the front vowel system (in this case, the Northern Cities Chain Shift) but at the same time reflective of older African American norms in the back vowel system.

There is also evidence that this emerging system is instrumental rather than assimilating since there is no correlation of network scores with the degree of acquisition of the local majority norm. This may reflect a pattern among many higher status African Americans, who retain a symbolic identity in phonology while acquiring morpho-syntactic norms that are indistinguishable from other varieties.

Key words: African-American (Vernacular) English, sociophonetics, Northern Cities (Chain) Shift, race and ethnicity, dialect acquisition

Word count: 4,891
In *Talkin and Testifyin*, Smitherman (1977) says:

In the early period of American history, the African experience was very immediate and real to the slaves and many yearned to escape back to Africa. As time progressed, though, the African slave became rather firmly entrenched in the New World, and hopes of returning to the motherland began to seem more like unattainable fantasies. Having thus resigned themselves to a future in the New World, many slaves began to take on what Langston Hughes has termed the “ways of white folks” — their religion, culture, customs, and, of course, language. At the same time, though, there were strong resistance movements against enslavement and the oppressive ways of white folks. Thus, from the very beginning, we have the “push-pull” syndrome in black America, that is, pushing toward White American culture while simultaneously pulling away from it (10-11).

That push-pull is perhaps nowhere more evident than in language, but, as Smitherman has also pointed out, we may have seen a great deal more pullin than we have pushin.
There is no denying that the [vernacular male street culture world] is a dimension of black linguistic tradition; the point, however, is that a slice of black folk character was presented as the whole (1988:162).

That is, research on African American English (AAE) has focused on that variety which Labov (1972a:xiii) calls African American Vernacular English (AAVE), the one most different from surrounding varieties of English and, although by no means always, the one most likely to embed expression different from that of the mainstream culture.

It is not odd that a variety is most different from a standard if it is representative of younger, male, working-class speakers. Many studies have shown that younger speakers use a variety that is most divergent from the overtly prestigious one (e.g., Downes 1998:223-24), and male speakers are more prone than female speakers to exhibit these covertly prestigious norms (e.g., Trudgill 1972). Dialectologists also recognize that “there is far more geographical variation among people of the lower social classes than there is amongst those at the top of the social heap” (Hudson 1980:43), and we believe that what is true of region and class may be extended to other social distinctions.

It is also not odd that the variety of AAE most divergent from standard American English (SAE) would have attracted the attention of linguists first and predominantly. It was thought that a scientific approach to this particular
variety would help most in the solution of both theoretical problems (e.g., origins of the variety) and social inequities (e.g., reading failure in schools) (e.g., Labov 1972a).

This focus has led, however, as Smitherman has pointed out, to a monolithic impression of AAE, and we believe that impression has misled us in characterizing the relationship between African-American identity and language. Put simply, the error is this: a speaker’s African-American identity can be determined by the nativeness or authenticity of his or her AAVE and/or by the intensity of his or her use of it.

First, the nativeness (or you-can't-go-home-again) question. Speakers who acquire alternatives to AAVE are, according to Labov (1972b), no longer authentic speakers of their native variety.

Although one can achieve a certain amount of insight working with bilingual informants, it is doubtful if as much can be said for “bidialectal” informants, if indeed such speakers exist. We have not encountered any nonstandard speakers who gained good control of a standard language, and still retained control of the nonstandard vernacular. Dialect differences depend upon low-level rules, which appear as minor adjustments and extensions of contextual conditions, etc. It appears that such conditions inevitably interact, and although the speaker may indeed appear to be speaking the vernacular, close examination
of his speech shows that his grammar has been heavily
influenced by the standard. He may succeed in convincing his
listeners that he is speaking the vernacular, but this impression
seems to depend upon a number of unsystematic and heavily
marked signals. (215)

Although Labov does not disparage such speakers as lacking in African
American identity, the implication, especially for those who believe that there
is a close correlation between language and identity, is clear.²

Second, in what we might call the “numbers game identity theory,”
speakers of AAE are often represented as existing somewhere on a stylistic-
status continuum between AAVE and SAE. Data such as those in Table 1 are
typical:

Insert Table 1 about here

This picture is clear: young, inner-city males almost categorically delete
/r/ in this context; older working-class African Americans use considerably
more /r/, and middle-class African Americans use even more, although they
do not reach the level of nonstandard speaking New York City area European
American working class youth. SAE speakers, not shown here, presumably
have 100% in both styles. Again, although Labov does not state it, one
implication is that older and higher-status African American speakers are “less
black” than younger, lower-status males because their norms are closer to or move in the direction of white speakers.

We reject those implications; to use Smitherman’s terms, we think that many adult and higher-status African Americans have been pullin and pushin for so long that they have maintained authentic, full-fledged African American identities without necessarily having full competence in what might be called basilectal AAVE. We therefore investigate the position of some vowels in the phonological systems of working and middle class urban northern African Americans from Lansing, Michigan to determine what AAE systems they are creating, and we compare these systems to some morphosyntactic features collected from the same respondents.

By means of this comparison we hope to further the idea that phonology is the level that speakers who are involved in acquiring wider community norms hold on to as expressions of identity but that morphosyntax is not used in this way. Hudson (1996), for example, suggests that “… syntax is the marker of cohesion in society, with individuals trying to eliminate alternatives in syntax from their language. […] Pronunciation reflects the permanent social group with which the speaker identifies” (45). Ash and Myhill (1986) note that blacks with extensive white contacts are quicker to acquire white norms in morphosyntax than in phonology. These observations about linguistic levels and identity are undoubtedly related to the contention that phonological variables have often been shown to have \textit{gradient stratification} while morphosyntactic ones have \textit{sharp stratification} and perhaps as well to the
conclusion that such sharply stratified elements are more salient and more easily acquired, particularly by older learners.

We approach the general problem first by studying the degree to which African Americans in Lansing have or have not adjusted their vowel systems to the surrounding but still emerging local norm. Not much is known about African American vowel systems in northern urban areas, although Anderson and Milroy (2001), Deser (1991), and Edwards (1992) have looked at isolated vowels in the Detroit area. In his extensive work on the acoustic characteristics of American English vowel systems, Thomas (2001) includes only one northern (although “Midland” by traditional US dialectology standards) African American speaker (a Columbus, Ohio female, born in 1970), and the remainder of the African American vowel systems he displays are those of speakers from Texas and North Carolina. Neither of those areas was an important homeland for African American migrants to urban southeastern Michigan, who mostly came from Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia (Harrison 1991, Wolfram 1969).

On the other hand, a great deal is known about urban northern European American vowel systems, and the Lansing area is one of those affected by the so-called Northern Cities Chain Shift (NCCS), one of the best-studied ongoing linguistic changes in the sociolinguistic canon (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here
We will focus on the fact that the European American norm in this area involves /æ/-raising (so that, as shown in Figure 1, “cad” might sound like “Ked” or even “kid”) and /ɑ/-fronting (so that, as shown in Figure 1, “cod” might sound like “cad”). (N.B.: Labov uses the letter “o” to represent the sound of “cod”; we will use the IPA symbol “a.”)

We need to establish that, before any possible influence of the NCCS, African American norms would not have included /æ/-raising or /ɑ/-fronting. To do this, we refer first to Thomas’ only representation of an African American speaker from the source states for the majority of the southeastern Michigan African American population — a male, Dallas County, Alabama speaker born in 1856 and recorded in 1941. This plot (Thomas 2001:166) shows very clearly that these two vowels are in no position that could be confused with NCCS influences. His F1 (taken here to represent vowel height) for /æ/ is at 700 Hz, approximately the same height as his /ɑ/. His F2 (taken here to represent vowel front-backness) for /ɑ/ is at approximately 1000 Hz (just as far back as his /ɔ/ and his /ʌ/). There is, however, in this speaker’s system some minor evidence of /æ/ fronting (or “tensing”). His F2 is approximately 2000 Hz, the same degree of vowel frontness as his /ɛ/.

Thomas’ much younger Columbus, Ohio speaker (who is from a Midland area not influenced by the NCCS) shows a very similar positioning of both /æ/ and /ɑ/ (177), but we have also conducted our own acoustic analyses (through
LPC analyses of F1 and F2 characteristics of vowels on Kay Elemetrics Computer Speech Lab) of one Mississippi and six Alabama speakers whose voices were recorded during the progress of the fieldwork for the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)—speakers born in the late 19th and early 20th Century. A generalization (based on means scores of normalized F1 and F2 characteristics of the vowels) of these vowel systems is shown in Figure 2. Both vowels focused on here are clearly in positions very different from those influenced by the NCCS. Although /æ/ is fronted (parallel in F2 position to /ɛ/), it is only very minimally raised, if at all, and is clearly much lower than /ɛ/ on the F1 dimension. The vowel /ɑ/ (shown here in Labov’s system as an “o” and nearly covered by “aw,” the position of the onset of the diphthong in “out”), is not at all fronted and is as far back (F2) as /ʌ/. We conclude, therefore, that the African American vowel system brought to southeastern Michigan looked very much like Figure 2 and that any radical raising of /æ/ or fronting of /ɑ/ will have resulted from contact with the emerging NCCS system.³

Insert Figure 2 about here

For this study, Jones (2003) collected word list, reading passage, and conversational data from thirty-three male and female African American respondents in Lansing, Michigan between the ages of 19 and 74 and divided
them into “young” (under 40) and “older” (over 40) age groups. Using a modified scale based on Warner et al. (1960), they were divided into working and middle class groups. We use actual age and actual scores from the Warner-style status assessment in some of our statistical tests.

It was then determined whether these respondents’ /æ/ vowels were raised and/or their /a/ vowels fronted, based on acoustic measurements (conducted in the same way the analysis of DARE vowels was done, with appropriate t-tests) which determined the position of the two vowels in question. The following index scores were assigned to the vowel positions of each speaker as a result of these analyses.

Insert Table 2 about here.

On this basis, an /æ/ is considered raised and an /a/ fronted if they had index scores of “2” or higher. In fact, no respondents had a raising or fronting score higher than “2.”

The results for the thirty-three respondents for /æ/ are shown in Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 about here

It is clear that /æ/-raising is most characteristic of female, middle-class respondents, a sociolinguistically expected response to an adjustment to a new norm. Although age is not a factor for middle class respondents, it is for
working class ones (both male and female). In contrast, a chart for /a/-fronting is unnecessary since only two young, working class females had a score of “2.”

Why would these middle class female respondents, who have so completely accommodated to the local norm for /æ/ (eight out of nine are raised) be so resistant to the influence of local /a/ (none are fronted)? We believe these speakers are, in fact, constructing AAE (not AAVE) phonological systems and that, most interestingly, some aspects of local pronunciation are not important to the African American identity of that system (and, by extension, to the speaker) but others are. In this case, these speakers have incorporated /æ/-raising into their systems (perhaps simply as a case of change from below the level of conscious awareness), but they have resisted the local change to /a/, and the result is that their systems are still identifiably African American.

A network analysis of each speaker’s position in the community was also done, and these results will help us evaluate this interpretation of the status of /æ/-raising. The first part of this survey was a modified version of Milroy’s network assessment system (1980) that sought to determine the density and multiplexity of one’s local social embedding (SOCNET = social network). It asks about the status of the neighborhood itself, the number of one’s family members in the neighborhood, the number of same-sex work partners one has in the neighborhood, and the number of neighborhood residents with whom
one spends leisure time. A speaker with a score of “0” is not extensively connected in a tightly networked local community; one with a score of “5” is maximally connected. We added to this investigation another that sought to determine the degree to which a speaker was embedded in ethnic networks as well as neighborhood ones (ETHNET = ethnic network). In this test, we asked speakers to characterize the percentage of their close acquaintances who were members of the same ethnic group. Again, a score of “0” indicated that the speaker had no close association with ethnic sames, and a score of “5” indicated that a speaker had exclusive association with ethnic sames.

We had hoped to combine these two network investigations to give a total network score, but that could not be done for these respondents since the correlation between the two measures was very low (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.092$).

Since these two measures of network do not correlate, we must first ask why. We suspect that Milroy’s method of calculating network density and multiplexity is appropriate for only those nonmobile, traditional neighborhoods typical of many European contexts but only, perhaps, of very stable rural environments in the United States or in some traditionally stable ethnic neighborhoods in our largest cities. Respondents can score high on such scales only if they live in the same close-knit neighborhoods with co-workers, co-leisure time partners, and extended family. Moreover, high scores on such measures are also shown to be typical of working class rather than middle class respondents, and this trend, although not statistically significant, is
shown in our respondents in a correlation between the actual scores used to compute social status and SOCNET scores (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.389$). We may ask, then, if there is a correlation between ETHNET and SOCNET for our working class speakers only, but there is not (Spearman correlation coefficient $r=0.256$).

We conclude, therefore, that ETHNET and SOCNET measure relatively independent factors among our respondents and that the meaning of the SOCNET scale itself (since it does not highly correlate with social status) cannot be interpreted in the same way it was in Milroy (1980). In particular, our respondents (and others in the United States) may actually deserve higher density-multiplexity scores than they might be given by even a modified Milroy-like scale. Such measures may mask greater network relations among some groups due to the greater mobility of residence patterns in families (especially perhaps among groups which have experienced important migration patterns within the last few generations, as African Americans in the north certainly have) and to the greater diversity of employment sites among same-neighborhood dwellers. Whatever the interpretation of our Milroy-like scores, we will treat them (SOCNET) separately from our estimate of association with ethnic sames (ETHNET).

We correlate first the association between SOCNET and /æ/-raising. If tight neighborhood network association suggests less correlation with wider community norms, there should be a negative correlation between the SOCNET score (the higher the score, the denser and more multiplex the
respondent’s neighborhood network associations) and the /æ/-raising index score (“1” = not raised, “2” = raised). Figure 4 shows the complete lack of correlation between SOCNET and /æ/-raising, with a wide range of SOCNET scores over both raised and non-raised /æ/ vowels.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Since we have questioned the interpretation of SOCNET in this population, however, we return to our measure of association with ethnic sames, but the results are no different; as Figure 5 shows, there is no statistical correlation between ETHNET and /æ/-raising either (Spearman correlation coefficient: $r = -0.12$).

Insert Figure 5 about here

Why is it that the big three of sociolinguistics (sex, age, and status) show sensitivity to /æ/-raising in largely predictable ways but network shows no relationship whatsoever? Before we assume that such network relations do not correlate with adaptation to new phonological norms, we show the results of a similar study among Appalachian European Americans who have immigrated to urban southeastern Michigan. Evans (2001) investigated twenty-eight children and grandchildren of such migrants to Ypsilanti, Michigan and found a significant correlation between ETHNET and SOCNET, perhaps an
indication of the tighter residential patterns among her respondents and a more monolithic employment pattern (local area auto plants). More importantly, the correlation between this combined network score (TOTNET = SOCNET and ETHNET) showed a significant relationship with /æ/-raising (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = -0.618$; regression $f = 12.914$, $p = .001$). Note that this is, of course, a negative correlation — as the TOTNET scores go up (indicating denser and more multiplex community relations and greater association with ethnic sames), /æ/-raising decreases. In light of what we have said above, perhaps it is also important to point out that both ETHNET and SOCNET independently correlate negatively with /æ/-raising. These results show that network scores can be important indicators of linguistic change.

It is more difficult to compare the Lansing and Ypsilanti groups for /ɑ/-fronting. Since this is the second step of the NCCS, we would expect the Ypsilanti respondents to be slower in picking it up because they have not been in southeastern Michigan as long as the Lansing respondents. In fact, like the Lansing respondents, only two are fronted, both middle class speakers. Since the actual number of /ɑ/-fronted respondents is the same, we will take a different approach to compare the two groups.

Recall that in /æ/-raising, Ypsilanti respondents are well behind the Lansing ones; only 32% (9 of 28) are raised as opposed to 52% (17 of 33) of the Lansing respondents. By contrast, the percentage of /ɑ/-fronting in both
groups is very similar: 7% (2 of 28) in Ypsilanti and 6% (2 of 33) in Lansing.

But the percentage differences between /æ/-raising and /ɑ/-fronting is very large. It is only 25% (32% minus 7%) for the Ypsilanti respondents, but a whopping 46% (52% minus 6%) for the Lansing respondents, a good indication, we believe of the importance of maintaining a backer /ɑ/ for African American identity in this community, as we have already suggested.5

As concerns /æ/-raising itself, however, since Ypsilanti respondents also behave in sociolinguistically predictable ways for sex, age, and status, why is there such a mismatch between network and /æ/-raising correlations between these two groups? We believe the answer to this question is the same as the one to the question posed earlier. Why does the African American group show no correlation between network scores and adaptation to an on-going linguistic change, one which is surely well on its way to becoming a norm in both speech communities (i.e., Lansing and Ypsilanti)?

All this evidence points to the interpretation that /æ/-raising is a local linguistic norm which has nothing to do with the African American identity of Lansing speakers, at least as it is measured by our ETHNET and, perhaps, SOCNET scales. To raise /æ/ is to be from Lansing, a regional but not ethnic characteristic, and sensitivity to it follows age, gender, and social status patterns but not ones of ethnic identity and/or solidarity. On the other hand, to front /ɑ/ in Lansing appears to be a phonological marker of ethnic identity, and perhaps it is even an avoided white sound, as the [æ]-onset to the /aw/
diphthong was discovered to be among Philadelphia African Americans (Graff, Labov, and Harris 1986).

We now compare these results to a brief and partial review of morphosyntactic evidence gathered in the course of our fieldwork with these same Lansing African Americans, much of it acquired during tape recordings of that part of the interview that determined the respondent’s ETHNET score. Although this part of the interview was relatively formal, there were several respondents who frequently used AAVE morphosyntax. The following example is taken from this part of the interview with a twenty-eight year old male working class respondent.

Interviewer: What’s the best thing about living here?

Respondent: Ain’t really nothing best out there for me. I mean I’m struggling and still just surviving. I mean it don’t seem like you get treated very well. They say equal opportunity, but you don’t really see the equal.

Many of our working class respondents use such constructions as these (here, multiple negation and transportation of the negative element to the first of the sentence and no 3rd singular agreement [“it don’t”]).

Most middle class respondents never used such features, so the defining characteristic would appear to be social status, and the classic definition of sharp stratification applies to these respondents: “In the case of sharp
stratification, we find a clear-cut pattern of correlation in terms of major social classes” (Wolfram and Fasold 1974:81).

On the other hand, there was some use of nonstandard features among middle class speakers, but we believe this occurs only under well-defined circumstances. The following discussion with a twenty-five year old middle class female is illustrative.

Interviewer:  Do you like being a self-employed nurse?

Respondent:  Uh. Yes and no.

Interviewer:  Yes. Why yes?

Respondent:  Uh. Because I- I’m at home with my mom, and then when I wasn’t at home with my Mom, I was also at other people’s houses. And it’s like you can’t call in – and that’s the-No, you know I have to be at home every [inaudible] with my Mom. I can’t call in. There’s no set vacations. And every day constant work. So some days I wish I could have a regular nine to five, but the pay is good.

Interviewer:  Do your best or closest friends live in your neighborhood?


Interviewer:  Do you have relatives in the neighborhood?

Respondent:  All of them. All of them are out here.
Interviewer: Do you spend time with your co-workers in leisure time activities?

Respondent: Uhuh; no. I don’t have any co-workers.

Interviewer: What do you usually do when you have spare time?

Respondent: Uhm. Go bowling with A... on Monday or sit at home with my new baby.

Interviewer: How old is your baby?

Respondent: Three weeks

Interviewer: Oh. Do you think this is a good neighborhood to grow up in?

Respondent: I would say any neighborhood is a good neighborhood to grow up in. I don’t [inaudible] because I grew up on the west side. I didn’t grow up over here. It’s so quiet. I liked it. I liked when I grew up on the west side, we all got along. There was closeness. It’s like everybody is to themselves. You see; they got money out here. See it’s like. No- like everybody. I don’t know. I wouldn’t. No; I probably wouldn’t like it out here. It looks boring to me. When we grew up on the west side, we learned how to survive for ourselves, play together, learned to share. It’s like they don’t have to share. They have so much. The kids out here have cars at sixteen. I mean the girl next door done had three of them. I
mean every time I turn around; she had a truck; last time she had a Jetta; she had a sports car, and we had to work. So, no I wouldn’t trade places. No, I would’ve rather grew up on the west side.

Interviewer: What’s the worst thing about this neighborhood?
Respondent: It’s quiet. They nosy. Everybody know everybody’s business.

(laughter)
Respondent: I guess it’s good they can watch out for burglars, but...

This respondent uses no nonstandard features during the interview until the topic of neighborhood awakens in her an emotional response to the fact that her new neighbors “have so much.” In contrast to her old neighborhood (where people had to “share”), there is conspicuous consumption (by people who do not have to work) in her new neighborhood, and she disapproves of that (as well as of their “nosiness”). Unlike the earlier parts of the interview, however, this more emotional segment contains several nonstandard forms (“done had,” perfect “grew,” copula absence in “They nosy,” and no 3rd singular agreement in “Everybody know”).

In this case, we believe it is straightforward to show that this respondent has code-switched between her ordinary, consultative middle class AAE variety to a more AAVE-oriented voice. She has done this precisely at a point
in the interview when she wants to highlight the difference between the neighborhood where she grew up and the one where she lives now. We do not know if she has complete control of the many features associated with AAVE, but she clearly makes use of some of the morphosyntactic features associated with it.

We do not believe, however, that this topically or emotionally induced code switching detracts from the fact that morphosyntactic features are most often sharply stratified. If they were not, then they should be distributed quantitatively across the class distinctions, but AAVE features are, in our data, used either by working class speakers or by middle class speakers only in such clearly identified segments. In contrast, our Lansing data show that /æ/-raising is a gradiently stratified feature. Twelve of our middle class respondents are raised, but five are not; five of our working class respondents are raised, eleven are not.

Additionally, we find an interesting contrast between our Lansing respondents and rural, mid-Michigan European Americans. While the latter are also in the early stages of the NCCS, Ito (199) found that 21 out of 36 are /ɑ/-fronted. Since only 2 of our 33 Lansing respondents show any evidence of /ɑ/-fronting, we conclude that sharp stratification is not limited to morphosyntactic features nor to social class groups, for we find /ɑ/-fronting to be sharply stratified between African American and European American Michiganders regardless of social status.
Of course, AAVE morphosyntactic features are sharply stratified as well. Most of our working class respondents use some such features; our middle class respondents did so only when they clearly code-switched to their representation of that variety.

We are most intrigued, however, by the failure of our gradiently stratified feature (/æ/-raising) to show network significance, particularly since its network significance is so strong among the Appalachian descendents in Ypsilanti. We believe, however, that the answer rests in the different relationship to identity that this shift marks in the two populations. African Americans in Lansing acquire this feature as a part of their regional identity, one that poses no challenge to their ethnic identity. The Appalachian descendents in Ypsilanti, however, acquire a new regional identity at the expense of their previously regionally based Appalachian identity. The tighter their community and ethnic-same networks (which are based originally in region), the less likely they are to participate in the NCCS. When they do, they lose their Appalachian identity; when Lansing African Americans participate in a regional change, they see no threat to their ethnic identity, and, when a regional change might pose such a threat (as apparently /ɑ/-fronting may), they reject it.

In conclusion, then, although we find morphosyntactic markers to be sharply stratified along class lines, we have also found an identity-marking sharply stratified phonological feature, one not at all sensitive to sex, age, or status but sensitive to ethnicity. On the other hand, we find that African
Americans, although they use such sharply stratified features as the avoidance of /a/-fronting for identity purposes, freely participate, with no loss of ethnic identity whatsoever, in some local linguistic changes.

With the information we now have in hand about Lansing African Americans, we are eager to move on to other related questions. How would local respondents react to /a/-fronted and /æ/-raised tokens? Would they reject any /a/-fronted token as not African American? What other aspects of the local systems may show gradient and sharp stratification and which might correlate with network position (as these have not)? What competence in AAVE do code switching middle class respondents actually have?

As Smitherman has warned us, unless we survey the variety of persons who make up the African American population, we may miss both what is unique and what is sociolinguistically commonplace. We hope to have shown that that is just as true at the finely tuned level of phonology as it is at the more typically researched areas of morphosyntax, lexicon, and ways of talking.
Notes

1. Both authors are responsible for this article; Jones is uniquely responsible for the conduct of the fieldwork in Lansing. Both authors are delighted to be able to present this small study in honor of our colleague and mentor David Dwyer.

2. The distinguished African American sociolinguist John Baugh confesses that, when he first heard Labov’s characterization of African American youth who grew up with little or only peripheral embedding in the vernacular street culture as lames, he worried about his own status. He has himself, however, resolved this and is happy with both his historical adolescent lame but nevertheless current full-fledged African American identity (personal communication).

3. Since there is evidence of /æ/-fronting in the data from DARE and in the Columbus and Alabama respondents reported by Thomas, we ignore the F2 dimension in our analysis. We are aware that there is also evidence of /æ/-raising in AAE. Thomas shows such a pattern in several of his plots for Texas and North Carolina respondents, and Henderson (1996) characterizes some AAE Philadelphia respondents as having raised but not tensed items. We have not found these raised vowels in our research on speakers of the most likely historical background for speakers in the Lansing area. Because Henderson’s data involve the complex tending of this vowel in Philadelphia, we ignore that complication since, apparently, /æ/-tensing is ubiquitous in NCCS-affected
regions. Particularly relevant is the fact that Henderson reports raised but not tensed items in local Philadelphia African American respondents. In our work in all ethnic groups in Michigan, we have found tensing to be a prerequisite for raising.

4 The /a/-fronting scale runs from 0 to 5 since many southern and African American speakers have a backer vowel than a typical /a/.

5 European American mid-Michigan residents, who are latecomers to the urban southeastern Michigan NCCS, are, for example, 94% /æ/-raised and 55% /a/-fronted (Ito 1999).

6 We use code switching in a very neutral sense. We cannot say, for example, if these middle class speakers are code switching into a variety that is under their control or not and/or whether that switching constitutes a performance variety (e.g., Schilling-Estes 1998) or is, in fact, an imitation (e.g., Preston 1992).
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TABLES

Table 1. Social, stylistic (A = casual style, B = careful style), and ethnic stratification of /r/ percentages (in the context /r##V/, e.g., four o’clock) for three African American and one European American groups (adapted from Labov 1972a: 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Style</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-city youth gang</td>
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<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class adults</td>
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<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working class white speakers</td>
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<td>80</td>
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</table>
Table 2: Index scores of Lansing African American /ae/ and /a/ vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F1 index</th>
<th></th>
<th>“Raising”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 /ae/</td>
<td>/ae/ is significantly lower than /ε/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 /ae/</td>
<td>/ae/ is not significantly different from /ε/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 /ae/</td>
<td>/ae/ is significantly higher than /ε/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 /ae/</td>
<td>/ae/ is significantly higher than /ε/ but closer to /I/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 /ae/</td>
<td>/ae/ is not significantly different from /I/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F2 index</th>
<th></th>
<th>“Fronting”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 /a/</td>
<td>/a/ is significantly back of /ʌ/^d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 /a/</td>
<td>/a/ is not significantly different from /ʌ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 /a/</td>
<td>/a/ is significantly front of /ʌ/ but closer to /ʌ/ than /ε/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 /a/</td>
<td>/a/ is significantly front of /ʌ/ but closer to /ε/ than /ʌ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 /a/</td>
<td>/a/ is not significantly different from /ε/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. The Northern Cities Chain Shift (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 1997)
Figure 2. Average F1-F2 positions of selected vowels for one Mississippi and 6 Alabama African Americans (from DARE recordings)
Figure 3. Numbers of respondents by age and status with raised (‘2’) and not raised (‘1’) vowels
Figure 4. Individual Lansing AAE SOCNET - /æ/ raising correlations (overall
Pearson correlation coefficient: r = -0.081
Figure 5. Individual ETHNET - /æ/ fronting correlations (overall Pearson correlation coefficient: $r = -0.12$)