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An Intonational Description of African American Language in Princeville, NC

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AN INTONATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE
IN PRINCEVILLE, NC

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

AN INTONATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE
IN PRINCEVILLE, NC

This thesis uses data from the Princeville, NC section of the Corpus of Regional African American Language (CORAAL) in order to address two topics concerning language: first, what the intonation of the Princeville participants of the CORAAL looks like acoustically; and second, if intonation is the salient feature that categorizes a speaker as Black or non-Black. The acoustic analysis software, Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2019), is used to take average, minimum, and maximum f0 measurements for 16 participants (9 women and 7 men) across three age groups. From these measurements, the rate of change is calculated in Hz/second to determine the fluctuations in pitch within the pitch range across an utterance. Results in response to the first question suggest that female participants followed a more identifiable average f0 pattern than their male counterparts. Additionally, female participants tended to have higher minimum and maximum f0 measurements, as well as higher rates of change. In response to the second question, the ethicality and morality of asking certain research questions is examined. It is suggested that, rather than potentially essentializing individual linguistic features which belong to a broader social system of meaning, we instead turn towards a critical examination of the field's practices, methods, and theories, and how these in turn fit within broader systems of domination like white supremacy.

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August 4, 2020

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To my grandma, Louise Leavelle, who inspired in me a lifelong passion for learning, and to all Black people, may we experience the death of white supremacy in our lifetimes. Black Power.

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This thesis has been a journey of constant learning and unlearning, a reminder that comfortability in whiteness for white people is not a good place to be. It has reminded me again and again of the dedication I need to relinquish whiteness in the fight to end white supremacy. The world has changed around this thesis and the person I was when I proposed the idea of a thesis like this in the fall of 2018 is not the person that I am now, in the summer of 2020. The movement for Black Lives has once again come to the forefront of public consciousness after the senseless killing of yet more Black people by the State, who remains impugn to Justice. We now, collectively and globally, are imagining a world free from State terror, where prisons, the police, and the military apparatus are abolished. This work would be impossible without the countless Black people who have sacrificed their very lives in the pursuit of justice and freedom. But this is not all we have to be thankful for. Black people deserve to live, period. Regardless of presumed innocence or guilt, of contributions or failures. Black lives matter because Black people are people, and we, as white people and as white academics, have to do better.

I am utterly and totally indebted to the culture of Black intellectuals who have helped me enormously both in my ignorance and in the task at hand. It is shameful that we live in a world where someone like me has to be taught about how anti-Blackness has been inscribed at every level of our societies, but it is even more shameful that there are people who still are not listening. I cannot begin to express the depth to which I feel gratitude for the opportunities I have had to learn from Black people of all walks of life, especially from Black women. To Dr. Fabiola Henri, who completely changed my entire outlook on the field of linguistics and gave me a much deeper understanding of the nature of colonialism. To Dr. Nicole R. Holliday

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> I think that gets at one of the fundamental ethical questions/problems/crises for the West: the status of difference and the status of the other. It's as though in order to come to any recognition of common humanity, the other must be assimilated, meaning in this case, utterly displaced and effaced: "Only if I can see myself in that position can I understand the crisis of that position." That is the logic of the moral and political discourses we see everyday - the need for the *innocent* black subject to be victimized by a racist state in order to see the racism of the racist state. You have to be exemplary in your goodness...
> – Hartman & Wilderson III (2003): 189

The so-called "post-colonial" world in which we live finds us all searching for meaning in our own identities from a place of loss. "Finding ourselves" in relation to each other in a world after the fall and transformation of chattel slavery has left us with a number of questions that have yet to find their proper answers. For the colonizers, we are left with a social reckoning that many of us are unprepared to answer to, let alone realize the roles we all continue to play in sustaining the colonial structures that our ancestors helped build. For the colonized, the tension between permeating colonial expectations and the authentic reality of life pre-colonization remains a significant site of interrogation for many scholars searching for what it means to be a post-colonized subject. In many instances, the struggle for freedom against the colonizer is only the first step in reconciling a post-colonial present with a pre-colonial past, particularly in the significant cultural erasure inherent to the colonial powers' *mission civilisatrice*. The reconciliation of these tensions, in particular in their relation to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, have brought numerous Black scholars like Saidiya V. Hartman (cf. Hartman 1997), Hortense Spillers (cf. Spillers 1987), bell hooks (cf. hooks 1990), Angela Davis (cf. Davis 1983), Frank B. Wilderson, III (cf. Wilderson 2020), Frantz Fanon (cf. Fanon & Philcox 2004), and Achille Mbembe (cf. Mbembe & Dubois 2017) into conversation with each other to envision their lives both in response to and beyond the realm of colonization. One site of special interest was, and continues to be, that of language. Even for those who do not directly engage with meta-discourse about language in their theory, the mysteries and curiosities of language have proven to be nigh inescapable for scholars theorizing about race.

One aspect of this that has been especially striking for me is the prevalence and persistence of seemingly diametrically opposed language ideologies[1] that are able to co-exist simultaneously within the same cultures and societies. In the French example, the relation between *la Métropole* and *les territoires* is seen by the colonizer as much the same as the relation between a parent and a rebellious child; France, with its *Académie française*, is the arbiter of hegemonic, prescriptively "correct" French, while its colonized territories, both former and current, are seen as pushing up against

this notion with their "créoles". As a matter of continued public debate, these creole languages are often viewed by the French citizenry as non-standard bastardizations of the French language. In other words, it's French, but French spoken incorrectly through "ignorance". Yet, despite this, the typological status of these languages as they are known by linguists is not as dialectal variants of Metropolitan French but rather as French-based or French-lexified creoles. In case after case, the languages that often receive prestige due to their status as culturally significant to the places where they are spoken (creoles), are in turn minoritized due to the predominance of French. For example, in the case that is best known to me, while most Haitians speak Haitian Creole (Kreyòl as it is known to speakers) monolingually, the language of education and government in Haiti is French. This policy subtly reinforces the ideology that while Kreyòl may be a source of national pride, French is the "superior" language that will get you ahead in life. This tension between intracommunal cultural prestige and global status tends to be the lot creole languages are given across the globe. If we turn our attention to a language more close to home, for instance, we see similar parallels.

African American Language (AAL), is a language spoken predominately (though not exclusively and certainly not universally) by the descendants of the African people who were forced into slavery in what is now the United States of America. Like Kreyòl, it is a language that is simultaneously praised and denigrated by speakers. And additionally, it faces extreme social stigma at the hands of non-speakers who often view the language as being the "uneducated" speech of Black Americans (cf. Coates 2009). Despite this, the language has a certain reputation for being associated with the "cool", the "subversive", and the "underground" (R. Graham 2015). However, unlike Kreyòl, both intracommunal and global opinion on African American English varies widely. If one was to conduct a survey of all Black Americans, you'd likely find a variety of Black Americans who see AAL as a source of pride and cultural heritage. Likewise, you'd find a variety of Black Americans who view the language in a negative light. In comparison, you'd likely find white Americans and a number of non-Black people of color who feel that they, too, hold "ownership" of some of the linguistic and sociocultural elements of AAL, just as you are likely to find that they denigrate it.

The maelstrom created by the tension these varying viewpoints inspire makes it all the more difficult to talk about AAL without first addressing the profoundly challenging social life the language leads. All of these ideologies lend themselves well to a broader conversation about the status and typology of AAL. On the one hand, the promulgation of ideologies about African American Language (or African American English, African American Vernacular English, Ebonics, etc.) being "*like* its own language" provide many speakers avenues to historicize aspects of their own language use in order provide a sense of legitimacy to the language. On the other hand, speakers of Mainstream United States English (MUSE), invested in the imperialist dominance of English, work to delegitimize AAL as a language by directly influencing language policy and language attitudes about AAL. All too often speakers of the dominant, colonial language link deviance from the prescriptive framework they have created for the language to deviance from broader social systems, in turn suggesting that

derivation from the linguistic norm is suggestive of criminality or deviancy (Ronkin & Karn 1999).

The difficulty for the linguist, then, is to find the middle ground between dispelling rumors and half-truths about language and more specifically, AAL, while providing resources for AAL speakers to advocate for language policy that benefits rather than harms them. In the fight for linguistic justice, the work of the linguist is invaluable. Therefore, it is from this standpoint that I conduct this thesis, in the hopes that it will allow future scholars of AAL, particularly those who were born and raised speaking it, a descriptive basis for conducting their own research on the subject. I see this project as the "grunt work" for more complex and more nuanced work, and so I have documented every aspect of the research project here. To future researchers, take whatever you need and run with it – reach out to myself or the members of my committee if you need anything else.

This linguistic description of intonation in Princeville, NC utilizes the Corpus of Regional African American Language (CORAAL) to answer two specific questions:

1. What do the intonational patterns look like acoustically for speakers of AAL in the Princeville section of the CORAAL?

2. Is intonation the salient linguistic feature for identifying a speaker as Black vs. non-Black?

To do this, the phonetic analysis software, Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2019), is used to identify f0 features (average, minimum, and maximum) in addition to the time elapsed of each utterance in the corpus. The following section is a literature review covering the topics of race and racialization, creole languages and creolization, and intonation as it relates specifically to this project. As these topics are considerably broad and have entire fields dedicated to their study, these sections are meant to be an overview rather than a comprehensive and exhaustive list of every detail, discussion, and debate within these fields. The section after this deals with the project's data including: how this project came to be, what procedures were used to collect, collate, and create the description you see here, the intonational description of the Princeville CORAAL data, and a discussion of the implications this description has on the research questions. Finally, this thesis concludes with a discussion of potential confounding variables on the data and future research directions, with some suggestions of ways to build on the description found here.

CHAPTER 2.   Creoleness, Racialization, and the Science of Prosody

> The objective was prominent; if we wanted to apprehend this Caribbean civilization in its American space, we had to abandon screams, symbols, sensational comminations, and turn away from the fetishist claim of a universality ruled by Western values in order to begin the minute exploration of ourselves, made of patiences, accumulations, repetitions, stagnations, obstinacies, where all literary genres (separately or in the negation of their limits) as well as the transversal (and not just pedantic) use of all human sciences would take their share.
> – Bernabé et al. (1990): 84

> Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.
> – Fanon & Markmann (2000): 18

Despite our best efforts, language as a structure cannot be separated from language as a social system. The very ideologies we take as given about language are undergirded by our assumptions and beliefs not only of language as a grammatical system (we are, after all, linguists), but by the prevailing, systemic, and hegemonic culture surrounding language users. Therefore, it seems prudent to me that any investigation, no matter how intricate or niche, into a specific feature of a language system must first begin with a grounding in that language's social reality. What influences and inspires the language to change? What are the sociohistorical moments that have played a role in generating the language as we see, hear, speak and sign it today? What is the language's status, and what role does it play in the society/-ies where it is spoken? These questions help us as language researchers and language scientists develop a more complete picture and a deeper understanding of the intricacies at play as they concern the particulars of any given language. It would be impossible, however, for any single researcher on any given research project to answer, past the limits of doubt, even one of these guiding questions. Each question, alone, forms a formidable sub-field where researchers have dedicated their lives to trying to solve these mysteries. The broader we draw these questions out, the more complicated they become, and the more difficult it becomes to answer them within the bounds of a formalized document like the master's thesis. Therefore, what I will attempt to do with this literature review will not be to solve all of the complications we find facing language, society, and culture, but to showcase the enormous complexity of these questions as they pertain to the specificities provided by the current project. That is to say, I will not be providing a full overview of everything written on language, culture, and society, nor will I be painting a picture of the field in such broad

strokes. Neither will I try to document everything that has been published on race, creole languages and creolization, or prosody. Instead, this section will be dedicated to providing a concise look at the research that has informed my own thinking and made this project possible.

This literature review is organized into three distinct parts. While all three parts are delicately interwoven in reality, I have organized them here from what could be considered the most "basic" element to the most "complex" one. First, I address the concept of race – specifically, how race became a prevailing identificatory category. For this, I will address the origins of the white race and how, then, whiteness hierachicalized and oppositionalized non-whiteness, and in particular, Blackness. From here, I will talk about how individuals are "raced" in the US context, and how this process of racialization affects our understanding of race. Second, I will discuss some theories of creolization and creole genesis, focusing especially on the definition of a creole this project employs and how that applies to AAL. Finally, I will talk about what prosody is, what some of the different methodologies that exist for examining prosody are, and some of the research that has already been done on prosody as it relates to Black speakers.

2.1 Race and Racialization

In this section, I will outline the idea of race and the concept of racialization by talking about how the two came to be. By now, it is considered somewhat common knowledge in the sciences that race has little, if any, biological basis (cf. Thompson 2006, Smedley & Smedley 2005, hooks 1992). Rather, much like most instances of classification for humans, race is a social group with seeming phenotypical traces found within biological realities – that is to say, race isn't so much a neat scale in which people are organized by the color of their skin, facial features, body type, amount of body hair, etc., but that it is a complex system which moves and shifts with each culture's understanding of racial realities. In this way, the idea of ordered racial categories emerges not from a certain biological reality, but from the "interactions among [people] that cannot be predicted by mechanical laws" (Burkette & Kretzchmar Jr. 2018: 5). This, in part, is what makes race so difficult to define. What is considered "white" in one culture, for example, may not be considered "white" in another culture. In historian Theodore W. Allen's "The Invention of the White Race", Allen provides several examples of racial categories across space and time:

> In colonial Hispanic America, it was possible for a person, regardless of phenotype (physical appearance), to become "white" by purchasing a royal certificate of "whiteness." With less formality, but equal success, one may move from one "racial category" to another in today's Brazil where, it is said, "money whitens." On the other hand, in the United States the organizing principle of society is that no such "whitening" be recognized – whether "whitening" by genetic variation or by simple wealth. In 1890, a Portuguese emigrant settling in Guyana (British Guiana) would learn that he/she was not "white." But a sibling of that same person arriving

in the United States in that same year would learn that by a sea-change he/she had become "white." In the last Spanish census of Cuba, Mexican Indians and Chinese were classified as "white", but in 1907 the first United States census there classed these groups as "colored" (Allen 2017: 103-4).

It's evident from Allen's work that any understanding of race must emerge from a particular local context. The notion that race is something that can be perceived as epistemologically different from one locale to the next provides evidence that, in the words of W.E.B. DuBois, race "transcends" physical distinctions (DuBois 1897). In other words, if race were to be an in-born phenotypical reality, we would expect that any understanding of race would be based on global universals about race – the Portuguese emigrant from Allen's example therefore would always be typed as "white" or "not white" regardless of the geographic context.

From these geographically disparate examples, Allen moves to a brief description of how the concept of race has been aligned and re-aligned throughout U.S. history:

> According to Virginia law in 1860, a person with but three "white" grandparents was a Negro; in 1907, having no more than fifteen out of sixteen "white" great-great-grandparents entitled one to the same classification; in 1910, the limit was asymptotic: "every person in whom there is ascertainable any Negro blood ... [was to] be deemed a colored person." As of 1983, the National Center for Health Statistics was effectively following the 1910 Virginia principle by classifying any person as black if either of the parents was black. At the same time, in Texas the "race" classification was determined by the "race" of the father. Prior to 1970, a set of Louisiana court decisions dating back to the late 1700s had upheld the legal concept that "any traceable amount" of African ancestry defined a "Negro." In 1970, "racial" classification became the subject of hard bargaining in the Louisiana state legislature. The Conservatives held out for 1/64, but the "more enlightened" opposition forced a compromise at 1/32 as the requisite proportion of Negro forebears, a principle that was upheld by the state's Supreme Court in 1974. (Allen 2017: 104-5).

The definition of "race" as described by Allen through its instantiation by the State has wide-reaching consequences. At its base, being "raced" as "not-white" meant that "that any "white" man, however degraded, was the social superior of any African-American, however cultured and independent in means" (Allen 2017: 118). This provided a legal basis for such heinous and atrocious crimes as the rape of Black women ("the rape of a female slave was not a crime, but a mere trespass on the master's property", Allen 2017: 156), and the murder of Black people broadly ("manslaughter of a slave is not punishable ... "the killing of a negro" was not a felony, but upheld an award of damages to the owner of an African-American bond-laborer murdered by another "white" man", Allen 2017: 156-7). This legacy can be traced to today, particularly in instances of racial profiling such as the Stop-and-Frisk policies in New York City (cf. Bacher-Hicks & de la Campa 2020), or in the unequal

treatment of Black women in court cases where they were seen as neither exemplary of "women" nor "Black" as described by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in her revolutionary "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", which introduced intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989).

So, while Allen points out that the concept of race has a tendency to morph across space(s) and across time(s), "Blackness' too, is not a racial categorization that has remained static, particulary when it comes to self-identification. Blake (2016) in "Toward Heterogeneity: A Sociolingusitic Perspective on the Classification of Black People in the Twenty-First Century" provides readers with a two-page long chart of different terms that Black people have used to refer to themselves since the beginning of slavery and the colonization of the Americas. I have reproduced this chart in Table 2.1 below. It is worth noting that, in the article, Blake includes both relevant historical events and relevant linguistic events occurring at the time of each the of attested group names, however, for the sake of space, I have abbreviated this chart to include only the year, the name, and an attested usage of the name.

Table 2.1: Ethnic Group Names over Time from Blake (2016): 158

ABBREVIATED CHART FROM BLAKE (2016)		
Year	Ethnic group name	Attested uses
1619	**African**	African Episcopal Church
1808	**Colored**	NAACP
1877	**Negro**	American Negro Academy
1966	**Black**	Black History Week
1990s	**African American**	Nat'l Museum of AfAm History
2000s	**African American;**	World Summit of African
	Black;	Descendants
	African Descendant	
	(of African Descent)	

Just as the idea of whiteness has shifted, and indeed, the idea of who "gets" to be white, so too have ideas about being Black in America changed with the times. The chart from Blake provides a glimpse at important moments in the development of Black identity in the US – in fact, as Blake aligns important cultural and linguistic developments in her original article, you can trace the ways in which particular cultural moments (like emancipation or the Black Power Movement) directly influence how Black people refer to themselves and how they prefer to be called by those outside of their racial group. From the shift of being enslaved Africans to honoring the suffering of those enslaved ancestors by referring to your descendancy from them, to the persistence in preference for "Black" since it was first used in the 60s, and the falling out of favor of terms like "Colored" or "Negro", these point to a racial reality that, rather than fixed and never in flux, is constantly called into question, (re-)examined, and hotly debated.

In illustrating how "race" is conceptualized across spatial boundaries and time in the US, I hope to demonstrate how complex the idea of race is within the American imagination. A secondary goal is to show the impossibility of a biologically constituted "race". If "race" were a biological reality, we would expect there to be biological consistency across the globe. Instead, what we see is vastly different ideas of what it means to be "raced" based on particular cultural and societal notions of what race is. These notions, while informed broadly by global white supremacy and the age of colonialism, are nuanced region-specifically. Just as the idea of "whiteness" in Mexico differs from the idea of "whiteness" in South Africa, so too do the ideological entanglements surrounding race shift and change. Therefore, rather than speaking about how race is bounded by a particular sequence of DNA resulting in material traits that match up with what we think x or y race should look like, we must talk about how individuals and groups are racialized within the specific cultural context they find themselves within. And furthermore, we must talk about how that racialization includes, importantly, ideologies about language and how individuals within particular racialized contexts are expected to embody certain characteristics that are deemed emblematic of their socially-determined racial category.

Here, the metaphor of a panopticon becomes crucial in our understanding of how the processes which racialize the body are in turn used to racialize the voice. First posited in 1791 by Jonathan Bentham in *Panopticon, or The Inspection House* (Jennings et al. 2012) and further elaborated and abstracted by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1995), a "panopticon" is essentially a prison structure where the incarcerated are placed into cells and monitored by a single guard. This guard is placed into a centralized structure, with the prison cells facing out towards it (see Figure 2.1 below; the circle in the middle marked "B" represents the guard tower, while the nested green circles marked "C" represent the cells).
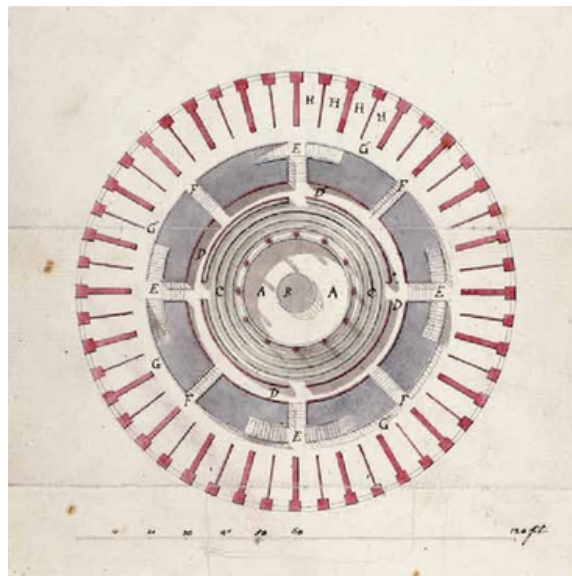

Figure 2.1: An elevated view of the panopticon prison (Bentham et al. 2017: 139).

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The idea behind this configuration of buildings is that, since the guard is unable to view all of the prisoners simultaneously, the prisoners are made to *believe* that they are being monitored at any given moment. As they can never know when the guard is watching, the prisoners are coerced into obeying the laws, rules, and regulations of the prison. Adding to this, in his historiography of the punitive systems of Europe, Foucault elaborates that rather than a physical structure, the hierarchical nature of Western society has historically constructed itself in such a way that society, itself, is organized analogous to this panopticon. Foucault draws on the history of the Black Plague in Europe, citing the monitoring and quarantining of the afflicted, as well as asylums, hospitals, and schoolhouses. In Foucault's analysis, at almost every level, any given European institution has the structure of a panopticon – that is to say, they have a central body (the State in the broadest sense; the doctors, educators, etc. in the more narrow sense) which "oversees" the governance and control of a more global populace.

This conceptualization of the panopticon can be applied to language, as well. On the one hand, there is a clear line that can be drawn between regulatory language maintenance bodies, such as the Académie française in France or the Real Academia Española in Spain, and the languages that they regulate[2]. These academies, in essence, monitor, control, and dictate the accepted forms of language, marking non-accepted and dialectal forms as marginal. On the other hand, a less clear line exists for languages without explicitly named regulatory bodies. Consider, for example, Mainstream English in the United States. While there isn't an analogy to the language academies of Europe in the U.S., language is still monitored, controlled, and assigned status. Nowhere is this more obvious than the Oakland Ebonics Controversy of the late 1990s.

The Oakland Ebonics Controversy revolved around the introduction of "ebonics" as a language of instruction in the Oakland School District (Rickford 1998). This was an effort to give students the opportunity to learn in a language that they understood and spoke at home, so that the "educational gaps" that are popularly aligned with Black culture and Black education, in particular, could be filled. In other words, educators in the Oakland School District believed that providing instruction in AAL would help bridge a gap between the student's knowledge of language and the subject areas they were responsible for knowing (in much the same way that language immersion classrooms work for L2 speakers of English). Despite their efforts to unite linguistic, sociological, and anthropological research on the subject, the decision to "meet students where they were at" in Oakland faced harsh, national public backlash. In 1997, at the height of the "controversy", a full-page ad was taken out by the National Head Start Association (NHSA)[3] in the New York Times emblazoned with the message "I Has a Dream" (see Figure 2.2 below) in order to demonstrate how the use of AAL in the classroom might have influenced Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech had he been taught using similar methods. Due to this public outcry, supporters in California were not able to convince the public of the importance and relevancy of teaching in AAL, and subsequently, Proposition 227 passed state legislature in 1997. This proposition mandated that "English learners [were] to be taught in English immersion classrooms", effectively banning dual im-

mersion programs on the whole in the state of California (see Hopkinson 2017 for a brief review of the policy and recent developments).

Figure 2.2: Full-page ad taken out by the NHSA in the New York Times, 1997 (Russo 2018).

This mirrors the ways panopticism is discussed in the Foucauldian interpretation. The presumed fear here was that students would be learning a variety of "broken English", and despite linguistic evidence to the contrary (cf. Rickford & Rickford 2000), they would not be receiving the same quality of instruction as students who are speakers of more mainstream varieties of English. However, the very perception of AAL as "broken English" prejudges speakers as deviant from a perceived and idealized "standard" form of English – for example, the kind that is taught in schools. Thus, just as victims of the plague were policed by their neighbors and reported to the authorities for deviance from the State's commands so that they could receive the appropriate punishments, so too were (and are) speakers of AAL punished in the panopticon of education through the denial of AAL as an intelligent linguistic system, and through the shuttering of resources meant to bridge the alleged achievement gaps facing Black students.

The process of denying Black and other speakers of AAL access to education in their home variety is permeated with a number of ideological mudslides that construct an image of AAL as being something that is precisely on the periphery of US society. This includes both denigrating AAL as something that is dangerous, associated with the "hoods" and "ghettoes" that are assigned to Black speakers by the white populace at large (cf. S. L. Lanehart 2001 or S. Lanehart 2015 for discussions on this), and adopting AAL to mark oneself as being "cool" or as belonging to a particular group (cf. Bucholtz 2011 for one example of this). Black speakers of AAL are bound between

seemingly polar opposite ideologies: one that sees their language as commodity, as something "in" (but, importantly, only when white people "discover" it) and another that sees their language as something inherently dangerous. After all, the myth of the "angry Black woman" is a myth predicated on our understanding of her language use as aggressive, accusatory, and oftentimes violent.

It stands to reason that, like the physical bodies we inhabit, our voice is a material part of our "being". If this holds true, we must then ask if there is ever a point in which the voice, as both a physical object in that it produces audible soundwaves and as a ephemeral object in that it transmits the ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. of the person to whom it belongs, can ever be disembodied from the colonial subjects who use it. That is to say, can we truly separate one's voice from the material circumstances from which that voice is generated? In decontextualizing both the act of speech and the event where speech occurs, we remove the context that has generated a particular voice; when we remove what is said from the who, when, how, and why, we may be able to accurately describe what is happening in terms of the bare, linguistic reality, but we fail to account for any of the reasons that an utterance might have been produced. This is particularly true when we consider that languages which are exceptionally marked are not marked because of some innate and arbitrary understanding of a particular feature, but because speakers of a dominant language – be that a dialect, a so-called "prestige variety", or something else entirely – "otherize" speakers of non-dominant language by aligning salient differentiations between the two (or more) languages with ideological constructs that describe the character of the people who speak them.

Think of children's media, for example. In Disney-Pixar's animated film, *Cars*, Mater the Tow Truck is both loveable and charming, while still being a source of frustration for the main characters through his incompetence and seeming lack of intelligence (which, for the audience, is supposed to be a source of comic relief). Mater is voiced by Larry the Cable Guy, who makes use of Southern English features and the subsequent stereotypes associated with them to bring his character to life. Compare this to the film's protagonist, Owen Wilson's Lightning McQueen, who speaks only in Mainstream US English. In another animated film by Disney, *The Lion King* employs the voices of Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin to bring life to Shenzi and Banzai, the villainous hyenas who are also a source of comic relief in the films tenser moments. Goldberg and Marin voice their characters using features of AAL and Chicano English, while Simba, the film's primary protagonist, is voiced entirely in Mainstream US English. These ideologies are spoon-fed to us through entertainment from an early age (Lippi-Green 2012), yet, these contemporary films are not emblematic of recent cinematographic trends. Rather, they exemplify a relationship between what is considered to be "entertainment" and what ideologies are popular surrounding identity groupings like race, ethnicity, and region at a given period of time. For example, if we turn our attention to the beginning of the 20th century, minstrel-like caricatures of Black people like the image on the postcard featured in Figure 2.3 were widely circulated in various forms of media, helping to construct images of Black people as "simple" and "unintelligent". Moreover, when Black people were depicted in film and television at this time, it was often by white actors per-

forming in Blackface (Abramovitch 2019). So, rather than reflecting any true reality of Blackness, media reified, inscribed, and reflected the prevailing, predominant ideologies about Blackness and Black people at the time the piece of media was created or produced. The same is true about *Cars* and *The Lion King* in today's world.

Figure 2.3: A postcard in the public domain, credited to the Ullman MFQ, New York c. 1909.

Media bias and depictions are but one example of the social implications of race that are still prescient in our societies today (Smedley & Smedley 2005). For example, we are able to sort individuals into racial categories that fall in line with popularly accepted racial identities with relatively little linguistic input (you can find a discussion of this in Holliday (2016b), or in McGowan (2011)). Again, this is not something that is biologically programmed into us – for example, we aren't born knowing what makes an "Asian voice" sound Asian to us – but instead is socially inscribed in us through repeated exposure to ideologies about race. The fact that we are able to assign a "Black-sounding voice" to a person who identifies as Black does not suggest that there is something essential that a "Black voice" must have in order to be authentically Black, but rather that there are features of Blackness that we connote with "sounding Black". These features are often stereotypical, as well. We might describe a Chinese-accented speaker as sounding "sing-songy" or a Black-sounding speaker as "sounding baritone", and voices that fall outside of these racial categories often confuse our pre-programmed ideas about race.

Take, for example, Sonja Fix's work on white speakers of AAL. When rated on voice alone, the more these speakers aligned with notions of "Black-sounding voices", the more they were identified as belonging to a "Black" racial category (Fix 2011). Does this suggest a fluidity to racial categories? Chances are that it doesn't, as matched-guise studies have suggested that there are multi-modal, semiotic cues that extend beyond the voice and inform our racial categories (McGowan 2011). To complicate matters further, however, with solely spoken linguistic input as we saw in

Fix's study, it's possible to be misread as a race you are not. What, then, does this suggest? In my opinion, it suggests that linguistic systems can be acquired wholesale by certain speakers such that their voices, devoid of other semiotic information, can be categorized as "sounding racially Other", despite any reality to the contrary. This, of course, goes beyond the conversation about race and racialization happening here to encompass all instances of self/other, in-group/out-group binaries, such as gender, class, sexuality, nationality, age, (dis)ability, etc. For the purposes of this project, how this fits in with the idea of race and racialization is of particular importance, however, it must be said that this focus does not preclude the importance of these other identity categories.

2.2 CREOLES AND CREOLIZATION

The project of classifying African American Language (or one of the many other names it is/has been known by such as African American (Vernacular) English, Black English, Ebonics, etc.) is filled with complications and nuances. Just as there are many different types of linguists, so are there different theories as to where AAL originates from. For most scholars, one things is agreed upon: at some point in its history, AAL was a creole (Baugh 1999). The debate, then, can be boiled down to those who believe that AAL has "decreolized" and has shifted to become a – albeit particularly racially marked – dialect of Mainstream United States English, and those who believe that, definitionally, AAL has never lost its status as a creole language. To complicate matters further, our understanding of how AAL fits into the larger linguistic picture of the world's languages has morphed and evolved in tandem with our burgeoning understandings of creole languages (cf. S. Lanehart 2015 for a discussion of this). That is to say, as linguists have proposed new taxonomies and hierarchies for the classification of creole languages from a typological standpoint, so too has AAL been classified and reclassified along the definitional boundaries that came with these new systems.

Seemingly, this tension between creole and dialect is regulated strictly to the academic arena. It should be that speakers without an investment in the realm of linguistics as a discipline don't care whether the language they're speaking is a dialect of English or a creole, but folk ideologies of language (and their consequences) tell us that this distinction is an important one, especially for speakers. There is a popular ideology that, for reasons of cultural, political, and social significance, speakers often invoke when speaking about AAL: "it's like we have our own language" (M. Graham 2020). Furthermore, as the link between AAL and Black speakers is deeply ingrained in public imaginations of language in the US, regardless of linguistic validity, the question of whether AAL is a creole or a dialect is an extremely fraught political question – one in which a classification as one or the other could mean the difference between access to the same rights and privileges as white speakers of Mainstream US English or the denial thereof. Therefore, in any work dealing with AAL, it is of vital importance that this debate be addressed, and any typological classification of AAL be carefully, deliberately, and cautiously considered. For the reasons that will be outlined in this section of this paper and in further sections, I will be discussing AAL

primarily as being an English-lexified creole, with heavy influence from contact with other English varieties. For a more complete overview of the typological classification of AAL and debates surrounding it, I suggest that readers see Holliday (2016b), S. Lanehart (2015), or Poplack & Tagliamonte (2001).

One of the most popular conceptualizations of pidgins and creole languages is dubbed the "Pidgin to Creole Lifecycle Model". Each linguist who uses this model has a different spin on it, but at its core, it follows the same schema. First, a situation of contact happens wherein nobody shares a common tongue. Then, a "code" or jargon develops – individual words become mutually intelligible through a common or shared semantic range, but lack a set syntactic structure. As more and more speakers begin to use the jargon, a pidgin develops, wherein a syntactic structure begins to be applied to the words that made up this pre-pidgin "code". This is where linguists begin to differ on what happens next. In Figure 2.4 below, Walczyński (2012) identifies two possibilities: for some reason, usually social, the speakers of the pidgin stop using the language and the language effectively "dies"; or, speakers could extend and expand upon the pidgin, giving it more linguistic complexity in the form of increasingly complex grammatical structures. From here, the pidgin can then either be folded back into the lexifier language (also called the "superstrate" by some linguists), thus becoming a dialect of the lexifier language; or it can be acquired as a first language by the children of the pidgin speakers, and thus a creole is born. Wałczyński points out that at each stage of this process, the opportunity for language death looms ever present. This can be for a number of different reasons, for example, during the colonization of Africa by the French, British, Portuguese and Belgians, language policies enforced by the colonists pushed colonial subjects to speak the language of the colonizers to varying degrees. Failure to do so resulted in varying levels of violence.
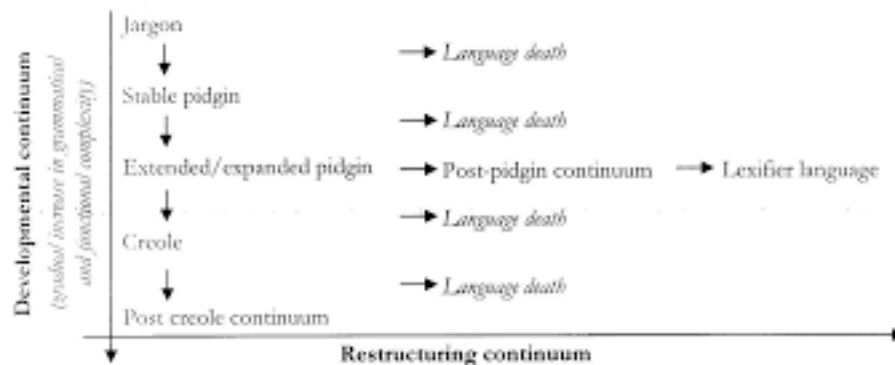
Figure 2.4: The Pidgin-Creole Lifecycle Model (Wałczyński 2012)

Ultimately, this theory of creole genesis has been heavily critiqued and debated. Some creolists, like Michel DeGraff, note that this model extends into theories of creole exceptionalism, wherein creoles are given "special" status outside the realm of "normal" languages and are thus phylogentically or typologically difficult to classify (i.e., they belong to a phylum unto themselves: the "Creole" language family)

(DeGraff 2003). Aside from cordoning off creole and pidgin languages from typological surveys (and by extension, limiting the amount of information we can draw from in forming typological universals), DeGraff notes the sociocultural effects of such theorizing, as well. Of creole exceptionalism, he states that it "begins with the epistemological baggage that is entailed by the very term "Creole" and its derivative "creolization"" (2003: 391). For DeGraff, this "epistemological baggage" is rooted in the history of colonialism and colonization from which creole languages arose. He goes on to state that:

> ... both terms have long been taken to involve *sui generis* linguistic-structural and cognitive-developmental properties that have no equivalent in the synchrony and diachrony of "normal" languages [...] This exceptionalist baggage, a legacy of the race-theoretical assumptions that were promoted as part and parcel of Europe's *mission civilisatrice* [civilizing mission] in Africa and the Americas, has been forcefully dragged across time and space, and it is still central to much work in contemporary creolistics, independent of theoretical orientation (2003: 391).

So, rather than developing from some sort of jargon or in other words, from nothing to something, creole languages develop in much the same way that other extant languages have done. That is to say, from a common ancestor, new languages emerge. If we were to extend this to another example, the trajectory of Proto-Indo-European into the many branches of the Indo-European family (Slavic, Germanic, Italic, etc.), and then finally into the many languages we are familiar with today (Russian, Polish, German, English, French, Italian, etc.), follows much the same process as creole genesis is theorized to be by linguists like DeGraff (2003).

In spite of criticism, the understanding of creole genesis as a lifecycle has persisted, with changes introduced due to a number of theoretical considerations and pitfalls. Criticizing this position for the reasons outlined above, DeGraff postulates that, rather than insular language isolates (or languages of the type "pidgin" and "creole"), creole languages are descended from the lexifier language just as English is descended from (Proto-)Germanic. Salikoko Mufwene, in his seminal work *The Ecology of Language Evolution*, suggests that creole speakers select grammatical features from a so-called "feature pool" – essentially the collection of all available features from all of the contributing languages (2001). Other linguists, have proposed concepts surrounding notions of hybridity and merged grammars (see Bickerton (2016) or McWhorter (2011)), wherein creoles emerge from a combination of two (or more) grammars from the contributing languages[4].

What's important here is not that there are a multitude of theories about creole genesis, but that these theories suggest something about the *linguistic* nature of creole genesis. In other words, rather than aligning creole genesis with a sociocultural or historic reason for existence, they attempt to point to how language might have evolved in order to become a creole. This is important, as it helps draw broader conclusions about how humans might have acquired language, but there's an aspect to this that complicates defining creole languages – namely, the differences between

creole languages that have emerged more contemporarily and creole languages that have emerged at some point in the past. This suggests that, perhaps, there are other avenues we can pursue in terms of defining what makes a creole language, "creole".

One such avenue has been pioneered by linguists like Fabiola Henri. Building off of the work of linguists like DeGraff (2003), Henri brings new data and arguments to the conception that creoles could have emerged from a particular socio-historical moment – namely, from colonization and slavery. Using evidence from naive discriminative learning (Baayen et al. 2016) and the tense, mood, and aspect markings of French-lexified creole languages, Henri suggests a theory of creolization that moves beyond its purely linguistic or typological roots to examine creole and pidgin languages as existing within complex realities – realities that are shaped by the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which they emerge (cf. Henri 2017). This creates a view of creoles that moves beyond a "theoretical underpinning [of] [...] Eurocentric linguistics" (DeGraff 2019) which views creoles as "the youngest and least complex languages in the world", in order to do linguistic analysis that is more equitable and accurate to the linguistic reality of creole and pidgin speakers.

I join with linguists who see the colonial history of the United States, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the subsequent role of Black people in the creation and establishment of American Culture and employ Henri's theory of creolization to look at what has been called many things, but that I will be referring to as African American Language.

2.3 PROSODY

Fundamentally, the study of prosody is the study of suprasegmental features (cf. Zsiga 2013). This includes everything from the study of how individual phonemes combine into syllables or morae, to the study of larger units of speech (and sign) like tone, stress, rhythm, or intonation. For this project – the study of intonation, how pitch varies and fluctuates across time in a given utterance – is the object of study. Typically, projects of this type utilize methods found either in phonetics (i.e. Gaudio 1994) or phonology (i.e. Féry 2018). Studies of the latter usually make use of the Tones and Breaks Indices (ToBI) system in order to annotate and analyze the pitch contours of running speech (Beckman et al. 2005). Intonational studies making use of methods in phonetics normally utilize fundamental frequency (f0) measurements through acoustic analysis software like Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2019). These measurements include the minimum and maximum f0 which correlates roughly to the pitch range, and the average f0 which indicates a static measurement of pitch for a given interval – in other words, where the pitch is located within the pitch range for a particular utterance. Which approach you take to examining intonation depends largely on what sort of questions you're interested in answering and what type of data you have to work with.

For example, phonological approaches to intonation can handle a wide range of spontaneous and elicited data as ToBI was designed with large corpora in mind (Beckman et al. 2005). Phonetic approaches to intonation, however, will typically use experimental, laboratory-generated data because the acoustic analysis software used in

phonetics is not sensitive enough to pick up on certain subtleties present in more naturally occurring speech, such as the difference between speakers in instances of speech overlap. It should be noted, however, that while a phonological approach to studying intonation is open to more kinds of data, the ToBI system is not universally applicable (cf. Maekawa et al. 2002). This makes robust and comprehensive typological comparison difficult from this angle of phonological analysis. On the other hand, the methodology for f0 measurements is generally universal, even if the expectations for "normal" f0 measurements differ interlingually (Traunmüller & Eriksson 1994). The ease of robust typological analysis that acoustic description provides is a strong motivator for its use in this project.

Another motivator relates to a curious finding between production and perception experiments when asking questions about the relationship between identity categories and f0 correlates. Essentially, what these studies find is that while there are strong ties to the perception of a particular identity (e.g. listeners are able to correctly identify someone as being straight or gay with high levels of accuracy (Levon 2006, Gaudio 1994)) solely based on linguistic input, there is little phonetic difference between one group and the other intonationally. In other words, for speakers who share all but one identity category, there usually isn't a significant difference in f0 measurements between them, but listeners are still able to accurately sort speakers into their respective identity categories based on hearing their voice alone. To complicate matters further, listeners are often unable to specifically name what feature of a speaker's speech led them to correctly identify the aspect of the speaker's identity in question. In Gaudio (1994), listeners offered differences in intonation as marking someone as gay or straight[5], but in perception studies specifically asking questions about race, the participants pointed less decisively towards intonation as the cause of one categorization over the other. Thomas & Reaser (2004), for example, survey a number of previously conducted perception studies with AAL and find that: 1) familiarity with AAL seems to play a role in ease of identification for listeners; and, 2) listeners seem to be drawing on a number of linguistic cues to identify someone's race, as attempts to emphasize or focus one linguistic cue over another did not seem to hamper listener accuracy when identifying a speaker's race.

To further complicate this, Burdin (2019) in her paper, "The perception of macrorhythm in Jewish English intonation" , finds that listeners who belong to the same group as speakers (in this case, Jewish listeners evaluating Jewish speakers) associate their shared identity with finer grained linguistic features than do listeners who do not belong to the same group as speakers (non-Jewish listeners evaluating Jewish speakers). Furthermore, in his dissertation, Reed (2016) found that a speaker's identity and their ties to a particular place – namely, whether or not they identified as belonging to said place – influenced whether prosodic features looked like those in the community or diverged significantly. What this suggests is that speakers are aware of these intonational features both to the degree that they can recognize it in the speech of interlocutors *and* in their own speech to the point that they can modify it as a means of (dis-)belonging.

Unfortunately, this link between prosody and identity also means that the prosodic system facilitates the racialization of speakers, subsequently opening them up to

the material consequences being raced provides. Purnell et al. (1999), for example, finds that speakers seeking housing were discriminated against for speaking AAL or Chicano English. They note that due to differences in the intonational systems between these languages and Mainstream US English, listeners were able to quickly identify the race of speakers. More recently, Craft et al. (2020) reviewed research on language discrimination in education, media, employment, legal systems, housing markets, and health care, finding (again) that speakers racialized as non-white were met with unequal outcomes in comparison to their white peers. Thus, intonation is not just of socio-cognitive interest in that humans are surprisingly adept at sorting people into categories through linguistic stimuli alone, but it is also of interest to racial justice in understanding how intonation can mark speakers as racially Other, opening them up to the consequences of white supremacy[6].

CHAPTER 3. **The Data**

> Practice is not just things we do, but rather bundles of activities that are
> the central organization of social life.
> - Pennycook (2010): 2

As previously mentioned, this thesis serves as a means of collating everything that went into completing this project. Therefore, this methods section will be somewhat atypical in that, rather than just providing straightforward information about what was done to the data in this description, I'd like to also go through how my thinking evolved leading up to the description you will read in the next section.

My interest for this project began around the same time I became interested in the properties of AAL as a language. I grew up speaking it with my friends in Southern California, but once I had moved to Idaho as a preteen, I quickly stopped using it among my new, mostly white peer group. As I went to college and began learning about French and the various creole languages that were influenced by it, I returned to AAL and wondered why it hadn't been receiving equal treatment in comparison to its French compatriots. Despite having remarkably similar origin stories, AAL was even considered by linguists to be something like a "highly marked variety of English". This is what led me to actually look into the origins of AAL and what linguists, and particularly Black linguists, were saying about it. If Section 2.2 wasn't any indicator, the results were incredibly complicated. I felt like I didn't really understand what was happening until I met Dr. Fabiola Henri and she told me about the definition of a creole being "a language emerging out of a specific sociohistorical moment (slavery)". For those unfamiliar with the debates, this definition may seem like something simple, but it has profoundly shifted the way I approach looking at creole languages and, coming from studying colonization as a French undergrad, connected more than a few of the floating puzzle pieces rotating around in my head. From this point of departure, I began planning what eventually became what you are reading now.

Originally, I had intended for this project to look at AAL as it is spoken by speakers in Appalachia. This would have involved an experimental component wherein I'd have participants read an excerpt from a play, tell a story from a wordless picture book, and then tell me about something funny that had happened to them recently. I have used this methodology before in an unpublished pilot study on the intonation patterns of gay and straight men with some success and thought the experimental design would lend itself well to the questions I was after (namely, what does the intonation of Black AAL speakers influenced by Appalachian English look like and how does that compare to more widespread varieties of AAL like Southern AAL?). However, I quickly ran into problems with this in that I did not really have connections to any Black Appalachian communities, and more immediately concerning, I didn't have money to pay any participants. While I'm sure I could find those who'd be willing to participate without getting paid, as a white, non-Appalachian researcher looking at two extraordinarily marginalized languages and language communities, it

did not feel right for me to try. So, I modified the project so that instead of looking at Black Appalachian speakers of AAL, I was looking at Black Southern speakers of AAL using data that would have represented my control group in the previous design (CORAAL's Princeville files).

I encountered a slightly different problem shortly after completing my literature review – that of scope. It is incredibly difficult to find anything to research and to make the project: 1) narrow enough so that it can be manageable and actually answer the question(s) you set out to answer; and 2) broad enough so that you actually have something to talk about. My problem was that the project started out too broad and I had to make the (very) difficult decision on what I would need to leave out. At this stage of development, the thing I ended up setting aside for a future project was a learnability model based on the CORAAL Princeville dataset. In line with much of the work Dr. Henri has done for French-based creoles, I was hoping to create a learnability model for AAL that demonstrated similar or identical patterns of acquisition of prosody for AAL speakers as there were for grammatical features in languages like Mauritian Creole. Fortunately for me, the completion of this project facilitates a much simpler and more comprehensible future project where the learnability model is the focus rather than just a component.

3.1 Methods

For this project, I have used data from the Corpus of Regional African American Language (CORAAL) hosted at the University of Oregon (*The Corpus of Regional African American Language: PRV (Princeville, NC 2004)* 2018) in order to answer the following questions:

- What does the intonation pattern look like acoustically for participants in the Princeville section of the CORAAL?

- Is intonation the salient feature that identifies a speaker as Black or non-Black?

More specifically, I have used data from the Princeville, North Carolina survey in order to analyze the f0 measurements of the corpus' participants. In terms of geographic background, Princeville is the first town in the US to be incorporated by Black people (van Hofwegen 2010). It is a majority Black community in Central North Carolina (Kendall 2009)[7]. This part of the CORAAL hosts interviews from 16 participants: 9 women and 7 men. The participants are split into three age groups: the first being participants below the age of 29; the second being participants between 30 and 50 years old; and the third being participants over the age of 51. These are denoted by the labels Ag1 for the first age group, Ag2 for the second age group, and Ag3 for the third age group. The gender distinction between participants is denoted by an F for female participants and an M for male participants. Finally, participants are assigned a number within their age and gender groups to identify them from one another. This number is arbitrary and does not necessarily correlate to a meaningful distinction between participants.

The corpus comes pretagged into uninterrupted utterances bounded by pauses of 60-70ms. For the sake of replication, I have preserved this tagging system in my description, though this is by no means considered to be "best practice" in intonation studies, which typically make use of much smaller intonational phrases (IP). In total, there are 18,331 tokens that make up this description. This breaks down into 4,463 tokens from Ag1, 5,440 tokens from Ag2, and 8,428 tokens from Ag3. A further token breakdown by individual participant can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.1: Tokens by Age Group and Gender

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Num. of Tokens
1	F	01	1307
1	F	02	1114
1	M	01	796
1	M	02	1246
2	F	01	1090
2	F	02	1538
2	F	03	156
2	M	01	1281
2	M	02	1375
3	F	01	1247
3	F	02	1732
3	F	03	656
3	F	04	1342
3	M	01	1786
3	M	02	953
3	M	03	712
			18331 total

From here, the phonetic analysis software Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2019) was used to analyze the average, minimum and maximum f0 for each utterance. As instructed by Styler in his introduction to the Praat software (Styler 2017), the window was restricted to reflect the "average pitch range in normal speech": 45 to 300Hz. As the Praat software isn't an omniscient and omnipotent god, this allows the software to reduce errors generated from misreading signals in the recording (i.e. from picking up background noise and mistaking it as part of the pitch signal which could potentially generate erroneous f0 measurements). Christian DiCanio's Praat script for extracting pitch values at timed intervals across a textgrid-aligned utterance (DiCanio 2007) was used to extract f0 measures across 12 equidistant points for each token. This script does not extract the average, minimum, and maximum f0 measurements produced by the Praat software, but rather samples specific points of the utterance and extracts the f0 measurement at that point. While there are scripts designed to extract this information from Praat, they are intended for use with much smaller intonational units. Since each utterance in the CORAAL contains multiple intonational phrases, this script is a more appropriate option because it does not have

to worry about competing readouts from multiple, separate IPs; although, because of this wide sampling, it is admittedly less accurate than more precise scripts which target Praat's f0 readouts specifically.

Removed from the description are tokens consisting solely of extra- and paralinguistic sounds such as laughter or coughing. Tokens which contained these sounds but were not entirely comprised of them were left in for potential affective value. This, however, likely has a confounding effect on the description of Princeville AAL intonation patterns which will be discussed further in this paper's conclusion. Likewise, overlaps in speech were left to preserve token count, though this too likely has a confounding effect on the resulting description.

Tokens where the Praat script was unable to sample any f0 measurements were also removed. Impressionistically, these "null results" seemed to correlate with naturally occurring speech phenomena (i.e. coughing) that would fall outside of the Praat window restrictions set according to Styler's guidelines (2017). However, a more detailed analysis of these "null results" could potentially lead to fruitful discussions about the effects of phonation and/or affective type on intonation, both of which are important to the study of prosody (cf. Nielsen 2010, for one example) but are not considered in the current study.

From the data coallated by the Praat script, the average f0, average minimum f0, average maximum f0, and average time elapsed for each speaker was calculated. Additionally, the average rate of change was calculated using the following formula:

$$Rate\ of\ Change = \frac{\frac{m_2 - m_1}{t_e - t_s} + ... + \frac{m_{12} - m_{11}}{t_e - t_s}}{12}$$

where m = the measurement in Hz of f0 at that particular frame, t_e = the end time of the segment, t_s = the start time of the segment, and 12 = the amount of frames the Praat script sampled from across each segment. Results are displayed in Hz per second. This is not a measure typically included in intonational descriptions, but as the rate of change has been used to some success in perceptual studies (cf. Isaacs & Watson 2010), I have decided to include it in this description under the assumption that it correlates to shifts in pitch within the pitch range.

Finally, the standard deviation was calculated for each of the averages. This was done to check for statistical validity, as well as to see if more robust statistical testing would be necessary or beneficial to this intonational description.

3.2   Data Presentation and Discussion

To begin this description of the intonational patterns of AAL as it's spoken in Princeville, I'd like to start by outlining some general tendencies found in the data. First, the female participants tended to follow a more identifiable pattern when it came to average f0 measures than did their male counterparts, who had more variable measures. Female participants also tended to have a higher minimum and maximum f0, while this tended to be lower for the male participants. In terms of the rate of change, the female participants tended to have the higher rates of change on average.

Finally, for all participants, the average time elapsed for each utterance was between 1 and 2 seconds.

In terms of average f0, the female participants trended into two groups: one centered from 180Hz to 190Hz and one centered from 140Hz to 150Hz. This is shown in table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Average f0 (in Hz)

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Average f0
1	F	01	189.06
1	F	02	185.83
1	M	01	120.98
1	M	02	108.53
2	F	01	188.46
2	F	02	148.26
2	F	03	139.76
2	M	01	90.97
2	M	02	110.48
3	F	01	181.54
3	F	02	181.03
3	F	03	146.50
3	F	04	146.10
3	M	01	146.51
3	M	02	127.43
3	M	03	109.34

For the male participants, these numbers were a lot more variable in that they didn't necessarily fall into distinct groupings. This runs counter to what much of the prosodic research has suggested about the intonational patterns of men (cf. Gaudio 1994). The expected pattern here is for men to be much more static in terms of pitch and for women to have more variability. Moreover, we expect men to have lower average pitch than women, which is the case for the Princeville data. We would additionally expect age grading effects, however, they do not appear present here. There are, for example, similar measurements for men and women across age groupings. This could be due to a number of confounding factors which will be discussed at length in the following section.

For the average minimum f0, with the exception of one outlier, the participants followed typical pitch expectations for men and women. This can be seen in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Average Minimum f0 (in Hz)

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Avg Min f0
1	F	01	154.50
1	F	02	142.20
1	M	01	94.75
1	M	02	86.75
2	F	01	149.13
2	F	02	99.11
2	F	03	107.79
2	M	01	74.70
2	M	02	76.72
3	F	01	126.41
3	F	02	125.60
3	F	03	105.42
3	F	04	89.19
3	M	01	121.41
3	M	02	88.69
3	M	03	76.49

On the whole, women tended to have a higher average minimum f0 than did men. There does seem to be an age grading effect here in that, as female participants got older, their average minimum f0 lowered. This was not necessarily the case for male participants, as they seemed to stay relatively stable across age groupings. One participant, Ag3M01, is remarkable in that he had an average minimum f0 measurement higher than any other male participant in any of the age groupings. This could be due to methodological errors, but it should be noted that some researchers have suggested that the pitch range of Black men shifts upwards as they age (cf. Holliday 2016b for a discussion), thus, barring any confounding factors, this may be expected for male speakers of this age group.

Average maximum f0 measurements reveal similar expectations. The upper limit of the pitch range tends to be much higher on average for women than it does for men. This is shown in table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Average Maximum f0 (in Hz)

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Avg Max f0
1	F	01	221.71
1	F	02	220.37
1	M	01	146.20
1	M	02	135.11
2	F	01	224.46
2	F	02	194.52
2	F	03	173.59
2	M	01	113.96
2	M	02	155.23
3	F	01	225.41
3	F	02	226.66
3	F	03	187.20
3	F	04	207.88
3	M	01	172.57
3	M	02	169.34
3	M	03	158.12

Where this data diverges from expectations about the pitch of men and women is that there doesn't appear to be a group with a wider pitch range. What is typically expected is that women will have a wider pitch range than men (cf. Gaudio 1994), however, in this dataset it appears that pitch range varies widely between women and men across age groupings. For instance, Ag2M01 has a pitch range of roughly 40Hz, relatively small compared to the pitch range of Ag2F01 at 75Hz. This would represent some of the pitch ranges we'd expect from male and female speakers, yet, Ag2M02 has a pitch range of about 79Hz, 4Hz more than Ag2F01. Thus, these pitch ranges do not seem to follow the canonical trends that have come to be expected of pitch between men and women. In addition, there does not seem to be age grading effects here in that men and women both seem to have relatively stable maximum f0 measures across age groupings. The suggestion of age grading in the minimum f0 measures and the absence of that same suggestion here, however, leads me to believe that it's absence might be due to some confounding variable having an effect on the data.

As far as the average time elapsed for each utterance is concerned, both male and female participants took an average of 1 to 2 second per utterance. This can be seen in table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Average Time Elapsed (in seconds)

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Avg Time
1	F	01	1.70
1	F	02	2.01
1	M	01	1.90
1	M	02	1.18
2	F	01	1.44
2	F	02	1.60
2	F	03	1.65
2	M	01	0.91
2	M	02	1.71
3	F	01	1.84
3	F	02	1.74
3	F	03	1.70
3	F	04	1.86
3	M	01	1.35
3	M	02	1.93
3	M	03	1.32

Of particular note here is that these measures are significantly larger than the intonational phrases[8] that are used in most prosodic studies.

For the average rate of change, women tended to have a higher rate of change than did men. This is shown in table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Average Rate of Change (in Hz/s)

Age Group	Gender	Participant	Avg RoC
1	F	01	-1.60
1	F	02	-1.15
1	M	01	-0.90
1	M	02	0.15
2	F	01	-2.74
2	F	02	-1.26
2	F	03	-1.40
2	M	01	-0.20
2	M	02	-2.48
3	F	01	-3.33
3	F	02	-2.52
3	F	03	-2.64
3	F	04	-1.41
3	M	01	-0.59
3	M	02	-1.13
3	M	03	-1.39

This aligns with what we expect from female intonation patterns – namely, that the fluctuations in pitch within the pitch range are much more variable for women, and that they tend to be relatively static for men. Age grading effects seem to also be at play here, suggesting that the older women get, the more likely they are to fluctuate their pitch within their pitch range. Again, however, the male participants do not seem to follow this same trend. There appears to be somewhat of an effect between Ag1 and Ag3 which would suggest that men also tend to fluctuate their pitch within the pitch range to a higher degree as they get older, however, this is thrown into question by Ag3M01 who has a lower average rate of change than some of the male participants in Ag1. Likewise, Ag2 features both an outlier (Ag2M02) with the highest recorded average rate of change for men, and a participant with a similar rate of change to that of Ag1. It should be stated here that, if there are confounding variables in the calculation of average f0 and average minimum and maximum f0, those effects will likely carry over to the calculation of the rate of change, as they draw from the same sampling of f0 measurements.

Finally, the statistical validity of these measurements was tested by calculating their standard deviations. These are shown in table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7: Standard Deviations for Tables 3.2 - 3.6

Participant	Avg f0	Min f0	Max f0	Avg Time	Avg RoC
Ag1F01	23.67	32.03	35.06	1.01	10.91
Ag1F02	24.23	42.95	29.45	1.45	14.53
Ag1M01	20.91	21.92	32.73	1.42	7.87
Ag1M02	23.40	21.50	44.13	0.92	11.76
Ag2F01	24.77	34.18	34.08	0.95	13.29
Ag2F02	41.73	45.78	55.39	1.03	8.71
Ag2F03	30.92	30.28	44.14	1.00	8.77
Ag2M01	21.01	18.73	42.56	0.61	11.27
Ag2M02	25.23	26.11	53.70	0.90	10.33
Ag3F01	18.39	28.53	23.09	0.82	7.06
Ag3F02	25.00	38.76	33.61	1.14	11.05
Ag3F03	44.99	43.12	59.64	1.11	11.72
Ag3F04	35.33	34.29	39.67	1.32	9.16
Ag3M01	20.26	22.90	32.82	0.90	10.33
Ag3M02	20.75	26.34	31.59	1.10	9.68
Ag3M03	27.42	20.99	57.08	1.01	10.78

For the most part, these standard deviations produce abnormally high margins of error, meaning that it is highly probable that confounding factors in the study design have contributed significantly to the results seen here. These are discussed further in the next section. It is worth noting that the average time had a normal standard deviation, producing a low margin of error, and because it contributed to the formula used to determine the average rate of change, these measures have significantly lower standard deviations than the f0 measurements do. Due to these results, it was

determined that more robust statistical testing would not be necessary, and that the methodology would need significant changes in order to produce more statistically relevant results.

This leaves the second research question ("Is intonation the salient feature that identifies a speaker as Black or non-Black?") to be answered. In addressing this question, we must first ask whether the methods of this thesis were designed in such a way that this question can be addressed through its findings. This is tricky to answer because many of the potential responses hinge on the very ideological notions of race, racialization, and language that have previously been discussed in section 2.1. If, for example, it is determined that an unexpected and unique intonational pattern is emblematic of Princeville AAL, we run the risk of essentializing this feature – in essence, of saying that this is a marker that speakers of Princeville AAL have and those who don't have it aren't speaking Princeville AAL; or, conversely, of saying that this feature is unique to Princeville and cannot be found in any of the surrounding dialects or varieties in North Carolina. This, of course, is from a purely speech production standpoint. If this study had a speech perception element, we'd encounter many of the same difficulties discussed in section 2.3, namely that it is difficult to know precisely whether intonation is the only salient feature or if it is part of a larger salience system.

On another level, I am reminded of a quote from Saidiya V. Hartman from an interview she had with Frank B. Wilderson, III about her book *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hartman 1997). In a discussion on the history of minstrelsy in the US, she says, "It doesn't matter whether you do good or do bad, the crux is that you can choose to do what you wish with the black body" (Hartman & Wilderson III 2003: 188). This has led me to question the very nature of the work that is being done in this thesis. Is it ethical for a white researcher, with no experience of what it's like to be a Black speaker of AAL, to present data on AAL, and can that presentation be truly freed from being interpreted through the lens of the researcher's own experience? In other words, is it possible for white researchers to present on Black language in a society marked by white supremacy in a way that is not white supremacist?

I have yet to find an answer to this question. In my own attempts to think critically and reflexively of this work, I've encountered thinkers from a broad spectrum that seem to affirm different things. For example, Hartman and Wilderson represent an ideological tradition where even if it was possible to wrest the work of white researchers from white supremacy, the history of violence exhibited against Black people by white people makes this morally and ethically suspect, at the very least. On the other hand, bell hooks suggests that a combination of experience and academic knowledge makes for the best "way of knowing" (hooks 1994). Importantly, to hooks, a lack of experience does not preclude one from knowing, so long as they have a desire to learn from others who *have* experienced. In this way, hooks makes justice an experience where both the oppressed and the oppressor are required to come together in conversation with each other. Both of these accounts are, in my opinion, deeply important to the study of language. In linguistics, I think we need more questioning about optics and positionality; of how our work might be used and

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how the presentation of our work might manifest some of those very things we are seeking to fight against. That is not to say that white linguists haven't contributed meaningfully to linguistic justice (cf. Charity Hudley & Mallinson 2018), but that we should think critically about how our own work fits into systems of dominance like white supremacy, and be self-reflective about these issues.

CHAPTER 4. **Looking Towards the Future: Black Lives Matter in 2020 and Beyond**

> [Our] struggle for liberation has significance only if it takes place within a feminist movement that has as its fundamental goal the liberation of all people.
> – hooks (1981): 13

For the sake of future research, I would like to begin this section by documenting some of the potentially confounding variables in this study. To begin, the methodology used to collect and describe the intonation data ignored phonation types (such as falsetto) and utterance types (such as interrogatives). These features have been shown to have a significant bearing on AAL intonation specifically (cf. Holliday 2019a, Nielsen Nielsen), so future research should look to sort participants not only along the sociocultural identity lines outlined by the corpus, but should further delineate the data into categories based on linguistic type.

Furthermore, this study leaves in the description mid-utterance interruptions from extra- and paralinguistic sounds, such as coughing or laughter, for their affective potentiality. It should be noted here that this runs counter to the work of many senior researchers (cf. Holliday 2016a), as it has been shown to have potential skewing effects on the data. Likewise, overlapping speech has the potential to cause errors in both readability of pitch data and the shape of the pitch contour (Holliday 2016b), so preserving the maximal amount of tokens for each participant likely resulted in readability errors for Praat. These should be removed in future studies.

Beyond refining the methods used for this thesis, there are several avenues of research that can be taken from this paper's findings. A potentially rich site for future work on intonation in AAL involves a broad, typological description of intonation in all varieties of AAL. There are little linguistic descriptions of this type available, particularly those that utilize phonetic methods. This could provide an invaluable cross-section of the ways AAL has interacted with other languages, like Appalachian English or Chicano English, and in doing so, provide us with more information about the development and origins of AAL.

Another possible direction involves a more meta-interrogation of linguistics as a field. This work is already being done (cf. Holliday 2019b), but it should be noted, primarily by non-white scholars. I think all linguists need to be taking these conversations seriously and joining them in a way that doesn't engage with white apologetics or privilege disclosures, but instead joins the scholars already doing this work to critically interrogate the history, methods, and findings of the field. In this way, I think linguistics can be more than just the scientific study of language, but an interweaving of interdisciplinarity across the social and human sciences, with a consciousness set towards and engaged with the authentic human experience.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate the importance of Black lives, Black voices, and Black people. With everything currently going on in the world, I doubt that this

thesis will make much of an impact outside of my university and/or my circle, but I hope that it encourages whoever reads it to turn a reflexive eye towards their own lives and their own contributions to the work. At the very least, I wish for this thesis to serve as a model of what I hope "objectivity" in science can be: a deliberate consideration for the systems that color our world and the ways we move through it, and how those systems permeate through every level of the research experience, in spite of our best efforts to deny them access.

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Notes

1. "Ideologies" refers here to a broad and particularly Foucauldian sense of the term. While there is a vast body of research within linguistics on ideology from the standpoint of language, and while that body of research has been informative to many of my own viewpoints and modes of analysis, I won't be discussing this research at length here. Ideologies about culture and identity and ideologies about language are not separate from each other, but to explain their convergences and divergences would take more than what the brief introduction provided here would allow for. See Schieffelin et al. (1998) and Heller & McElhinny (2017) for a more comprehensive overview.

2. For the sake of simplicity, this oversimplifies the interaction between language regulatory bodies and the State, wherein the former has little actual power to enforce national language ideologies and the latter does so through actualizing the rules and regulations put forth by the language regulatory body. This takes place primarily in the form of State-mandated or State-sanctioned education, which is why idealized forms of language persist even in locales where there is no official language regulatory body, as is the case in the US.

3. According to their website, the National Head Start Association is, "the national commitment to give every vulnerable child an opportunity to succeed." (*National Head Start Association Homepage* 2020). They are based in Alexandria, VA., but have local chapters across the country.

4. More intense research can – and should – be done about which languages are responsible for contributing which aspects of the creole's grammar, as these approaches have been criticized frequently for privileging the contributing languages of the Indo-European variety over all others.

5. It should be pointed out, however, that while most of the participants in Gaudio's study were white men of the same peer group, Gaudio reports that the singular non-white participant, a Black gay man, gave listeners pause when asked to indicate whether he was straight or gay. Their responses were also less accurate for the Black gay participant than for his white counterparts.

6. This is but a fraction of the research that has been done on AAL and intonation. For further reading, I suggest seeing Holliday's dissertation (2016b) which features a much more comprehensive overview than what is discussed here.

7. Both the van Hofwegen article (2010) and Kendall's dissertation (2009) cited here are excellent sources for more information about the town of Princeville.

8. While the utterances used in the CORAAL are measured in seconds, intonational units are typically broken down into milliseconds. This shows that each utterance in the CORAAL contains multiple intonational phrases.

VITA

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