

“I BE ON THE BUS”: AN INVESTIGATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’

LEARNING ABOUT DIALECTS, POWER, AND IDENTITY

by

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**“I BE ON THE BUS”: AN INVESTIGATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS’
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This dissertation reports on the implementation of a dialect diversity curriculum in a racially heterogeneous 6th grade classrooms. The research was guided by the following questions: (1) How do middle school students engage in curricular activities on dialect variation, identity, and power? (2) How do students’ racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects? (3) How were students’ sociolinguistic perceptions and content learning shaped by the curriculum? (4) How do students’ attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)? Critical language pedagogy informed the creation of the curriculum. Data sources included pre- and post-survey responses, classroom observations, students’ written responses, and student interviews. Data were collected over a six-week period and critical language pedagogy drove data generation, coding, and analysis to determine what students learned and how their perceptions were shaped, changed, or stayed the same.

Overall, students demonstrated growth in their understanding and appreciation of the grammaticality and legitimacy of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE and Pittsburgh dialect. However, there was little change in students’ frequent use of Standard English language ideologies in their descriptions of mainstream American English (MAE) that positioned MAE as inherently better than non-mainstream dialects such as AAE and Pittsburgh. In terms of

differences in student subgroups, African American and multiracial students voiced similar perceptions about the connection between dialect use and the speaker's identity, but White students did not acknowledge links between language varieties and identity. Furthermore, there was noticeable silence and avoidance around the topic of race from White students. Quantitative data collected from pre- and post-surveys of student perceptions did not always converge with classroom observations and students' written responses.

Findings align with scholars who suggest that code switching techniques that do not include discussions about the inherent power behind privileged dialects such as MAE have the potential to further marginalize speakers of non-mainstream dialects. Future studies should consider the way themes of institutionalized power and racial identity can be introduced to middle school students in meaningful yet understandable ways before students consider the ways power and identity intersect with language variation.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s marked a period when many African Americans and other marginalized groups fought against discriminatory practices and racism that directly impacted their quality of life. Throughout history there have been numerous examples of protest. While much of the recorded history of this period shows that African Americans were on the front lines of protest, their efforts would have been immensely less effective without the support of many Jewish people, Puerto Ricans, and LGBTQs (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) who were also either directly involved in the Civil Rights Movement or in similar protests for equal treatment or better working conditions (Grubin, 2008; Hall, 2013; Negrón-Muntaner, 2015). For example, many Jewish people were (and still remain) actively involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Additionally, the Young Lords who were Puerto Rican protested against their working conditions in the late 1960s and were often compared to the Black Panther Party. As a result, the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) sought to protect the rights of many different populations of people by making discrimination based on race, color, religion, or gender in the workplace and public spaces illegal. Recent events, such as the killing of unarmed African Americans by law enforcement officers, have fueled what many people describe as a current day Civil Rights Movement and have evoked similar feelings of protest in hopes of ending police brutality, especially against minority populations. What all of these movements have in common is that they have encouraged people

to question what is considered “right” and “wrong” and to explore the dynamics of power that have allowed discriminatory practices to be considered the norm for so long.

Similarly, it’s important to question the ways people in the United States use mainstream (common and considered most acceptable) dialects and non-mainstream dialects and attitudes towards dialects. Mainstream dialects are varieties of English used most often at work and school environments and include mainstream American English (MAE). Non-mainstream dialects are communicative practices that are conventional ways to communicate in specific contexts and regions but often differ from mainstream dialects and include dialects such as African American English (AAE) and Pittsburgh dialect.

Preconceived notions about acceptable uses of the English language are often used as forms of power that allow people to use language as a gauge of a speaker’s measure of intelligence or ability to perform tasks in certain work environments. I follow Foucault by defining *power* an action instead of something inherently possessed. Foucault (1982) explains:

[W]hat defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future. (p. 789)

Foucault is careful not to define power or provide a specific framework for power, but instead encourages the examination of power through the techniques and actions that are used to maintain power. Just as conversations about power in current events and struggles for present-day civil rights (and connections to past civil rights issues) have entered into school and afterschool spaces and created opportunities for students to think critically about notions of power and fairness (Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Rodriguez, 2013; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011;

Shiller, 2013), discussions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialect usage and connections to identity and power should also be included in students' critical discussions because there are often many assumptions and attitudes about how the English language should be used. Such attitudes include perceptions of MAE as "correct" and "proper," while non-mainstream dialects are perceived as inherently wrong. Consequences of negative assumptions and attitudes about non-mainstream dialects can result in students internalizing Standard English language ideologies (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013).

One way discrimination against people of color is perpetuated is through linguistic discrimination—discrimination against speakers of non-mainstream dialects. As described earlier, non-mainstream dialects are communicative practices that are acceptable ways to communicate in specific contexts and regions but often differ from mainstream American English (MAE) practices. Examining the use and understanding of non-mainstream dialects in the classroom presents an opportunity for students to explore dynamics of power. Non-mainstream dialects such as African American English (AAE) and Pittsburgh Dialect are just a few of many non-mainstream dialects spoken in the United States. Though widely accepted among regions and communities of people who share a particular non-mainstream dialect, speaking in the dialect is often deemed wrong, inappropriate, or indicative of speakers of lesser intelligence when compared to MAE speakers (Baugh, 1999; Bereiter & Englemann, 1966; Labov, 1969; Smitherman, 2000).

1.1 HOW TEACHERS ADDRESS NON-MAINSTREAM DIALECTS

In-service teachers have struggled to address students' uses of non-mainstream dialects in the classroom because there is a dilemma between acknowledging these language varieties as assets and identity markers and meeting the demands of the mandated ELA curriculum standards that identify MAE as the preferred language variety (Delpit, 1995). Godley, Carpenter, and Werner (2007) found that Daily Oral Language Practice activities presented a monolithic view of the English language. The findings suggest:

...grammar and language instruction needs to be reconceptualized in order to promote language ideologies that are reflective of current research in linguistics, that help students become more proficient in written Standard English, and that build upon students' linguistic experiences in positive ways. (p. 123)

When English is presented monolithically, the non-mainstream dialectal practices of students or conversations about dialects are not viewed as assets to learning and further complicate teachers' ability to value students' linguistic practices and also teach the mandated ELA curriculum (Godley et al., 2007). The reconceptualization described by Godley et al. (2007) suggests that educators should find ways to use students' linguistic experiences in ways that value the linguistic skills and also use students' experiences as part of language instruction.

For many students, negative attitudes towards non-mainstream dialects might not be addressed in early years of schooling. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002), aligning to Freire (1970), explain "the raising of critical consciousness in people who have been oppressed is a first step in helping them to obtain critical literacy and, ultimately, liberation from oppressive ideologies" (p. 89). The critical consciousness that Morrell and Duncan-Andrade refer to is a mindset that automatically aims to question, critique, and dissect. Additionally, this type of

examination is also important for MAE speakers. MAE speakers as early as middle school can benefit from conversations about non-mainstream dialects, because they can clarify misconceptions about non-mainstream dialects early before MAE speakers enter the world as adults with language prejudices and other stereotypes about people who speak other varieties of English (Fogel & Ehri, 2006).

1.2 RATIONALE

Students need to talk about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects and connections to identity and power, because such conversations engage students in examinations of their own attitudes, the roots of their attitudes, and give students opportunities to engage in discussions with students who might have different experiences and attitudes. Investigating how students learn about variety among non-mainstream dialects and the dynamics of power and identity associated with them highlights an additive model of learning. This additive model of learning can redefine the ways teachers and researchers work to eliminate deficit models that suggest that students are lacking certain skill sets.

Thus, this study investigated middle school students' responses to a 10-day ? curriculum focused on learning about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects of English. The curriculum was designed to foster critical thinking about non-mainstream dialects and their intersection with power and identity. The goals of the curricular activities on dialectal variety, power, and identity were to raise students' awareness of the ways people use different varieties of English, provide students with opportunities to reflect on their experiences with the English language, and dispel myths and stereotypes about dialectal varieties that differ from their own English usage. The

curricular activities used in this study engaged students in conversations about controversial topics that encouraged students to participate using the knowledge and experience they had on the topic of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, positioning all participants as experts based on their attitudes and experiences.

The main research question that guided this study is: How do middle school students engage in curricular activities on dialectal variation, identity, and power? To answer this question, I used the following sub-questions to explore other issues that might be related to students' views of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects:

- a. How do students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects?
- b. How were students' sociolinguistic perceptions shaped by the curriculum?
- c. How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)?

Data was collected in two sixth grade English classrooms over a period of six weeks, and I visited each class for approximately forty-five minutes. Data included a pre- and post-survey, classroom observations, students' written responses, and one-on-one student interviews. Using a pre- and post-survey to determine students' attitudes on linguistic diversity, this study examined how students' attitudes changed over the course of the activities. Students' sociolinguistic content learning was examined through class recordings and students' writing samples to identify how the students' remarks aligned with the sociolinguistic principles of language variation, power, and identity. This study explored students' attitudes and knowledge about societal norms and social injustices related to non-mainstream dialects that they might not have known or questioned previously.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the scholarship that informed my study of students' engagement in a dialect diversity curriculum that aimed to be socially just. I begin by reviewing some of the critical calls for critical approaches to dialectal variation in the classroom. Next, I review the theories of literacy that align with a socially just and sociolinguistically informed curriculum on dialect diversity. Then, I review the sociolinguistic research and terminology that grounds this study and the curricular intervention. Finally, I review the existing body of research on pedagogical approaches to dialect diversity, focusing on the critical approaches that guided the design of the curriculum, data collection, and data analysis.

2.1 CALLS FOR CRITICAL APPROACHES

Language and literacy theorists and researchers have called for more critical approaches to dialectal variation in the classroom that will allow students to examine dialectal differences and that will counter widely accepted stereotypes about varieties of English (Alim, 2005; Fecho, 2000; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Paris, 2012). Such critical approaches allow traditionally marginalized and stereotyped speakers of non-mainstream dialects to explore hierarchical views of non-mainstream dialects, non-mainstream dialectal histories, regional non-mainstream dialectal differences, and their own experiences with non-mainstream dialects. These critical

inquiries are especially important to students who are often told that their use of English is incorrect or not acceptable (Godley & Minnici, 2008).

The current study used curricular activities that engaged students in discussions about non-mainstream dialects and the connections these non-mainstream dialects have to power and identity in an English Language Arts classroom. Some of the curricular activities used aspects of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) (Godley & Minnici, 2008) to get students to think about differences within the English language, reflect on their own experiences, and be exposed to how others use and critique non-mainstream dialects that are classified outside of MAE. This study examined students' attitudes towards non-mainstream dialects over the course of the implementation of a series of mini lessons on dialect diversity. Through students' engagement in the mini-lessons, students were encouraged to think beyond and question societal norms that often dictate the perceived correct and incorrect ways of speaking English.

Thinking critically about non-mainstream dialects and diversity within the English language in a way that encourages students to question societal norms and constructs of power promotes socially just education. Miller (2008) describes social justice pedagogy as the ways teachers "deconstruct and critique the ways that curriculum is socially constructed and consider the foundations of its origins" (p. 2). In this study, students had the opportunity to engage in a curriculum that allowed them to deconstruct and critique widespread ideologies that often go unquestioned. Specifically, this type of examination into the assumed norms for the use of the English language reflects socially just pedagogy because it attempts to present linguistic diversity as language differences instead of language deficits. In the vein of both social justice and culturally sustaining pedagogy, when students are encouraged to engage and grapple with

research-based facts about non-mainstream dialects and power, they can learn that their linguistic knowledge and experiences are valued even if dominant social ideologies suggest otherwise.

2.2 LITERACY THEORIES

This study draws from literacy theories that aim to expand traditional definitions of what it means to be literate. My view of non-mainstream dialects within education is grounded in new literacy studies (NLS). NLS redefines literacy and literate acts beyond the traditional definition of simply reading and writing to include literacies that vary depending on context and are challenged depending on the power relations (Street, 2003). This means that being literate includes the ability to interpret symbols, gestures, body language, the environment, and messages conveyed through style of dress (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). Such nuanced definitions of what it means to be literate also bring to the forefront the ways traditional understandings of literacy are often designated as having more power and prestige than others. According to Street (2003)

NLS, then, takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking ‘whose literacies’ are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant.
(p. 77)

Similarly, I consider the ways that the definitions of literate practices are determined by a small, powerful portion of the population who are not representative of the dialect diversity that exists in the U.S.

My conception of non-mainstream dialects and education is also grounded in the New London Group’s multiliteracies theory (New London Group, 1996). The New London Group’s

call for a pedagogy of multiliteracies responds to the diverse populations represented in schools across the world. Multiliteracies are the nuanced ways of communicating that include technology and the ways English is being used by different populations and cultures. The New London Group (1996) explained, “Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more [*sic*] frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries” (p. 64). It is important for teachers to recognize the link between students’ use of varieties of English and literacies. Students’ use of language is what gives them access to literacy, and thus, a student’s use of English shapes how the student conceptualizes literacy.

For example, Heath’s (1983) ethnographic study described the connection between oral language and literacy in her observations of the two communities (Roadville and Trackton). In Roadville, early experiences with language included times when adults read stories and asked children to retell different parts that the children heard. The children were not asked to think outside of the information presented in the stories because, “in Roadville, the absoluteness of ways of talking about what is written fits church ways of talking about what is written” (Heath, 1983, p. 234). Church ways of talking about what is written means that just as the people of Roadville accepted the Bible as perfect, people of Roadville extended that view to talking about written texts that were not the Bible. This meant that Roadville children were not accustomed to talking about written text in a way that might go against the actual information presented within the text. For Roadville children in the early years of schooling, it was difficult for them to extend their understanding beyond the text with tasks that asked them to make a prediction or imagine a different ending to a story because such tasks challenged perceived notions of what they thought was right (the text).

In Trackton, children were accustomed to adjusting and negotiating language. For Trackton children, “words are the tools performers use to create images of themselves and the world they see” (Heath, 1983, p. 235). Trackton children were accustomed to manipulating language in creative and imaginative ways through telling their own stories or performance play. Heath (1983) explained, “for Roadville, the written word limits alternative expression; in Trackton, it opens alternatives” (p. 235). In both communities, the children had very specific experiences with language. However, these experiences with language differed from the expectations of school, and these differences impacted the ways children interacted with literacy tasks.

The expectations of school-based language and literacy still require students to master MAE, which is the standard they are held to in many of their tasks at school and on national tests (Delpit, 1995; Godley & Minnici, 2008). Multiliteracies theory encourages schools to be more open to the multiple communication styles across cultures because our changing world includes speakers who might not always identify with dominant ideals of MAE. Additionally, multiliteracies theory speaks to a future society where people have the potential to be more open and understanding of dialectal and language variety if we provide spaces for students (especially those who will be in power later) to explore variation within the English language.

Similar to multiliteracies theory, Gee (2005; 2012) described “big D” Discourse as the different ways language is used. Discourse (“big D”) is “combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (Gee, 2005, p. 21). The Discourse of school specific to literacy includes valuing the ways students complete tasks that align to state mandated goals such as decoding words, synthesizing information, and skillfully

using MAE. However, the Discourses of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE and Pittsburgh dialect often include using specific words or grammatical features, intonation, and the ability to interact skillfully with others who also speak the dialect. There is often a misalignment between the Discourse of school and the Discourse of non-mainstream dialects.

These theories helped me to explore the ways students' perspectives on non-mainstream dialects and academic literacies intersected in my study. New literacy studies, multiliteracies, and Discourse are frameworks that teachers and researchers can draw from as they create spaces that value dialectal differences and use these differences as a bridge to learning academic English literacy and empowering students of all backgrounds to examine the dynamics of power and identity often associated with specific dialects.

2.3 TERMINOLOGY FOR AMERICAN DIALECTS

Many different terms are used by sociolinguists and by literacy scholars to describe dialects of English in the United States. No term is entirely neutral or free from assumptions about language varieties. My choice of terminology reflects the research-based perspective that all dialects of English are equally logical and grammatical and that the preferred variety of English, often called *standard English*, is not objectively "better" than other varieties. I will discuss terminology in more detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 Mainstream American English

In this study, I use the term *mainstream American English (MAE)* to define the variety of English that is widely accepted in school and workplace environments and beyond a single community's use of English. Referring to this variety of English as *standard English*, as some do, suggests that this dialect is the standard for communication that all other varieties of English should be compared to and thus the only "correct" form of English (Charity Hudley & Mallison, 2011; Godley, Carpenter, & Werner, 2007). Alternately, the term *mainstream American English* implies that this language variety is one of many dialects in the U.S., and is "mainstream" simply because of its widespread use in social institutions and mass communication, not because it is more correct than other dialects.

Another term for MAE used by some language and literacy researchers is *standardized English*, which suggests that this variety is not better than others but rather a form that has been socially constructed as the preferred variety of English. Charity Hudley & Mallison (2011) explain:

In other words, there are no objective, empirical, linguistic reasons why a standardized variety of English should be thought of as being inherently better than any other variety of English, whether it be Shakespearean English, Brooklyn English, Texas English, Australian English, Singapore English, or South African English. If any language or language variety has a prestigious label, it is only because that type of language is spoken by socially, economically, and politically powerful people and is not due to any independent linguistic qualities. (p. 12)

However, *standardized* still implies that this form of English is the standard for communication, even if it is only preferred because of its use by dominant groups in society.

Instead, I use *mainstream* because the term describes the dialect's use among many people and institutions instead of prescribing a specific way to communicate that is preferred over other varieties of English. I also used this term in the curriculum for this study in order to encourage the students to question why MAE is often considered “correct” English.

2.3.2 African American English and Pittsburgh Dialect

Throughout this study, I use the term *non-mainstream dialects* to refer to all American dialects other than MAE. As previously noted, non-mainstream dialects are just as logical and grammatical as MAE but are often viewed as lesser forms of English, particularly when they are used by groups of people who are discriminated against in U.S. society (Cross, Devaney, & Jones, 2001; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 2007).

The curriculum used in this study focuses on two specific non-mainstream dialects, African American English (AAE) and Pittsburgh dialect, because they are the non-mainstream dialects most used by and familiar to the students in the study. African American English (AAE) describes the dialect often used by many African Americans as well as by some non-African Americans who have close contact with AAE speakers. Mufwene (2001) describes AAE simply as the “language spoken by or among African Americans” (p. 21). Also known as Black English (BE), African American Language (AAL), and Ebonics, AAE draws its roots from the enslavement of Africans through the slave trade. Smitherman notes that, “Ebonics is a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans’ appropriation and transformation of a foreign tongue during the African Holocaust” (2000, p. 19). Smitherman described AAE as having historical roots that go beyond stereotypical representations of urban youth and as being embedded within a historical and cultural identity of African Americans. Baugh noted that,

“while most other immigrants were able to continue to speak their ancestral language in ethnic ghettos, slaves were torn from their narrative communities and immediately isolated from others who shared their language” (1999, p. 5).

The use of *Black* or *African American* as descriptors of this form of English is reflective of the historical changes in how many African Americans have chosen to be identified. For example, 20th century descriptions of African Americans as “colored” and Negro have shifted towards the present-day use of the terms Black and African American (Smitherman, 1986). Thus, Spears (2001) defines Black English similarly to AAE and explains that Black English is socially defined through grammar and pronunciation features such as the pronunciation of vowels, intonation, tempo, and rhythm.

AAE serves as an umbrella term for many different stylistic patterns (Labov, 1994; Spears, 1988). For example, the stylistic and grammatical patterns often used by African American pastors and by young African American hip-hop and rap artists can be quite different, but like most scholars, I include both under the term African American English. AAE also includes particular communicative patterns, such as call and response. Though not exhaustive, Table 2.1 presents widespread features of AAE that often appear across contexts (Green, 2011) in comparison to how the features are used in MAE.

Table 2.1 Examples of Prominent Features of AAE and MAE

Feature	AAE usage Example	MAE usage Example
Copula <i>be</i>	He at the store.	He is at the store.
Habitual <i>be</i>	My mother goes to work, so she be in the office.	My mother goes to work, so she is always at the office.
Pre-nominal possessives	“I like my baby hair with baby hair and Afros” (Brown, Hogan, Williams, & Knowles, 2016).	I like my baby’s hair styled in an Afro.
Verbal –s third person	My friend keep telling me that she will return my shirt that she borrowed.	My friend keeps telling me that she will return the shirt she borrowed.
Call and Response	Pastor: God is good. Congregation: All the time. Pastor: And all the time? Congregation: God is good.	
Cultural pride	Say it loud! I’m Black, and I’m proud (Brown & Ellis, 1969, track 1).	

The term AAE is sometimes used interchangeably with African American Vernacular English (AAVE). AAVE can be classified under the larger category of AAE. Labov (1994) argued, “AAVE refers to the geographically uniform grammar found in low-income areas of high residential segregation” (p. 348). Mufwene (2001) described vernacular as “the primary, native, or indigenous language variety one speaks for day-to-day communication” and noted that “African-Americans’ vernaculars can vary from basilectal to colloquial varieties close to the standard” (p. 34). Thus, AAVE is one variety of AAE that is often connected to African Americans of low socioeconomic status, a connection that has led to further marginalization and stereotyping of its speakers. Spears (1988) explained that AAVE is known as the non-standardized variation of AAE that differs the most from MAE with features that include double negatives (*he ain't got none*), habitual *be* (*he be at the store*), and *done* as a marker of a grammatical aspect (*she done took her notebook and left the classroom*). The widespread assumption in mainstream, predominantly White society that AAVE was an uneducated, unintelligent form of MAE led to early research that viewed it as a deficit in need of correction (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966) instead of as a form of communication simply different from MAE.

I use the term AAE throughout this study because the term is inclusive of several features and registers of the language spoken by many African Americans across contexts. I do not use the term *vernacular* to describe AAE or Pittsburgh dialect because even though linguists have defined the term as the language used for day-to-day communication (Mufwene, 2001), the term is often misinterpreted as a negative description of both the dialect being described and its speakers.

I also refer to AAE interchangeably as a non-mainstream dialect, language variety, and communicative practice throughout this study instead of as a language, as some scholars do (Spears, 2001; Mufwene, 2001). A language is often assumed to have more power and be associated with speakers who are more advanced while a non-mainstream dialect is often perceived negatively in popular usage. Spears (2001) clarified the definitions of these terms: “*Language* is the more inclusive term, and a language is seen as including a number of dialects, all of which have a grammar. Dialects, as languages, may or may not be written” (p. 99). Aligning to this definition, this study considers AAE as a variety of American English.

The other non-mainstream dialect that is the focus of the curriculum in this study is Pittsburgh dialect. Also known as “Pittsburghese” and Pittsburgh Language, the Pittsburgh dialect is specific to areas of Western Pennsylvania, not solely the Pittsburgh area. Early settlers in southwestern Pennsylvania spoke many different languages, but the Scots-Irish are the earliest English-speaking immigrants who settled in and around the Pittsburgh area. Pittsburgh dialect is closely tied to the ways European immigrants who worked in the city’s steel mills in the mid 1900’s used English in combination with their native languages (Johnstone, 2011). Pittsburgh dialect (and also AAE) is sometimes difficult to describe because “of the hundreds of thousands of words Pittsburghers use and grammatical choices they make, only a tiny percentage are not words and structures that all English-speakers use” (Johnstone, 2013, p. 8). Speakers of Pittsburgh dialect use specific speech patterns that stand out from MAE, but the largest percentage of the words in the non-mainstream dialect are more similar to MAE than different.

Several phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic features are specific to Pittsburgh dialect (see Table 2.2 and Table 2.3). Phonological features include monophthongizing /aw/ in words such as *about* and fronting /o/ (stressing the vowel sound in the front of the mouth, such as

pronouncing “boat” as “bewt” are reflective of the local pronunciation of these words. Features of lexicon include words such as “yinz” (plural form of “you” and similar to “you all” or “y’all”) and “slippy” (“slippery”). Phonological features of Pittsburgh dialect include “dahntan” (“downtown”) and “Stillers” (“Steelers”). Morphosyntactic features of Pittsburgh dialect includes phrases such as the NEED + past participle “The car needs washed” (“the car needs to be washed” or “the car needs washing”), “whenever” used in the place of “when” (e.g. “I started driving whenever I was 16”), and “anymore” to indicate something as present or current (e.g. “It’s quite cold anymore”).

When the steel mill industry collapsed in the 1970s, Pittsburgh dialect remained as an identifying characteristic for many Pittsburghers, and in essence, a part of Pittsburgh identity. The non-mainstream dialect has gained popularity in the western Pennsylvania region, and there have even been tutorials for people who want to learn how to speak Pittsburgh dialect (Fleming, 2008). Given the location of my research setting in proximity to Western Pennsylvania and the working-class community in which the school is located, many of the students in my study are familiar with Pittsburgh dialect.

Even though AAE and Pittsburgh dialect are both considered non-mainstream dialects, Eberhardt (2009) found that many African Americans in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania perceived Pittsburgh dialect as a characteristic of White speakers. Additionally, even though many African Americans in the Western Pennsylvania region use features of Pittsburgh dialect, African Americans maintain differentiation in their use of Pittsburgh dialect when compared to White speakers of Pittsburgh dialect. As a result, many African Americans in the Western Pennsylvania region blend features of Pittsburgh dialect with AAE, creating a form of AAE that is locally influenced (Eberhardt, 2009). This research suggests a hierarchy and racial divide between local

non-mainstream dialects, with the dialect associated with White speakers given a colorblind, all-encompassing geographic term and the dialect spoken by African American speakers referred to with a term that is solely associated with race.

Table 2.2 Pittsburgh Dialect – Examples of Lexicon and Phonology

Pittsburgh Dialect Usage Example	MAE Usage Example
Stillers	Steelers
yinz	you all; y'all
dahntahn	downtown
<i>nebbby</i>	a nosey or intrusive person

Table 2.3 Pittsburgh Dialect – Examples of Morphosyntactic Features

Feature	Example of Usage
Copula <i>be</i>	The car needs washed. The dog wants petted.
Positive anymore	It's quite cold outside anymore.
Punctual whenever	I first went to the amusement park whenever I was 6 years old.

2.3.3 Controversy around African American English

In the United States, controversy has arisen around students' right to use AAE. *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children et al. v. Ann Arbor School District Board* (1979) was a lawsuit filed in federal court on behalf of 15 African American children from a low-income housing project in Ann Arbor, Michigan. These students were placed into classes for students with special needs, retained, and not provided interventions to address what was perceived as their educational failures (Baugh & Smitherman, 2007). In July of 1979, the judge ruled in favor of the children and found that the school was at fault for "failing to take the children's language into account in the educational process, and thus the district had violated the children's right to equal educational opportunity" (Baugh & Smitherman, 2007, p. 122). The ruling identified students' use of AAE as an integral part of their learning, and by refusing to acknowledge AAE, the school district interfered with the children's ability to learn. Controversy arose again nearly two decades later in the Oakland Unified School District's Ebonics Resolution of 1996. The resolution acknowledged AAE as a legitimate language form and mandated that students receive instruction that would help them to maintain AAE while also becoming fluent in academic English. This resolution was released as a plan of action to help the thousands of African American students who were performing poorly in the school district.

The Oakland Ebonics Resolution and the King Case were responses to the high number of African American students who were failing in U.S. schools. Smitherman explained that "both *King* and Oakland centered on the lack of academic progress and educational underachievement of African American students in the nation's public school systems" and that "both considered language to be central to this deleterious state of affairs" (2006, p. 12-13). The resolution and court case brought to the forefront the ways that schools were failing African American students

and attempted to right these wrongs. The history and controversy between AAE and its connection to schooling are important because many of the stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes toward the non-mainstream dialect have remained in schools and society.

The principle of linguistic subordination (also known as the linguistic inferiority principle) is the assumption by speakers of a socially dominant group in society that their communicative practices are superior to a group deemed to have less power in society (Lippi-Green, 2012; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006). Even though the Linguistic Society of America's (LSA) 1997 resolution asserted that "all human language systems—spoken, signed, and written—are fundamentally regular" (para. 2) and that descriptions of socially stigmatized varieties as "slang, mutant, defective, ungrammatical, or broken English are incorrect and demeaning," (para. 2) such ideologies have led to a number of stereotypes and myths about the ways people from subordinate racial groups and socioeconomic status use English. Even though the LSA has declared that all dialects of English are valid, educators and educational researchers are still likely to find evidence of students (and teachers) questioning the validity of non-mainstream dialects.

2.4 PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Beyond literacy theories that have redefined literacy, there are a number of pedagogical approaches that encourage critical examinations of the English language. These critical examinations include valuing the skills students bring to the classroom such as knowledge of non-mainstream dialects or the ability to code switch between dialects in different environments or for different purposes. Through these critical examinations, students can critique widely

accepted views of non-mainstream dialects, question the inherent power associated with MAE, and explore the ways non-mainstream dialect use connects to identity.

Examinations of non-mainstream dialects can promote higher level thinking skills (Chisholm & Godley, 2011), and such engagement is especially important for low-income students who are often taught to obey instead of engaging in higher level thinking activities that will prepare them to lead (Anyon, 1997). When teachers are able to use students' non-mainstream dialects or knowledge of the variety within the English language as a bridge to learning academic language and literacy instead of believing students are simply speaking incorrectly, students are more likely to understand and appreciate the ways their practices and writing are valued and be more engaged in learning (Godley et al., 2007; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

2.4.1 Funds of Knowledge

Students often enter the classroom with knowledge and experiences that might not be viewed as having value in school the same way the knowledge and experiences might have value outside of school. This knowledge and experience might include uses of language, dialects, or experiences within their communities that differ from what occurs at school. *Funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) includes information students have learned at home, in their communities, and any other out-of-school space and include skills such as a students' memorization and understanding of a popular hip-hop song or questioning current events that expose current day social injustices against minorities. For example, most of the students in Moll et al.'s study identified as Mexican and had "cross-border experiences" (1992, p. 136). However, given the race and lower socioeconomic class of the students, these cross-border experiences

were rarely shared. One teacher researcher remarked, “this experience is not recognized or valued because they are Mexican children going to Mexico,” and conversely, “Anglo children may spend a summer in France and we make a big deal about it by asking them to speak to the class about their summer activities” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 136).

Similarly, students who speak non-mainstream dialects are often told to use more mainstream English practices if they want to be successful in the workplace and code switching techniques (Wheeler, 2006; 2009; Wheeler & Swords, 2004; 2006), but it is rare for these speakers to use their knowledge of their non-mainstream dialect to engage in critical discussions and learning. Moya (2002) asserts that epistemic privilege “refers to a special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) operate to sustain matrices of power” (p. 38). Epistemic privilege is often associated with groups that have been oppressed or marginalized. Groups that have been oppressed or marginalized “understand how hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality operate to uphold existing regimes of power in our society” (Moya, 2002, p. 38). Thus, the experiences of students who possess skills and experiences that are not valued in school have the potential to inform other groups that have not had similar experiences.

Similarly, Moll et al.’s examination of students’ home experiences is especially important for “students whose households are usually viewed as being ‘poor,’ not only economically but in terms of the quality of experiences for the child” (1992, p. 132) because these experiences can inform other groups. They found that students’ previous experiences before formal schooling contribute to students’ funds of knowledge and should be valued in the classroom. Students’ foundational knowledge and experiences with language and literacy may vary from student to student, thus there is a need for diverse pedagogical approaches that include identifying students’

strengths and areas of expertise outside of traditional school-based skills in order to help them to excel. This study analyzed the use of curricular activities that tap into the knowledge and experiences involving MAE and non-mainstream dialects that students already possess through conversations about dialects.

2.4.2 Cultural Modeling

Lee's (2001; 2003; 2007) Cultural Modeling framework provides guidelines and principles that can be used by teachers and researchers to draw on students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Like funds of knowledge, Cultural Modeling does not support the idea of hierarchy among cultural practices, and students' previous experiences are valued because those experiences have helped to shape culture and identity. Lee explained, "Cultural Modeling is a framework for the design of learning environments that examines what youth know from everyday settings to support specific subject matter" (2007, p. 15). The aims of Cultural Modeling include focusing on problems that are generative and helping students to draw on prior knowledge as students attempt to solve new problems. This pedagogical approach aims to give value to students' cultural practices, such as the use of different varieties of English, instead of perceiving these skills as deficient and incorrect. In the curricular activities used in this study, the students applied what they already knew from their experiences with MAE and non-mainstream dialects to engage in critical discussions about language variation, power, and identity.

2.4.3 Using MAE to Participate in the Culture of Power

It is also important for students to question power structures that can dictate the way many people understand the relationship between MAE and non-mainstream dialects and also the actions that are a result of the understanding of the relationship between MAE and non-mainstream dialects. As described earlier, this study uses Foucault's (1982) description of power as the actions and techniques that are used to maintain power. Delpit (1995) asserted that students need to learn the dominant codes (MAE) in school so they can participate within the culture of power, but she also favors discussions that examine the culture of power and the types of behavior and actions needed in order to be a part of the culture of power. Delpit described tenets of the culture of power as power being enacted in the classroom, specific codes/rules for participating in this culture, and rules that reflect the culture of those in power. Additionally, people who are a part of this culture are least likely to acknowledge its existence, and those who are not in power (e.g. non-mainstream dialect speakers) need to be explicitly told the rules. In order for students to participate, it is important for them to understand that "their language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political power game that is also being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are certain games that they too must play" (Delpit, 2006, p. 40). Delpit asserted that, "even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent" (p. 45). Delpit supported students' mastery of MAE, but asserted that students also need to critically examine how power is manifested in the culture of power, the ways certain English language forms have been deemed dominant over others, and the racially and prejudicially charged implications related to non-mainstream dialects.

2.4.4 Non-mainstream Dialects as Assets to Learning

Students can use their knowledge of non-mainstream dialects as a tool to engage in discussions that encourage students to question widely held perceptions about non-mainstream dialects. Ladson-Billings (1994) described culturally relevant teaching as conceiving of knowledge in a broader sense, and “the primary aim of culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the development of a ‘relevant black’ personality that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African American culture” (p. 20). This pedagogical approach values students’ non-mainstream dialects as resources that will help them with additional ELA content area learning. Ladson-Billings (2000) asserted, “schools and teachers treat the language, prior knowledge, and values of African Americans as aberrant and often presume that the teacher’s job is to rid African American students of any vestiges of their own culture” (p. 206). Attempts to rid students of non-mainstream dialect usage are counterproductive to the aims of culturally relevant teaching because such attempts portray the message that students’ uses of non-mainstream dialects are wrong and are not aligned to academic achievement.

Culturally relevant teaching acknowledges the cultural differences, such as dialectal differences, as assets to learning, but it is also important that people who use and identify with these practices sustain the practices. Paris (2012) expanded the culturally relevant teaching framework in his description of culturally sustaining teaching pedagogy:

The term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* requires that our pedagogical experiences be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while

simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy then, has its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. (p. 95)

Paris (2012) argued that multilingualism is the existence and use of different languages, and culturally sustaining pedagogy supports both the existence and sustainability of these differences in a multicultural world. Non-mainstream dialects are also included in the concept of multilingualism, because non-mainstream dialects are representative of different ways that the English language is used across cultures and regions. This study also aligns to culturally sustaining pedagogy by promoting linguistic pluralism through conversations that examine ideologies about non-mainstream dialects. Students should be encouraged to critically discuss and reflect on multilingualism, which includes the non-mainstream dialects of students from diverse backgrounds. The “democratic project of school” that Paris (2012, p. 95) advocated for is an environment that supports diversity and equality.

In a heterogeneous classroom, culturally sustaining pedagogy is even more important, because students from different backgrounds or students who use non-mainstream dialects should feel that the diversity they bring to the classroom is an asset instead of a deficit that needs correction. Deficit models depict minority students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, as lacking knowledge and experiences when compared to other groups who are deemed to have power (Hart & Risley, 1995), and researchers and linguists have challenged these perceptions (Labov, 1972b; Moll et al., 1992; Rolstad, 2005). In one example of a deficit

model, Hart & Risley (1995) described the language practices of African American children on welfare as deficient when compared to the language practices of middle- and upper-middle socioeconomic status families. Dudley-Marling and Lucas (2009) explained, “By taking the language practices of the middle- and upper-SES families in their sample as the standard, Hart and Risley transformed the linguistic *differences* they found among the welfare families in their study into linguistic *deficiencies*” (p. 365). In Hart and Risley’s study, the researchers’ deficit views positioned MAE as a universal norm and speakers who fall outside of MAE are considered to be lacking in linguistic proficiency and link school failure to these linguistic deficiencies.

In contrast to Hart & Risley’s (1995) study, Heath’s (1983) ethnographic study described differences in the ways two communities in the Piedmont Carolinas taught their children language and literacy skills from birth. Heath’s ethnographic study highlights differences in the language and literacy practices of the two communities without identifying a specific practice as a universal standard for success. This approach allowed Heath to present differences instead of deficiencies and also explain how different skill sets in the communities were assets to learning during the early years of schooling.

2.5 CURRENT RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE DIVERSITY INSTRUCTION IN U.S. SCHOOLS

Current scholarship on the ways educators have addressed non-mainstream dialects in the classroom is limited, but a handful of researchers have examined the ways students have engaged in examinations of non-mainstream dialect in their ELA classrooms and the connection between students’ non-mainstream dialect use and students’ identities.

2.5.1 Examinations of Non-mainstream Dialectical Differences in the Classroom

Researchers and practitioners have used a number of techniques to incorporate non-mainstream dialects into the classroom. This study seeks to expand on these studies. Several dominant pedagogical approaches have emerged for incorporating non-mainstream dialects into the classroom: using linguistically informed curriculum in the classroom (Brown, 2008; Henderson, 2016; Reaser, 2006; Sweetland, 2006), contrastive analysis (Wheeler, 2006; 2009; Wheeler & Swords, 2004; 2006), and *Critical Language Pedagogy* (CLP) (Godley & Minnici, 2008). Inquiry-based approaches to teaching the English language, such as CLP, have been implemented in middle school through college classroom settings to question widely accepted views about non-mainstream dialects and to encourage students to reflect on their own observations and experiences with varieties of English. Additionally, current research on students' attitudes about diverse English practices and the effects of linguistically informed curricular materials have also been examined.

There is limited research that describes the use of linguistically informed curricular materials in the classroom and their effect on students' learning and attitudes about non-mainstream dialects. For example, Sweetland (2006) conducted a study that used a sociolinguistic approach curriculum that introduced elementary students who were AAE speakers to regional dialects through literature. The curriculum also used a contrastive analysis approach to help students to improve their mastery of MAE in formal writing assignments. Students who participated in the sociolinguistic approach curriculum demonstrated greater mastery of MAE, increased self-efficacy, and used fewer features of AAE in formal writing assignments when compared to students who did not participate in the sociolinguistic approach curriculum.

Similarly, Reaser (2006) found that a curriculum based on non-mainstream dialects within North Carolina helped secondary students learn about how the non-mainstream dialects are reflective of the speakers' geographical location, culture, and racial identity. Using a language survey tool, Reaser examined the knowledge of and attitudes about dialect diversity of 129 ninth grade students in North Carolina. Reaser found that the students who participated in the curriculum showed an increase in their sociolinguistic knowledge about non-mainstream dialects and variety within the English language. The findings also suggest that it is still possible to improve the language attitudes of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 so that students are more sensitive to dialectal differences.

In another study, Brown (2008) created a curriculum for secondary students that used contrastive analysis as one tool to help students understand the differences between AAE and MAE. Brown (2008) and Reaser (2006) both found that a teacher could teach a linguistically informed curriculum even if he/she is unfamiliar with the linguistic content of the curriculum as long as the curriculum provides guidance and structure. Additionally, linguistically informed curricular materials have the greatest effect on student learning when the teacher is able to make connections between the lesson within the curriculum and students' work within the classroom. An example of this is when a student can identify non-mainstream dialect features in their writing and code switch (Brown, 2008).

Several researchers have used pedagogical approaches to help students discover mainstream and non-mainstream dialectal differences, consider the ways some dialects hold greater societal power than others, reflect on their own uses of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, and rethink previous perceptions of non-mainstream dialects.

Contrastive analysis aims to help students to understand the differences in the grammatical features of MAE and non-mainstream dialects such as AAE or Pittsburgh dialect. Contrastive analysis has been hailed by many researchers as an appropriate technique for students to use in order to practice writing and speaking in MAE and is used most often in research to support code switching as a practical skill for students to maneuver between languages (Fisher & Lapp, 2013; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Hill, 2009; Wheeler, 2006; Wheeler, 2009; Wheeler & Swords, 2004; Wheeler & Swords, 2006; Williams, 2013).

In one study, Wheeler (2009) used qualitative methods to describe how the teacher (Swords) applied code-switching techniques that improved the ELA achievement of her African American third graders whose ELA scores on standardized tests were behind those of their White classmates who spoke MAE. In the study, Swords introduced students to contrastive analysis. First, the class discussed clothing for different settings. Then, the teacher had students apply their understanding of style/shift to grammar. Next, the teacher used contrastive analysis to lead the students in discovery learning during their exploration of how the grammar of AAE used at home compares or contrasts with expectations for MAE at school. Wheeler (2009) found that the teacher's African American students equaled or outperformed White students on NCLB (*No Child Left Behind*) tests after just one year of her implementation of code switching techniques using contrastive analysis by the end of the study.

However, many scholars and linguists have challenged notions of contrastive analysis (Canagarajah, 2006; Sledd, 1969; Young, 2004; 2012; Young et al., 2014) and contended that it is a technique that upholds racial and hierarchical language ideologies, because students (especially young ones, such as in Wheeler's 2009 study) receive the message that their non-mainstream dialect is inappropriate. Contrastive analysis gives students an opportunity to see the

differences between a non-mainstream dialect and MAE, but the analysis does not give students an opportunity to discuss constructs of power and identity. Conversations about the inherent power associated with the ways people use English in different contexts and the ways a speaker's use of English is reflective of their cultural or racial identity are important because they represent much of what is omitted when students are told to use contrastive analysis.

A number of researchers have developed and studied more critical approaches to teaching about dialect diversity, approaches that acknowledge language ideologies, power, and discrimination in expectations about language use in school and other contexts. Young (2012) and Canagarajah (2006) brought attention to the ways contrastive analysis and code switching can be counterproductive. Code switching is the intentional use (switching) of language or dialect depending on the context. Young (2014) described code switching as “commonly accepted in the general public and also among elementary through college English teachers, where students are instructed to switch from one code or dialect to another” (pp. 1-2). For example, a person might use MAE while at a corporate job but code switch to Pittsburgh dialect when at home or in their community where it is used most often and deemed acceptable. Young and Canagarajah argued that it is not enough for students to learn to code switch or “the linguistics of White supremacy” (Sledd, 1969) because students have been told that they have to in certain situations. Students also need to be able to think critically about why they code switch and the ways non-mainstream dialect usage intersects with race, power, and identity.

Code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2006; Elbow, 2011; Young, 2004; Young, 2012; Young et al., 2014) has been suggested as an alternative view of non-mainstream dialect use and more accurate than code switching ideologies because code-meshing involves the combining (or meshing) of dominant codes such as MAE with AAE to create a more robust, communicative

practice that eliminates hierarchical ideologies of certain types of varieties of English dominating over others.

Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) (Godley & Minnici, 2008) is a response to Alim's (2005; 2007) call for researchers and practitioners to bring critical language awareness into the learning environment. CLP will be used in the study to investigate the ways students explore why MAE holds its societal power (Godley & Minnici, 2008). Similar to *Critical Language Awareness* (Fairclough, 1995), which examines the interconnectedness of language, identity, culture, and power, CLP teaches students to question the power structures that are reflected in varieties of English and the ways power is used in action against non-mainstream dialect speakers (Foucault, 1982; Gallagher, 2008). This inquiry-based approach encourages students to discuss dialectal variation dialogically and to include their own local knowledge and experiences involving non-mainstream dialects. CLP consists of three components: identifying and critiquing dominant language ideologies; a dialogic classroom environment that values students' conversations, debates, and experiences; and allowing students' language experiences to be at the center of the discussions. A number of studies have exhibited how CLP and other critical examinations of language ideologies have provided students with a space to inquire and make meaning about the world (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Fecho, 2000; Godley et al., 2007; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008).

For example, Fecho (2000) drew from critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire, 1970) and presented three case studies of students from his secondary English class (all students identified as African American or Caribbean American) who developed and conducted personal inquiries about the impact of language in their lives and community. The students interviewed family members and reflected on how their home practices and attitudes intersected with the ways they understood

non-mainstream dialects. In the three case studies, the students came to their own conclusions about the pros and cons of code switching in certain situations, described their own failed attempts to participate within the culture of power through MAE usage, and presented perspectives on the importance of being able to use MAE. Fecho explained,

By allowing students to systematize and intentionalize their own informal inquiries into language, teachers can help students to see language codes less as a prescribed set of rules that somehow constrict and inaccurately define their lives and more as a system of possibility over which they have some control. (p. 392)

Inquiries that empower students to ask questions and take an introspective look at their own uses of the English language do not provide a narrow view of MAE as a dominant practice. Instead, these types of inquiries equip students to make their own decisions about how and when to use MAE or non-mainstream dialects. Fecho explained:

For these students and others like them, it is not a matter of *if* they are able to speak and write in mainstream codes—they could and did at various times in my classroom—but is more a matter of figuring out why they would feel disposed to. A key factor is motivation. The students were deepening their awareness of the role language played in their lives. In doing so they were confronting whatever reluctance and reservation they might have had for more consistent use of the mainstream codes of power.” (p. 386)

Fecho described students as being fully capable of using MAE codes and suggests that this inquiry pushed students to think about the importance of language in their lives. Students’ understanding of how they used English in their daily lives helped them to consider why they might be opposed to using MAE.

Fecho's (2000) study demonstrates both the importance and impact of using an inquiry-based approach to engage students in conversations about their non-mainstream dialects and how such an inquiry can have greater implications for the students' participation within the culture of power. Fecho agreed with Delpit (1995) that teachers should value students' non-mainstream dialects while also learning and critiquing power codes. Additionally, Fecho suggested that, "Because students may be ambivalent about this celebration and acquisition, teachers need to encourage students to problematize and seek personal understanding of their thinking" (p. 392). Inquiry-based approaches such as CLP and the one Fecho implemented encourage critical thinking skills and incorporate funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2004) as means to examine the world through a lens that does not simply accept widespread understandings of correct and appropriate uses of language.

In a related study, Baker-Bell (2013) studied a curriculum drawn from critical language pedagogy (Alim, 2007; Godley & Minnici, 2008) to interrogate dominant notions of non-mainstream dialect usage. In her qualitative study, Baker-Bell served as co-teacher, researcher, and participant in an urban high school's advanced placement English class with students who identified as African American. Over the course of the study, the students completed five activities: the construction of a cartoon that corresponded to an AAE language sample and an MAE language sample; whole class discussions about students' cartoon illustrations; a problem-posing activity that exposed students to historical, cultural, and political aspects of AAE; a two to three paragraph response to Smitherman's (1998) article, "Ebonics, King, and Oakland: Some Folk Done Believe Fat Meat is Greasy"; and an open, unstructured discussion of AAE. In the beginning of the study, the students did not think that AAE was a valuable language form, which was evident through their descriptions of AAE as broken English and grammatically incorrect

and also through their cartoon illustrations that depicted AAE speakers in urban attire while the MAE speaker was nerdy and more educated. However, after inquiries and discussions into power structures that informed many ideologies about non-mainstream dialect, the students began to see value in AAE.

Similarly, Williams (2013) situated her qualitative study of first year college students in culturally sustaining and culturally relevant pedagogy using a social justice framework that encouraged students to rethink their previous perceptions of AAE. The students were enrolled in one of two writing classes that centered on race and ethnicity, and Williams focused primarily on the African American students' experiences with AVT (African Vernacular Tradition) curriculum and instruction. After a pre-survey that asked students to define key terms, rate appropriateness of AAE, and analyze prior knowledge of AAE, the researcher compared features of AVT to MAE and demonstrated ways the students could accomplish specific writing tasks in their class. Many of the African American students never viewed AAE as a non-mainstream dialect spoken by intelligent people even though they were familiar with the AVT features taught by the researcher. Williams's social justice approach to AAE as a viable communicative practice instead of a deficient practice helped to guide students to learn new information about their non-mainstream dialects, begin to think critically about the societal norms they previously abided by without questioning, and explore the ways AVT can be used to enhance their writing.

The findings from Baker-Bell (2013) and Williams (2013) described African American and non-African American students as having negative perceptions of AAE in the beginning of their studies. However, additional research has described students as having more positive attitudes about AAE. Kirkland and Jackson (2009) found that middle school AAE speakers fully embraced the non-mainstream dialect as something special and unique. In their ethnographic

study, Kirkland and Jackson drew from theories of the study of symbols where they found that middle school age African American boys in an afterschool and weekend program always saw value in their use of AAE as one of the defining factors of their perceived coolness. In another study, Kinloch (2010) drew from a historical framing of language rights in a case study designed to explore the perceptions of two teenage African American boys in their struggle to achieve academic success. Findings from this case study described the ways the participants positively viewed AAE. Additionally, research among high school students (Godley & Escher, 2013) supports the notion that African American students have positive perceptions of AAE. These conflicting findings of students' non-mainstream dialectal attitudes from middle school through college among high and low performing ELA students suggest a need for additional research. The next section describes the current research that has connected students' uses of dialects to identity.

2.5.2 Non-mainstream Dialect and Identity

For many speakers of non-mainstream dialects, the way they communicate serves as a marker of racial identity (Kinloch, 2010; Paris, 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2002). Identity is the way individuals align themselves to certain attitudes, cultural practices, regions, and also the ways people characterize themselves racially (Heath, 1983; Tatum, 2003). The characteristics that a person associates with their identity are often used to identify how the person would like to be recognized by others.

Many African American students experience difficulty when using MAE practices because they do not feel it reflects their identity (DuBois, 1903/1965; Kinloch, 2010; Paris, 2009; Rickford & Rickford, 2002; Smitherman, 1977). This study provides current research on

students' perceptions about the way they connect identity to non-mainstream dialects. Baker-Bell (2013) found that when asked to draw pictures of the type of person who speaks AAE or MAE, the illustrations of the AAE speaker depicted people in urban attire and MAE speakers as nerdy and educated. Similarly, some students might also find that people who use certain forms of English that are not representative of the person's race, culture, or region are not authentic (Godley & Loretto, 2013). Research on the connection between students' non-mainstream dialects and identity highlight tensions between students' perceptions of themselves and how they perceive what it means to excel in MAE language and literacy practices.

Rickford and Rickford (2002) suggested that African Americans' use of AAE exemplifies wanting to distance themselves from a race of people (White) who have historically wronged them. In this sense, AAE works in opposition and protest to traditional norms of communication that some African Americans might not deem as a realistic aspect of their culture or identity. Similarly, Smitherman (1977) and DuBois (1903/1965) described a dichotomy between African American speakers of AAE and their relationship to MAE. Smitherman (1977) described *linguistic push/pull* as "evidenced in the historical development of Black English in the push toward Americanization of Black English counterbalanced by the pull of retaining its Africanization" (p. 11). Linguistic push/pull is a tension that exists among many African Americans who want to push towards identifying with the middle class (who look down on AAE) but also pull to identify with a group of people who use AAE, understanding the history of struggle and the importance of solidarity. DuBois (1903/1965) described this sort of tension as "double-consciousness," and the term is reflective of an inner conflict:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a

world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 7)

The double-consciousness is the awareness of identifying with a particular race and culture but also recognizing the ways that majority populations might view one's identity negatively. Similar to double-consciousness and linguistic push/pull, Ogbu (2003) described African American students' fear of being perceived as "acting White" (p. 85). Ogbu explained, "For some people, the internalization of the beliefs that Blacks are not as intelligent as Whites translated into another belief, namely, that White students, not Blacks, were the ones who did well academically" (p. 85). Ogbu's findings suggest that African American students have to decide between academic achievement and identifying with their African American race. These linguists and scholars suggest that dialects such as AAE used by African Americans are often accompanied by larger internal conflicts and struggles that are racially charged. Additionally, these feelings transfer into the classroom setting for African American students who speak AAE when MAE is viewed as the only correct or as a more acceptable language (Godley et al., 2007). As students participated in the curriculum's activities and discussed mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, the current study investigated how students described dialect use in connection to how the students identified racially.

The current study included students from different racial backgrounds, and several studies have examined the ways students describe how their racial identity is connected to the use of non-mainstream dialects. Kinloch (2010) and Paris (2009) found that African American teenagers connected their AAE use to identity and solidarity. Kinloch (2010) drew from a

historical framing of language rights in a case study designed to explore the perceptions of two teenage African American males in their struggle to achieve academic success. Findings from this case study demonstrated that the participants connected their use of AAE to their Black male identities. Additionally, if the participants reject AAE, then it also suggests the participants are rejecting their identities. These findings support early frameworks (DuBois, 1903/1965; Smitherman, 1977) that suggested African Americans must choose between embracing cultural practices such as AAE and accepting and utilizing codes of power in an MAE dominated world. Paris (2009) used ethnographic methods over a nine-month period and found that youth at a multiethnic high school used AAE across ethnic lines and African American students supported its spread among the multiethnic population:

AAL [African American Language] was a shared practice that challenged notions of difference and division rather than reinforced them. Employing words, the grammar, and the speech acts of black language provided a space of local youth prestige against the backdrop of shared marginalization in a white language-and white culture-dominated society. It was a shared counter language that resisted the dominant norms of school and society. (p. 443)

In this regard, AAE was a unifier not just for African American AAE speakers, but also for all AAE speakers from ethnic groups who were fighting similar battles against the marginalization of their language or dialect and dominance of MAE. This study resituated linguistic push/pull for students in this multiethnic context as the students pushed to identify linguistically with a group (AAE speaking African American students) in what might be perceived as an act of solidarity. Both Paris (2009) and Kinloch (2010) highlighted AAE as a

unifier, but Paris extended this solidarity to include other racial groups who have experienced similar marginalization of their native tongue.

The use of MAE is often associated with identifying with a White identity (Ogbu, 2003), thus the current study investigated curricular activities that allowed students to describe the connection between dialects and identity. Nasir and Saxe's (2003) study suggested that young African American men and women have to choose between a positive racial identity and a strong academic identity and that this forced choice contributes to the discussion about how literacy and identity are connected. In the case of literacy, a good student is often narrowly described as one who is capable of reading and comprehending higher-level texts and using appropriate language forms (MAE) to express ideas (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). For students who use literacies that are outside of the traditional language arts curriculum, the established identity outside of school is often incapable of coexisting, which forces students to choose one identity while sacrificing the other (Godley, Carpenter & Weaver, 2007).

Similar to the connection many students make between dialects and racial identity, there is also potential for students to connect gender identity to dialect use in the same way many students connect identity to literacy. Young's (2004) framework describes the dilemma many students face between identifying as a student who excels in literacy and identifying as a male student. Young (2004) argued:

Because some boys see school as a site of effeminacy and school language (WEV) [White English Vernacular] as a discourse for girls, white and black boys resist some forms of language instruction, which in turn, causes them to fail literacy classes. But the difference between black boys and white boys, however, is that black boys not only feel coerced to give up their masculinity if they do well

in school, but they also feel forced to abandon their race—the ultimate impossibility. (p. 90)

This concept of MAE practices being gendered as female and racialized as White does not support the literacy success of many young African American males or females. Students' identities are not supported in academic settings where African American young males equate literacy success as effeminate and White or for African American young females who perceive ELA success as not being representative of the African American race.

Similarly, Fordham (1993) also found that African American young females in a magnet school believed that their academic success was contingent upon their ability to not be seen as a “loud Black girl.” According to Fordham, many African American young females battle stereotypes about their academic identities that often cause them to want to suppress their gendered and racialized identities in academic settings because they want to be taken seriously. The students in Fordham's study associated the label of a loud Black girl as being opposite of the ways of their academically successful White male classmates, and therefore, their silence was displayed in an effort to align to the perceived ideals of academic success. By suppressing their established identities, some of these students are “minimizing a female identity in a self-conscious effort to consume, or at least present the appearance of being, the male dominant” (Fordham, 1993, p. 4). When the female identity is minimized, many African American young women impersonate a White male image in voice, thinking, speech pattern, writing style as well as in the formal school context when interacting with teachers (Fordham, 1993).

2.5.3 Rationale

This study took place in the ELA classes of both higher and lower performing middle school students using a pre- and post-survey explored students' attitudes about non-mainstream dialects and MAE before and after the study. This study used a curriculum with activities that allowed middle school students to engage in critical conversations about non-mainstream dialects that have only been studied previously in high school and college (Godley & Minnici, 2008; Williams, 2013; Baker-Bell, 2013). Additionally, the study took place in ELA classrooms where not all students identified as speakers of non-mainstream dialects, while most studies of CLP have focused on implementing this approach with students of color who speak non-mainstream dialects.

This study contributes to the existing frameworks and research reviewed above in several ways. Data collected contribute to the existing literature that has depicted mixed responses from students from middle school through college about their attitudes about language. The methods used in this study allowed students from different backgrounds to describe their perceptions of the ways their dialects and identities intersect. Also, this study expands the existing research by investigating approaches used in the curricular activities that allowed students to participate in conversations about how they understood dialect's connection to their identity as well as how they might have personally experienced or witnessed this tension between identifying with their culture and embracing MAE language and literacy practices.

Additionally, this study provides current research on conversations about power and identity. Just as students question power as they discuss current events, students can also look at the dynamics of power in other areas of their lives. The participants in the study had the opportunity to learn about non-mainstream dialects. Learning about non-mainstream dialects

does not take place often in English classes as a result of the demands and rigor of the state's mandated objectives. Finally, the participants in this study were in racially integrated classes. Few studies have included participants from racially diverse classrooms, and this study adds to the limited body of existing research.

3.0 METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the research questions that guided this study, the dialect curriculum, participants, and the setting. Also, included in this chapter is a teacher snapshot that describes some of the perceptions Mrs. Dunston's expressed during the study and in her interview at the end of the study. A description of the data sources and coding categories used for data analysis are also included in this chapter.

3.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the ways middle school students learned about dialects as they engaged in curricular activities that encouraged students to think critically about dialects and the ways these communicative practices intersect with issues related to power and identity. The findings from this study contribute to existing research that does not include many investigations into attitudes and learning about dialects among middle school students.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this mixed methods study, I observed middle school students from two ELA classes as they engaged in a curriculum on dialect diversity. Students were provided with opportunities to discuss the ways they have used dialects and how they understand the wider society's view of dialects. The main research question that guides this study is: How do middle school students engage in curricular activities on dialectal variation, identity, and power? To answer this question, I used the following sub-questions to explore other issues that might be related to students' views of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects:

- a. How do students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects?
- b. How were students' sociolinguistic perceptions shaped by the curriculum?
- c. How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)?

3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

This study took place in Bank Elementary School (pseudonym), a K-8 public school that is located just outside of a Rust Belt city in the Northeastern United States. The school had a total population of approximately 483 students in grades K-8. The student population was 53% African American, 41% White, and 3% multiracial. Asian and Native American students made up the remaining 3% of the school's demographics. Sixty-four percent of the student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

A total of twenty-one sixth graders participated in this study and self-identified as African American, multiracial, White, and other. All participants were students in Mrs. Dunston's reading classes. Seven out of twenty-one students from Mrs. Dunston's first reading class, and fourteen out of twenty students from Mrs. Dunston's second reading class turned in signed student assent and signed parental consent forms in order to participate in the study. Given the small number of participants, the classes are reported together in the findings chapters. All students were given the same activities that were a part of the dialect curriculum activities, and participation in the study was voluntary.

The teacher, Mrs. Victoria Dunston (pseudonym), was in her 9th year at Bank Elementary School. Victoria grew up attending public school in the district where she currently teaches and has school-aged children who attend public school within the district as well. Before teaching in her current position, she was a long-term substitute in a nearby school district and also worked in an African centered school during her time in graduate school. Victoria identified as an African American, a speaker of AAE, and a code switcher. Mrs. Dunston reported that before the study, she spoke to her students about the importance of code switching depending on the audience who will receive the information orally or in written format. Victoria used a number of culturally relevant pedagogies to engage her students such as rap music lyrics, poetry, and current events. She described her approach to teaching as having a student-centered approach encouraging her classes to become communities of learners who can learn from one another. Victoria taught two different classes of 6th grade reading and science. The study took place in her reading classes. In the next section, I provide a teacher snapshot of Mrs. Dunston.

3.4 TEACHER SNAPSHOT

In this section, I provide more detailed information about Mrs. Dunston's role in the study, and I also describe Mrs. Dunston's perceptions of her responsibilities to her students and the dilemmas she faced. Throughout the study, there were times when some of Mrs. Dunston's overt messages to students about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects were echoed in students' comments and responses. This teacher snapshot may help explain the ways Mrs. Dunston contributed to shaping and reinforcing students' perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects throughout the study. This teacher snapshot is placed after the description of the participants within the Methods chapter because it is too short to be a chapter by itself and contains pertinent information for the reader before reading the chapters that report the findings.

3.4.1 Teacher's Role and Perceptions of Responsibilities and Dilemmas

During the study, I took the lead presenting all of the curricular activities, but Mrs. Dunston also actively participated in the study, especially during the warm-up when Mrs. Dunston attempted to engage students in discussions about their written responses to the warm-up prompts. Beyond the warm-up activities, Mrs. Dunston often addressed the class directly on topics related to using mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. These topics included overt messages about code switching, descriptions of her own use of AAE, and using non-mainstream dialects to connect with other listeners. After the conclusion of the study, I interviewed Mrs. Dunston (see the teacher post-interview protocol in Appendix D) about her observations of students' participation in the curricular activities and students' growth. During the follow-up interview, I also presented

Mrs. Dunston with excerpts from the transcripts where she addressed the class to give her an opportunity to member check and to clarify the messages she directed toward her students.

A common theme in Mrs. Dunston's talk to the class and in her follow-up interview with me were her perceived responsibilities to her students and the different dilemmas Mrs. Dunston faced trying to fulfill her perceived responsibilities: time restrictions, concerns about insisting students use MAE, and using non-mainstream dialects to connect with listeners. One of the responsibilities she described was to value all dialects in a welcoming classroom environment, but she also wanted students to master code switching.

Mrs. Dunston also perceived that she had a responsibility to students to provide written MAE grammar instruction and feedback, but time restrictions and addressing other curricular objectives limited Mrs. Dunston's availability to address writing as thoroughly as she would have liked. Mrs. Dunston also expressed that it was her duty to help students learn and practice the grammar rules of written MAE that she feared students might not use as speakers of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE, but she was uncertain how to find the balance between teaching the skill while not feeling as though she was telling students that their uses of non-mainstream dialects were wrong or incorrect. "Correcting" students' uses of non-mainstream dialects in writing and verbal communications (insisting students use MAE) followed by prompting students to code switch to MAE were not Mrs. Dunston's preferred teaching styles.

At times, Mrs. Dunston talked about the importance of code switching in professional situations, and yet also talked about how she used AAE in professional situations, because it allowed her to form a closer connection to her audience. Mrs. Dunston expressed that there were times when non-mainstream dialects helped a speaker to connect with the audience in a way that mainstream dialects did not allow. Mrs. Dunston wanted her students to code switch, but she

recognized the ways non-mainstream dialects were instrumental in forming connections between the speaker and listener.

Mrs. Dunston's messages to students to code switch and concerns about their ability to code switch verbally and in writing were echoed throughout the study. During a conversation that I had with Mrs. Dunston after class on day two of the study following the curricular activity on repetition as an AAE feature, Mrs. Dunston shared her concerns about students' ability to code switch in their writing. She said, "The problem has been getting students to not write how they speak. Or when there are assignments when AAE can be used, getting students to use it in quotations." Mrs. Dunston's comment suggests that she wanted to see more evidence of code switching in students' writing. Mrs. Dunston acknowledged that AAE could be used to enhance students' writing, but code switching in writing meant using features of AAE in quotations to indicate the dialect was different from MAE.

Mrs. Dunston reminded her students about the importance of code switching and checked for their understanding of what it meant to code switch. On day four, during activities that introduced students to features of AAE, Mrs. Dunston reminded students that they had previously discussed code switching, and asked the class: "We've talked about code switching. What is code switching?" Kenneth (a multiracial AAE and Pittsburgh dialect speaker) responded, "When you talk to your friends different from the way you talk to your teachers and parents." Kenneth's response summarized some of the overall message that students received from previous discussions about code switching. On the same day, Mrs. Dunston expressed,

If you don't code switch, then you need to start, because there's a time and a place for everything, right? Unfortunately, in today's society, especially as you are getting older, M-A-E is acceptable in certain environments. So even though it

sounds preppy and it may take you a longer time to say, we have to do it. There's a time and a place.

Mrs. Dunston's comment suggests that it was imperative that students code switch and that students were at an age where they should understand that MAE is more acceptable in certain environments. When Mrs. Dunston said, "we have to do it," Mrs. Dunston placed herself as a speaker who also needed to utilize code switching. Also on day four during curricular activities on patterns of AAE, Mrs. Dunston said, "What scares me is when you guys write like this, omitting the -s [prenominal -s]." Mrs. Dunston expressed that she was concerned about students' lack of code switching in their writing. Even though Mrs. Dunston expressed concern about students' ability to code switch to MAE in their formal writing assignments, very few patterns of non-mainstream dialects were observed in students' writing samples during the study. Cindy, the teacher researcher in Godley et al.'s (2007) study described a similar responsibility to prepare her 10th grade ELA students for post-secondary careers and opportunities. Cindy perceived that students needed to practice using MAE at all times in her classes if they were going to be successful in the future, however all eleven students interviewed in the study noted that they knew how to alter their language based on audience and purpose. In the current study, Mrs. Dunston was concerned that students did not code switch between AAE and MAE in their writing, but I will describe later in the findings chapters that there were few examples observed of students using non-mainstream dialects verbally or in writing during the study.

It was important for students to know that they should code switch based on audience and purpose. On day seven before watching the *Do You Speak American?* video, Mrs. Dunston responded to Kelsey (who self-identified as a multiracial Pittsburgh dialect speaker) in agreement that students should code switch based on audience and purpose. Mrs. Dunston said,

“Yeah, when and where, I definitely agree with you. When and where [to code switch] is the question. When and where.” Similarly, after viewing *Do You Speak American?* on day seven, Mrs. Dunston expressed, “You need to know when and where to use this type of language.” Mrs. Dunston’s overall message to students throughout the study was that code switching was important both verbally and in their written work. Additionally, Mrs. Dunston’s comment to students to “know when and where to use this type of language” suggests that Mrs. Dunston is alluding to ways power might be enacted as a way to limit as a result of their uses of non-mainstream dialects (Foucault, 1982). As Foucault (1982) suggests, power is not simply inherently possessed—power includes the ways it is enacted such as techniques to prohibit people from accessing certain spaces. Mrs. Dunston did not want her students to be excluded from certain spaces or opportunities as a result of their uses of non-mainstream dialects

3.4.1.1 Creating a Welcoming Classroom and “Correcting” Students

Mrs. Dunston expressed that her first responsibility to her students was to create a classroom environment that welcomed all dialects, help her students to master written and spoken MAE, and teach students to code switch based on the audience and purpose. In the follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Dunston, “How would you describe your responsibility to students in terms of addressing non-mainstream dialects in your classroom?” Mrs. Dunston replied:

My responsibility is to continue to create a culture that is welcoming to all students within my classroom community and also expand their minds and their realm of thinking to embrace other cultures and other dialects other than themselves. I think that it’s important that we learn what we call Mainstream English. I feel that students should also feel comfortable to speak the way in which they enjoy speaking in class to get their point across. There’s something

about appreciating students where they are. So, meeting students where they are and also teaching them that there's a time and a place.

Mrs. Dunston described her broad responsibility to students to create a classroom environment where all students were welcomed and to also create an environment where students were exposed to dialectal and cultural differences. Mrs. Dunston's appreciation of students' *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) and use of Cultural Modeling (Lee 2001; 2003; 2007) were integral to creating a classroom environment that valued students' cultural practices as assets. However, Mrs. Dunston was also faced with the dilemma of helping students to feel welcomed while also helping students to understand "that there's a time and a place" for when students should use mainstream dialects or non-mainstream dialects. This was a dilemma to her because, as Mrs. Dunston expressed, "I feel that students should also feel comfortable to speak the way in which they enjoy speaking in class to get their point across." Mrs. Dunston's comment suggests that she was aware that there were times when students might be able to better express themselves and share ideas in the classroom if students used non-mainstream dialects without fear of being corrected or prompted to code switch to mainstream dialects, specifically MAE. Mrs. Dunston explained, "There's something about appreciating students where they are," suggesting that Mrs. Dunston understood that students entered her classroom at different levels academically, but some students might also be at different levels of code switching proficiency. Mrs. Dunston believed that it was important to appreciate the diversity in students' dialects for those who used non-mainstream dialects more often than mainstream dialects, but Mrs. Dunston also expressed that it was her responsibility to teach students to code switch.

Mrs. Dunston's sense of responsibility for creating a classroom environment that welcomed all dialects and also reinforced code switching was similar to Delpit's (1995)

recommendations to teachers. Delpit advocated for students to be taught codes of power that are needed to participate in American life but also understand their non-mainstream dialects are also valid. Delpit explained that students'

language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political power game that is also being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are certain games that they too must play (1995, p. 40).

"The political power game" that Delpit described was students' awareness of code switching that will allow students to access spaces where mainstream dialects are preferred.

In Mrs. Dunston's classroom, students' ability to code switch for audience and purpose was part of the "political power game," because Mrs. Dunston wanted her students to understand that the rules of the game expected students to code switch. As a result of abiding by the rules of the game, Mrs. Dunston perceived that students would have access to more opportunities that students might not be able to access if they used their non-mainstream dialects. However, some scholars have viewed Delpit's solution as problematic. Young et al. (2014) disagreed with teaching code switching and argued, "Although explicit instruction in dialectal differences in grammar is clearly useful, the code-switching approach runs the risk of reproducing negative language attitudes by simply replacing ideas of correctness with appropriateness" (p. 41). Young et al. suggested that code switching techniques labeled non-mainstream dialects as less appropriate than mainstream dialects in certain environments and has the potential to further stigmatize students' non-mainstream dialects as not being welcomed in the same spaces as mainstream dialects. Mrs. Dunston wanted her students to know how and when to code switch, and Mrs. Dunston's perception aligns to Delpit's suggestion that students abide by the rules of the "political power game" in play. It is possible that Mrs. Dunston did not perceive code

switching similarly to Young et al. as a technique that reinforced the stigmatization of students' non-mainstream dialects.

3.4.1.2 Grammatical Features of MAE and Time Restrictions

The second responsibility to her students that Mrs. Dunston described was helping students to learn written grammar of MAE, but this responsibility was faced with the dilemma of not having enough time. During the follow-up interview, I asked Mrs. Dunston, "How might you change your instruction to address dialects in future lessons and activities that you may do with students?" Mrs. Dunston answered:

I would like to pay more attention to students' writing. If there was ever enough time in a day, I would love to be that teacher with the red pen. You know? And really comb through the grammar in their pieces. It's just, I don't know if I ever wanted to be the teacher that would stop and correct kids when they're in mid-sentence, but then sometimes I need to because I know that it's wrong. But as a kid, and even as an adult sometimes I'm hesitant about the way that I speak to certain people because I'm always thinking about 'Are they correcting me?' in their head. And I don't want to create that type of environment in my classroom. So, it's hard to sort of find that balance.

Although Mrs. Dunston was unable to dedicate as much time to students' writing as she would have liked to because of time constraints, she also remarked "I would love to be that teacher with the red pen." In her response, Mrs. Dunston described a teacher who thoroughly reviewed students' writing, using a "red pen" to give feedback and make corrections on students' uses of MAE written grammar. Mrs. Dunston described having the awareness of students' mistakes in need of correction and felt an obligation to make students aware of their grammatical

mistakes in writing according to the grammar rules of MAE. Mrs. Dunston began her response describing how she would change her approach to giving students feedback on their writing, but Mrs. Dunston juxtaposed “correcting” students’ MAE written grammar with “correcting” students’ verbally. Mrs. Dunston perceived “correcting” students as insisting that students use mainstream dialects instead of non-mainstream dialects, but insisting that students use mainstream dialects was a difficult task for Mrs. Dunston. Mrs. Dunston’s hesitancy to “correct” her students is different from the teacher-researcher (Cindy) in Godley et al.’s (2007) study. Cindy’s use of Daily Language Practice with the students in her 10th grade ELA class and her prompts to students to use features of MAE instead of AAE presented a monolithic view of English. Unlike Cindy, Mrs. Dunston was hesitant to use pedagogical practices that students might perceive as attempting to change their uses of non-mainstream dialects. Additionally, Mrs. Dunston’s use of the word “correcting” implied a Standard English language ideology because the terms implies that Mrs. Dunston has internalized non-mainstream dialects as incorrect when compared to the grammatical structures of mainstream dialects, and this internalization was also observed in many students’ responses during the study.

Mrs. Dunston’s difficulty “correcting” students led to an additional dilemma of wanting to help students master written and spoken MAE by “correcting” students but also not wanting students to feel judged as the result of Mrs. Dunston’s insisting that students use mainstream dialects. If students felt judged as a result of their uses of non-mainstream dialects, then it would be difficult for Mrs. Dunston to cultivate a classroom environment that encouraged students to speak freely, because students might hesitate out of fear or being judged as a result of their non-mainstream dialects.

One explanation for this dilemma was Mrs. Dunston's own verbal use of AAE that she was often unaware that she used (e.g. during an observation on day two of the study, Mrs. Dunston told a student, "You be like ten minutes late saying your line for the spoken word poem"). In the follow-up interview, Mrs. Dunston affirmed, "I'm hesitant about the way that I speak to certain people, because I'm always thinking about are they correcting me in their head." Mrs. Dunston reflected on her own use of AAE and how others might judge or correct her use of English according to the rules of MAE, and as a result, Mrs. Dunston was not comfortable with the notion of pointing out students' uses of non-mainstream dialects and insisting students use mainstream dialects instead. This created a dilemma, because, as Mrs. Dunston stated previously, she had to "meet students where they are," but it is possible that Mrs. Dunston also feared that insisting students use MAE instead of non-mainstream dialects would go against the inclusive classroom environment that valued students' differences that Mrs. Dunston aimed to create.

Other factors that contributed to Mrs. Dunston's hesitancy to insist that students use mainstream dialects over non-mainstream dialects were her own fears of the difficulty she would face if she had to use MAE all the time. During day seven of the study, Mrs. Dunston told the students:

If I had to only use mainstream American English, I think it would discourage me a little bit as an educator. Because I would constantly think about what I'm saying, how I'm saying it, when it's used, when I shouldn't use it, who I'm talking to. You know like, it would definitely make this job hard.

Mrs. Dunston explained that her job as an educator would be even more difficult if she had to worry about using MAE exclusively. In her explanation, Mrs. Dunston described the ways that she would constantly evaluate and re-evaluate her uses of MAE, second guessing whether or

not she was using MAE according to its grammar rules. Mrs. Dunston would also second guess whether or not she was code switching appropriately based on audience and purpose. It is possible that Mrs. Dunston's use of AAE and awareness of the difficulties she would face personally if forced to use MAE all of the time made Mrs. Dunston less likely to insist that students use mainstream dialects instead of non-mainstream dialects.

3.4.1.3 Code Switching and Making Connections with Listeners

Similar to her responsibility to teach written and spoken MAE, Mrs. Dunston's third responsibility that she expressed was to teach the appropriate places and times to code switch between mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. However, the responsibility of teaching students to code switch based on the audience and purpose was coupled with the dilemma Mrs. Dunston expressed that non-mainstream dialects sometimes allowed for a stronger connection between speaker and listener. On day seven of the study after watching the *Do You Speak American?* video, Mrs. Dunston told the class, "You need to know when and where to use this type of language. I couldn't stand in front of a group of people and just speak any kind of way. But I'm gonna be honest with you, sometimes I do." Mrs. Dunston began by reiterating to students that they needed to know when and where to code switch, because there is an expectation that students will code switch depending on the audience and purpose. However, Mrs. Dunston concluded her remarks by sharing with students that she did not always adhere to the expectation that she should code switch. On day seven of the study Mrs. Dunston explained further about speaking to a group of funders about her trip to Poland:

I just remember standing in front of that fireplace thinking about the way that I speak and trying to use that mainstream American English as much as I could, but sometimes you will not connect with your audience that way if you're not used to

doing that. I think that using non-mainstream English allows for a human connection to take place.

Mrs. Dunston shared with the class through this example that her use of AAE allowed her to connect with her audience in a way that MAE did not allow. The atmosphere was formal, so her original aim was to use MAE, which aligned to Mrs. Dunston's overall message to students that they should code switch based on their environment and audience. However, Mrs. Dunston also acknowledged the ways that using non-mainstream dialects such as AAE allowed for a "human connection" with her audience that Mrs. Dunston would not have been able to achieve had she used MAE instead. The human connection was a connection between the speaker and audience—the speaker addressing the audience in a way that kept the audience interested and engaged in the speaker's message. Mrs. Dunston commented, "trying to use that mainstream American English," and her use of "that" implies that MAE was distant from her use of AAE. It is possible that Mrs. Dunston was distant from MAE because she did not perceive it as a part of her identity, but AAE was embedded in her identity, and therefore, more familiar than MAE.

Overall, Mrs. Dunston conveyed a variety of (sometimes conflicting) perspectives on dialect use to her students. On one hand, Mrs. Dunston perceived that she had a responsibility to students to create a classroom environment that welcomed all dialects and remind students to code switch based on audience and purpose. On the other hand, Mrs. Dunston understood the ways non-mainstream dialects allowed a speaker to connect with his/her audience in a way that mainstream dialects did not allow. Echoes of Mrs. Dunston's views were seen in students' written work, sociolinguistic surveys, interviews, and participation during the sociolinguistic classroom activities. These themes appeared across subgroups of students, that is, across groups of students with different racial and linguistic identities.

3.5 DIALECT DIVERSITY CURRICULUM

I created the curriculum for this research study (see Table 3.1) after examining previous studies that encouraged students to think critically about the ways dialects are used, discuss popular notions about dialects, learn about dialectal patterns, and examine the ways dialects intersect with power and identity (Baker-Bell, 2013; Fecho, 2000; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Godley, Reaser, & Moore, 2015; Williams, 2013). The activities were specifically chosen as a part of the dialect diversity curriculum because they are reflective of sociolinguistic content learning and inquiry-based approaches to learning. Additionally, the dialect curriculum was used during Mrs. Dunston's poetry unit. The activities from the dialect unit took place during the first half of the class period and were followed by the poetry activities that were planned by Mrs. Dunston.

Table 3.1 Dialect Curriculum

Day	Topic	Activities	Writing Prompt
1	Personal experiences with mainstream and non-mainstream dialects	Pre-survey; writing prompt; class discussion	Describe a time when you spoke differently from people around you or a time when you heard a different dialect spoken.
2	AAE	Writing prompt; class discussion; AAE feature of repetition; identifying repetition in “I Have a Dream” King (1963)	Is there a language called African American English?
3	AAE	Writing prompt; class discussion; zero copula; habitual <i>be</i>	If a person says, “I be on the bus,” how would you describe their use of language?
4	AAE	Pre-nominal possessives and verbal –s third person	How does the way someone speaks shape their character?
5	Pittsburgh dialect	Writing prompt; discussion; Pittsburgh dialect features of lexicon/phonology and use of copula <i>be</i>	How does the dialect of a city tell a story? [prompt provided by Mrs. Dunston]
6	Dialects in different parts of the country	Writing prompt; class discussion; excerpt from <i>American Tongues</i>	Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation?
7	Teacher’s role in teaching MAE	Excerpt from <i>Do You Speak American?</i> ; class discussion	

Table 3.1 (continued)

8	Linguistic discrimination	Writing prompt; discussion; HUD PSA	In our society, are mainstream dialects valued more over non- mainstream dialects? How is this determined?
9	Wrap-up and post-survey		

3.5.1 Introduction to Grammatical Patterns and Stylistic Features of AAE and Pittsburgh Dialect

This activity was modeled after Williams’s (2013) study that introduced college-level students to features of the African Vernacular Tradition that could be used to enhance their writing. In this study, the students were introduced to examples of the AAE stylistic feature of repetition by reading and viewing a passage and a short video clip of a historical speech that utilized this feature. Students were also introduced to the grammatical pattern of the zero copula (e.g. “She walking to the store”), habitual *be* (e.g. “She be walking to the store”), pre-nomininal possessives (e.g. “I like my mother lasagna she made last night”), and verbal –s third person (e.g. “My brother keep his money hidden under the bed”). As a part of these activities, students were introduced to the grammatical patterns associated with and used in oral and written forms of AAE. Brown’s (2009) teaching resource gives examples of lessons on the grammatical features of AAE and was used as a reference during these activities, because this resource provides clear examples of grammatical features and comparisons to MAE.

After the dialect curriculum activities on AAE, students were introduced to the historical background of Pittsburgh dialect and grammatical, pronunciation, and lexicon features associated

with some of the popular terms they are familiar with (e.g. “the car needs washed,” “Stillers,” and “yinz”). The students described some of the features of Pittsburgh dialect they use or hear most often. The purpose of this activity was to introduce students to the grammatical, pronunciation, and lexicon features that some might have previously been exposed to or used, but this exposure aimed to show students that many of them are already very familiar with features of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect but might not have understood these features as specific patterns of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect.

3.5.1.1 Writing Prompts

Students responded to several prompts during this study. These short writing activities aimed to get students to think about their own experiences and how they have developed their current views about dialects. Students responded to the following prompts over the course of the study: (1) Describe a time when you spoke differently from people around you or a time when you heard someone speaking a different dialect around you; (2) Is there a language called African American English? What do you know about it; (3) If a person says, “I be on the bus,” how would you describe their use of language; (4) How does the way someone speaks shape their character; (5) Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation; (6) In our society, are Mainstream American English dialects valued more over non-mainstream dialects? How is this determined? These activities were completed in class as short writing assignments and were used in attempts to engage students in class discussions.

3.5.1.2 Video Segments

Short segments from the video, *American Tongues* (Alvarez & Kolker, 1987), were shown followed by a reflection and discussion during the research study (Godley, Reaser & Moore,

2015). The purpose of this activity was to expose students to different regional dialects and explore the ways people are judged for their dialects and accents. These video clips were followed by a class discussion where students were asked to discuss the video and the views that were expressed. This activity comes from Chisholm and Godley's (2011) study of high school English students who discussed the video in order to explore dialects in the United States, became aware of dialect's connection to identity, and explored the relationship between dialect and power in students' own lives. The current study used Chisholm and Godley's discussion questions in order to get students to think about dialects:

Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it fair? Is it a reasonable expectation? Explain.

The students were also introduced to a segment from *Do You Speak American?* The students watched a teacher's approach to teaching his students features of MAE by using a contrastive analysis approach (Wheeler & Swords, 2006). After viewing the video, the students were asked to discuss the teacher's approach and how it might be helpful/harmful to students' development.

Finally, the students viewed a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) public service announcement that addressed linguistic profiling that was also used as a part Reaser and Wolfram's (2007) curriculum. The purpose of this activity was to get students to discuss the ways uses of non-mainstream dialects and power intersect, and the ways speakers of non-mainstreams might be stereotyped or prohibited from being welcome in certain spaces.

3.6 DATA SOURCES

In order to address the research questions, I collected data using pre- and post-surveys, conducted one-on-one interviews with students, observed students as they engaged in and responded to activities, and collected student writing samples related to the curriculum on dialects. I also conducted pre- and post-interviews with the teacher, Mrs. Dunston. The classroom observations were audio and video recorded, and the recordings were transcribed. The pre- and post-surveys provided quantitative data on the change in students' attitudes towards dialectal variation before and after the study.

Data collection took place for approximately six weeks in the participants' ELA classroom, and I was in their class three to four times per week. I had already been introduced to students as a researcher and students were given an opportunity to ask questions about my research interests. The study was introduced to students at the beginning of their ELA class period using a script approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Pittsburgh. Students had the opportunity to ask additional questions about the study, and parental consent forms were distributed.

All students who submitted signed assent forms and signed parental consent forms participated in one-on-one interviews at the end of the study. A total of twenty-one students were interviewed. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Students completed several writing prompts. The responses to the writing prompts helped to identify students' attitudes about dialects, and the interviews allowed students to clarify some of their attitudes and ideas as they reflected on the different activities from the dialect curriculum.

It was very difficult to identify an English teacher for this study. For two years, I met

many teachers and leaders of afterschool activities in hopes of identifying a space where the teacher or adult engaged or considered engaging students using topics such as current day discrimination or injustice to encourage students to think critically about power. My first interaction with the teacher in this study was through an afterschool S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) program for girls at the school where the study takes place. I volunteered with the group throughout the 2015-2016 school year and talked to Mrs. Dunston often about her English classes and her style of teaching. The teacher talked about her love of music and how she often used music lyrics to engage students in current events or reflections of their own experiences. Mrs. Dunston invited me to visit her English classes during the school day to get a better idea of the way she engaged her students. After talking to Mrs. Dunston about my research interests and creating a curriculum, I asked Mrs. Dunston if she would be willing to participate in my study with her English classes. The site was chosen because of Mrs. Dunston's willingness to participate and her excitement to use curricular activities that would help her to engage students in critical thinking about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects.

Before the study began, I sat down with the teacher to discuss the curricular activities that were used. Together, the teacher and I thought about how to use the curricular activities with lessons that were already planned. The teacher and I created a schedule to determine when the curricular activities would take place and how Mrs. Dunston's planned curriculum would include similar discussions related to language variety, identity, and power that I also observed in addition to the observations that were specific to the curricular activities that were used in this study. My study took place during the first thirty minutes of Mrs. Dunston's English classes. At the time that this study took place, Mrs. Dunston and her students were working on a poetry unit.

3.6.1 Pre- and Post-Surveys

Using Reaser's (2006) survey as a model, I created a survey using a Likert scale to determine students' attitudes and self-perceptions about dialects, and the survey was administered at the beginning and end of the study. The pre-survey was piloted with 16 sixth grade students who identified as Latino/a and African American and attended an urban public school in the Northeastern United States. I spoke to the principal, school guidance counselor, and ELA teacher about my study before visiting the classroom and asked questions about how students talked about different varieties of English and if they used terms such as *slang*, *dialect*, *Ebonics*, or *African American English*. They all were confident that students would understand what I meant by African American English in the survey, but the principal worried they would use the term *ghetto* to describe this type of English. In the classroom, I introduced myself to the students and told them that I was a researcher working on a big project. Before distributing the survey, I told the students that I was interested in what they think about AAE and asked them if they knew what I meant when I used that particular term. Some of the African American students in the class raised their hands and provided answers such as "the way we talk outside of school" and "the way we sometimes talk informally." I agreed with students' definitions and told them "African American English is the way many African Americans might speak that is different from mainstream American English that might be used at school or when at work." After distributing the pilot pre-survey to the students, I analyzed the data and tallied students' responses for each statement. I revised the survey by eliminating statements that seemed repetitive or did not address students' self-perception and adding an "I don't know" response option (Appendix A). Also, the pilot study asked students specifically about AAE, and the

current survey has been revised to use the terms “mainstream dialect” and “non-mainstream dialect.”

During the pilot of the pre-survey, several students expressed uncertainty on how to respond to some of the prompts because they had mixed feelings. One African American student explained to me that she had two possible responses for a few of the responses and was not sure which answer to choose. Another African American student decided to write a few sentences about why she chose her answer because she was not sure if the response she chose reflected her true opinion. The revisions to the pre-survey aimed to address any confusion that students might encounter and to ensure that every survey item is worded clearly.

After reviewing students’ responses from the pilot of the pre-survey, response items that did not address students’ self-perceptions were deleted. I added definitions of mainstream dialect and non-mainstream dialect to the top of the survey. After piloting the survey, I realized how important it was for the participants to understand what I meant by *mainstream* and *non-mainstream* and included examples. If students did not understand the statements about these terms, then it would be difficult to assess their answers. During data collection, I had an initial conversation with students and asked them what they thought I meant by mainstream dialects and non-mainstream dialect, and I included an additional reminder on the survey to make sure that the students had a clear understanding.

The pre-survey was administered in the classroom at the beginning of the study before the participants engaged in the curricular activities and conversations on dialects. The participants put their names on their survey (pre- and post-surveys) so that their pre- and post-responses could be matched. It was important for me to be able to match students’ pre- and post-survey results so that I could describe how self-perceptions changed or remained the same over

the course of the study. The teacher was not able to see the students' individual responses to the surveys, and I de-identified the surveys using pseudonyms after they were collected. The post-survey included the same statements as the pre-survey, but there was an additional optional section on the post-survey that asked students to identify their race. I looked for quantitative change in the students' responses over the course of the study for all of the participants. The pre- and post-surveys (see Appendix A) took approximately ten minutes to complete, and students worked individually to complete their survey at the beginning of the class period.

The survey that I created had a total of 20 items, and the items connected to three different foci—students' sociolinguistic content learning, students' opinions about their teacher's role in teaching MAE, and students' general opinions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. Ten of the survey items asked students if they agreed with statements related to sociolinguistic principles. Four survey items asked students to give their perceptions about their teacher's responsibility to teach MAE and value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom. Lastly, six items asked students to respond to statements about their perceptions of mainstream dialects and non-mainstream dialects.

3.6.2 Student Interviews

All twenty-one students participated in one-on-one interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The student interviews (see Appendix B) took approximately 10 minutes each. The aim of these interviews was for the student to discuss his/her thoughts on the class discussions and activities and describe any change in their views on dialectal differences in a setting away from their peers (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992). In this setting, participants were able to express attitudes or share experiences that they might not have been as willing to share as freely in a group setting. The

interviews were semi-structured with questions prepared in advance, and there were also opportunities for additional follow-up questions to be asked (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interview consisted of the following 4 questions:

1. Explain to me how you would define the term “non-mainstream dialect.” What are your current thoughts/attitudes on non-mainstream dialects such as African American English or Pittsburgh dialect? Have they changed or stayed the same over the course of these activities?
2. What have you learned over the course of these activities? What might you want to learn more about?
3. Have there been any comments made in class that you strongly agree or disagree with related to dialects?
4. Which activities about dialects were most interesting?

3.6.3 Teacher Interviews

The pre-interview (see Appendix C) with the teacher took place at the beginning of the research study, and the follow-up interview (see Appendix D) took place after the conclusion of the study. Both interviews followed a semi-structured interview format using guiding questions and additional follow up questions to the teachers’ responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The pre-interview gave the teacher an opportunity to describe her background, teaching philosophies, experiences with dialectal differences, and class dynamics. The follow-up interview questions allowed the teacher to describe her observations of the ways students responded to the curriculum (Godley & Moore, 2013). The follow-up interview also gave Mrs. Dunston an

opportunity to clarify some of her statements and messages to students that were recorded during the classroom observations.

3.6.4 Classroom Observations and Student Writing Samples

Data sources from classroom observations include audio and video-recorded data as well written field notes from each visit. The audio and video recorded data was transcribed. This data includes observations of students during activities from the dialect diversity curriculum, specifically the class discussions following the video segments and grammatical features of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect activities. Observations of students took place in whole-class settings over a six-week period, and day of activities did not exceed forty-five minutes.

Student writing samples from the prompts throughout the dialect curriculum also served as data sources. Some students did not respond to every writing prompt throughout the study for various reasons such as tardiness or simply chose not to provide a written response. These samples were collected at the end of the study and reviewed to determine students' attitudes from the writing prompts. The student writing prompts were integrated into their writing warm-up activity that was a part of their daily ELA instruction. Students were given ten to fifteen minutes to respond to the writing prompts, and an additional fifteen minutes was allotted to hear students' responses in a whole-class setting.

3.6.5 Analysis of Surveys

The pre- and post-surveys were used as a quantitative tool for analysis. Pre-survey and post-survey data were collected from all twenty-one participants in the study. All students' responses

were totaled in order to get a clearer picture of changes in students' perceptions about dialectal variety from the beginning of the study to the end. To do this, I used a master pre- and post-survey sheet for all students and used tally marks to determine the responses that all students gave to each survey item. I used a one-tailed paired *t*-test to determine if any statistically significant change occurred over course of the study for each survey item. The pre- and post-surveys included "I don't know" as a possible answer choice for each response item. Item pairs that included one or more "I don't know" answers were excluded from the analysis.

3.6.6 Analysis of Classroom Observation Data

Classroom observations included my written notes from each classroom visit, audio recordings, and video recordings. Student participation in classroom discussions during the study was less than anticipated, and as a result, student participation on each day of the study ranged from four to eight students out of twenty-one total participants. For data analysis, the recordings were transcribed for coding. This data was coded in different rounds according to the research questions.

The first round of coding addressed the research question, "How do students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects?" Students were given an opportunity to self-identify their race on the post-survey, and all twenty-one participants selected a race (one student selected "other"). I used emergent coding (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011) to look for patterns in students' responses. I used the following emergent codes in the first round of coding to identify the ways students described mainstream and non-mainstream dialects: proper/correct; improper/incorrect; slang; and foreign (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Kinloch, 2010). Examples of these codes were observed in students' writing samples that

were used as a starting point for class discussions before engaging in the curricular activity for the day, but there was little evidence of these codes as students engaged in activities where students identified using features of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect. I also coded for the ways students described the reasons behind the uses of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects using the codes of respect and bonds/connections (Godley & Escher, 2012; Kinloch, 2010). Examples of these codes were observed in students' writing samples and classroom discussion data. I looked for patterns in the ways students from different racial backgrounds critiqued or agreed with widely accepted views about dialects (Godley & Minnici, 2008), and examples of these patterns were found in students' writing samples on days one through five of the study. Such responses from students included statements such as "AAE is not correct English," or descriptions of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE as "talking Black" and were observed in students' writing samples.

The second round of coding addressed the research question, "How do the curricular activities shape students' sociolinguistic perceptions?" In this round, I looked for students' responses that were related to the sociolinguistic principles *language variation*, *power*, and *identity* (Chisholm & Godley, 2011) (see Table 3.1). These a priori topics are derived from sociolinguistic principles and research that demonstrate the validity of dialects such as AAE (Labov, 1972), the ways language is used in different contexts and reflects different identities (Heath, 1983; Smitherman, 1977), and the ways language is used to form negative and positive attitudes based on the way people speak (Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2007; Heath, 1983). I looked for evidence of students' sociolinguistic perceptions and evidence that suggested students were critiquing dominant power codes (Godley & Minnici, 2008). I also identified specific curricular activities that might explain students' sociolinguistic perceptions. For each

sociolinguistic topic, emergent themes were created to capture patterns in students' responses in connection to each sociolinguistic topic and will be described in more detail in chapter five. Examples of the a priori topics and emergent themes used to answer the second research question were observed in students' writing samples and classroom discussions.

The third round of coding addressed the research question, "How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)?" Data from students' pre- and post-surveys were used to describe changes that took place in students' attitudes during the study. To address this research question, I looked for changes in students' responses and also considered the ways students' survey responses did not converge with remarks made in class about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. See Table 3.2 for the coding categories. Within this round of coding, I also examined students' responses to survey questions that were connected to sociolinguistic principles and determined if students' responses aligned or did not align with sociolinguistic principles (Chisholm & Godley, 2011) (see Table 3.3). Students' perceptions in alignment with sociolinguistic principles agreed with the principles, and students' perceptions not in alignment with sociolinguistic principles disagreed with the principles.

Table 3.2 Guiding Coding Categories for Research Questions (Based on Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008)

Research Question	Codes/Topics	Data Sources
How do students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects?	-Critiques/support of widely held attitudes of non-mainstream dialects -Black, White, Multiracial -Correct/Incorrect -Right/Wrong -Emergent themes	-classroom observations -student writing
How do the curricular activities shape students' sociolinguistic perceptions and content learning?	-Dialects -Variation within language -Power -Identity	-classroom observations -student writing
How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)?	-Attitude (changes, stays the same, new or unresolved questions) - Widely accepted views -Responses supported by research on sociolinguistic principles -Emergent themes	-pre-survey data -post-survey data

Table 3.3 Sociolinguistic Content Learning (based on Chisholm & Godley, 2011)

Code	Sociolinguistic Principle	Alignment with current sociolinguistic principles
Language variation	All dialects of English are valid and valuable	Yes/No
Identity	Language use varies in different contexts and communities and is reflective of different identities	Yes/No
Power	Positive and negative judgments are often made based on how people speak	Yes/No

3.6.7 Analysis of Student Writing Samples

The analysis of students' writing samples was coded using the rounds of coding described above (see Table 3.1). Additionally, students' responses were also coded according to the prompts. The first writing prompt asked, "Describe a time when you spoke differently than people around you or a time when you heard someone speaking differently around you." The responses to this prompt were coded using emergent themes to summarize students' responses.

The second writing prompt asked, "Is there a language called African American English?" Students' responses were coded based on students' agreement or disagreement of the existence of AAE, and the reasons students gave to support their responses were summarized and categorized.

The third writing prompt asked, "If a person says, 'I be on the bus,' how would you

describe their use of language?” Students’ responses were coded using emergent codes according to students’ responses to the prompt: *right*, *wrong*, *correct*, and *incorrect*.

The fourth writing prompt asked, “How does the way someone speaks shape their character?” Responses to this prompt were coded based on students’ agreement or disagreement that a speaker’s use of a dialect is connected to the speaker’s identity, personality, or individuality. Students’ responses to this prompt were compared to the writing prompt that asked, “Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation” (the fifth writing prompt) because for several students, there was a change in their perceptions about the connection between a speaker’s identity and a speaker’s use of a dialect between their responses to these two writing prompts.

The fifth writing prompt asked, “Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation?” Students’ responses were coded according to the connections students made or did not make between a speaker’s use of dialect and identity. I also examined the similarities and differences in the ways students from similar racial or linguistic backgrounds responded to the prompt.

The sixth writing prompt asked, “Are some forms of English valued more over others and how is this determined?” Students’ responses were coded based on their views of dialectal hierarchies (yes, no, maybe), and the explanations were summarized using emergent themes to categorize students’ responses.

3.6.8 Analysis of Student Interviews

Students’ responses to the one-on-one interview questions were transcribed and excerpts from the transcriptions were coded (see Table 3.1) and used to identify students’ opinions about their

sociolinguistic perceptions and what students would like to learn more about. All twenty-one students were interviewed. Additionally, students' survey responses were used to triangulate data collected from classroom observations, students' writing samples, and pre- and post-survey responses. Students' interview responses are discussed in chapter five.

3.6.9 Analysis of Teacher Interviews

The teacher's responses to the interview questions were coded for different themes. The data from the pre-interview was analyzed using the codes *background experiences*, *dialectal attitudes*, *teaching philosophies*, and *student/classroom descriptions*. The pre-interview provided background information about the teacher and also provided important information about her classes and different dynamics within the classes before the study began. The follow-interview data was coded using the same codes as the pre-interview, but I also coded for *change*, *responsibilities/perceptions*, and *dilemmas*. These codes highlighted the teacher's attitudes and observations of the ways she perceived her students to have changed over the course of the study (dialectal attitudes and perceptions, classroom discussions). These codes were also used to explain Mrs. Dunston's perceptions about teaching MAE and the dilemmas she faced in her teaching practice around valuing non-mainstream dialects, creating a welcoming classroom environment, and teaching students MAE.

3.7 LOOKING ACROSS DATA SOURCES

After the data were coded, I looked across all data sources to identify the ways students discussed language variation, power, and identity across all of the curricular activities and identified patterns or changes in the data that took place during the study. The codes and themes described in this section guided my analysis as I looked across all of my data sources. However, there were also additional emergent codes developed after I looked across all data sources that I use in my analysis that do not fit into the codes and themes described above. During data analysis, the emergent codes *avoidance* and *silence* were also used to identify patterns among students' behavior in the study.

4.0 STUDENTS' RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES

This chapter addresses the first research question that considers the ways students' racial and linguistic identities shape students' perceptions about dialects. The findings in this chapter are reported by racial group and major themes identified across racial groups. Additionally, comparisons are made to highlight instances where perceptions were similar to or different within groups and across groups.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the research question: How do students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shape their views about dialects? To answer this question, I used the following data sources: students' racial self-identifications on post-surveys, classroom observation data, and student writing samples. On the post-survey, only one student self-identified racially as other, and findings for that student were not summarized to answer this research question, because it would be difficult to summarize the findings based on a single student's data. For each racial group, I looked for themes within the classroom observation data and student writing samples. The curricular activities took place over nine school days, and most of the data analyzed to answer this research question comes from days one through day five of the study, because these days of the study included many students' perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream

dialects as they were introduced to the curricular activities on AAE and Pittsburgh dialect. I used the following codes to identify the ways students described mainstream and non-mainstream dialects: proper/correct; improper/incorrect; slang; and foreign (Baker-Bell, 2012; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Kinloch, 2010). I also coded for the ways students described the reasons behind the uses of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects using the codes of respect and bonds/connections (Godley & Escher, 2012; Kinloch, 2010). These codes were used across all racial groups of students to better understand how students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shaped their opinions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. The findings in this chapter are organized by students' race because much of the existing research on this topic has taken place in racially homogeneous settings (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Reaser, 2006) that do not provide findings of diverse student populations. Throughout this chapter, responses from one racial group of students is compared to another racial group of students. This was done to highlight similarities and differences in students' perceptions across racial groups.

Standard English language ideologies were often used in students' descriptions of non-mainstream dialects. Standard English language ideologies were often applied to descriptions of AAE even though many students self-reported speaking AAE. African American and multiracial students were critical of AAE even though many self-reported to be speakers of AAE, and students did not critique their own uses of non-mainstream dialects. No White students, no multiracial students, and only two out of nine African American students mentioned race in their comments.

4.2 RACIAL IDENTITIES AND LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCES

Even though the students in the study self-identified as members of several racial groups, there was not always a clear mapping between students' racial identities and linguistic experiences (see Table 4.1). Additionally, the way students self-reported their uses of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects did not always reflect what I observed during the study. Students' self-reported linguistic identities were recorded during classroom observations at different times during the implementation of the dialect curriculum when students were asked to raise their hands if they used features of AAE or Pittsburgh dialect such as verbal -s or said the word "yinz."

Observations of students using non-mainstream dialects during the study were also noted. Features of non-mainstream dialects observed during the study were noted when students used a feature of AAE or Pittsburgh dialect that was discussed during the dialect curriculum. For example, students were observed saying or writing habitual *be* and using Pittsburgh dialect lexicon in pronunciation in words such as "Pixburgh" (Pittsburgh), and these features were presented to students as a part of the curriculum on days one through five of the study. Background information on students' self-reported uses of non-mainstream dialects and observations of students using non-mainstream dialects are provided in Table 4.1.

There was a mismatch between students' self-reports and my observations of students using non-mainstream dialects during the study. Sixteen out of twenty-one total students self-reported using non-mainstream dialects, but only four students were observed using non-mainstream dialects during the study. Five out of seven multiracial students self-reported using non-mainstream dialects, and I observed two out of those seven multiracial students using features of non-mainstream dialects during the study. Eight out of nine African American

students self-reported using at least one pattern of AAE, and two out of nine African American students self-reported using a pattern of Pittsburgh dialect. However, I observed only one African American student use AAE during the study, and I did not observe any African American students using Pittsburgh dialect. Two out of four White students indicated that they used AAE, but I did not observe any White students using features of AAE. The one student who self-identified racially as other self-reported that she used a pattern of AAE, but during the study, I only observed the student using a feature of Pittsburgh dialect in addition to her MAE use.

One explanation for students who self-reported using non-mainstream dialects but did not use non-mainstream dialects during the study is Mrs. Dunston's reminders to students to code switch. According to Mrs. Dunston, her students knew about code switching prior to the study. It is possible that students who reported using non-mainstream dialects did not use non-mainstream dialects in school because they were taught to use mainstream dialects when speaking to adults or in formal settings such as school. For students who did show evidence of using non-mainstream dialects during the study, it is likely that they felt comfortable using non-mainstream dialects. The classroom climate was very casual during the curricular activities, and I even shared some of my own experiences using non-mainstream dialects. Given the classroom climate, it is possible that students who used non-mainstream dialects did so because the casual nature of our discussions and activities provided the students with opportunities to feel comfortable using non-mainstream dialects without being prompted to use MAE instead. Another explanation for the limited observations of students using non-mainstream dialects even though sixteen out of twenty-one students self-reported using non-mainstream dialects is that students' self-reported information might not have been accurate. It is possible that students did

not have the self-awareness to discriminate between their own use of non-mainstream dialects and uses of non-mainstream dialects that they heard often in their daily lives.

Table 4.1 Students' Self-identified Racial Identities, Self-reported Uses of Dialects, and Observations of Students Using Dialects (AAE=African American English; MAE=Mainstream American English; PD=Pittsburgh dialect)

Student	Race	Linguistic Self-Identification	Observation During the Study	Class Period
Aidan	African American	AAE/MAE	AAE/MAE	2
Alex	African American	AAE/MAE/PD	MAE	1
Amelia	African American	AAE/MAE	MAE	2
Danielle	African American	AAE/MAE	MAE	2
George	African American	MAE	MAE	2
Jackson	African American	AAE/MAE	MAE	2
Jeremy	African American	AAE/MAE/PD	MAE	2
Myles	African American	AAE/MAE	MAE	1
Rebecca	African American	AAE/MAE	MAE	1
India	Multiracial	AAE/MAE	AAE/MAE	1
Joseph	Multiracial	MAE	MAE	2
Kelsey	Multiracial	MAE/PD	MAE	2
Kenneth	Multiracial	AAE/MAE/PD	AAE/MAE/PD	2
Pria	Multiracial	AAE/MAE	MAE	2
Samantha	Multiracial	AAE/MAE/PD	MAE	2
Traci	Multiracial	MAE	MAE	1
Zoe	Other	AAE/MAE	MAE/PD	1
Harper	White	MAE	MAE	2
Kimberly	White	MAE	MAE	1
Michael	White	AAE/MAE	MAE	2
Steven	White	AAE/MAE	MAE	2

4.2.1 Mainstream Dialects Are More Valuable Than Non-Mainstream Dialects

MAE was perceived as more valuable than non-mainstream dialects across all racial groups. Students' perceptions of the value of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects were based on the writing prompt on day eight of the study: *In our society, are mainstream American English dialects valued more over non-mainstream dialects? Explain.* Eight students (one student from class one; seven students from class two) out of twenty-one students responded to the writing prompt. Three out of nine African American students, two out of seven multiracial students, and one out of four White students who responded to the prompt perceived that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects (see Table 4.2). Additionally, one out of nine African American students expressed that MAE was a part of an accepted practice in society, and one out of seven multiracial students expressed that society would not allow non-mainstream dialects to be valued more than MAE. Danielle (African American), Harper (White), and Joseph (multiracial) were in class two and perceived that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects and gave reasons such as "most people talk mainstream," "it's taught more in school than non-mainstream dialect," and "you wouldn't get picked" if a speaker used non-mainstream dialects during a job interview. All three students expressed that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects such as AAE because of their dominant presence among speakers in society, academic environments, and work settings. This suggests that the three students' perception of MAE having greater value than non-mainstream dialects reflected how the students observed MAE as the preferred dialect in specific settings. If students perceived that MAE was better in spaces such as school and work, then it is possible that students associated MAE as having a greater value because of the assumed access that it could potentially provide to its speakers. Young et al. (2013) describe students' compartmentalizing of MAE for certain

activities as one of the problems with code switching techniques that label non-mainstream dialects as less appropriate than mainstream dialects in certain environments. Additionally, such perceptions of non-mainstream dialects as less appropriate have the potential to further stigmatize students' non-mainstream dialects as not being welcomed in the same spaces as mainstream dialects.

MAE was considered more valuable than non-mainstream dialects because it was perceived that MAE was a part of an accepted practice and was a way for speakers to show respect to listeners. Amelia (African American) agreed that MAE was considered more valuable than non-mainstream dialects but she noted, "People want to be in routines and keeping MAE is part of the routine. Non-mainstream English is being valued more now in society because everyone's changing routine." Amelia expressed that MAE was a part of society's routine and norm for how English should be used. Her remarks also suggested that society wants to maintain the routine of MAE being the preferred dialect. Additionally, Amelia complicated the perception that MAE will always be more valuable because routines were changing, presumably because more people are speaking non-mainstream dialects than previously and society is becoming more diverse.

Kelsey expressed that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects because people "feel more respected with mainstream than non-mainstream." Kelsey was the only student who mentioned respect as a reason why mainstream dialects were considered more valuable. Additionally, Kelsey identified people in society as having the power to make the decision that mainstream dialects were more valuable. Kelsey expressed the perception that non-mainstream dialects were becoming more popular among speakers and that there were forces in play (e.g. MAE speakers and society) that would not allow non-mainstream dialects to gain equal

status as mainstream dialects. Kelsey did not explain or give examples to support her perception that non-mainstream dialects were becoming more popular, but it is possible that she considered non-mainstream dialects that she heard in popular culture such as music lyrics.

Not all respondents to the prompt agreed that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects. Aidan (African American) and Jeremy (African American) were in class two and were the only students who did not express that MAE was valued more than non-mainstream dialects. Aidan wrote, “people are not talking to their friends in different ways than their mom or dad or a stranger.” Aidan was skeptical that speakers code switched, and instead, expressed that speakers used the same dialects regardless of the environment or audience. Aidan also perceived that a speaker’s uses of dialects were a personal decision. Jeremy did not explain his response, but he expressed that his city did not view MAE or non-mainstream dialects as being respected more over the other.

The majority of students’ responses were similar to Godley and Minnici’s (2008) study that found many high school students thought people in society believed that dialects spoken in White communities (mainstream dialects) were more valuable than dialects spoken in African American communities (non-mainstream dialects). Additionally, most students’ responses were reflective of the principle of linguistic subordination (Lippi-Green, 2012; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006). “According to this principle, the speech of a socially subordinate group will be interpreted as linguistically inadequate by comparison with that of a socially dominant group” (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006, p. 7). In their responses to this writing prompt, students perceived MAE as being dominant as a result of the places where it is used often, but students did not indicate in their responses that MAE was valuable because of its favor among the socially

dominant group. Throughout this chapter, there are also other examples of the principle of linguistic subordination that will be described in later sections.

Table 4.2 Is MAE Valued More Than Non-Mainstream Dialects – Day Eight Written Responses

Student	Written Response	Class Period
Aidan	I don't think mainstream English is used more valued [sic] because people are not talking to their friends in different ways than their mom or dad or a stranger. Does not matter which way you talk it's their own language.	2
Alex	In our society mainstream American English is valued more over non-mainstream dialect. Mainstream can get you a lot more jobs and people will respect you for the way you talk to them. But non-mainstream can get you into a lot of jams in the world. [written response] Like if you get into like.. like.. If you go somewhere and they're all talking non-mainstream and you feel like you want to fit in by like talking the way they're talking. Mainstream is not always the best dialect. [verbal response]	1
Amelia	I think MAE is valued more than non-mainstream English. People want to be in routines and keeping MAE is part of the routine. Non-mainstream English is being valued more now in society because everyone's changing routine. Language is language and they all should be valued equally.	2
Danielle	In our society, mainstream American English are [sic] valued more over non-mainstream dialects. They are valued more because most people talk in mainstream.	2
Harper	In our society, mainstream dialect is valued more than non-mainstream dialects because it's taught more in schools than non-mainstream dialect is. This is determined [not finished]	2
Jeremy	In my city neither is respected more.	2
Joseph	I think mainstream English is valued more. If you were at a interview and you spoke non-mainstream, you wouldn't get picked.	2
Kelsey	People usually value Mainstream over non-mainstream dialect. They feel more "respected" with mainstream than non-mainstream. This is determined by people in society. Non-mainstream is trying to be equally valued, but some reject that. Dialect shouldn't change the way you treat somebody.	2

4.2.2 African American students and AAE

African American students used terms such as *improper*, *incorrect*, *slang*, and *foreign* to describe AAE. Examples of African American students using these terms were observed in students' day two written responses to the writing prompt that asked *Is there such a language as African American English* (see Table 4.3). There were also observations of African American students' uses of these terms in their day four written responses to the writing prompt that asked *If you heard a person say, "I be on the bus," how would you describe the speaker's use of language?* Four out of nine African American students responded to the day two writing prompt, and all four students were in class two. Students responded to this prompt before they were shown different patterns of AAE. As students shared their written responses with the class, one student, Kelsey (a multiracial Pittsburgh dialect speaker) asserted that AAE was a dialect and not a language. To address Kelsey's opinion, I shared with Mrs. Dunston and the class that some sociolinguists call AAE a language while others refer to AAE as a dialect. Additionally, I told the class it was not important to debate whether or not AAE was a language or a dialect and that we would review some of the patterns that are a part of AAE. Aidan, Amelia, and George agreed that AAE exists, and Jeremy both agreed and disagreed. Aidan gave examples of the types of AAE he has heard from other African Americans and wrote, "It might not sound perfect or public correct English." In his description of AAE, Aidan described AAE through the lens of MAE, with MAE serving as the standard for language that is *perfect* or *correct*. George also agreed that AAE exists, and he expressed, "African American English doesn't use proper grammar or anything." Similar to Aidan's response, George described AAE as not using grammatical structures that he perceived as *proper*. African American students' descriptions of AAE in this study are similar to other studies that have also found that African American

students often internalize Standard English language ideologies as many students did in the study (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013). Even though African American students in the study reported using AAE, Standard English language ideology that positions MAE as better than AAE was still at the root of how African American students described AAE.

Two African American students who responded to the day two prompt made a connection between AAE and African Americans. Aidan and Amelia named African Americans specifically as a group who would understand AAE in their written explanations (see Table 4.3). Amelia wrote, “The way we talk can’t always be understood and African Americans can understand.” Amelia’s response suggests that she perceived that many African American were speakers of AAE, and as a result, would understand the non-mainstream dialect. Aidan identified African Americans as speakers who use terms such as “homie, bra, yo, and cuzz.” Aidan perceived that these terms were understood by African Americans who were speakers of AAE. These were among few examples of race being mentioned specifically by the participants. Aidan and Amelia’s responses suggest a bond and connection among speakers of AAE that will be discussed in a later section in this chapter.

Table 4.3 African American students' Day 2 responses to "Is there such a language as African American English?"

Student	Written Response
Aidan	There is a language called African American English because like you hear African Americans saying homie, bra, yo, cuzz. They are saying words the other people understand to say what he wants to say. It might not sound perfect or public correct English. It be different it tells a story to people that understand or touch what they are saying. For example, people from _____ say homies some people wouldn't understand that.
Amelia	There is an African American language. The way we talk can't always be understood and African Americans can understand. That's why people think you're talking Black or you're talking White. Slang is used a lot by African Americans. Slang is a language by itself.
George	There is an African American English. I believe it's hard to speak. African American English doesn't use proper grammar or anything. African American English is how you talk to your friends.
Jeremy	I do and don't think there is an African American English.

Some African American students attempted to provide "corrections" that rephrased a sentence with a feature of AAE and also attempted to identify grammar rules of MAE that suggested that the sentence was not correct. Examples of students attempting to correct or

rephrase AAE occurred on day three of the study when students responded in writing to the following writing prompt: *If a person said, “I be on the bus,” how would you describe their use of language? Explain.* Six out of nine African American students responded to the prompt (one student in class one; five students in class two) (see Table 4.4). Two African American students who responded to the prompt attempted to provide a “correction” or identify grammar rules of MAE that suggested that the sentence “I be on the bus” was wrong. In class two, George and Jackson expressed that “I be on the bus” was not *proper English*. Jackson attempted to correct the sentence, and his correction used MAE. However, the correction did not capture the same grammatical pattern of the example provided (“I be on the bus”) that implied a habitual action. George did not offer a correction to “I be on the bus,” but he attempted to identify exactly what was wrong with the phrase. George knew that the use of language in the example, “I be on the bus,” was not MAE and therefore determined that the speaker’s use of language in the example was incorrect. However, even though George knew “I be on the bus” differed from what he considered to be the right use of language, George was unable to correctly identify the ways the AAE phrase “I be on the bus” differed from MAE grammatical structures George perceived were “the right use of language.” “I be on the bus” does not have three negatives in the sentence as George explained in his response to the writing prompt. George and Jackson perceived “I be on the bus” was not a correct use of language, and as a result, attempted to provide “corrections” based on their perceptions of how the phrase would be voiced in MAE.

One African American student who provided a written response to the prompt about “I be on the bus” suggested that the phrase was wrong, but speakers had the freedom to make their own decisions. In her written response, Rebecca (class one) wrote that “I be on the bus” was “not right” (see Table 4.4). Even though Rebecca expressed disapproval of “I be on the bus,” she also

expressed that speakers were free to determine how they want to use English. Rebecca said, “If that’s how you talk, then that’s how you talk,” which acknowledged her acceptance of the differences in how speakers used English and that a designation of “right” or “wrong” did not matter if the speaker was set in his or her use of a non-mainstream dialects. Rebecca’s comment supports a Standard English language ideology that non-mainstream dialects are not “right.” Additionally, Rebecca’s comment, “If that’s how you talk, then that’s how you talk,” implies that a speaker’s use of a non-mainstream dialect cannot be easily changed just because another person designates the speaker’s language as “right” or “wrong” and is implicitly connected to the speaker’s identity.

Standard English language ideology was observed most often in students’ written responses, but classroom observations of students’ reports of their use of AAE did not reflect Standard English language ideology. Whether students self-reported using the AAE habitual *be* pattern or not, students still described AAE as being inherently wrong when compared to MAE in their written responses. When students were asked on day three if they used habitual *be* in a pattern similar to AAE (e.g. “You be like ten minutes late saying your line for the spoken word poem; and My mother goes to work, so she be at the office”), two out of nine African American students (Amelia and Jeremy in class two) raised their hands. Amelia self-reported using the AAE pattern of habitual *be*, and she wrote, “But I would say it’s wrong even though I can understand it” (see Table 4.4). Jeremy self-reported using habitual *be* in a way similar to the AAE examples provided during the curricular activities, but he initially described a speaker who says “I be on the bus” as someone who might be from a foreign country and still learning English (see Table 4.4) in his written response. Amelia and Jeremy’s reports of using AAE during the study were in conflict with their perceptions of AAE as “wrong” and “foreign,” but the students

did not apply their perceptions of AAE to their own uses of AAE. Amelia and Jeremy’s Standard English language ideologies in their written responses were used to describe other speakers of AAE, but it is unclear how they perceived their own uses of AAE that were expressed verbally.

Table 4.4 “I be on the bus” – African American Students’ Responses on Day Three

Student	Response	Class Period
Aidan	If a person says “I be on the bus” I would say their language is in the middle because to me it depends on what [who] that person is talking to like that will understand. But I would say it’s wrong even though I can understand it, it’s not proper English. I would correct their saying. [written response]	2
Amelia	I wouldn’t mind if someone said “I be on the bus.” Unless I’m really trying to be proper, I will maybe correct it because that’s who I am. But not very often. It’s not wrong or right. Language isn’t taught just so you can be told you’re wrong. You make language your own. It’s how you communicate and relate. [written response]	2
George	If someone said “I be on the bus,” I would say that their use of language is wrong. I don’t think that’s right grammar because it’s not using the right words in the sentence. There are 3 negatives in a sentence. If someone said that I would correct them. I would give them an idea of how to say the sentence. [written response]	2

Table 4.4 (continued)

Jackson	It's not proper English. It should be "I am on the bus" or "I will be on the bus." [verbal response]	2
Jeremy	If a person says "I be on the bus" to me I would think they are foreign. Or I would think they are using slang. Or there is something they should learn. [written response]	2
Rebecca	I mean it's not like.. I mean.. I mean like if it were like ME hearing it, I wouldn't say anything. Like I'd just be like "oh, ok." But in my mind I would say "that's not right." But if that's the way you talk, then that's the way you talk. [verbal response]	1

In summary, African American students in my study voiced Standard English language ideologies in multiple ways. African American students had a range of perceptions about the existence of AAE, but many of the students' responses about AAE included Standard English language ideologies that positioned AAE as substandard when compared to MAE, especially in students' writing samples. AAE was often described as relative to MAE. Examples of the inherent correctness of MAE were observed most often in students' written responses to writing prompts (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4). Six out of nine African American students who submitted written responses or gave verbal responses when they participated in the dialect curriculum described AAE as relative to MAE. One explanation for students' perceptions of AAE is students might have internalized code switching in a way that assigned hierarchical value to dialects as *incorrect* and *correct* (Canagarajah, 2006; Young, 2009).

4.2.2.1 African American Students and Respect

Many African American students perceived code switching as a way to show respect to the listener being addressed. For example, on day eight of the study in class two, during a classroom observation that followed the viewing of segments from *American Tongues*, Amelia described her decision to use AAE or MAE based on the amount of respect she has for the person. Amelia also identified the relationship as another determining factor of choosing a mainstream or non-mainstream dialect. After watching *American Tongues* on day eight, Amelia explained:

I think the way you talk depends on how much respect you have. Like their importance. Like the way I'm talking with you now, I'd talk to with like ANYONE. But like the way like if you're talking to like THE PRESIDENT, I think you would use more proper [English] unless you're like super close to the President. So it depends on the relationship.

In her example of speaking to the President of the United States, Amelia described the conversation as warranting more respect, and therefore the speaker should choose a mainstream dialect such as MAE instead of a non-mainstream dialect. During the time of the study, the current President was Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States. However, Amelia also explained the relationship as an important factor in a person's decision to use a mainstream or non-mainstream dialect. On day three of the study, Amelia said that she would tell her grandmother *He at the store* if her grandmother were to ask for Amelia's cousin. Interpersonal politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) suggests that the familiarity of the interlocutors is among the factors that determine how speakers might vary their uses of language. For Amelia, it was not a sign of disrespect to use AAE to speak to her grandmother, because the relationship between Amelia and her grandmother determined that AAE can be used and does

not suggest the speaker is being disrespectful. Similarly, Amelia perceived that if the speaker had a close relationship with President Obama, then it would not be disrespectful to address the President using non-mainstream dialect. Amelia's reasoning about talking to Barack Obama seemed to value relationship status more than racial connection. This finding is similar to Godley & Escher (2012) who found that some African American students in their study expressed detailed reasons for their code switching decisions that included code switching from AAE to MAE as a way to show respect to elders.

Amelia also questioned the assumption that using a non-mainstream dialect was equivalent to being disrespectful, especially when addressing an adult. During a classroom observation after viewing the English *Do You Speak American?* video on day seven, Amelia asked, "Speaking of respect, like if you speak respectfully, don't you think the non-mainstream [dialects] would like still be in your vocabulary? Like *Excuse me ma'am, I ain't gonna do this for you.*" In this example, Amelia used non-mainstream dialects in a way that she determined to be respectful, therefore questioning the assumption that non-mainstream dialects do not show a speaker respect. Mrs. Dunston responded to Amelia's question and explained that Amelia's example might be considered acceptable in the South. Mrs. Dunston gave the following example of what Amelia's example might sound like in the North: "Excuse me ma'am, I am not going to do this for you." Mrs. Dunston's interpretation of an acceptable phrase from a Northern speaker took out the word "ain't." By omitting "ain't," Mrs. Dunston's response suggests that "ain't" is not a way that a speaker might show another person (presumably an adult woman) respect. Amelia's question about using AAE to address an adult in a respectful manner suggests that she was beginning to reconsider the dichotomy of *proper* and *improper uses of language* that she previously perceived. Amelia was the only African American student who raised this point about

respect, but Kenneth (multiracial student) also raised this point and will be discussed in a later section.

Unlike Amelia, Alex (class one) provided a different perception of respect when he described respect for the speaker and not respect for the listeners. Alex described respect for listeners in his written response to the writing prompt on day eight of the study that asked, *Is MAE more valued more than non-mainstream dialects*. Alex described respect for the speaker as a factor that made MAE more valuable and appealing than non-mainstream dialects (see Table 4.2). Alex wrote, “Mainstream can get you a lot more jobs and people will respect you for the way you talk to them.” Alex perceived that using MAE in an interview would warrant more respect from the listeners for the speaker, presumably because the listeners are speakers of MAE. Alex’s comment also suggests that being respected by the listeners when using MAE was more important than showing respect for the listeners as Amelia suggested in her response during the classroom observation on day eight. Alex offered a unique perspective that differed from his classmate. Alex perceived that getting respect from the listeners was the goal of MAE, a perception that differed from Amelia who perceived that showing the listeners respect was the goal of MAE.

In summary, Alex and Amelia’s views of respect differed, but both students’ responses implied that they were aware of how and when to code switch. In Mrs. Dunston’s interview, she expressed that code switching was a skill that students needed to master. However, there were limited observation of students using non-mainstream dialects verbally or in students’ writing samples, and this suggests that students in the study knew how to code switch (Godley et al., 2007) even though Mrs. Dunston perceived that this was a skill that students needed to master.

4.2.2.2 African American Students and Bonds/Connections with Others

AAE was described by two African American students as a way to bond and connect with other speakers of the dialect both racially and linguistically. African American students' connections between AAE and bonds and connections with other speakers were observed in students' written responses on day two of the study to the prompt that asked *Is there such a language as African American English?* Responses to this prompt were described in an earlier section in this chapter. However, this section will revisit written responses from two out of six African American students (class two) who responded to the prompt because they described how AAE use builds bonds and connections with other speakers of the dialect. In a written response to the prompt, Aidan wrote, "It be different it tells a story to people that understand or touch what they are saying" (see Table 4.3). In his written response, Aidan used the habitual *be* feature and described using AAE as a way to communicate with other speakers of AAE. Aidan's response also suggests that he perceived that AAE was used to communicate in a way that MAE did not allow. Aidan expressed that when speakers used AAE, it was assumed that there was a bond among the speakers because only another AAE speaker would understand the speaker. Amelia responded to the same prompt (see Table 4.3): "The way we talk can't always be understood and African Americans can understand." Amelia's response shows that she assumed all African Americans are also AAE speakers. Amelia expressed that using AAE reinforced the racial connection among African Americans. This finding is similar to Kinloch's (2010) study that found the participants believed AAE was a part of a shared cultural practice among African Americans. Similarly, Aidan and Amelia attempted to describe the racial connection between African American speakers of AAE as a unique cultural practice.

For two out of nine African American students in the study, non-mainstream dialects provided speakers with an opportunity to connect to one another through the dialects. This connection was linguistic and racial. Additionally, the connection was important because in the examples, the shared use of AAE also suggested membership into the group. Speaking a non-mainstream dialect in the presence of other others who also spoke the non-mainstream dialect meant that the speaker was accepted among other speakers as a member of the group.

4.2.3 African American Students and Pittsburgh Dialect

Pittsburgh dialect use was not self-reported as widely as AAE among African American students. An example of this was observed during a classroom observation during the dialect curriculum activity on day five of the study where we discussed Pittsburgh dialect. Three out of nine African American students self-reported that they heard or were familiar with patterns of Pittsburgh dialect, and two out of nine African American students self-reported using Pittsburgh dialect. Alex (class one) and Jeremy (class two) both self-reported that they heard the term “yinz” before, but neither student indicated that they used the term “yinz.” Alex did not specify where he heard it, but Jeremy responded “My baseball coach uses it.” Jeremy did not self-report that he used the Pittsburgh dialect phrase “yinz,” but he was familiar with the term and was aware of its meaning. Alex and Rebecca (class one) indicated that they heard examples of how the copula is used in Pittsburgh dialect with phrases similar to “The car needs washed” and “The dog wants petted.” Alex (class one) and Jeremy were the only two out of nine African American students who self-reported using Pittsburgh dialect during the day five dialect curriculum activity on Pittsburgh dialect. Alex self-reported that he said “Pixburgh” instead of the MAE form “Pittsburgh.” Jeremy did not specifically mention a pattern or feature of Pittsburgh dialect that he

used, but he raised his hand to acknowledge that he thought he speaks a dialect as the result of living in close proximity to speakers of Pittsburgh dialect. There were few examples of African American students self-reporting their uses of Pittsburgh dialect, but African American students' experiences hearing features of the dialect suggested that the students interacted often with Pittsburgh dialect speakers.

More African American students self-reported being speakers of AAE than Pittsburgh dialect. This finding supports existing research that suggests many African Americans perceive Pittsburgh dialect as a characteristic of White speakers, not African American speakers (Eberhart, 2009).

Additionally, African American students did not apply Standard English language ideologies to their descriptions of Pittsburgh dialect the same way they used Standard English language ideologies to describe AAE. This suggests that African American students perceived that Pittsburgh dialect was inherently *correct* in the same way students perceived that MAE was inherently correct, and both dialects are often associated with White speakers instead of African American speakers.

4.3 WHITE STUDENTS AND AAE

Not all White students were in agreement that AAE exists. Examples of the varied responses were observed in students' written responses to the writing prompt on day two of the study that asked, *Is there such a language as African American English*. Three out of four White students provided a written response to the writing prompt, and all students who responded were in class two (see Table 4.5). Michael and Steven agreed that AAE existed. In Michael's explanation, he

wrote, “If there was only one language, life wouldn’t be exciting.” Michael perceived that the existence of AAE contributed to diversity. Steven wrote, “Back in the 1800’s, when the slaves had to learn English, they have shortened words and has [*sic*] created a new language.” Steven attempted to provide a historical context for how the non-mainstream dialect came into existence. Unlike Michael and Steven, Harper was adamant that AAE did not exist, because her understanding of the term, AAE, was that it implied racial profiling of a person based on how they speak. For Harper, AAE and “talking Black” were synonymous with and implied racial stereotyping. White students’ written responses to the prompt indicated that there was not universal agreement about the existence of AAE.

Table 4.5 White students’ Day 2 responses to: “Is there such a language as African American English?”

Student	Written Response
Harper	I do not think there’s a language called African American English because one can not talk black or talk Asian or talk White. It’s a way you were taught to talk. You can’t say someone’s trying to act black or trying to be white. It’s the stereotype card people use most often.
Michael	I do believe there is an African American English language because it holds those people together. If there was only one language, life wouldn’t be exciting.

Table 4.5 (continued)

Steven	<p>I believe there is an African American English. Back in the 1800's, when the slaves had to learn English, they have shortened words and has [<i>sic</i>] created a new language. "Y'all need to get dem" is an example of African American English. The language has been passed down culture to generation and so on.</p>
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White students also had different perceptions about the appropriateness of patterns within AAE. On day three of the study, students were given the following writing prompt: *If a person said, "I be on the bus," how would you describe their use of language? Explain.* Three out of four White students responded to the writing prompt, and all three students were in class two. Steven expressed that "I be on the bus" was a person's own way of communicating and identified examples of his own use of non-mainstream dialects (see Table 4.6). Steven's response implied that language is personal, and, therefore, not connected to racial or other group identities. On the other hand, Harper described "I be on the bus" as "improper" because it differed from the way she spoke (MAE). Harper gave alternatives to how she would say "I be on the bus," all of which used MAE. Harper was the only White student who described AAE as *improper* with the assumption that MAE was *proper*. Michael did not respond to the prompt but wrote that he perceived that people were judged for the way they speak. Michael identified characteristics that might be ascribed to a speaker based on how their use of language is perceived by others.

Table 4.6 “I be on the bus” – White Students’ Day Three Responses

Student	Written Response
Harper	If someone says I be on the bus, I would describe their use of language as improper because I don’t talk that way. I would say I ride that bus, or I rode that bus instead.
Michael	You could seem truthful, powerful, weak, smart, and much more just by how you sound.
Steven	I believe it is okay to say words like I’ma and say I be on the bus. It is that person’s own way of speaking. I always say I’ma go get dem or I be doin’ dat. It’s just faster and in your own language. I stutter a lot, so I have to abbreviate words I say. It is in my own way of speaking, and so is it to other people.

None of the three White students who responded to the writing prompt on day two made comments that connected AAE to African American speakers of the dialect. Harper’s response on day two expressed that AAE was a racial stereotype that was similar to “talking Black,” but none of her (or other White students’) other verbal or written responses specifically mentioned race. This finding is similar to Godley, Reaser, & Moore (2015) who found that White teachers avoided making specific connections between a speaker’s use of dialect and racial identification. This avoidance was observed again when White students described the bonds and connections among speakers of non-mainstream dialects.

4.3.1 White Students and Bonds/Connections with Others

Similar to the way White students avoided acknowledging race explicitly in their descriptions of AAE (see Table 4.5 and Table 4.6), White students also did not acknowledge race as a part of the bond among speakers of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE. In a previous section in this chapter, I described White students' written responses to the day two writing prompt that asked students if AAE existed. Three out of four White students responded to the prompt, and Michael (class two) wrote, "I do believe there is an African American English language because it holds those people together." Michael expressed that AAE existed and that the non-mainstream dialect helped its speakers to bond and connect with one another. Additionally, Michael explained that AAE held particular significance for speakers of the non-mainstream dialect and therefore created a bond among its speakers. Though he did not specify a particular group when he wrote "those people," his response suggests that he was referring to African American speakers of AAE. Michael's written response that AAE was specific to African Americans is similar to African American students who expressed that AAE told a story and was often not understood by speakers who were not African American.

Harper also did not make a connection between AAE and African American speakers of the dialect. On day seven of the study during a classroom observation when students viewed the *Do You Speak American?* video clip, Harper said, "Dialect are like ways to hold a strong bond with others and there's a lot of groups in the country like some people that speak just like you and like breaking that...it's like breaking an entire nation." Harper broadly used the term "groups" instead of giving a specific racial group example. Even though Harper perceived that non-mainstream dialects such as AAE were "improper" on day three of the study (see Table 4.6), she also expressed that non-mainstream dialects made their speakers feel connected to one

another through their particular use of English on day seven. Breaking the bond meant forcing speakers of non-mainstream dialects to only use mainstream dialects. Harper perceived that breaking the bond would minimize the closeness among the speakers who were originally bonded through non-mainstream dialects, but she also made no mention of race in her verbal response. Similar to Godley, Reaser, and Moore's (2015) findings, White students in the current study were able to describe the ways regional dialects connected speakers, but the descriptions did not include indicators of race.

It is possible that White students' avoidance of race in their descriptions of the bond and connection among non-mainstream dialect speakers was their attempt to maintain a neutral stance out of fear of offending African American students or multiracial students. The participants in the study were predominantly African American and multiracial. White students' avoidance of direct comments about race could have been an attempt to not single out a particular racial group (e.g. African Americans) in their comments about AAE. This finding is supported by existing research that suggests discussions about race are often perceived as taboo in the classroom (Evans, Avery, & Pedersen, 1999).

4.3.2 White Students and Pittsburgh Dialect

No White students voiced negative views of Pittsburgh dialect or specific features of that dialect. On day five, students were presented with an example of the way the copula is sometimes used in Pittsburgh dialect (e.g. "The dog wants petted" and "The car needs washed"). None of the four White students in the study self-reported that they were speakers of Pittsburgh dialect, but two out of four White students self-reported that they were familiar with a feature of the non-mainstream dialect. None of the White students were observed using Pittsburgh dialect during

the study. Additionally, none of the White students self-reported using the copula similar to the way it is sometimes used in Pittsburgh dialect, but Michael raised his hand to self-report that he had heard a phrase similar to “The dog wants petted” before. In another example, we discussed the word, “yinz,” as an example of a lexicon specific to Pittsburgh dialect. Harper did not raise her hand to identify using “yinz,” but she explained the term to one of her African American classmates who was confused by “yinz.” Harper explained, “It’s like saying, ‘Yinz guys wanna go out and get some ice cream?’ Like it’s you guys. Like you...everyone.” Harper’s knowledge of the term suggested that she has heard “yinz” before, possibly in her home or community. Neither of the two White students who responded provided a critique of Pittsburgh dialect even though both students were familiar with a feature of the dialect.

Even though two White students were familiar with features of Pittsburgh dialect, Standard English language ideologies were not observed in White students’ descriptions of Pittsburgh dialect. Harper, who perceived AAE negatively, did not have the same negative perceptions of Pittsburgh dialect. In descriptions of AAE, Harper used the term *improper* (See Table 4.6). However, negative descriptors were not used by any of the White students who submitted writing samples or participated in classroom discussions in connection to Pittsburgh dialect. One explanation for this finding is that Pittsburgh dialect is specific to Western Pennsylvania and surrounding regions and is often connected to White speakers (Eberhardt, 2009). Even though features of AAE are used by speakers of different backgrounds, AAE is most often connected to African American speakers.

4.4 MULTIRACIAL STUDENTS AND AAE

There were limited responses from multiracial students about the existence of AAE, but two out of three Multiracial students who responded to the prompt did not perceive that AAE existed. On day two of the study, students were asked, *Is there such a language as African American English?* Three out of seven multiracial students responded to the writing prompt (see Table 4.7). Two multiracial students (Kenneth and Samantha) responded that AAE does not exist. Kenneth wrote, “No, there is no such thing as African American English. Just are you a different religion or culture does not mean you speak a different way than everyone else.” An interpretation of Kenneth’s written response is he perceived that differences among speakers such as religion and culture were clear, but those differences did not suggest that a speaker’s use of English could also be categorized as different as a result of the speaker’s background. Similar to White students’ responses, Kenneth did not mention a specific race in his response. Unlike Kenneth and Samantha, Kelsey expressed that AAE exists, but Kelsey indicated “It [AAE] is a dialect.” One interpretation of Kelsey’s insistence that AAE is a dialect and not a language is that Kelsey perceived the designation of AAE as a language suggested a higher level of status and acceptance in comparison to the designation of AAE as a dialect (Spears, 2001; Mufwene, 2001). Even though Kelsey’s written response focused on why she considered AAE to be a dialect and not a language, she was the only multiracial student who acknowledged the existence of AAE.

Table 4.7 Multiracial students' Day 2 responses to "Is there such a language as African American English?"

Student	Written Response
Kelsey	There is not a language called African American English. It is a dialect. It is a dialect because it is a form of English, just like Pittsburghese when you say read up. It is just a way you speak a language. If I say yall need to calm down, is saying that sentence a different language? Not, it is not. So why should African American English be a language. Dialect isn't a language. It's the way you speak.
Kenneth	No, there is no such thing as African American English. Just are you a different religion or culture does not mean you speak a different way than everyone else. You speak that the way you write is what teacher say and I think that true [sic]. This is why I think there is no such thing as African American English.
Samantha	I don't think there's an African American English language.

Several multiracial students perceived that AAE was not a correct use of language, and this perception was similar to African American students and one White student. On day three of the study, students responded to the following writing prompt: *If a person said "I be on the bus," how would you describe their use of language?* Five out of seven multiracial students responded to the writing prompt, and four of the responses to the prompt suggested that this use of language was *foreign, wrong, not correct, or slang* (see Table 4.8). In his written response, Kenneth wrote, "Some people come from different countries like they don't know how to speak English." Kenneth perceived that a speaker who said "I be on the bus" might be from a different country or possibly still learning how to speak English. Kenneth's perception was that the speaker had an

English language deficit and still needed to acquire the skills of MAE. Similarly, Pria wrote, “If a person talks in a way that is not correct to me, like ‘I be on the bus,’ I would think that they are not so good at using language.” Multiracial students who perceived that “I be on the bus” was not an appropriate use of language made assumptions about the speaker’s level of English proficiency.

Not all multiracial students perceived that “I be on the bus” was the wrong use of language. Two multiracial students who responded to the day three prompt expressed different perceptions. Joseph wrote that “I be on the bus” was not wrong because “That is the way they speak” (see Table 4.8). Joseph’s written response suggests that a speaker’s use of a dialect such as AAE was simply the way the speaker used English. Kelsey concluded that it was more acceptable if a speaker said “I be on the bus” verbally. Kelsey wrote, “On paper, I would say it was wrong, but if it was verbally, I would think it is acceptable.” Kelsey’s explanation suggests that she perceived a hierarchy between written AAE and verbal AAE, and this hierarchy designated verbal AAE as the more appropriate use of language when compared to written AAE. Even though Kelsey used Standard English language ideologies in her response when she described AAE as “incorrect grammar” and “wrong” in her written response, Kelsey was the only student to express a hierarchy between verbal and written AAE.

Kelsey did not explain her response further, but acknowledged the ways non-mainstream dialects such as AAE are used in different contexts. This finding is similar to the New London Group (1996) who assert that multiliteracies are the nuanced ways of communicating that include the different dialects of English. Kelsey’s perception suggests that AAE was appropriate verbally as a communicative practice, but Kelsey perceived AAE’s presence in written form as problematic. Kelsey’s explanation of the appropriateness of verbal AAE also suggests that

Kelsey recognized verbal AAE as a “big D” discourse (Gee, 2005; 2012) that allows speakers to skillfully interact with other speakers of the dialect. Even though most of multiracial students’ written responses about AAE suggested that they perceived the dialect as inherently wrong and inferior to MAE, two multiracial students, Kelsey and Joseph, expressed perceptions that disagreed with the Standard English language ideologies expressed by others.

Two multiracial students were critical of AAE, but they did not apply their critiques of AAE to their own uses of AAE. Two out of seven multiracial students, Pria and Samantha, self-reported using the AAE pattern habitual *be* when asked following the class activity on day three. Students were given the following sentences on day three of the study as examples of habitual *be* in AAE: *You be like ten minutes late saying your part for the spoken word poem; My mother goes to work, so she be at the office.* Pria and Samantha (class two) raised their hands to self-report using the habitual *be* pattern in a way similar to the examples provided in class. However, before Pria and Samantha indicated that they used habitual *be*, both students used Standard English language ideologies in their written responses in their descriptions of a speaker who said “I be on the bus” (see Table 4.8). Pria expressed that a speaker who said “I be on the bus” was “not so good as using language,” but she also expressed that the speaker might be from a different place (regionally or internationally). This suggests that Pria perceived “I be on the bus” as a phrase that might be used by a speaker who is not very familiar with MAE (or perhaps the English language altogether), and this perception is similar to an African American student in class two (Jeremy) (see Table 4.4). Similarly, Samantha expressed, “I be on the bus would mean slack [slang] to me.” Samantha’s description of “I be on the bus” as slang suggests that the use of language was outside of her perceptions of how language should be used. This finding is similar to African American and White students whose linguistic perceptions were reflective of the

principle of linguistic subordination (Lippi-Green, 2012; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006) which suggests that dialects of socially dominant groups were better than dialects of socially subordinate groups.

Even though Pria and Samantha self-reported that they used habitual *be*, both students used Standard English language ideologies in their descriptions of the phrase. Additionally, similar to responses among two African American students in class two (Amelia and Jeremy), Pria and Samantha did not apply their descriptions of speakers of AAE to their own uses of the AAE habitual *be* pattern. For both African American and multiracial students, written responses suggested that AAE was linguistically inferior, but verbal responses during the classroom observations suggested that students were users of patterns of AAE and included fewer negative perceptions of AAE.

Table 4.8 I be on the bus – Multiracial Students’ Responses

Student	Response
Joseph	I don’t think “I be on the bus” is the wrong language. That is the way they speak. You might not sound the same, but you can still understand the person. [written response]
Kenneth	Some people come from different countries like they don’t know how to speak English, so they might say “I be on the bus.” [verbal response]

Table 4.8 (continued)

Kelsey	<p>If someone says something in incorrect grammar, I sometimes correct him/her. If someone says I be on the bus, I would say his/her use of language is wrong, as you are supposed to say I am on the bus or I was on the bus. I think his/her use of language is how they want to use it. On paper, I would say it was wrong, but if it was verbally, I would think it is acceptable. You speak the way you want to speak. Because it is their dialect or way of saying something. If everyone talked prim and proper nothing would be interesting. [written response]</p>
Samantha	<p>I be on the bus would mean slack [slang] to me. [written response]</p>
Pria	<p>If a person talks in a way that is not correct to me, like “I be on the bus,” I would think that they are not so good at using language. I wouldn’t say they do it on purpose. I would say they’re not so good at using language, or they’re new around here. [verbal response]</p>

In summary, multiracial students provided a range of responses about AAE that included negating the dialect’s existence, using Standard English language ideologies to describe AAE, but also expressing understanding and acceptance of AAE. Even though four out of seven multiracial students self-reported using AAE (though only two out of seven multiracial students were observed using AAE during study), multiracial students had very strong opinions about non-mainstream dialects and speakers of those dialects. Descriptions of AAE in four multiracial students’ written responses included *wrong* and *foreign* to describe AAE, but multiracial students did not specifically apply those terms to their own use of AAE. It is likely that previous class discussions with Mrs. Dunston about the importance of code switching prior to the study sent the

message to students that MAE was more appropriate in formal settings such as the classroom and AAE should be used in informal environments (e.g. conversing with friends). It seemed that many multiracial students and African American students internalized code switching to mean that non-mainstream dialects such as AAE were *wrong* and *not correct* because MAE was to be utilized in professional and formal settings (Canagarajah, 2006; Young, 2009). Also among multiracial students' responses were perceptions that included understanding and acceptance of AAE that suggested two multiracial students were less critical of AAE than their other multiracial classmates who voiced negative perceptions. It is possible that there was no clear pattern among multiracial students because of the small number of participants in the study.

4.4.1 Multiracial Students and Respect

Showing respect to listeners by using MAE was expressed by one multiracial student. An example of this was observed on day one of the study when students were given the following writing prompt: *Describe a time when you spoke differently from people around you or a time when you heard a different dialect spoken.* Kenneth (class two) described code switching as a way a speaker can show respect to a listener. Kenneth expressed that he spoke differently around his friends than he spoke around teachers or other adults, and Amelia (African American) expressed a similar perception in her explanation of code switching to show respect to adults, especially adults in power. In response to the prompt, Kenneth wrote, "A time I spoke differently from someone else is at school. I would speak different then I would speak to teacher. For teachers I would give them more respect than I would speak with [*sic*] my friends." Kenneth did not describe himself as an AAE speaker in the study, and he did not identify using any of the patterns of AAE discussed during the curricular activities. However, Kenneth acknowledged the

importance of speaking to teachers differently than the way he would address his friends as a sign of respect. Kenneth's written response suggests that he did not perceive that his use of English with his friends was appropriate to use with teacher because his use of English would be perceived as disrespectful.

4.4.2 Multiracial Students and Pittsburgh Dialect

Pittsburgh dialect was not criticized by African American and White students, but one multiracial student used a Standard English language ideology in her description of the dialect. On day five of the study, we discussed Pittsburgh dialect as a part of the dialect curriculum. Two out of seven multiracial students were observed self-reporting that they used a feature of Pittsburgh dialect. Kenneth and Samantha (class two) both said they used the word "Pixburgh" (Pittsburgh dialect) instead of "Pittsburgh" (MAE). Kelsey and Kenneth reported hearing "nebbly" (Pittsburgh dialect for "a nosey person") before, but neither student used the word. Samantha reported hearing "yinz" outside of school. When asked if she used "yinz," Samantha responded, "I don't use yinz. It just sounds weird." Even though Samantha was familiar with patterns of Pittsburgh dialect and used the word, "Pixburgh," Samantha determined that the Pittsburgh dialect word "yinz" was outside of the norm for her. The norm for Samantha was MAE, and the Standard English language ideologies Samantha used positioned MAE as normal over non-mainstream dialects such as Pittsburgh dialect. The same number of multiracial students and African American students self-reported using Pittsburgh dialect (see Table 4.1), but Samantha's (multiracial) description of Pittsburgh dialect as "weird" was the only observation of a critique of Pittsburgh dialect. Throughout the study, critiques of Pittsburgh dialect were limited in comparison to the ways students critiqued AAE.

4.5 SUMMARY

African American and multiracial students' responses were similar in their description of non-mainstream dialects. Students from all racial backgrounds voiced Standard English language ideologies, but Standard English language ideologies were observed most among African American and multiracial students. Through previous discussions about code switching with their teacher before the study, it is likely that African American and multiracial students internalized code switching to represent *correct* and *incorrect* uses of English (Young et al., 2013). Although AAE was perceived negatively by students across all racial groups in the study, Pittsburgh dialect was only critiqued by one multiracial student (Samantha) who expressed that Pittsburgh dialect was "weird." The lack of critique of Pittsburgh dialect suggests that its presence as a regional dialect made the non-mainstream dialect less likely to be scrutinized in comparison to a non-mainstream dialect like AAE that is often connected to African Americans.

There was limited mention of race from all participants in the study. African American students (two) were the only students to comment on the racial connection between AAE and African American speakers of the dialect, and no multiracial students made any mention of race in their responses. White students avoided making specific comments about race in their descriptions of AAE and the way the dialect bonds and connects people. White students' avoidance of race was more observable than multiracial students. The one multiracial student who provided a response where race could have easily been mentioned (Kenneth) identified partially as African American during a classroom observation at the end of the dialect curriculum. White students' avoidance suggested that they were not comfortable mentioning a race that they did not identify with, and as a result attempted to remain neutral and not offend students who were African American.

5.0 STUDENTS' SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS SHAPED BY THE CURRICULUM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, I address my second research question: How were students' sociolinguistic perceptions shaped by the curriculum? The primary sources of data used to address this research question were classroom observations during discussions and students' writing samples, although I also draw on students' responses to an interview question that asked students about their perceptions of their learning from the curricular activities in the study. Most of the data analyzed to answer this research question are students' written and verbal responses collected on day six through the end of the study when students responded to interview questions because activities and questions addressed on these days included code switching, language variation, power, and identity (see Table 3.1 in chapter three). Additionally, writing samples from the day four activities were also used to address the research question because many students noted a connection between identity and speakers' dialects used in their responses.

Before the study began, I thought that I would have a lot of discussion data from the students. However, during the study, there was very little discussion among students. Instead, much of the discussion was focused around my or Mrs. Dunston's asking students questions and waiting for students to respond. Also, the teacher shared a lot more information about her

experiences and perceptions during the study than I thought she would share, and her sharing might have biased some of the students' perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects.

In order to answer my research question and determine students' sociolinguistic perceptions, I looked for sociolinguistic principles in the classroom discussions, student writing prompts, and student interviews related to language variation, power, and identity (Chisholm & Godley, 2011). These sociolinguistic principles and research include the validity of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE (Labov, 1972), the ways language is used in different contexts and reflects different identities (Heath, 1983; Smitherman, 1977), and the ways language is used to form negative and positive attitudes based on the way people speak (Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2007; Heath, 1983). Additionally, for each sociolinguistic topic, emergent themes were created to capture patterns in students' responses in connection to each sociolinguistic topic (see Table 5.1). All students in the study were MAE speakers, so descriptors of students' linguistic identities only highlight students' additional use of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect. For some students who only self-reported speaking MAE, their linguistic identity is described only as MAE. Similar to the previous chapter, the findings in this chapter are reported according to students' racial identities to show similarities and differences in responses within and across racial groups.

One major finding across the data sources was that several African American students who included stereotypical remarks or did not acknowledge the connection between dialects and identity on day four of the study did not include similar remarks on day six of the study. By day six of the study, several African American students expressed more explicit connections between a speaker's use of a dialect and the speaker's identity.

Another significant finding was the difference between African American/multiracial and White students' views that emerged in some specific aspects of dialect curriculum topics. Several African American and multiracial students expressed that speakers should not have to be linguistically accommodating and questioned constructs of power inherent in attitudes about dialects. Several White students expressed that it was the speaker who should be linguistically accommodating and change their use of non-mainstream dialects. In the previous chapter, I described how White students did not contribute to conversations about race. In the data analyzed in this chapter, I found similar trends of White students not making explicit connections between a speaker's racial identity and use of a dialect. Additionally, none of the White students contributed to the discussion when students were asked to identify sources of power or the sources of many linguistic perceptions.

The final major finding was that several students reported in their one-on-one interviews that they learned about the differences among dialects. Students did not include specific examples of the differences. Additionally, students did not report in their one-on-one interviews that they learned about power, but some students posed rhetorical questions about power in relation to dialects as a topic that they would like to explore.

Table 5.1 Main Sociolinguistic Themes in Students' Engagement in the Curriculum

Topic	Themes
Adjusting language for audience and purpose	-People should not have to change the way they speak -The way people speak is diverse and unique from person to person -How you speak is who you are/where you come from -People should change the way they speak

Table 5.1 (continued)

Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MAE is more valuable than non-mainstream dialects -Society/White men have power -Questioning who determines hierarchy among dialects
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dialects determine place of origin or geographical location -Dialects determine who you are -Dialects determine level of intelligence/opportunities in life

5.2 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE WAYS SPEAKERS ADJUST LANGUAGE FOR AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

African American and multiracial students' sociolinguistic perceptions were shaped by learning about the history of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect, specifically the ways many students' geographic location was connected to their uses of Pittsburgh dialect. Several African American and multiracial students expressed the opinion that uniformity in speaking the English language takes away from diversity and unique differences among speakers and cited connections between dialects and the speaker's identity (see Table 5.2). On day six of the study, students responded to the following writing prompt: *Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation?* This writing prompt was presented to students the day after we discussed the history and features of Pittsburgh dialect, and many students shared that they used some of the features of the dialect. Among the nine students who responded, four out of nine African American students and three out of seven multiracial students (all students were in class

two) noted that speakers should not have to change the way that they speak if the speaker is in an environment where others speak differently. For example, Jeremy (African American) wrote, “I do not think people have to change the way they speak because it tells who they are. Also where they came from.” Jeremy made a direct connection between a speaker’s place of origin and the speaker’s use of dialects, but Jeremy’s comment also suggests he perceived a speaker’s use of dialects as a part of the speaker’s individual identity. A speaker’s place of origin and identity are a part of the speaker’s individuality—what makes the speaker different from others. Jeremy’s written comment suggests that a speaker should not have to change because the speaker’s individuality should not have to be altered to appease others who might speak differently.

In a similar example, Joseph (multiracial) also perceived that a speaker was an individual who should not be forced to change simply because a person who speaks differently suggests that the speaker change. Joseph wrote, “We all have our own voice.” An interpretation of Joseph’s written response is that a speaker’s dialect represents individuality and is not a negative characteristic. In Chisholm and Godley’s (2011) study of three bi-dialectal high school students who learned about language variation, power, and identity through small group inquiry-based discussions, the researchers found that high school students discussed language variation in more detailed ways than the middle school students in the current study. Participants in Chisholm and Godley’s study gave personal examples and used logical reasoning to describe their perceptions of the relationship between language variation and identity. Even though the middle school students in the current study were able to identify the relationship between dialects and identity, students did not make detailed connections between their own dialects and identities. It is possible students’ responses were less detailed and explicit because they were younger and just beginning to explore such dynamics in comparison to the older high school students.

Alternately, two out of four White students who responded to the prompt on day six perceived that the speaker should change his or her language variety to communicate in a new speech community. An example of this was observed in Harper's written response when she wrote, "People should still remember their 1st language even when they learn a new one." Harper's comment suggests that even though a speaker should change their use of a dialect, it was also important for the speaker to maintain their identity. A speaker's first language or dialect is a part of a speaker's identity, and speakers should aim to maintain their identities even as they code switch when communicating with others.

Steven (White) was concerned that a speaker might not get a job if the speaker did not use MAE during an interview. Steven gave the example, "y'all need to like dem other companies," as a non-mainstream dialect that might interfere with a person receiving a job, and the example, "you all need to like the other companies," as an example of a mainstream dialect that would increase a speaker's chances of getting a job. Additionally, Steven's written response suggests that a speaker could maintain their use of a non-mainstream dialect when he wrote, "You can speak the way you'd like to speak outside of your important attributes of working." However, Steven compartmentalized using a non-mainstream dialect to informal settings that were not as high stakes as a job interview. In his concluding sentence, Steven wrote, "Speaking the way you speak is fine, but change when needed for the better." Steven attempted to show tolerance for non-mainstream dialects, but his written response suggests that, similar to Harper, Steven maintained Standard English language ideologies. He suggested that non-mainstream dialects are only appropriate in low stakes environments when the speaker is at home or in their community with other speakers of non-mainstream dialects. Alternately, changing "for the better" suggests that certain environments such as job interviews are inherently "better," and

therefore the speaker should use mainstream dialects as a means of linguistic accommodation in acknowledgement of the audience (speakers of mainstream dialects) and purpose (the job interview).

This finding is similar to Godley and Escher (2012) who found that 47% of the participants in their study who were African American bi-dialectal speakers described workplace settings as places where non-mainstream dialects such as AAE should be avoided. Additionally, 71% of students in Godley and Escher’s study who described the need to use mainstream dialects in the workplace made comments specific to the interview process and not performing the job itself. In the current study, Steven also specifically referenced using mainstream dialects during the interview process, but he did not mention using mainstream dialects as essential to performing the job.

Table 5.2 Students’ Day Six Pre-Documentary Written Responses to Whether or Not a Person Should Change the Way They Speak

Student	Race	Written Response
Aidan	African American	I don’t think that people should change how they speak because it would break communicate [<i>sic</i>] or expressing you or where they come from.
Amelia	African American	I don’t think people should have to change the way they speak. The way you speak shows who you are and where you’re from. It’s not a reasonable expectation. What if the tables were turned. [<i>sic</i>] What if wrong was right you spent everyday [<i>sic</i>] listening to people trying to fix you. [<i>sic</i>] Sometimes you have to picture

Table 5.2 (continued)

		yourself in someone else's shoes.
George	African American	I think people shouldn't change the way they speak because the way you speak is where you come from, it's you. It's the way you speak. You wouldn't want people telling you ways to speak.
Harper	White	People should have to change their language so that others that speak differently understand it. People should still remember their 1 st language even when they learn a new one.
Jeremy	African American	I do not think people have to change the way they speak because it tells who they are. Also where they came from.
Joseph	Multiracial	People shouldn't have to change the way they talk. If they want to, they can. Just because you talk differently doesn't mean you have to cause other people to talk like you. We all have our own voice.
Kelsey	Multiracial	People should not have to change the way they speak. That is who they are. Why do you want to change someone because they aren't the same as you? Why do you expect people to speak the same? That's what makes us different. It's not reasonable if you keep forcing on your ways of doing something nothing would be left of the other person.
Samantha	Multiracial	I think we shouldn't change the way we speak because it will take our personality. If we change the way we are then it will effect [sic] our whole future. We can make a change in the world, but not in us. Be yourself 'cause you're the only one.

Table 5.2 (continued)

Steven	White	<p>People should learn the proper way of speaking English for the better. If that person goes to a job interview and says, “y’all need to like dem other companies” they will probably not get the job. If someone says “you all need to like the other companies,” the chances go higher. You can speak the way you’d like to speak outside of your important attributes of working. Speaking the way you speak is fine, but change when needed for the better.</p>
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In summary, four out of nine African American students and three out of seven multiracial students who responded to the prompt expressed that speakers of non-mainstream dialects should not change the way they speak. The findings suggest that African American and multiracial students advocated for speakers of non-mainstream dialects to maintain their dialect, and essentially, their identity. The curricular activities on the history and features of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect shaped students’ sociolinguistic perceptions because some African American and multiracial students expressed that individuality and identity are intertwined in a speaker’s linguistic choices. African American and multiracial students gave similar responses to each other on questions about whether or not a speaker should have to change the way they speak; there was a consistent theme of identity and a speaker’s right to not assimilate. African American and multiracial students were more concerned with a speaker’s identity and a speaker not giving up their identity than White students. One interpretation of this finding is that the African American and multiracial students who responded to the prompt considered their own uses of non-mainstream dialects and how their uses of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE were

intertwined with their identity, and as a result, was not something that could be easily changed or that students wanted to change.

Alternately, several White students expressed that speakers should change their speech depending on the speech community. The ways African American and multiracial students gave similar responses and were often unified in their opinions are similar to Paris's (2009) study that found high school speakers of AAE from underrepresented racial groups in an urban high school expressed that they had to support one another as minorities and allowed their use of non-mainstream dialects to unify them even though they were from different racial and linguistic groups. In the current study, the shared bonds of using non-mainstream dialects among members of underrepresented racial groups was observed often when students expressed their perceptions.

5.3 FEW STUDENTS EXAMINED CONSTRUCTS OF POWER

Among two students, society and White men were perceived as holders of power whom determined the hierarchy among mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. This perception was expressed by one out of nine African American students and one out of seven multiracial students on day eight of the study after viewing the HUD public service announcement on linguistic profiling and racial discrimination. Following the HUD public service announcement, I asked the class, "How is it determined that certain dialects of English are more valuable than others?" The aim of this question was to encourage students to explore more macro-level issues related to power that moved away from students' focus on their own dialects (Brown, 2006; Chisholm & Godley, 2011).

Amelia (African American) and Kelsey (multiracial) were the only students who contributed to the classroom discussion about power. Other participants listened attentively to Amelia and Kelsey's responses, but other students did not contribute to the discussion. As described in chapter three, there was not as much participation from students during the class discussions as anticipated. Much of the discussion was focused around myself or Mrs. Dunston posing questions to the students and waiting for responses. The limited participation from students was observed during discussions such as this one about power where only two students contributed.

When asked, "How was it determined that mainstream dialects are better than non-mainstream dialects?" Kelsey responded, "Society, because we are the ones that make the people, not make them but we grow each other up. We build each other up and tear each other down in society. So, everybody. It's society's fault we think this way." Kelsey identified society as the culprit for creating people who upheld that certain dialects were more valuable than others. Kelsey said, "we are the ones that make the people," implying that society is responsible for creating people and cultivating ways of thinking. Therefore, Kelsey expressed that society was also responsible for perpetuating perceptions such as mainstream dialects are better than non-mainstream dialects.

Similarly, Amelia identified society as the ones who decided that mainstream dialects were the norm, but Amelia specifically identified White men as holders of power. In the same discussion on day eight Amelia said, "I agree with Kelsey. Because in society people influence other people. And based on like routines and stuff, they'll [*sic*] want to keep the average White male mainstream routine going on. Like he's supposed to buy THIS and he speaks like THIS." Amelia explained that White men represented the norm for the way English should be used and

the norm for what people of all races and genders should strive to achieve in their lives. I asked Amelia, “Do you mean that people who determined mainstream dialects were better than non-mainstream dialects were White men and the rules about MAE relate back to White men in power?” Amelia explained, “I said that because mainstream American English. They want like, they think that the perfect image would be like, they think that the perfect image would be like the White male.” When asked to define who she was referring to when she said “they,” Amelia explained, “Society. And since people like routine and don’t like to change much, then they would take that through the years and it’s still like here today.”

Kelsey and Amelia never clearly identified who they were referring to when they said “society.” Kelsey’s use of “society” in her response suggested general populations of people who were not members of a specific race, especially since Kelsey included herself in her description of society when she said, “we make the people.” However, Amelia’s use of “society” suggested White people in power, especially when Amelia identified White men as “the perfect image” that others should strive to attain. In agreement, Mrs. Dunston added, “Yeah, they’re who are making these decisions. So, due to this, *this is the standard.*” Amelia expressed that society accepted the language of White men (mainstream dialects) as a routine that was unlikely to change since many people were comfortable with the routine. Mrs. Dunston agreed with Amelia that the dialects White men use have become the normalized standard of mainstream dialects for people of all races and backgrounds to follow. Kelsey did not specifically name a racial group, but her comment suggests that she was beginning to think of the larger power structures in place that have caused Standard English ideologies to exist and perpetuate. Amelia, however, was more specific in her description and called out White men as holders of power. Even though Amelia singled out White men as holders of power in her response, it is unclear if her response was

rooted in the knowledge of White men historically maintaining power when compared to other gender and racial groups.

Amelia and Kelsey's attempts to identify holders of power during this classroom discussion represented a unique moment during the study even though the discussion was limited to two students. This was the only time during the study when students engaged in a discussion about power and hypothesized about origins and structures of power that suggested that mainstream dialects were preferred over non-mainstream dialects. Throughout the study, it was not uncommon for Mrs. Dunston or me to ask students why non-mainstream dialects were considered "incorrect," but students often did not respond. However, day eight of the study was the first time any of the students expressed their perceptions of the constructs of power behind mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. Amelia and Kelsey were among few students from whom I was able to collect data from all sources (pre-surveys, written responses, classroom observations, interviews, and post-surveys), and classroom observations suggested that both students were active participants in class. It is possible that Amelia and Kelsey were able to discuss power in class because this was a topic that they might have discussed before either at school or a setting outside of school and were aware of constructs of power in society. It is unclear if Amelia and Kelsey's remarks were their own perceptions or if they were sharing perspectives that they might have heard from others about the origins of power and the specific ways different groups of people.

White students did not contribute to the discussion about the power structures behind the hierarchy among dialects; therefore, it was difficult to document their perceptions in response to the HUD PSA and discussion. Similar to findings from the previous chapter that described White students' avoidance of mentioning race specifically, White students avoided contributing to the

exchange above when Amelia named White men as having the power to make linguistic decisions that the rest of society follows. However, there was also noticeable silence by other participants who identified racially as African American and multiracial in class two where the exchange between Amelia and Kelsey took place. In the current example of silence from students who were also African American and multiracial, it is possible that the topic of power and Amelia's specific claim that White men were holders of power made students uncomfortable (Evans, Avery, & Pedersen, 1999). Mrs. Dunston contributed to the discussion and agreed with Amelia's perception that White men were holders of power. It is unclear how Mrs. Dunston might have engaged students in discussions about power before the study or if this study was one of few times when students were given an opportunity to consider constructs of power.

One explanation for all students' silence on the topic of power during the class discussion emerges from Mrs. Dunston's agreement with Amelia's perception that White men are in power. It is possible that students who might have had other ideas about the power structures behind the social hierarchy of dialects chose not to contribute to the conversation because Mrs. Dunston's remarks sent the message that White men in power was the only correct answer to the open-ended question. Additionally, students who may have had other opinions on the topic might not have wanted to offend those who expressed that White men were the holders of power. This finding is somewhat different from Haviland's (2008) study who found that White teachers avoided saying words in discussions about race that might be offensive to others because silence was observed in the current study by students who were African American and multiracial as well. The classroom atmosphere might have also played a role in the silence as a result of the heterogeneous setting. If students were in racially homogenous groups instead of discussing the

topic in a whole-class setting, there might have been an increase in the amount of participation across all participants.

Another explanation of White students' silence during this discussion about power is White privilege—a privilege afforded to many White people based on race that provides an advantage over other races. Peggy McIntosh (1988) explains white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 30). Such assets include not experiencing racism or linguistic discrimination in the same ways as underrepresented groups and speakers of non-mainstream dialects. A result of White privilege is often being unaware of or intentionally ignoring the ways people from underrepresented groups do not experience the same type of privilege (McIntosh, 1988). White students might not have contributed to the discussion about power because they were not aware of the ways power has historically been enacted by the White majority over underrepresented groups such as African Americans or the ways in which power has resulted in racist or discriminatory practices. Additionally, white privilege often evokes silence and avoidance because acknowledgement of privilege suggests that meritocracy does not exist (McIntosh, 1988). The philosophy of meritocracy suggests that individuals achieve power based on skill and ability. However, White privilege works in opposition to meritocracy because power that is assumed through White privilege is generally based on an individual's race instead of the individual's ability. Amelia's remarks about White men being in power and making decisions that other groups adopt as norms may not have resonated with White students because White students are members of the majority who have the power to make decisions. Therefore, it is possible that many White students had not previously thought about constructs of power since such constructs had never applied to them.

Questioning who was responsible for determining that mainstream dialects were better than non-mainstream dialects was an observable pattern in students' one-on-one interviews that took place at the end of the study. During the one-on-one interviews, I asked all twenty-one participants, "What would you like to learn more about?" One out of nine African American students and two out of seven multiracial students mentioned questioning who was the authority behind the determination that mainstream dialects are superior to non-mainstream dialects (see Table 5.3). For example, Kenneth (multiracial) said, "Who says non-mainstream English is wrong? Who says mainstream is the best? Who says *this* is wrong or *this* is right?" Kenneth posed a series of rhetorical questions that suggest he reconsidered the inherent appropriateness of MAE and Standard English language ideologies that he often adhered to and supported throughout the study. Rebecca (African American) questioned the differences between mainstream and non-mainstream dialects that supported perceptions of mainstream dialects as the preferred way to communicate. Rebecca said, "Like I just want to learn about like the whole idea behind it and why people think that mainstream dialect is so different from non-mainstream dialect. Because I think it's the same thing. It's just said differently." Rebecca's response suggests that mainstream and non-mainstream dialects both delivered messages that could be understood by listeners in spite of the surface level differences (e.g. grammatical patterns or lexicon). Rebecca's response suggests that the differences between mainstream and non-mainstream dialects were minimal, and as a result the differences were not enough for people to determine that mainstream dialects were inherently better than non-mainstream dialects. African American and multiracial students were the only participants who indicated in their one-on-one interviews that they had additional questions about how it was determined that mainstream dialects were superior to non-mainstream dialects. There was no evidence or observation of

White students attempting to question power during the interviews; this pattern may be attributed to White privilege, as described earlier in this section.

Table 5.3 Interview Responses – What Would You Like to Learn More About?

Student	Race	Example of Student Questioning Power During Interview	Class
India	Multiracial	Because like.. there's some people that don't understand you. That's how I think it become a problem. But .. How did they start speaking like that? I wanna learn like why is that a problem, like how people talk different. That's what I wanna know. How did this all happen? How did everybody start talking different?	1
Kenneth	Multiracial	Who says that non-mainstream English...like who says two plus two equals four? Who says non-mainstream English is wrong? Who says mainstream is the best? Who says <i>this</i> is wrong or <i>this</i> is right?	2
Pria	Multiracial	Like someone said in there <i>who</i> said it's right or wrong? <i>Who</i> ... like who said you're supposed to talk like this and put these words in that order?	2
Rebecca	African American	Like I just want to learn about like the whole idea behind it and why people think that mainstream dialect is so different from non-mainstream dialect. Because I think it's the same thing. It's just said differently.	1

The implications for these interview and classroom discussion data suggest that the day eight activity encouraged some African American and multiracial students (three out of sixteen) to question power in ways that they might not have questioned power before the study. Specifically, the HUD PSA video showed discrimination based on the dialects, accents, and special needs of the applicants of the apartment until the speaker used a mainstream dialect that students perceived resembled a White male speaker. It is unclear whether or not students were previously afraid to question power or if it had never occurred to students to ask questions about power.

5.4 STUDENTS' SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IDENTITY

Day five curricular activities on Pittsburgh dialect and students' acknowledgement of their use of Pittsburgh dialect shaped some students' sociolinguistic perceptions about identity. This was evidenced in the change in some students' written responses from day four to day six of the study (see Table 5.4). On day four of the study, students were given the following writing prompt to respond to before the curricular activities: *The formation of one's character ought to be everyone's chief aim. – von Goethe. Do you agree with von Goethe? How does the way someone speaks shape their character?* It was my intent to ask the students a specific question about identity and language on day four of the study, but Mrs. Dunston posted the question and students began to respond to it before changes could be made. However, students' written responses to the prompt included comments related to identity and language. On day six of the study, students responded to the following writing prompt: *Should people have to change the way they speak? Is it a reasonable expectation?* Three out of nine African American students in class two who responded to the writing prompt on day four of the study expressed different

perceptions on day six of the study. Two students (Aidan and George) changed their responses from day four when their responses included stereotypical remarks or the perception that a person's speech does not shape a speaker's identity to day six when the students acknowledged a connection between language and identity. Additionally, one student (Amelia) on day four did not perceive that a speaker's use of a dialect shaped the speaker's character, but she changed her response on day six to acknowledge a speaker's use of language as being indicative of the speaker's identity and place of origin.

An example of the change in several African American students' responses was observed in Aidan's response on day four of the study that included stereotypes in his description of the connection between dialect and identity, but Aidan did not use similar stereotypes when he described the connection between dialect and identity on day six. On day four of the study, Aidan wrote that a person's use of dialect represents "where you come from or religion or ethnicity." Aidan's response suggests a stereotype that might be perceived as limiting and determining a speaker's religion based on the speaker's use of a dialect. However, on day six of the study, Aidan wrote that when a speaker changes how he/she speaks, it interferes with "expressing you or where they come from." On day six, the day after the curricular activities on Pittsburgh dialect, Aidan expressed a connection between dialect and identity that did not include stereotyping and suggests a shift in his sociolinguistic perception.

Amelia, who did not express a connection between dialect and identity on day four at all, changed her response on day six to explicitly describe a connection. Amelia did not agree that the way a person speaks is indicative of their identity on day four of the study. In her written response to the day four prompt, Amelia explained that a speaker might use mainstream dialects ("talk proper"), but their outer appearance might not match the speaker's use of mainstream

dialects. On day four, Amelia wrote, “You could talk very proper and be one of the sloppiest, unorganized people ever. You could talk very improper and still be successful and neat.” Amelia’s explanation complicated the perception that a speaker’s use of dialects aligned to a preconceived notion of outer appearance. Amelia’s comment suggests that a speaker’s outer appearance might be perceived by others as “neat,” but a speaker’s use of a non-mainstream dialect would go against a preconceived notion that a person who dresses “neat” would not “talk very improper.” This finding is different from Baker-Bell’s (2013) and Kirkland and Jackson’s (2009) findings that many African American students perceived AAE speakers as gang-affiliated because of their outer appearance. Even though Amelia acknowledged the often-dichotomous relationship between a speaker’s use of a dialect and outer appearance, it was her perception that the relationship was actually more fluid than solid, because there were times when a speaker’s outer appearance might not align to assumptions about how the speaker used a dialect. Amelia described the connection between language and identity on day six when she wrote, “The way you speak shows who you are and where you’re from.”

By day six of the study, Amelia refined her sociolinguistic perceptions and made a more explicit connection between dialect and identity in their defense of why a speaker should not have to change the way that he or she speaks. These findings suggest some students’ sociolinguistic perceptions changed after the day five curricular activities, which encouraged students to consider their uses of Pittsburgh dialect and also how the dialect is often connected to a specific region of speakers.

Table 5.4 Change Between Students' Day Four Written Responses (How Does the Way Someone Speaks Shape Their Character?) and Students' Day Six Written Responses (Should a Person Have to Change the Way They Speak?)

Student	Day Four Written Response	Day Six Written Response
Aidan	The way that someone speaks shape [sic] their character by saying where you come [from] or religion or ethnicity. For example, Donald Trump speaks loud in [sic] proud so people would think he would be proud and strong. It shapes their identity of how they are or what they do. Identity is the person you are.	I don't think that people should change how they speak because it would break communicate [sic] or expressing you or where they come from.
Amelia	The way you talk does not shape your character. You could talk very proper and be one of the sloppiest, unorganized people ever. You could talk very improper and still be successful and neat. At times, I could be proper but I will usually talk slangish. But I'm still neat and successful.	I don't think people should have to change the way they speak. The way you speak shows who you are and where you're from. It's not a reasonable expectation. What if the tables were turned. [sic] What if wrong was right you spent every day [sic] listening to people trying to fix you. [sic] Sometimes you have to picture yourself in someone else's shoes.

Table 5.4 (continued)

George	The way you speak doesn't form your character. I think this because when many people speak they change the way they speak. It depends what people you're around. The way you shape your character by being known as where you come from. You could change the way you speak; it wouldn't stand as your character. Don't let the way you speak shape you.	I think people shouldn't change the way they speak because the way you speak is where you come from, it's you. It's the way you speak. You wouldn't want people telling you ways to speak.
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One African American student voiced concern about the ways students' identities might be changed as a result of code switching techniques. On day seven of the study, students viewed *Do You Speak American?* In the video, the teacher taught his students MAE by having students code switch statements from AAE to MAE. After viewing the video, Alex (class two) articulated his concern that the teacher's technique to help students to practice code switching did not support the maintenance of students' identities. At the end of the video, I first asked the students "By a show of hands, who thinks that the teacher's technique used to teach his students mainstream American English was helpful?" Seven out of nine African American students (class one and class two) who responded to the question were observed raising their hands in agreement. Next, I posed a second question to the students:

Some teachers are split on this video. Some teachers think it's a great idea. But is it valuing or is it brainwashing them in a way that's going to make them forget their home dialects? That's why I wanted to show it to you all to get your input. So, no one thought it was a bad idea?

Alex was the only student out of twenty-one participants who provided a response to the second question. Alex responded, "In a way, I do agree with teachers that say it's kind of brainwashing them, because they'll forget what their home dialect is. They'll forget who they are." Alex connected students' use of dialects at home (presumably non-mainstream dialects) to students' knowing "who they are" and essentially, students' identity. Mrs. Dunston probed further, "You don't think that there should be any rules?" From Alex's response, Mrs. Dunston wondered if Alex was against rules that many speakers of non-mainstream dialects followed for code switching—adjusting dialects based on environment or audience. Alex answered:

I don't talk to people in a different way. Sometimes I would talk to my Mom the way I would talk to my friends, but some people will go out with their friends and talk a whole different way and then come home and they're expected to talk a different way. And then, sooner or later they're going to forget how they used to talk.

Alex was most concerned about students forgetting who they are through techniques that teach code switching. Alex expressed that if a speaker is constantly told to change their use of a non-mainstream dialect to a mainstream dialect, then the speaker would likely forget the non-mainstream dialect. Alex connected a speaker's use of a dialect to how the speaker identifies as an individual. Mrs. Dunston wondered if Alex thought the teacher's technique was wrong:

I don't know, I think there comes a time when you have to mature, you have to grow, you have to develop. I don't think that someone should strip you of your own language, but I also think there is value in learning how to speak so that you can write properly. So, do you think that the way the teacher did it was wrong?

Mrs. Dunston expressed that code switching was a part of students' growth and development. Furthermore, Mrs. Dunston expressed her concern for students knowing how to code switch between mainstream dialects and non-mainstream dialects, because it was an important skill for writing. Mrs. Dunston did not perceive that students should be "stripped" of their dialects but that knowing how to code switch was an important skill for students to learn and was a part of maturing. Alex responded, "I don't think it was wrong. It was a good idea, but like some people still talk not mainstream." When Mrs. Dunston asked Alex if he thought the teacher was wrong, Alex reiterated his point that not everyone speaks a mainstream dialect, and

his comment showed concern for what might happen to speakers who originally spoke a non-mainstream dialect.

Alex was concerned that code switching techniques did not take into consideration students' identities. This was the only time during the study that a student disagreed with Mrs. Dunston during the whole-class discussion. Alex's exchange with Mrs. Dunston shows that he did not back down or change his perception to agree with Mrs. Dunston. Alex's concerns are similar to Smitherman's (1977) "linguistic push/pull" and DuBois's (1903/1965) "double consciousness." Smitherman described linguistic push/pull as the tension many African Americans face wanting to identify with the middle class that looks down on non-mainstream dialects such as AAE. Similarly, DuBois described double consciousness as an inner conflict that results from wanting to identify with a particular race and culture but also recognizing the ways that majority populations might view one's identity negatively. Alex's comments suggest that he was concerned about the tensions that might arise when a speaker of a non-mainstream dialect conforms to speak a mainstream dialect and the ways the speaker's identity might change as a result of the conformity. Alex's concerns are also similar to the African American parents in Ogbu's (1999) study of parents and students in a low-income, predominantly African American neighborhood who were AAE speakers. Ogbu found that some parents perceived learning MAE as a form of assimilation and identified the public school system as being instrumental in the assimilation as "an institution which replaces slang identity with proper (White) identity" (Ogbu, 1999, p. 174). Some parents perceived learning MAE as displacing AAE linguistically and in relation to identity. In the current study, Alex had similar concerns about students learning MAE and no longer associating with AAE as a result of students losing their identity through their assimilation to MAE.

The curricular activities on day five (the history behind Pittsburgh dialect, patterns, and students identifying patterns of the dialect that they used), day six (viewing segments from *American Tongues*), and day seven (viewing the *Do You Speak American?* video) shaped the sociolinguistic perceptions for four out of nine African American students. Aidan, Amelia, and George grew in their understanding of the connection between a speaker's use of a dialect and the speaker's identity, and this growth was observed in students' change in perceptions from day four to day six of the study. Alex articulated his sociolinguistic perceptions following the *Do You Speak American?* video and explained that students in the video were being taught to use a dialect (MAE) that might not reflect students' identities. None of the African American students whose sociolinguistic perceptions were shaped by the curriculum made specific connections between a speaker's use of a dialect and racial identification such as many African Americans who use features of AAE. One explanation for this finding is the writing prompt on day four that asked students about a speaker's "character" instead of "identity." It is possible that the use of the term, "character," made more students consider a speaker's personality traits instead of a speaker's background and experiences. It is also possible that students who were speakers of AAE did not specifically mention race, because they might have assumed that there was an obvious racial connection between AAE and many African Americans who used the dialect so that they did not have to mention explicitly.

5.5 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING FROM CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students mentioned learning about differences among dialects, but students did not mention learning about power and identity. When students were asked to describe their learning from the curricular activities in their one-on-one interviews at the end of the study, students of all races described learning about features specific to non-mainstream dialects or the differences in the way speakers use English (see Table 5.5). During the one-on-one interviews at the end of the study, all twenty-one participants were asked, “What have you learned over the course of these activities?” Four out of seven multiracial students’ responses expressed that they were aware of the differences in the dialects speakers use by the end of the study. For example, Kenneth (class two) said, “People speak different ways,” and Traci (class one) commented, “There’s different ways people talk.” Two out of nine African American students described learning about features specific to non-mainstream dialects. Amelia noted that AAE exists and, “There are like patterns and stuff to it.” Similarly, Jackson said he learned “The ways people speak. The car needs washed and stuff.” Four out of seven multiracial students’ interview responses suggest that they expressed noticing differences in the ways speakers use English, but they did not expand on what those differences included. Similarly, two African American students noted learning about dialect differences, but the responses did not include specific observations about dialect differences.

All four White students in the study expressed that they learned about the different ways speakers use dialects. Steven provided the following response during his one-on-one interview when I asked him what he learned: “I learned about the different types of non-mainstream dialects and how it’s [*sic*] used by different people and different cultures.” Steven acknowledged

learning how different cultures use different non-mainstream dialects. Even though Steven did not specify a non-mainstream dialect used by many members of a particular race or culture, this was the first time during the study any of his comments (or any White student) alluded to race or culture. It is likely that the one-on-one atmosphere allowed Steven to mention culture in a way that was more discreet than the whole-class discussions and activities from the dialect curriculum.

Only two students expressed that they learned about code switching. Danielle (African American) said, “Depending on who you’re talking to you have to choose which language to choose.” Similarly, Harper (White) alluded to code switching when she responded, “People can talk in different ways. People can change the way they talk.” Danielle and Harper were both in class two and were the only students whose remarks suggested that code switching was a part of their learning from the curricular activities. It is possible Danielle and Harper’s sociolinguistic perceptions were shaped by Mrs. Dunston’s reminders to students to code switch. This finding is significant because Mrs. Dunston expressed that it was important for her students to know how and when to code switch, but only two students identified code switching as something they learned during the study.

No students reported learning about the power structures that undergird language ideologies or connections between dialects and identity. The curricular activities on the history and patterns of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect and the viewing of the segments from *American Tongues* seemed to lead to the most change in sociolinguistic perceptions during the study. These activities gave students an opportunity to consider and identify their own uses of non-mainstream dialects, learn about other dialects, and observe the ways speakers in different parts of the country describe dialects that are less familiar to them. Questions about power during the study

often went unanswered by students until Amelia and Kelsey shared their perceptions on day eight of the study after students viewed the HUD PSA about housing discrimination. Schultz (2010) suggests that students use silence as a way to gain access to different groups and perspectives, and as a result, the silence protects students from appearing as outsiders if their views are different from their classmates. In a case study example, Schultz (2010) describes a high school student named Caroline who expressed that in eighth grade, she shifted from an outspoken student to a quiet student in order to gain acceptance from her peers. Caroline silenced her views that might differ from her peers because Caroline perceived that her outspoken personality would subject her to being labeled as an outsider by her peers. In the current study of sixth graders, the silence observed from many students from different racial backgrounds on the topic power might be the result of students actively listening to determine their classmates' perceptions and protect their own perceptions that might differ.

In summary, students' perceptions of their learning did not include learning about power. This finding is significant because Godley and Minnici (2008) define critical language pedagogy as "instructional approaches that guide students to critical examinations of the ideologies surrounding language and dialects, the power relations such ideologies uphold, and ways to change these ideologies" (p. 320). It is important for students (especially students who speak non-mainstream dialects such as AAE) to learn about the inherent power behind MAE because non-mainstream dialects are often perceived as wrong, inappropriate, or indicative of speakers of lesser intelligence when compared to MAE (Baugh, 1999; Bereiter & Englemann, 1966; Labov, 1969; Smitherman, 2000). When students learn about power and begin to question ideologies about language that students have assumed as norms for how speakers should communicate, then students can begin to consider ways to change negative perceptions of non-mainstream dialects.

As previously discussed, four students (one out of nine African American students and three out of seven multiracial students) mentioned inquiries about power as topics that they would like to learn more about. This finding differs from Godley and Minnici’s (2008) study that found African American high school students were more critical and aware of the power structures connected to uses of dialects after participating in critical language pedagogy. Participants in Godley and Minnici’s study began to deconstruct the terminology “proper English” after viewing *American Tongues*. The current study of middle school students might not include many critical examinations of power because of students’ age or limited awareness of power structures around uses of dialects. It is also possible that the curriculum did not give students an opportunity to learn about power as a separate topic before students were asked questions about power in relation to dialects.

Table 5.5 Students’ Self-Reported Learning from One-On-One Interview at the End of the Study

Student	Race	Class	Self-reported Learning	Major Themes
Amelia	African American	2	That there was African American English and there are like patterns and stuff to it.	Features
Danielle	African American	2	MAE and non-mainstream English are different. Depending on who you’re talking to you have to choose which language to use.	Differences; Code switching

Table 5.5 (continued)

Harper	White	2	People can talk in different ways. People can change the way they talk.	Differences; Code switching
India	Multiracial	1	I learned like how different Pittsburghers talk...like how they talk really different. I thought they [speakers of Pittsburgh dialect and AAE] would talk the same kinda.	Differences
Jackson	African American	2	Some of the ways people speak. The car needs washed and stuff.	Features
Joseph	Multiracial	2	I learned that not everyone's the same and some people get discriminated against because of how they speak and who they are and where they come from.	Differences
Kelsey	Multiracial	2	I learned like how there's a lot of different dialects.	Differences
Kimberly	White	1	Like different people speak a different way.	Differences

Table 5.5 (continued)

Kenneth	Multiracial	2	That people speak in different ways and people could speak in ways that you wouldn't imagine them speaking of.	Differences
Myles	African American	1	There are different dialects you could speak.	Differences
Steven	White	2	I learned about the different types of non-mainstream dialects and how it's used by different people and different cultures.	Differences
Traci	Multiracial	1	There's different ways people talk.	Differences

5.6 SUMMARY

Students did not report questioning power in their follow-up interviews as a part of the change in their sociolinguistic perceptions, and this suggests that more curricular activities about power are needed to encourage students to question constructs of power and begin to consider how to work to change negative perceptions of non-mainstream dialects. However, several students identified power as a topic that they would like to learn more about in the future. This suggests that the viewing of the *Do You Speak American?* video as well as the questioning from Mrs. Dunston and

me on power that often went unanswered encouraged students to think about power in a way that students had not thought about it previously. In order to achieve the intended learning goals of learning about dialects, power, and identity, the curriculum might need to be revised to present the topics to middle school students in a way that gives students time to grapple with these topics individually before they are combined into curricular activities. The curriculum did not provide students with enough time to discuss the topics of identity and power sufficiently or provide definitions or examples of these concepts. The curriculum might have assumed that these were topics familiar to middle school students. Research on discussions about the intersections between dialects, power, and identity has typically been conducted in high school and college classroom settings that are racially homogeneous or predominantly represent only one race (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Reaser, 2006). Additionally, there are limited studies that have explored students learning about dialect differences in elementary school settings (Henderson, 2016; Sweetland, 2006). It is possible that middle students' sociolinguistic perceptions and perceptions of their learning can be changed if the curriculum is revised to slowly introduce the topic of power to the students and provide activities that encourage students to consider examples of power that they are already aware of in society before discussing power in relation to dialects.

6.0 SURVEY FINDINGS

This section addresses the third research question: How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study? Pre- and post-survey data highlights instances of students providing contradictory responses.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I address the third research question: How do students' attitudes about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects change over the course of the study (qualitatively and quantitatively)? To address this question, I analyzed data from students' pre- and post-survey responses. On the pre- and post-surveys, students responded to twenty survey items that asked students to express their opinions about dialects using the following scale: one—"strongly disagree"; two—"disagree"; three—"agree"; four—"strongly agree"; and "I don't know."

My analysis of the twenty survey items was divided into three foci—students' sociolinguistic content learning, students' opinions about their teacher's role in teaching MAE, and students' general opinions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. Twenty-one students responded to all of the survey items in all sections. The sociolinguistic content learning focus included ten survey items that were worded so that some aligned with sociolinguistic principles and some contradicted these principles. Thus, before analyzing these data, I inverted

the numeric scale of the students' responses for the items that contradicted sociolinguistic principles so that, for all items, a score of "3" or "4" reflected alignment with the sociolinguistic principle, and a score of "1" or "2" reflected a response that was not in alignment with the sociolinguistic principle. The students' sociolinguistic content learning was examined using Chisholm and Godley's (2008) study as a reference for determining if students' responses aligned or did not align to sociolinguistic principles and research that demonstrate the validity of non-mainstream dialects (Labov, 1972), the ways language is used in different contexts and reflects different identities (Heath, 1983; Smitherman, 1977), and the ways language is used to form negative and positive attitudes based on the way people speak (Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2007; Heath, 1983). In this chapter, I use descriptive statistics to examine changes in students' sociolinguistic content learning from the beginning to the end of the curricular unit on dialects.

The second focus of the survey was the teacher's responsibility to teach MAE. In this section, students responded to four survey items about their teacher's responsibility to teach MAE and valuing non-mainstream dialects in the classroom. Unlike the sociolinguistic content learning survey items, the scoring scales on the teacher's role were not inverted. The change in students' responses on the teacher's responsibility in teaching MAE that took place from pre- to post-survey will be also analyzed in this chapter using descriptive statistics.

The third focus of the survey was on students' opinions about topics related to mainstream and non-mainstream dialects that did not have "right answers" based in sociolinguistic research. Students responded to six survey items in this section. Similar to the survey items on their teacher's responsibility, the scoring scales on students' opinions were not inverted because there was not a specific correct answer for any of the survey items. The

quantitative data from these survey items were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In my quantitative analysis of change from pre- to post-test for each survey item, I analyzed changes in students' "I don't know" responses separately from student responses that indicated agreement or disagreement on each item on both the pre- and post-survey.

6.1.1 Major Findings

Changes in students' perceptions from the beginning to the end of the study were mixed, with some survey items showing gains in sociolinguistic learning and some showing perceptions about dialects that were not in line with current research or the views that students voiced in class. By the end of the study, students were more likely to agree that non-mainstream dialects have usage rules. Another major finding is that students' post-survey responses suggested they increased their expectation that their teacher value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom, but were still conflicted about whether Mrs. Dunston should teach spoken MAE. However, even though students expressed that their teacher should be tolerant of non-mainstream dialects, many students did not perceive by the end of the study that they needed MAE in order to be successful or that MAE was the best dialect to use at school. The perception by many students that MAE was not needed for future success contradicted perceptions of MAE as "proper" and "correct" that were voiced by students throughout the study.

6.2 SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTENT LEARNING SURVEY ITEMS

In this section, I explain the changes that took place among the sociolinguistic content learning survey items (see Table 6.1). Three survey items had statistically significant changes (there are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects; there are historical events behind non-mainstream dialects; and students should be punished for using non-mainstream dialects). I also identify two additional sociolinguistic content learning survey items that did not have a statistically significant change (non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk; people who use non-mainstream dialects are not very smart), but the change in means from pre-survey to post-survey decreased or did not change at all, respectively. These sociolinguistic content learning items are notable because even though they did not have a statistically significant change, students' post-survey responses moved further away from alignment with sociolinguistic principles. One-tailed *t* tests were used to determine if a statistically significant change took place for each survey item from pre-survey to post-survey (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Sociolinguistic Content Learning Survey Items (NS=no significant change)

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Mean	Pre-Survey SD	Pre-Survey “I don’t know” Responses	Post-Survey Mean	Post-Survey SD	Post-Survey “I don’t know” Responses	Change in Mean	Significance
1. Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk.	2.38	1.12	6	2.08	0.95	2	-0.31	NS
2. Everyone should speak using Mainstream American English every time they talk.	3.14	0.91	0	3.33	0.58	0	0.19	NS
4. There are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects.	3.06	0.75	1	3.59	0.51	3	0.53	<i>p</i> <.05
7. Non-mainstream dialects have rules for the correct way to use them.	2.17	0.86	2	2.50	1.20	2	0.33	NS
8. People who use non-mainstream dialects are not very smart.	3.74	0.45	2	3.74	0.56	0	0	NS

Table 6.1 (continued)

9. There are historical events behind the use of non-mainstream dialects.	2.73	0.90	7	3.36	0.67	8	0.64	<i>p</i> <.05
10. Professional authors never use non-mainstream dialects in writing.	2.71	1.20	4	3.00	1.18	5	0.29	NS
12. People should know when to switch between Mainstream American English and non-mainstream dialects.	3.39	0.85	1	3.61	0.69	2	0.22	NS
13. Students should be punished for using non-mainstream dialects.	3.50	0.95	1	3.95	0.22	0	0.45	<i>p</i> <.05

Table 6.1 (continued)

14. It is important to be able to use	3.44	0.95	2	3.61	0.60	1	0.17	NS
both Mainstream American								
English and non-mainstream								
dialects.								

The first statistically significant change was observed in the responses of many students who agreed by the end of the study that there are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects (see Table 6.2). Survey item 4 stated, “There are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects.” Pre- and post-study responses to this survey item demonstrated the greatest change from pre-survey ($\mu=3.05$, $s=0.75$) to post-survey ($\mu=3.59$, $s=0.51$) among the sociolinguistic content learning survey questions. It is possible that students reconsidered their own uses of non-mainstream dialects during the dialect curriculum when discussing language use with their friends or when addressing family members who also speak a non-mainstream dialect. Students’ responses to this survey question also align to one of Mrs. Dunston’s messages to students during the study. As described in chapter three, Mrs. Dunston talked to her students about times when AAE allowed the speaker to have a stronger connection with the audience. Students’ stronger perceptions at the end of the study that there are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects suggest that many students were becoming more aware of how using a non-mainstream dialect might be the better choice for certain audiences or purposes.

Table 6.2 Survey Item #4 – There are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Response Aligns to	17	18
Sociolinguistic Principles		
Response Does Not Align to	3	0
Sociolinguistic Principles		
I Don’t Know	1	3

Table 6.2 (continued)

μ	3.06	3.59
S	0.75	0.51

Note. The change in this survey item was statistically significant; $t(16)=.011, p=0.05$.

The second statistically significant change was observed in an increase among paired responses that suggest that there is history related to non-mainstream dialects (see Table 6.3). Question 9 stated, “There are historical events behind the use of non-mainstream dialects.” Many students still had uncertainty about the history behind non-mainstream dialects. Students’ “I don’t know” responses on the pre-survey (n=7) and post-survey (n=8) are evidence of students’ uncertainty that remained on the history behind non-mainstream dialects (e.g. immigrants arriving in Pittsburgh from Europe) by the end of the study. Even though there was still uncertainty about the history, there was a noticeable decrease in the number of responses that did not align to sociolinguistic principles by the end of the study, which suggests that the statistically significant change that took place was among students who did not choose “I don’t know” on the post-survey. One explanation of the change among students who did not choose “I don’t know” on the post-survey is that many students were already aware of the historical events behind non-mainstream dialects according to students’ pre-survey responses in alignment with sociolinguistic principles. One explanation of students’ uncertainty that is reflected in the “I don’t know” responses on the post-survey could be that some students did not recall the information on the history of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect. Another explanation for this finding is that the presentation of the history behind AAE and Pittsburgh dialect were not very interactive. For example, the history of Pittsburgh dialect was presented to students through bulleted

PowerPoint slides. Students volunteered to read one bullet point at a time, and I followed up with additional information about the history of Pittsburgh dialect. This style limited the student participation to the few students who were called upon to read the bullet on the PowerPoint.

Table 6.3 Survey Item #9 – There are historical events behinds the use of non-mainstream dialects.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Response Aligns to Sociolinguistic Principles	10	12
Response Does Not Align to Sociolinguistic Principles	4	1
I Don't Know	7	8
μ	2.73	3.36
S	0.92	0.65

Note. The change in this survey item was statistically significant; $t(10)=.033, p=0.05$.

The third statistically significant change was observed in students' responses that were in alignment with sociolinguistic principles that suggest non-mainstream dialect speakers should not be punished as a result of their use of a dialect (see Table 6.4). Survey item 13 stated, "Students should be punished for using non-mainstream dialects." On the post-survey, all twenty-one students' responses were in alignment with sociolinguistic principles, and this indicates an increase in sociolinguistic alignment from the pre-survey (n=18). One explanation for this finding is that many students considered their own uses of non-mainstream dialects and

how students might feel or react if their non-mainstream dialects were grounds for punishment at school.

Table 6.4 Survey Item #13- Students should be punished for using non-mainstream dialects.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Response Aligns to Sociolinguistic Principles	18	21
Response Does Not Align to Sociolinguistic Principles	2	0
I Don't Know	1	0
μ	3.50	3.95
S	0.95	0.22

Note. The change in this survey item was statistically significant; $t(19)=.023, p=0.05$.

However, changes in students' responses to other survey items suggested that students' perspectives moved further away from sociolinguistic principles as a result of the curriculum. Even though it was not statistically significant, one noticeable change was that students decreased in their agreement that non-mainstream dialects are valid forms of communication. Responses to Question 1, which stated, "Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk," changed from the pre-survey to the post-survey to reflect that more of students' responses were not in alignment with sociolinguistic principles by the end of the study (see Table 6.5). On the post-survey, students' responses in alignment with sociolinguistic principles decreased by one and responses not in alignment increased by five.

This finding is consistent with students’ descriptions throughout the study of non-mainstream dialects as “incorrect” and “improper.” However, the survey findings show that there was also a decrease in “I don’t know” responses from the pre-survey (n=6) to the post-survey (n=2). This decrease demonstrates that many of the students who were uncertain on the pre-survey became more certain after the dialect diversity curriculum that non-mainstream dialects were not correct.

Table 6.5 Survey Item #1 Responses – Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Response Aligns to Sociolinguistic Principles	7	6
Response Does Not Align to Sociolinguistic Principles	8	13
I Don’t Know	6	2
μ	2.33	2.05
S	1.05	0.91

One explanation of this finding points back to students' frequent uses of words such as "incorrect" and "improper" to describe non-mainstream dialects. The curricular activities did not directly address these ideologies. Mrs. Dunston and I often asked students why non-mainstream dialects are considered "incorrect" or "improper" and where these perceptions originated. As described in the previous chapter, only two students (Amelia and Kelsey) attempted to explain the constructs of power behind uses of dialects. Additionally, Mrs. Dunston's code switching advice might have also contributed to students' perceptions and reinforced notions that non-mainstream dialects are "incorrect" since her message to students was that they should code switch based on the audience and purpose. This finding suggests that, even though many students self-reported that they were speakers of non-mainstream dialects, many students also still followed Standard English language ideologies that suggested that non-mainstream dialects were "incorrect" while mainstream dialects were the only "correct" uses of English.

Reaser's (2006) study examined the knowledge of and attitudes about dialect diversity among predominantly White ninth grade students and used a language attitude survey that students completed before and after students engaged in the dialect awareness curriculum, and the curriculum included a similar survey item to Question 1. One of Reaser's survey items stated: "Dialects are sloppy forms of English." The ninth-grade students' responses to "Dialects are sloppy forms of English" were among the top 20% of survey items where students' responses changed to sociolinguistic alignment by the end of the study. Conversely, in the current study, middle school students' responses to "Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk" changed to responses that were not in alignment with sociolinguistic principles. This raises the question: Why did diverse middle school students in my study seem to regress in their learning about non-

mainstream dialects while the majority White high school students in Reaser's study showed strong gains in learning?

One explanation is that students in the current study had to put their names on the surveys so that I could match their pre- and post-survey results, and they may have thought Mrs. Dunston, who emphasized the importance of code switching, would see their responses and disagree or have a negative view of them. Mrs. Dunston emphasized code switching during the study, and it was a topic she reported discussing with students before the study began, specifically code switching based on audience and purpose. However, Mrs. Dunston did not encourage students to question the constructs of power behind code switching or why students should code switch. It is possible that Mrs. Dunston's reminders to students to code switch without challenging students to question the inherent power behind code switching contributed to many students perceiving that mainstream dialects were *correct* and non-mainstream dialects were *incorrect*, and as a result, the curricular activities were not enough to change students' perceptions.

Another explanation is Reaser's (2006) study used the *Voices of North Carolina* (VoNC) (Reaser & Wolfram, 2005) curriculum that focused on students' gaining an awareness and appreciation for the connection between history and language, the connection between language and culture, and other ways of speaking. The curriculum in Reaser's study took place in ninety-minute block classes over five school days. Additionally, other foci included students developing respect for the patterning of language and gaining authentic knowledge about how dialects pattern. Included in the curriculum were DVDs of vignettes that aimed to elicit empathy from the students as they learned about the connections between history, culture, and language. There were also note-taking strategies used as a part of the VoNC curriculum that allowed students to

organize new information students learned. In contrast, the curriculum used in the current study of middle school students had a greater focus on students learning about dialects, identity, and power and did not include as many videos that appealed to students to be empathetic or structured note-taking activities. It is possible that the high school students in Reaser's study increased their learning in ways that the middle school students in the current study did not as a result of the videos used that appealed to students' emotions and the note-taking activities that helped students to retain information learned.

Another observation among the survey data is that there was no change students' perceptions about the intelligence level of a non-mainstream dialect speaker (see Table 6.6). Question 8 stated, "People who use non-mainstream dialects are not very smart." Most students did not change their responses to this item after participating in the curriculum, although the two students who chose "I don't know" on the pre-survey changed their responses to be in alignment with sociolinguistic principles and one student whose response was in alignment with sociolinguistic principles on the pre-survey changed their response to not align on the post-survey. The pre-survey mean ($\mu=3.74$) and the post-survey mean ($\mu=3.74$) were the same.

The findings for this survey item do not converge with data collected from classroom observations and students' writing samples that suggest that many students held negative perceptions of non-mainstream dialects such as AAE and questioned the speaker's intelligence and English proficiency. One explanation for this finding is that students might have considered ways they might be judged and stereotyped as a result of their uses of non-mainstream dialects. During classroom observations, students never applied their negative descriptions of non-mainstream dialects to their own uses of non-mainstream dialects. Students' responses to survey

Question 8 suggest that students might have considered the ways stereotypes based on a speaker’s use of a dialect do not always align to factual information.

Table 6.6 Survey Item #8 Responses – People who use non-mainstream dialects are not very smart

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Response Aligns to Sociolinguistic Principles	19	20
Response Does Not Align to Sociolinguistic Principles	0	1
I Don’t Know	2	0
μ	3.74	3.74
<i>S</i>	0.45	0.56

In summary, students’ responses to several sociolinguistic knowledge survey items contradicted their previously expressed perceptions. There was no clear pattern of students’ survey responses supporting perceptions that were expressed during classroom observations and in written responses during the dialect curriculum. Many students agreed by the end of the study that there are historical events behind non-mainstream dialect, but there were still several students who were uncertain according to the high number of “I don’t know” responses on both the pre-survey and post-survey. Revisions to the curriculum might include more interactive ways to teach students about the history behind non-mainstream dialects.

At the end of the study, students were more likely to agree that there are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects. This perception aligns to sociolinguistic principles and also aligns

to the perception Mrs. Dunston expressed in her follow-up interview—there are times when a non-mainstream dialect might allow the speaker to have a stronger connection with the audience. During the study, students did not verbally agree with Mrs. Dunston when she described a time when she addressed a group of funders (see chapter three) and switched from MAE to use more features of AAE. Students’ survey responses to Question 4 suggest that students agreed with her perception that there are times when a non-mainstream dialect such as AAE might be the better choice instead of MAE.

6.3 TEACHER’S RESPONSIBILITY SURVEY ITEMS

There were changes observed in students’ perceptions about their teacher’s responsibility for teaching MAE (see Table 6.7). There was an increase in the number of students who agreed that their teacher should value non-mainstream dialects. There was also a decrease in the number of students who chose “I don’t know” in response to the survey item about their teacher’s responsibility to teach spoken MAE.

Table 6.7 Teacher’s Responsibility Survey Questions

Survey Question	Pre-Survey Mean	Pre-Survey SD	Pre-Survey I Don’t Know Responses	Post-Survey Mean	Post-Survey SD	Post-Survey I Don’t Know Responses
17. My teacher should value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom	2.29	1.10	4	3.13	1.02	5

Table 6.7 (continued)

18. It is my teacher's responsibility is to teach using mainstream American English in class	2.71	1.05	4	2.58	1.07	2
19. It is my teacher's responsibility to teach written mainstream American English	3.06	0.80	3	3.1	0.97	1
20. It is my teacher's responsibility to teach spoken mainstream American English	2.92	0.95	8	2.59	1.12	4

At the end of the instructional unit, students were more likely to perceive that their teacher should value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom. On Question 17, which states, “My teacher should value non-mainstream dialects,” students’ responses changed from seven students agreeing with this statement on the pre-survey to twelve students agreeing on the post-survey (see Table 6.8). One explanation of this finding is that students might have become more aware of Mrs. Dunston’s use of non-mainstream dialects during the study, especially since Mrs. Dunston herself began pointing it out and became more aware of her use of non-mainstream dialects. It is possible that the students did not realize how often Mrs. Dunston used non-mainstream dialects previously and might have agreed that their teacher should value non-mainstream dialects, because she was a speaker of AAE.

Table 6.8 Survey Question #17 Responses - My teacher should value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Agree or Strongly Agree	7	12
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	10	3
I Don't Know	4	5

There was no clear change in students' view of their teacher's responsibility to teach written MAE (see Table 6.7), but students' views of their teacher's responsibility to teach spoken MAE changed with more students expressing that it was not their teacher's responsibility (see Table 6.9). Although there was little change between the number of students who agreed (n=9) on the pre-survey and the number of students who agreed on the post-survey (n=10), there was an increase in the number of students who disagreed with the survey item by the end of the study, and the number of students who disagreed or selected "I don't know" on the post-survey (n=11) outnumbered students who agreed (n=10) on the post-survey. There was a decrease in the number of "I don't know" responses from eight on the pre-survey to four on the post-survey for Question 20, "It is my teacher's responsibility to teach spoken mainstream American English" (see Table 6.9). The eleven students who disagreed or selected "I don't know" on the post-survey might not have considered their teacher's role to teach MAE because the expectation of school was that they would begin their early schooling years already knowing many of the features of MAE. If students perceived that it was not their teacher's role to teach spoken MAE, then it is possible that students perceived others adults, such as parents and guardians, at home were responsible for teaching spoken MAE.

Table 6.9 Survey Question #20 Responses - It is my teacher's responsibility to teach spoken mainstream American English.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Agree or Strongly Agree	9	10
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	4	7
I Don't Know	8	4

In summary, there were several changes in students' perceptions of their teacher's responsibility to teach MAE. By the end of the study, more students agreed that their teacher should value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom. Sixteen out of twenty-one students in the study reported that they spoke non-mainstream dialects, therefore, it is possible that the curriculum led students to consider their own use of nonmainstream dialects and change their responses based on what students would want personally from their teacher. There was also a noticeable change observed in the number of students who changed their responses from "I don't know" to disagreeing with the survey item about their teacher's responsibility to teach spoken MAE. It is possible that these students disagreed or were uncertain about their teacher's responsibility to teach spoken MAE because students perceived that the expectation of school was that students would begin their early schooling years already using or aware of the features of MAE. Therefore, it would not be their teacher's responsibility to teach spoken MAE since students already knew mainstream dialects. It is also possible that students' perceptions about their teacher teaching spoken MAE were conflicted by the end of the study because of Mrs. Dunston's messages. Mrs. Dunston was an AAE speaker, and even though she advocated that students should code switch, she also shared with students a time when she did not code switch.

Students might have questioned the importance of learning spoken MAE in school because Mrs. Dunston's story was an example of a time when she used AAE instead of MAE, and as a result, Mrs. Dunston was able to connect with her audience in a way that MAE did not allow.

6.4 STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT MAINSTREAM AND NON-MAINSTREAM DIALECTS

On the survey items related to opinions rather than scientific knowledge about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, there was no clear pattern of change across all students, with many students expressing mixed feelings and potentially paradoxical responses. On the post-survey, just as students remained conflicted about whether or not Mrs. Dunston should teach spoken MAE, there were also conflicting findings in students' perspectives on MAE being the best way to talk, needing MAE in order to be successful, and MAE being the best to use at school (see Table 6.10).

Table 6.10 Students' Opinion Survey Questions

Survey Question	Pre-Survey Mean	Pre-Survey SD	Pre-Survey I Don't Know Responses	Post-Survey Mean	Post-Survey SD	Post-Survey I Don't Know Responses
3. Mainstream American English is the best way to talk.	2.19	1.17	5	2.45	0.89	1
5. Mainstream American English sounds very proper when compared to non-mainstream dialects.	2.83	0.99	3	3.10	0.70	0
6. When I hear Mainstream American English, I think the speaker is intelligent.	2.3	1.08	1	2.22	0.88	3
11. Students need to master Mainstream American English in order to be successful.	1.6	0.82	1	2.19	0.98	0
15. Mainstream American English is the best mainstream dialect to use at school.	2.63	0.81	5	2.29	0.85	4

Table 6.10 (continued)

16. A non-mainstream dialect is the best way to communicate with my friends.	3.13	0.91	6	3.22	0.73	3
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Students' responses to Question 3, which stated, "Mainstream American English is the best way to talk," showed an increase in the number of students who agreed as well as a decrease in the number of students who responded "I don't know" on the post-survey (see Table 6.11). This change suggests that students' perceptions at the end of the study were similar to many of the Standard English language ideologies that were expressed throughout the study that positioned MAE as inherently better than non-mainstream dialects such as AAE. By the end of the study, even though sixteen out of twenty-one students self-reported that they were speakers of non-mainstream dialects, MAE was still perceived as the best way to communicate. It is possible students interpreted this survey item based on the dialects students used in most environments the majority of the time because the survey question did not state that MAE is the best way to talk in a particular environment.

Table 6.11 Survey Question #3 – Mainstream American English is the best way to talk.

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Agree or Strongly Agree	4	10
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	12	10
I Don't Know	5	1

On the other hand, students’ disagreement with Question 15, which stated, “Mainstream American English is the best dialect to use at school,” doubled from the pre-survey (n=5) to the post-survey (n=10) (see Table 6.12). By the end of the study, students changed their responses to the survey question from the majority of students agreeing on the pre-survey to the majority of students disagreeing on the post-survey. The change in students’ perceptions suggests that students may have considered the ways they observed Mrs. Dunston using both MAE and AAE at school and begun to view both dialects as acceptable in school settings. Many students disagreed that MAE is the best dialect to use at school on the survey, but this perception did not align with classroom observations during the dialect curriculum activities when many students used Standard English language ideologies, especially in their written responses.

Table 6.12 Survey Question #15 – Mainstream American English is the best dialect to use at school

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Agree or Strongly Agree	11	7
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	5	10
I Don’t Know	5	4

The number of students who agreed with Question 11, which stated, “Students need to master mainstream American English in order to be successful” increased from two students in the pre-survey to eight students in the post-survey (see Table 6.13). This finding is notable because even though there were some students who perceived that their teacher should teach spoken MAE, the majority of students doubted their need for spoken MAE mastery for their future success. In Reaser’s (2006) study, predominantly White high school students responded to a similar survey question, which stated, “Students need to master Standard English to be

successful in life.” In Reaser’s study, there was an increase in the number of students who disagreed with the survey question by the end of the study. In the current study of middle school students who were predominantly African American and multiracial (many of whom self-reported that they were speakers of non-mainstream dialects), there was a large increase in the number of students who agreed with needing to master MAE in order to be successful in life. It is possible that the students in my study responded differently from those in Reaser’s study because of code switching advice from Mrs. Dunston that, even though conflicted at times, suggested that MAE was an important part of their future success. Similar to findings described in earlier sections in this chapter, students’ responses to this survey item were contradictory to perceptions expressed during classroom observations and in students’ written responses. This suggests that students might not have been certain about their perspectives on non-mainstream dialects. Students received reminders about code switching from Mrs. Dunston and possibly from other adults and teachers as well. It is unclear when students were simply voicing interpretations of perspectives that students heard from others or when students were expressing their individual beliefs.

Table 6.13 Survey Question #11 – Students need to master mainstream American English in order to be successful

	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
Agree or Strongly Agree	2	8
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	18	13
I Don't Know	1	0

In summary, students' change in their opinions about non-mainstream dialects reflects uncertainty about using MAE and non-mainstream dialects to communicate. Under the sociolinguistic content learning focus, students' responses on both the pre-survey and post-survey did not align to sociolinguistic principles about non-mainstream dialects being correct ways to talk (see Table 6.5). Additionally, students' perceptions that MAE was not needed in order to be successful and that MAE was not the best dialect to use at school complicated students' notions of non-mainstream dialects as "incorrect" or "wrong." Students' responses to the opinion survey items did not converge with previously expressed remarks made in class during the study about MAE being better than non-mainstream dialects. One interpretation of these findings is that students might have received many different messages from teachers and adults. As middle school students, they may have been more swayed by adults' opinions than the high school and college students who took part in similar curricula in other studies (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Reaser, 2006; Williams, 2013). As described in a previous section, it is difficult to determine which perceptions were the students' and which perceptions reflected statements that students had heard from adults about code switching, mainstream dialects, and non-mainstream dialects.

6.5 SUMMARY

There were several responses to survey items that were contradictory to other responses within the survey and to students' perceptions that were expressed during the dialect curriculum. Students' perceptions in their survey responses suggest that students believed their teacher should accept non-mainstream dialects as a caring professional who had to interact with many different students. Students wanted their teacher to value their uses of non-mainstream dialects, but students did not always express that they valued or were accepting of non-mainstream dialects, themselves. Additionally, even though there was no clear pattern of students' acceptance of non-mainstream dialects, this perception was complicated by students' perceptions that they did not need MAE in order to be successful and there are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects. One interpretation of the contradictory responses is double-consciousness (DuBois 1903/1965). Double-consciousness is an internal conflict between the awareness of identifying with race and culture but also recognizing the ways that majority populations might view one's identity negatively. Students' contradictory responses might indicate that many students were conflicted between expressing acceptance of non-mainstream dialects (especially students who self-reported speaking non-mainstream dialects) and expressing perceptions that aligned to many of the Standard English language ideologies that were commonly used to describe non-mainstream dialects. (I cut the next paragraph because it seems to repeat points you made on the last few pages and so is unneeded. Additionally, the two paragraphs about double-consciousness and respectability politics are nicely linked theoretically and so would be strong next to each other.)

It is also possible that African American and multiracial students in the current study chose responses not in alignment with sociolinguistic principles or responses that contradicted their own uses of non-mainstream dialects as a result of respectability politics. Higginbotham (1993) explained, “Respectability demanded that every individual in the black community assume responsibility for behavioral self-regulation and self-improvement along moral, educational, and economic lines. The goal was to distance oneself as far as possible from images perpetuated by racist stereotypes” (p. 196). Many African American and multiracial students in the current study enacted respectability politics as a means to critique AAE using Standard English language ideologies. The politics of respectability suggest that many African American and multiracial students’ critiques of AAE align to society’s norms (e.g. “correct” vs. “incorrect”) even though many students linguistically identified as AAE and Pittsburgh dialect speakers.

7.0 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I highlight the major findings from the study and discuss implications for research and practice. I also describe the ways findings from the current study contribute to the small body of existing studies on dialect diversity instruction.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examined the ways middle school students learned about dialects as they engaged in curricular activities that encouraged them to think critically about the ways dialects intersected with issues related to power and identity. Specifically, I examined the ways students' racial identities and linguistic experiences shaped their views about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, students' sociolinguistic content learning and perceptions over the course of the study, and the change in students' opinions about dialects over the course of the study. I also examined the ways students discussed institutionalized power structures such as racism and classism and the ways students discussed identity in terms of racial identity and group identity. The curricular activities in this study were created to address the Standard English language ideologies that position mainstream dialects of English as "correct" and non-mainstream dialects as "incorrect." The widely used Common Core State Standards (2010) provide students with an opportunity to examine the way language is used in texts, but the type of critical examination in the current

study extends beyond the analysis of language in text and encourages students to think critically about notions of fairness in the ways language is used in everyday life (Cabrera et al., 2013; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Shiller, 2013).

In this chapter, I revisit the major findings from each of the three research questions, connect them to existing research on this topic, and discuss the ways the current study fills gaps in the existing research. Implications for research, implications for practice, and limitations of the study are also discussed.

7.2 HOW DO STUDENTS' RACIAL IDENTITIES AND LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCES SHAPE THEIR VIEWS ABOUT DIALECTS?

Existing research has provided conflicting views on students' racial identities and linguistic experiences and the ways these factors shape their views about dialects. Kirkland and Jackson (2009) found that African American middle school students who were speakers of AAE perceived AAE as unique and were proud of their dialect use. However, the current study found that many African American and multiracial students had negative perceptions of AAE at the beginning of the study and often internalized Standard English language ideologies, similar to studies of students in high school and college (Baker-Bell, 2013; Godley & Loretto, 2013). Even more complicated is many students who expressed negative perceptions of AAE did so during formal writing activities, but perceptions that were voiced during discussion did not always align with the negative perceptions of AAE students expressed in their writing. It is possible that students perceived the written activities as more formal, and as a result provided responses that aligned with many of the messages they might have received from others about AAE.

There was no clear mapping of students' racial identities and linguistic experiences in this study. Students of all races (African-American, White, multiracial, and other) reported speaking non-mainstream dialects, but there were also students of all races who reported speaking MAE exclusively. Even though there was not a clear mapping of students' racial identities and linguistic experiences, a majority of students explicitly voiced Standard English language ideologies. Standard English language ideologies were expressed most often by African-American and multiracial students, many of whom self-reported that they were speakers of AAE or Pittsburgh dialect. This finding is notable because not only was there no clear mapping of students' racial and linguistic identities, but there also was not a clear mapping of students' linguistic identities and perceptions of non-mainstream dialects. Thus, there was not a clear picture of students who were speakers of non-mainstream dialects supporting and advocating for non-mainstream dialects. It is possible that Mrs. Dunston's overt messages about code switching contributed to African-American and multiracial students' internalization of code switching as switching between "correct" and "incorrect" dialects of English.

7.2.1 Mainstream dialects perceived as more valuable than non-mainstream dialects

Existing research has indicated that many high school students perceived that mainstream dialects spoken in White communities were more valuable than non-mainstream dialects spoken in African American communities (Godley & Minnici, 2008). Similarly, middle school students in the current study from different racial backgrounds perceived that mainstream dialects were more valuable than non-mainstream dialects. Students cited reasons for this perception such as the majority of speakers in society speaking mainstream dialects, mainstream dialects used most often in school, and mainstream dialects preferred during a job interview. The middle school

students in the current study expressed that mainstream dialects were more valuable than non-mainstream dialects. However, students' critiques of AAE and lack of critiques of Pittsburgh dialect suggest that students perceived that a hierarchy existed among non-mainstream dialects. Students reported using features of Pittsburgh dialect or having heard the dialect in their homes or communities, but only one student (Samantha) described the dialect somewhat negatively as "weird." The students' perceptions of Pittsburgh dialect suggest that the non-mainstream dialect was different, but not inherently wrong when compared to MAE, although many students perceived AAE was inherently wrong when compared to MAE. This perception was a social determination that is related to the principle of linguistic subordination. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006) describe the principle of linguistic subordination as when the linguistic practices of a socially subordinate group are interpreted as inferior or inadequate when compared to a group that is socially dominant. Students' lack of critiques of Pittsburgh dialect suggest that students perceived the dialect as having more in common with MAE and possibly more representative of White speakers. Thus, AAE was less criticized because it was perceived as having less in common with MAE.

Additionally, many African American speakers of Pittsburgh dialect do not use as many features of Pittsburgh dialect as White speakers of the dialect. Many African American Pittsburgh dialect speakers perceive a difference between their use of some of the features of the dialect and White Pittsburgh dialect speakers, and as a result, many African American Pittsburgh dialect speakers do not fully identify as speakers of the dialect (Eberhardt, 2009). It is possible that African American and multiracial students in the study who did not critique AAE in the same ways that they critiqued Pittsburgh dialect perceived Pittsburgh dialect as having a close

connection with White speakers and less connected to African American and multiracial students' identities.

On the other hand, it was not uncommon for students to use descriptors such as “incorrect” or “wrong” to describe AAE. Other than reminders from Mrs. Dunston to code switch based on audience and purpose, the students had not previously participated in curricular activities that addressed the history of non-mainstream dialects, connected dialects to identity, or questioned the constructs of power imbedded in uses of dialect. Kirkland & Jackson (2008) asserted that in the absence of such opportunities for students to learn about the history of non-mainstream dialects and address assumptions about speakers of non-mainstream dialects, it is likely that students will maintain negative attitudes about non-mainstream dialects.

Even though many students were speakers of AAE and had a negative perception of AAE, the students never critiqued their own uses of AAE. For example, when students raised their hands to report using a specific feature of AAE or give an example of how they might use the feature, none of the students critiqued their own use of AAE as “incorrect.”

7.2.2 Non-mainstream dialects and connections to race

African-American and multiracial students were more likely to describe the racial connection between AAE and African-American speakers of the dialect than White students. White students avoided making specific comments about race in their descriptions of AAE and the ways the speakers are bonded to one another through their use of the dialect. This finding is similar to Godley, Reaser, and Moore's (2015) study about White pre-service teachers, but the teacher in the current study was an African-American AAE speaker who might have contributed to White students' silence and avoidance of the topic. When Mrs. Dunston agreed with African-American

and multiracial students' perceptions, it might have sent the message that those were the only correct responses, which would signal to other students that other responses or perceptions were not acceptable answers. Additionally, Mrs. Dunston's position as an African-American AAE speaker who was also contributed to the facilitation of the curricular activities might have intimidated White students, and, as a result, their silence and avoidance around topics related to race might have been a way for White students to remain neutral. Mrs. Dunston aimed to create a classroom environment that was very comfortable and welcoming to all students, but for middle school students who were in a racially heterogeneous classroom, White students might have felt uncomfortable to express perceptions about the connection between race and non-mainstream dialects even if the perception was simply acknowledging the connection and not critiquing the connection.

7.3 HOW WERE STUDENTS' SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS SHAPED BY THE CURRICULUM?

Existing research and pedagogical approaches have shown that dialectal curricula have the potential to help students to explore dialectal differences and diversity, critique the constructs of power related to uses of dialects, reflect on their own uses of non-mainstream dialects, and reconsider previous perceptions (Baker-Bell, 2013; Brown, 2008; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Fecho, 2000; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Reaser, 2006). The current study expanded existing research on this topic by using similar curricular activities among a racially heterogeneous population of students who were also younger in age than participants in earlier studies. The current study used contrastive analysis approaches to engage students in the

curricular activities on AAE and Pittsburgh dialect features similar to previous research that engaged students in learning the differences between mainstream and non-mainstream dialects (Fisher & Lapp, 2013; Fogel & Ehri, 2000; Hill, 2009; Wheeler, 2006; Wheeler, 2009; Wheeler & Swords, 2004; Wheeler & Swords, 2006; Williams, 2013). Findings from the current study suggest that the contrastive analysis approach engaged students in the curricular activities as they considered their own uses of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, and as a result, learning about dialectal differences was identified as a memorable part of the curriculum by many students. The current study also expanded previous research on critical language pedagogy and critical examinations of Standard language ideologies that took place in high school and college settings (Baker-Bell, 2013; Brown, 2008; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Fecho, 2000; Godley et al., 2007; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008) to include middle school students in a racially heterogeneous class setting. However, even though contrastive analysis used in the current study was memorable, it did not seem to engender students' critical perspectives on dialect diversity or lessen Standard English language ideologies.

It is unclear how the curriculum implemented in the study helped students to develop a stronger awareness of patterns and features of non-mainstream dialects and shaped students' perceptions on linguistic accommodation. In the one-on-one interviews at the end of the study, most of the students' responses to the question about their learning indicated that students learned about dialectal differences and features. This suggests that the curricular activities on the patterns and features of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect were a memorable part of the curriculum, but students' acknowledgement of the differences between the dialects discussed during the study were not strong indicators of students' learning. The curriculum used in the current study did not include opportunities for students to examine features of non-mainstream dialects in their

own written work, nor were there many observations of AAE use in students' writing. However, existing research (Brown, 2008; Fogel & Ehri, 2000) suggest that incorporating structured writing activities that give students opportunities to identify dialects used in their writing and apply their learning about dialects to code switch between dialects in their writing help to enhance students' learning.

Although students reported that they learned patterns and features of non-mainstream dialects, students did not report learning to question the power dynamics surrounding dialects. Even though power was not included in students' responses about what they learned, questioning power was a theme in four students' responses during their one-on-one interviews when I asked, "Is there anything that you would like to learn more about?" This suggests that students might not have learned to question power, but the curriculum shaped students' sociolinguistic perspectives to want to further investigate and question constructs of power that many students accepted as norms for using dialects. Godley and Minnici (2008) suggest that in order for critical language pedagogy to be successful and engage students in examinations of power, "critical pedagogy must also address the ways in which students can affect changes in the world around them" (p. 340). One aspect of critical pedagogy missing from the current study was that students did not have an opportunity to consider the ways they could affect change related to linguistic perceptions in their own lives. Revisions of the curriculum might consider activities that challenge students to consider how they can affect change, and such activities might show greater sociolinguistic content learning if students are able to consider what they can do as individuals to evoke change.

Similar to the findings for the first research question, White students did not contribute to the discussion about power. It appears that the curriculum may have had an effect on White

students' participation in discussions. For example, on day eight of the study students were asked, "How was it determined that mainstream dialects were more valuable than non-mainstream dialects?" None of the White students responded. In fact, only one African-American student (Amelia) and one multiracial student (Kelsey) attempted to hypothesize why mainstream dialects were more valuable. Delpit (1995) asserted, "Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often aware of its existence" (p. 26). The lack of participation from White students suggests that their lack of awareness of issues of systemic power, which is a part of White privilege, might be the reason that White students did not attempt to respond to the question. If White students were not aware of issues of systemic power or that White privilege gave them advantages over other racial groups, such as not experiencing racism or discrimination in the same ways as African-American and multiracial students, then it is possible that White students would not know to question constructs of power, because the constructs had never applied to them as a result of White privilege. The participants were in the sixth grade at the time of the study, so it is possible that sixth graders were unaware of White privilege. It is also possible that African-American, multiracial, and White students did not participate in the discussion about power because the topic was too complex of a concept for their grade level and perhaps needed further explanation so that students could understand. This finding suggests that revisions should be made to the curriculum for future studies.

By day six, following the viewing of video clips from *American Tongues*, many African-American and multiracial students' perceptions that speakers should not have to change their dialects were different from students' initial responses in the beginning of the study when African-American and multiracial students applied Standard English language ideologies to their

perceptions of AAE as “incorrect.” Video clips from *American Tongues* seemed to shape many African-American and multiracial students’ perceptions about code switching as students began to consider the ways identity connected to a speaker’s use of dialects and possibly even students’ own connections between their use of dialects and their identities. There was a noticeable change in several students’ day four responses that included stereotypes about the connection between identity and dialects as well as responses that did not acknowledge the connection at all in their responses to the day four prompt that said, *How does the way someone speaks shape their character*. By day six of the study, these students made direct connections between dialects and identity in response to the prompt that asked students if a speaker should have to change the way that he/she speaks. However, unlike existing research that showed the ways high school students made detailed connections between uses of dialects and identity (Chisholm & Godley, 2011), the current study did not include similar detailed connections. It is possible that students in younger grades are less prepared to articulate the connection when compared to older students.

Additionally, many African American and multiracial students expressed similar perceptions that a speaker should not have to adapt his or her language variety to the people around them. This perception differed from White students who responded that a speaker should have to change their language. Even though White students perceived that it was important for a speaker to maintain his or her use of dialects and had the freedom to choose how to speak, White students maintained Standard English language ideologies in their reasoning that speakers should change their dialects for the sake of other listeners’ understanding and for high stakes situations such as job interviews. Similar to Paris’s (2009) study that found that students from underrepresented racial groups who spoke AAE were unified through their use of AAE, the same type of unifying took place among African-American and multiracial students in the current

study. This perception differed from White students in the study who expressed that a speaker should change the way he or she speaks but also should find a way to maintain the speaker's original dialects.

7.4 HOW DO STUDENTS' ATTITUDES ABOUT MAINSTREAM AND NON-MAINSTREAM DIALECTS CHANGE OVER THE COURSE OF THE STUDY?

Some change was observed in students' post-survey responses by the end of the study, but the change was often conflicting and contradictory to other responses. Existing research has provided conflicting findings on students' attitudes about non-mainstream dialects from African American students in middle school through college with evidence to support many African American students have both negative perceptions of AAE (Baker-Bell, 2013; Williams, 2013) and positive perceptions of AAE (Godley & Escher, 2013; Kinloch, 2010; Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). The findings from the current study converge with existing research because students' responses included both positive and negative perceptions of AAE, but the current study also included students' perceptions of how their teacher should address non-mainstream dialects in the classroom.

One example of change observed in students' survey responses that contradicted another response was students' perceptions of their teacher's role. Students expected that their teacher should value students' non-mainstream dialects in the classroom, but students did not perceive by the end of the study that they needed MAE in order to be successful. An equal number of students agreed and disagreed on the post-survey that MAE is the best way to talk, but students' post-survey responses also indicated that the majority of students disagreed that MAE was the

best dialect to use at school. This finding does not align with findings from research question one that described the ways many students used Standard English language ideologies in their descriptions of non-mainstream dialects. Students' negative perceptions of non-mainstream dialects would suggest that they saw value in MAE, but the survey item suggests that students did not perceive MAE to have as much value as expressed during the dialect curriculum. Potential explanations of this mismatch are considered below.

The survey in the current study was modeled after Reaser's (2006) survey of language attitudes that was used with a population of predominantly White ninth grade students. Unlike the current study, Reaser's participants showed stronger gains in learning. For example, Reaser had a similar survey item that stated, "Dialects are sloppy forms of English," and students' responses changed to reflect alignment with sociolinguistic principles by the end of the study. However, the current study used a survey item that stated, "Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk," and students' responses did not align with sociolinguistic principles by the end of the study. Reaser's curriculum included videos that appealed to students' emotions and included note-taking strategies to retain information. Revisions of the curriculum used in the current study might consider how additional videos about linguistic discrimination, learning about additional non-mainstream dialects, and note-taking strategies might be used to enhance students' learning.

Students' change in their survey responses from the pre-survey to the post-survey are indicative of the complex relationship between racial and linguistic identity that scholars have described in previous research (DuBois, 1903/1965; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Ogbu, 1999; Smitherman, 1977) and also respectability politics (Higginbotham, 1993) that students might enact in response to the complex relationship. The linguistic push/pull (Smitherman, 1977) evidenced in students' survey responses aligned to messages from their

teacher and others who encouraged code switching and possibly marginalized non-mainstream dialects in the process through Standard English language ideologies.

At the same time, many students' responses also reflected ways that students attempted to maintain their non-mainstream dialects and validate their importance (e.g. the majority of students disagreed that MAE was needed for future success). Most of the students in the study were speakers of non-mainstream dialects, and the linguistic push/pull observed in their survey responses suggests that many students were conflicted between expressing the Standard English language ideologies that many students adopted prior to the study or staying true to their uses of non-mainstream dialects through perceptions that supported their uses. Lippi-Green (2012) described a similar tension evidenced in two conflicting statements of speakers of non-mainstream dialects: "*I acknowledge that my home language is viable and adequate and I acknowledge that my home language will never be accepted* is to set up an irresolvable conflict" (p. 197). The irresolvable conflict suggests that there is no clear resolution for speakers of dialects to alleviate the tension from linguistic push/pull. As a result, students' survey responses were reflective of the fact that there is no clear resolution to the dilemma of students' maintaining and validating their non-mainstream dialects but also accepting that the larger society might not accept their non-mainstream dialects. There was also linguistic push/pull evidenced through Mrs. Dunston's perspectives. As the teacher, Mrs. Dunston wanted to equip students with the knowledge of MAE and code switching awareness, but Mrs. Dunston also wanted to remain true to her use of non-mainstream dialects. In Mrs. Dunston's messages to students, this linguistic push/pull was passed to her students who were on the receiving end of these mixed messages.

Even though discussions about race were limited in the study, students' responses are also indicative of double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903/1965). The majority of students in the study racially identified as African-American or multiracial. Another explanation of students' survey responses is that students recognized a connection between race and non-mainstream dialects, which added an additional complexity to the linguistic push/pull that many students already experienced. Many students expressed conflicting perceptions in their views of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, and these conflicting perceptions were also representative of the ways non-mainstream dialects were intrinsically embedded in students' racial identities as well.

The enactment of respectability politics (Higginbotham, 1993) suggests that students might have been more aware of the inherent power connected to dialects than previously thought. As previously discussed, there is an irresolvable conflict (Lippi-Green, 2012) that makes it difficult for students to alleviate the tension between maintaining their non-mainstream dialects and acknowledging that society does not accept their non-mainstream dialects. However, respectability politics provided students with the opportunity to publicly distance themselves from non-mainstream dialects that are not accepted by the wider society. Respectability politics suggest that individuals distance themselves from actions that the collective society has deemed inappropriate.

Similarly, many of the students in the study who identified as speakers of non-mainstream dialects seemed to use respectability politics during the study to distance themselves from speakers of non-mainstream dialects at certain times. Written work that was the basis for much of the class discussions and surveys included Standard English language ideologies that were reflective of respectability politics, but many students' acknowledgement of their uses of

features of non-mainstream dialects during activities that did not include writing did not reflect respectability politics. Students' enactment of respectability politics in connection to their critiques of non-mainstream dialects in their written work and on the surveys, even though many students identified as speakers of non-mainstream dialects during conversations that did not include written assignments, suggests that students might have perceived respectability politics as an act of power that was utilized during times when students perceived the activity (written responses or survey that included students' names) as evidence of their sociolinguistic perspectives. Respectability politics as an act of power allows students to critique non-mainstream dialects in ways that align to society's perceptions and participate in the culture of power (Delpit, 2006). Additionally, it is also possible that students' use of respectability politics is reflective of the education (Shujaa, 1993) students received outside of the classroom at home and in their communities. This education prescribes specific behaviors or perceptions in the public eye (e.g. at school or when in mixed company) that might be different from behaviors or perceptions that are a part of students' homes and communities.

7.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The current study fits into existing research as an expansion of dialect diversity pedagogy in a racially and linguistically heterogeneous setting. Students exhibited learning about dialects, power, and identity but in somewhat limited ways. Additionally, observations of many students' comments/writing in class and survey responses were often in conflict with their own uses of non-mainstream dialects. Future research on this topic needs to keep in mind the grade levels of the students and the ways curricular activities are introduced. Sixth graders in the current study

were introduced to topics and conversations about power and identity that might have needed additional background information and scaffolded support in order for students to grasp the concepts before learning about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects.

Future studies should also consider how to present smaller units to students on power and identity before they are combined with activities on mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. If the topics of power and identity are presented to students separately from topics on mainstream and non-mainstream dialects so that students are given an opportunity to have discussions about experiences, view video segments, and grapple with critical questions and higher-level thinking about these topics, then students might be more prepared to talk about power and identity in connection to mainstream and non-mainstream dialects at a later point in the curriculum. The current study assumed that students had previously discussed issues of power and identity and had working definitions of the terms, but students' responses (often few) suggest that students might have needed more time and background information in order to fully engage in the conversations.

More research is needed in such classroom settings since the existing research often takes place in racially homogenous classrooms of older students (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Reaser, 2006). The participants in the study were racially heterogeneous, and students from underrepresented racial groups outnumbered White students. Research that is set in racially heterogeneous classroom settings might consider incorporating small group settings. Chisholm and Godley (2008) focused on small group discussions of three bi-dialectal high school students as they discussed dialectal variation, identity, and power. Chisholm and Godley found that the small group setting provided a space for students to share perceptions that became increasingly more diverse as the study progressed. The current study had less student discussion

than originally anticipated, and it is possible that small group settings would allow for greater engagement and student-led discussions.

Additionally, future research might consider the ways Standard English language ideologies shape students' perceptions, specifically naming some of the sources of these ideologies such as teachers, parents, or other community members. Other than Mrs. Dunston's overt messages about code switching, it was unclear if students heard Standard English language ideologies from a number of different sources throughout their years of schooling (Godley et al., 2007; Ogbu, 1999). A survey item or discussion question that addresses how students might have adopted their perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects can assist researchers in identifying the ways some of those perceptions have shaped their opinions and guide curriculum that attempts to engage students in the unpacking of those Standard English language ideologies.

7.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

This section highlights implications for instruction for teaching students about power and identity. Additionally, implications for instruction also include suggestions for class discussions, the teacher's role, using video, and heterogeneous classrooms.

7.6.1 Teaching about power and identity

As described in the previous section, power and identity need to be discussed separately from a curriculum on mainstream and non-mainstream dialects in order to allow students time to

deconstruct these broad topics. In order to do this, the curriculum might need to be expanded to include power and identity as well as opportunities for students to make connections to literature and writing as other scholars have suggested (Baker-Bell, 2013; Brown, 2008; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Minnici, 2008). Even though power and identity are usually discussed in studies about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects among older students (Baker-Bell, 2013; Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Godley & Loretto, 2013; Godley & Minnici, 2008), these are also grade level appropriate topics for middle school students. It is possible that sixth graders had not previously discussed power and identity in connection to uses of dialects in their current class or in their early years of schooling. Therefore, it is important to give middle school students enough background information, definitions, and other curricula that will help them to talk about topics that they might have been aware of but were never encouraged to discuss.

Wheeler and Swords (2006) and Wheeler (2009) found that teaching code switching to elementary school students who were predominantly African American improved students' proficiency on state assessments. Even though code switching techniques helped to improve students' academic performance, the techniques only focused on switching between mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, described as formal and informal uses of language, and not the inherent power structures, dialectal histories, or connections to identity that intersect with uses of non-mainstream dialects. Young et al. (2014) and Young (2009) have challenged code switching pedagogies because they do not acknowledge that power, race, and identity that are inseparable from students' uses of dialects. Young et al. (2014) explain, "Acquisition of Standard English cannot eradicate prejudiced views of an individual's speech or writing because negative evaluations of the language of African Americans are not based on the actual form of their speech." This suggests that code switching is not enough to secure a speaker's success during a

job interview because negative perceptions about African Americans and other underrepresented groups are often rooted in racist and discriminatory ideologies ahead of linguistic practices. A speaker's use of a non-mainstream dialect connects to the speaker's identity, and as a result, code switching practices that use terms such as "inappropriate" and "informal" to describe non-mainstream dialects are essentially describing both the dialect and the speaker's identity as unwelcomed (Hill, 1998; Young et al., 2014).

The differences between Wheeler and Swords (2006) and Young et al.'s (2014) perspectives are similar to the differences between schooling and education. Shujaa (1993) explained "that schooling is a process intended to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and all the institutional structures that support those arrangements" (p. 330). This definition of schooling suggests that power structures such as MAE are maintained as standards through formal schooling. Similarly, Wheeler and Swords's code switching techniques support the maintenance of MAE as superior to non-mainstream dialects such as AAE and the culture of school also support this notion. However, education "is the process of transmitting from one generation to the next the knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness" (Shujaa, 1993, pp. 330-331). Shujaa's definition of education describes knowledge that is often not taught in formal educational settings but is generational and cultural information passed down from one person to another.

Young et al.'s approach to language (2014) align to Shujaa's definition of education because the researchers advocate for techniques that offer "disempowered" speakers who are often advised to code switch with critical information that expands code switching to include learning about connections to power, race, and identity as well. In a classroom of middle school students, connecting dialects to power, race, and identity are an important part of students'

sociolinguistic content learning if students' Standard English language ideologies are going to be challenged. The current study saw very little specificity in students' descriptions of and connections to power, students did not have very detailed descriptions about the connection between dialects and identity, and race was often avoided. Teaching about power and identity as a part of dialectal curricula suggests that teachers rely less on students' previous schooling and explore more of students' experiences through education to address these topics.

7.6.2 Class discussions

Class discussions can provide spaces for students to share perceptions, but students' remarks during class discussions that are clichés or stereotypical need to be addressed. During whole class discussions, students in the study read their written responses to prompts and answered questions posed to them about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. There were times when students shared Standard English language ideologies or shared perspectives that were not rooted in sociolinguistic facts and, when left unaddressed, might have reinforced inaccurate information about dialect diversity for other students.

Even though clichés and stereotypical responses that support Standard English language ideologies need to be addressed so that they are not perpetuated further, Mrs. Dunston created an environment where students felt comfortable to share their opinions. Alex was the only student who adamantly disagreed with Mrs. Dunston on day seven of the study when he expressed that the *Do You Speak American?* video did not support students' identities because the MAE that students were being told to use instead of their non-mainstream dialects did not support their identities. It was brave of Alex to disagree and give details to support his perceptions, but this was also evidence that Mrs. Dunston created an environment where students could express

different opinions, even if the opinions differed from the teacher's perceptions.

The writing prompts and other questions posed to the students were used in an effort to get students to think about their personal experiences; however, researchers need to be cautious about the ways reflective personal prompts might reinforce Standard English language ideologies. Chisholm & Godley (2011) found that students' sociolinguistic content learning was supported when students were asked to give specific evidence or claims to support their explanations of how students vary language for different people or situations. In contrast, broad discussion questions that asked students what they can do to change people's negative judgments about the ways others speak and how students can change their own stereotypes about the way people speak were not specific enough to elicit evidence, claims, and counterclaims from the students. Future studies might consider the ways the discussion questions within the curriculum can be written in a way that elicits specific, supported responses from students. In the current study, it was difficult to see a change in content learning in class discussions because the discussion questions did not elicit responses from students that students had to support or explain in greater depth.

7.6.3 Role of the teacher

Mrs. Dunston shared many of her perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects throughout the study, and her perceptions often included conflicting messages to students. For example, Mrs. Dunston wanted students to know when and how to code switch, but she shared with students that there was a time when she did not adhere to her own recommendation. Additionally, Mrs. Dunston's messages about code switching did not give students an opportunity to explore why students should code switch or the constructs of power related to

code switching.

Young et al. (2014) suggested that the concept of code-meshing should be taught instead of code switching because “the code-meshing approach fosters positive attitudes toward undervalued varieties and emphasizes the development of language skills that extend beyond the acquisition of Standard English grammar” (p. 44). Code-meshing is suggested as a way for teachers like Mrs. Dunston to address the dilemma between valuing students’ non-mainstream dialects and teaching code switching, because code-meshing provides students with a context that extends beyond simply telling students some dialects are more appropriate to use than others depending on audience and purpose. Revisions of the curriculum used in this study could address Young et al.’s concerns and assist the teacher in reshaping her message to students so that it is not grounded in Standard English language ideologies that send messages to students that they must code switch because mainstream dialects are “correct” and non-mainstream dialects are “incorrect.”

7.6.4 Using video

Several videos were used in this study to elicit students’ responses and perceptions about mainstream and non-mainstream dialects. Teachers might also consider the ways their questioning can elicit responses that extend beyond simple summaries of the videos. Following the *American Tongues* video clips and *Do You Speak American?* video, students often provided summaries of what they observed without being critical of the video footage. Students’ learning through videos should be supported with similar techniques that Chisholm & Godley (2011) used when they asked their high school participants learning to support their responses with specific evidence.

7.6.5 Heterogeneous classrooms

In heterogeneous classrooms, it is important for teachers to maintain some neutrality as facilitators. Mrs. Dunston, an African-American AAE speaker, actively participated in the study, and it is possible that students from different racial and linguistic backgrounds were less likely to contribute to discussions that critiqued power, because Mrs. Dunston expressed perceptions in agreement with African and multiracial students' perspectives. For example, during the discussion about why mainstream dialects are valued more than non-mainstream dialects, Amelia (an African-American AAE speaker) and Kelsey (a multiracial Pittsburgh dialect speaker) were the only students who attempted to hypothesize about the power behind perceptions about dialects. Mrs. Dunston agreed with Amelia and Kelsey's perceptions that society determined that mainstream dialects were more valuable than non-mainstream dialects. It is possible that White students (or any other students) might have shared a different perception if Mrs. Dunston's agreement with Amelia and Kelsey did not send the message that their responses were the only correct responses to the question. Teachers in heterogeneous classroom need to consider the ways the diversity of the student population also includes diversity in experiences and perceptions. By presenting a more neutral stance or continuing to solicit different responses, teachers may encourage responses from students with different perceptions.

Teachers might also consider ways racially homogeneous groups might encourage students from different racial backgrounds to share their perceptions. In the current study, there was a noticeable silence and avoidance by White students on topics of race and power. A racially homogeneous small group might have encouraged the White students in the study to share perceptions that they might not have felt comfortable sharing with the whole class.

7.7 LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations that might have affected the outcomes of this study. There were twenty-one participants in the study, but not every student responded to every writing prompt or verbal question posed during the study. Therefore, some of the analyses of students' perceptions are based on small numbers that represent the number of students who responded but not all twenty-one students. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were aware that they were not required to answer any question that they did not want to answer. When students did not respond to certain writing prompts or other questions, it is unclear if their views aligned to the patterns highlighted in the data or if those students would have expressed perceptions that were different from the other students' responses. There were also several questions that asked students to show agreement or disagreement by raising their hands, and it is possible that as a result of the video recorder's location, some students who raised their hands in agreement or disagreement with specific questions might not have been captured on video.

The curriculum took ten school days to complete and was followed by an additional three school days of interviews, but I remained in the students' classroom for an entire month. Throughout my analysis, I wondered if students heard Standard English language ideologies in other places outside of Mrs. Dunston's class from previous teachers, parents/guardians, or community members. Spending more time in the classroom before the study, perhaps intermittently leading up to the study, might have provided a clearer perspective on how students might have adopted Standard English language ideologies from others.

The history of AAE and Pittsburgh dialect were presented to students in different ways. Mrs. Dunston informed me before the study that she and the students often discussed dialects and that they were familiar with the history of AAE, but it is unclear the extent of students'

familiarity with the history of AAE before the study. During the study, the history of AAE was not presented to students explicitly. Instead, the history of AAE was presented to students in connection to a novel that students read, *Copper Sun* (Draper, 2008), because the main character was an enslaved African living on a plantation in the United States trying to learn English. The main character's experience as a slave learning English was tied into discussions about some of the history behind AAE, but the information was presented in a lecture format. Alternately, the history of Pittsburgh dialect was presented to students in an interactive format that gave students opportunities to read bullet points on the PowerPoint slides, and I would follow up with additional information. It is likely that learning the history of Pittsburgh dialect was more memorable than AAE because of the format of the way the information was presented.

In the past ten years, the United States has witnessed a number of present-day struggles for civil rights by underrepresented minorities, members of the LGBTQ population, and also women fighting to maintain their reproductive rights. As such events occur across the country, schools are becoming spaces where students are beginning to explore issues of social justice and question notions of fairness and power (Cabrera et al., 2013; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Shiller, 2013). Encouraging students to question power and consider the assumed norms for how the English language should be used contribute to the ways schools can help students develop a heightened awareness to unjust practices on a wider scale. This study contributes to discussions about social justice and fairness that are often related to current day civil rights movements because a speaker's use of mainstream and non-mainstream dialects and discriminatory practices against speakers of certain dialects are also issues of social justice. This study adds to the existing knowledge on this topic because it shows how curricular activities on dialects can be incorporated into a sixth-grade ELA class to begin to engage students in discussions about

dialects, power, and identity. These topics were specific to curricular activities on mainstream and non-mainstream dialects, but students' learning about these topics can expand to other issues of social justice that have experienced a resurgence in the past few years.

APPENDIX A

PRE- AND POST-SURVEY TOOL

Non-mainstream Dialects – examples include African American English and Pittsburgh dialect (or “Pittsburghese”). They are also known as social or everyday dialects and are widely spoken among communities of people who share a common regional or cultural background.

Mainstream Dialects –an example includes *Mainstream American English*. Mainstream dialects are used most often at school or at work.

Read each statement. Circle a number to indicate the following:

1 – strongly disagree

2 –disagree

3—agree

4—strongly agree

5—I don’t know

1. Non-mainstream dialects are correct ways to talk 1 2 3 4 5
2. Everyone should speak using Mainstream American English every time they talk 1 2 3 4
5
3. Mainstream American English is the best way to talk 1 2 3 4 5
4. There are good reasons to use non-mainstream dialects 1 2 3 4 5
5. Mainstream American English sounds very proper when compared to non-mainstream dialects
1 2 3 4 5
6. When I hear Mainstream American English, I think the speaker is intelligent 1 2 3 4 5
7. Non-mainstream dialects have rules for the correct way to use them 1 2 3 4 5
8. People who use non-mainstream dialects are not very smart 1 2 3 4 5

9. There are historical events behind the use of non-mainstream dialects 1 2 3 4 5
10. Professional authors never use non-mainstream dialects in writing 1 2 3 4 5
11. Students need to master Mainstream American English in order to be successful 1 2 3
4 5
12. People should know when to switch between Mainstream American English and non-mainstream dialects
1 2 3 4 5
13. Students should be punished for using non-mainstream dialects 1 2 3 4 5
14. It is important to be able to use both Mainstream American English and non-mainstream dialects
1 2 3 4 5
15. Mainstream American English is the best mainstream dialect to use at school 1 2 3 4 5
16. A non-mainstream dialect is the best way to communicate with my friends 1 2 3 4 5
17. My teacher should value non-mainstream dialects in the classroom 1 2 3 4 5
18. It is my teacher's responsibility is to teach using mainstream American English in class
1 2 3 4 5
19. It is my teacher's responsibility to teach written mainstream American English 1 2 3 4 5
20. It is my teacher's responsibility to teach spoken mainstream American English 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Explain to me how you would define the term “non-mainstream dialect.” What are your current thoughts/attitudes on non-mainstream dialects such as African American English or Pittsburgh dialect? Have they changed or stayed the same over the course of these activities? Explain your answer in at least 3-4 sentences.
2. What have you learned over the course of these activities? What might you want to learn more about? Explain your answer in at least 3-4 sentences.
3. Have there been any comments made in class that you strongly agree or disagree with related to dialects? Explain your answer in at least 3-4 sentences.
4. Which activities about dialects were most interesting?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How many years have you been in education? How many years at your current school?
[outline of career before teaching] Where was your first teaching assignment
[district/grade]
2. How would you describe the school/community where you attended school?
3. Describe your educational background [bachelor's; master's; thoughts about future PhD work]. When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?
4. What do you think are some of the most important things you teach your students?
[either specific to teaching reading/science or in general]?
5. How would you describe students' use of dialects? Specifically AAE or Pittsburgh dialect in/out of the classroom?
6. What are some of your philosophies about dialects? What stance have you taken on students using AAE or Pittsburgh dialect in the classroom? On writing tasks? [In what ways do you value diverse language practices in the classroom?]
7. How would you describe your own AAE or Pittsburgh dialect use? At home or in other environments? What do you tell your own children about dialects?
8. What has been your approach to teaching students mainstream American English?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER POST-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How would you describe your students' participation in and understanding of the lessons/activities on dialects?
2. What are some of the differences that you noticed in the ways students in each class responded to and participated in the activities?
3. In what ways have students grown? In what ways do you think students' attitudes have changed over the course of the study?
4. What would you change about the activities the students participated in?
5. How would you describe your responsibility to students in terms of addressing non-mainstream dialects in your classroom?
6. How might you change your instruction to address dialects in future lessons and activities with students?
7. Final reflections/questions on the activities?

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