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## CAN YOU HEAR (AND SEE) ME NOW?

### Race-ing American Language Variationist/Change and Sociolinguistic Research Methodologies

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I am an African American, Christian, cis-female, heterosexual, middle-class, college-educated, Black feminist, Houstonian Texan, and abled woman who is a mother, wife, daughter, social justice advocate, scholar, teacher, sponsor (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2010), and mentor. These are my salient identities, varying in their saliency from moment to moment and pointing to my subjectivities. I value my race/ethnicity, Christianity, womanhood, personal relationships, and affiliations within my sociocultural and historical contexts as an African slave descendant of involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1978) living in the “not post-racial” U.S.

As a language and identity scholar using the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black feminism, and intersectionality theory for my methodologies and multi-methods for more complex and inclusive narratives, I thrive when pushing boundaries and opening new spaces and places for people like me. In the case of this project, I conducted a survey of the entirety of one journal using a CRT (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001), Black feminist (Collins, 1990), intersectionality lens (Crenshaw, 1991; DeCuir-Gunby and Schutz, 2014). The goals of this chapter are to: (1) critique the status quo of (a) American language variation/change and sociolinguistic (ALVCS) research as well as researchers as “White, heterosexual, and male” (WHAM), and (b) African American Language research as “African American, heterosexual, and male” (AAHAM); and (2) using CRT, intersectionality, and Black feminism as methodologies to demonstrate the need for more inclusive, critical, and intersectional ALVCS research addressing more complex questions around language and identity as well as interrogating researcher identities and their subjectivities – especially as it involves African Americans in general and African American women in particular.

### Houston, We Have a Problem

In ALVCS research, African American women have often been ignored, made invisible, and overlooked as both research participants and researchers. These omissions are examples of the permanence of racism and sexism, or misogynoir: the hatred of Black<sup>1</sup> women (Bailey, 2010). Much research on language uses in African American communities has long focused on young, urban AAHAMs as the “authentic” users of African American Language (AAL)<sup>2</sup> or, specifically, African American Vernacular Language (AAVL), which is a sub-variety of AAL representing the everyday, informal speech used by and among African Americans. I can only assume that, given their omission as participants in AAL research, African American women have been viewed as either inauthentic, the same as African American men, or simply irrelevant. As such, I made a commitment to African American women’s lives and African American Women’s Language (AAWL) because, as an African American woman, I saw the multiplicative effects of racism and sexism, on the quality and quantity of research on language use in African American communities, and because this omission has consequential implications beyond ALVCS research.

ALVCS researchers seem to have difficulty going beyond two speaker/demographic variables from the “norm” of “WHAM.” White, heterosexual, cis-females; White, gay, cis-males; and AAHAMs are acceptable; however, given their omission, African American, LGBTQ women and girls are not acceptable, demonstrating daily that “all the women are White and all the Blacks are men” (Hull, Bell Scott, & Smith, 1982). Even though AAL is the most studied language variety in the United States, these studies too often exclude more than half the population of AAL speakers. However, still, some of us are brave (Hull, et al., 1982).

To demonstrate the pall of Whiteness in ALVCS research, I critique the research methods and methodologies in ALVCS, specifically the demographics of the participants, the demographics of the researchers, and the obfuscation of data. My data set comes from the feature articles published in the venerable journal *American Speech* (*AmSp*) from its first issue in 1925 to 2017. It has been a publication of the American Dialect Society (ADS), which was founded in 1889, since 1969, and has been published by Duke University Press since 2000.

Full disclosure: I am a lifetime member of ADS. I became aware of the organization as an undergraduate student studying in the English Language and Linguistics Program at the University of Texas at Austin. I dreamt of being published in *AmSp* because it epitomized the ALVCS research, specifically dialectology, I aspired to do. I have attended ADS annual meetings since being introduced to them by my doctoral advisor and dissertation chair at the University of Michigan, Richard W. Bailey, a well-respected senior scholar in English language and linguistics research. I served briefly as the Book Reviews Editor of *AmSp* and most recently as a member of the ADS Executive Council. In all that time and

interaction with ADS, I have too often been the only person of color (POC) and one of the few women in the room. Suffice it to say, despite my fondness for my ideal of the journal and the organization as opposed to the reality, ADS essentially has been a “good ol’ White boys” network. In its history, it has had only one POC as its president: John Baugh, a distinguished Black male scholar in Linguistics, Anthropology, and Education at Stanford University at the time. ADS has only had six White women as president in its nearly 130-year history, four of whom served after 2004. In 2018, the ADS Executive Council selected a White woman as Executive Secretary after decades of service by a White male. I say this because who is in the room has a lot to do with what questions are asked and what decisions are made about those who are not allowed in the room (Lanehart, 2017).

### Researching African American Language and Speech Communities

After the Ebonics Controversy of 1996–1997, the number of publications on AAL increased greatly. Although several publications were aimed at explaining the Ebonics issue (e.g., Baugh, 2000), others provided a new forum for discussing past research on AAL (e.g., Baugh, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 2000); expanded the conversation (e.g., Alim, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Alim & Baugh, 2007; DeBose, 2005; Morgan, 2002; Smitherman, 2006); followed untraditional groups in the African American community (Green, 2011; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Lanehart, 2002, 2009); provided a primer on AAL (Green, 2002; Rickford & Rickford, 2000), or broadened conversations about AAL (Lanehart, 2015a, 2015b) and the intersection of language and race in general (Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016; Alim & Smitherman, 2012). However, underneath traditional research on AAL is the narrow emphasis on viewing AAL as a language spoken mostly by and among AAHAM youths. There is little regard or recognition that language used in African American communities includes all demographics – children, men, women; working class, middle class, upper class; educated, uneducated; literate, illiterate; Southerners, Northerners, Midwesterners, etc. – and all stylistic varieties. Although one can now find language research on African American groups other than young AAHAMs, it is still a problematic issue and runs to the heart of the question: Who uses AAL? The notion that AAL is simply a street language or only part of a very specific AAHAM subculture is so ingrained it is difficult to break some researchers out of that mindset.

Since linguists know that all segments of African American communities speak AAL, ALVCS needs research and researchers exploring these segments so that when we use “AAL” it is not an elision for “AAL of men and boys.” There are still very few books addressing the issue of AAWL or simply speech communication and discourses of African American women (see Etter-Lewis, 1993; Houston & Davis, 2001; Hudson, 2001; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Lanehart, 2002,

2009, 2015a). This gap in the research literature exposes the lack of and need for more Black-identified and allied language and discourse scholars in the room and CRT, intersectionality, and Black feminist lenses on the research that is conducted, as well as on the researchers themselves. According to Crenshaw (1991, p. 1244), there are three ways of conceptualizing intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality proposes that strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who face different obstacles because of race and class (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1246). This was, and is, a divide that exists within the feminist movement and led groups of women of color to emerge as separate from White women’s groups. Black women, Latinas, etc. have many shared struggles with White women, but they also have many more dissimilar struggles because society is not only sexist, but it is also racist and classist. Hence, the feminist movement is not big or inclusive enough for women of color, those living in poverty, and other marginalized groups. As Crenshaw (1991, p. 1250) asserts, women of color occupy positions both physically and culturally marginalized within dominant society, so methodologies must be targeted directly to them in order to reach them.

### Beyond Two Degrees of Separation: Intersectionality, CRT, and Diversity in ALVCS Research

The term “intersectionality theory” gained prominence in the 1990s when sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) integrated the idea as part of her discussion on Black feminist thought, making research about Black women more complex and less connected to White feminist research than before. Collins’s work included women of color in her theoretical perspective and accounted for the exponential salience, hence, intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality. According to Crenshaw (1991, p. 1252), political intersectionality proposes that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one’s political energies between two, sometimes opposing, groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that White women seldom confront. Because women of color experience racism in ways distinct from men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to White women, antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms. Sexual stratification theory posits that women are stratified sexually by race. As a result, traditional ALVCS studies on AAL, AAHAMs, and AAVL have been more favored than African American women and AAWL because, for some, AAHAMs have been seen as the true arbiters of AAVL. Only more recent research has focused on African American women (e.g., Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Lanehart, 2002, 2009; Troutman, 2001; Morgan, 1991, 1996, 1999). This seems unconscionable given that both African American men and women use language, but women are typically early primary carriers of culture

and history through childrearing. To negate or subordinate the existence and experience of one is contrary to the nature of sociolinguistics: the study of language within sociocultural and historical contexts.

The failure of feminism to interrogate race means the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of POCs, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). Likewise, race-based priorities function to obscure the issues of women of color whereas feminist concerns often suppress minority experiences. In ALVCS research, women's language is dominated by White, middle-class, women's language and discourse. The field looks to Robin Lakoff, Jennifer Coates, Deborah Tannen, and other White women who focus on White women as the arbiters of women's language for all women. The languages of women of color are not the same as White, middle-class, women's languages and not the same as AAHAMs' language.

According to Crenshaw (1991, p. 1283), representational intersectionality purports that race and gender converge so the concerns of minority women fall into the void between concerns about women's issues and concerns about racism. Debates over representation continually elide the intersection of race and gender in the popular culture's construction of images of women of color. Accordingly, an analysis of what may be termed "representational intersectionality" would include recognition of both how these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender and how contemporary critiques of racist and sexist representation marginalize women of color (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1283).

Thus, from an intersectional analysis I argue that: (1) racial and sexual subordination are mutually reinforcing; (2) Black women are commonly marginalized by a politics of race alone or gender alone; and (3) a scholarly response to each form of subordination must, at the same time be, a scholarly response to both (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1283). In addition to a Black feminist intersectionality lens, a CRT framework reveals what is endemic to ALVCS research: (1) the permanence of racism, since racism will always be present in ALVCS research as long as WHAMs rule the roost; (2) interest convergence, since this revolution of inclusion and diversity will not happen without Whites perceiving more benefits for themselves; (3) essentialism, since AAAL is the prevalent emphasis of AAL research and that AAL is AAHAM; and (4) colorblindness, since neoliberalism is prevalent in sociolinguistics.

### The Survey Says ...

In Lanehart (2017), I argued that it matters who is in the room making decisions for those who are not in the room, who is doing the research on whom, and who is asking the questions. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, subjectivities guide research, Supreme Court decisions, tenure and promotion cases, hiring

decisions, and journal publications. The survey I conducted of *AmSp* using a CRT, intersectionality, Black feminist lens provides further evidence.

Table 4.1 shows the survey of literature data I collected for all 92 volumes available of *AmSp* since 1925–2017. The "Years" Column refers to the publication years of the volumes and issues. The "Volumes" and "Issues" columns refer to the corresponding volumes and issues for the years presented. The table is delineated based on the volume issues in order to provide more comparable periods of time than volumes or years would otherwise provide. The "Feature Articles" column refers to the total number of feature articles published in the corresponding years/volumes/issues. Although there have been and are other types of articles published in *AmSp*, such as book reviews, a Teaching section, Among New Words section, responses, bibliographies, indexes, notes from the editor, or the like, I chose to focus on the feature articles. Keep in mind that the feature articles, especially in the early volumes, vary greatly in length.

Early volumes contained many more articles, usually six to eight, than later volumes, usually two to four. They also contained many more issues, usually 12 issues per volume until 1927 and six issues per volume from 1927 to 1932, compared to later the standard four issues per volume beginning in 1933. The "POC Articles" column refers to the total number of feature articles in the years/volumes/issues/articles that acknowledge POCs specifically as part of their sample participants or

TABLE 4.1 *American Speech* feature articles that include or focus on POCs

Years	Volumes	Issues	Feature Articles	POCs Included in Articles	Percentage of POCs in Articles
1925–1928	1–4.2	32	191	10	5.2%
1929–1935	4.3–10	34	283	19	6.7%
1936–1944	11–19	36	225	10	4.4%
1945–1953	20–28	37	210	10	4.8%
1954–1961	29–36	33	163	6	3.7%
1962–1969	37–44	32	169	6	3.6%
1970–1977	45–52	32	116	17	14.7%
1978–1985	53–60	32	125	16	12.8%
1986–1993	61–68	32	124	29	23.4%
1994–2001*	69–76	32	169	52	30.8%
2002–2009	77–84	32	111	35	31.5%
2010–2018	85–93.2	34	111	37	33.3%
Totals:					
93 years	93 volumes	398 issues	1997 articles	247 POC articles	12.4% POC articles

\*Includes volumes 75.3 and 75.4 in 2000 which were special issues for the 75th diamond anniversary of *American Speech*. The two issues included 65 (31 and 34, respectively) short articles, each from a different scholar. In those 65 articles, seven were written by POCs, 4 and 3, respectively.

data collection section of the articles, since the title does not usually provide that information. Groups included in the POC category are African Americans, Latinx Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. If the researcher noted “Negro,” “African American,” “Black,” “African,” “Gullah,” “Mexican American,” “Hispanic,” “Japanese,” “Native American,” and the like in the methodology section or data tables or literature review, then it is counted as including POCs in some way in the article. The “Percentage” column represents the percentage of feature articles in the years/volumes/issues/articles specifically including POCs as part of their sample participants or data collection. The total number of feature articles in the “POC Articles” column for each row is divided by the total number of feature articles listed in each row of the “Feature Articles” column for the percentage of articles including POCs.

From 1925 to 1970, the inclusion of POCs was negligible and not representative of POC populations in the United States specifically or North America generally, but the percentage did increase considerably in the 21st century. In the 21st century, the inclusion of POCs is seemingly more representative with their proportion of the population in the United States specifically and North America generally. I say “seemingly” because some things the data obscure are made evident using a CRT, intersectionality, Black feminist lens.

First, I found it astounding how often the methods and methodologies sections were not delineated or discussed in much detail in the feature articles. Since ALVCS is social science research, most studies involve empirical data – which supposes a methods and methodologies section that outlines what was done, how it was done, and why it was done in the way it was done. In ALVCS research, that especially should include demographic, or speaker, variables and who collected the data. However, in far too many instances, the researcher does not provide this information. Feature articles from 1925–1950s including reference to POCs as part of the sample participants or data collection only did so as studying vocabulary, slang, folk songs, proverbs, names, humor, or as the language used in literature by White authors as representations of AAL. Even though the articles’ titles imply they include Black people, they really do not. They include aspects of linguistic data about Black people, but without actually having to interact with Black people. Again, Whiteness makes this acceptable because Whiteness defines which stories are valuable and how they should be expressed and interpreted.

Second, the way POCs and/or their languages are referred to is problematic because POCs did not get to tell their own stories, especially in the early years of the journal. Although one would expect “Negro” as a common term of reference for Blacks without a negative connotation, other racist terms are used for POCs. For example, volume 4.4 in 1929 includes a feature article entitled “Bamboo English” in reference to language in the Philippine Islands. In a 1932 article in volume 7.6, Dutch Guiana is referred to as “Bush-Negro Speech.” Native Americans are referred to as “the Red Man” in a 1965 article in volume 31.1. “Negro” gives way to “Black” in the early 1970s, along with the problematic terminology

for POCs in the journal’s earlier history. Using a CRT lens, the journal’s problematic language serves to highlight and reinforce the hegemony of Whiteness, the permanence of racism, and the need for counterstories. It tells POCs that stories are being told from the master’s narrative and that counterstorytelling is necessary and was inevitable with the civil rights movement and the more recent #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName. Although offensive terminology is not used, it is part of the history of the journal and ALVCS, and highlights who gets to tell their stories and have the right to name themselves. As such, it is not something to ignore or deny since history has a way of repeating itself and is, often times, re-imagined with rose-colored glasses by those in power.

Third, and one of the most problematic aspects of the *AmSp* feature articles, the unmarked term, that is, the “normal” meaning or referent – the one that can go without saying – is WHAM. In the majority of feature articles in *AmSp* – which include titles such as “Folk Sayings from *Indiana*” in volume 14.4 (1939), “*Campus Slang*” in volume 39.2 (1964), “Studies of *American Pronunciation since 1945*” in volume 52.3/4 (1977), “The Changing Language of *American Catholicism*” in volume 52.2 (1979), or “*Dahntahn Pittsburgh*” in volume 77.2 (2002) – POCs are not included in the sample population or data collected, despite the titles which appear to be inclusive of all Americans or all “X” people in a state, city, or institution. Unless there is some indication in the title that only White people are included – which hardly ever happens – wouldn’t it be normal to think that everyone is included? That would be a mistake. Not only are POCs not included, in many cases POCs are not even acknowledged to exist, hence there is no mention of their exclusion. POCs are not a part of the United States or North America if one subscribes to the omissions in these articles. POCs are sociolinguistically invisible because they are socially and humanly invisible in everyday society. But, then again, that is how POCs have often been treated in research – unless it is to see the “exotic” or look through the White gaze. CRT’s critique of liberalism reveals their neoliberal colorblindness. That is to say, “of course POCs are included because they really are ‘Americans’ or speak ‘Pittsburghese’ or go to college, but there was no need to be more specific because it is implied.” However, further investigation reveals POCs are not included.

Fourth, it is not until 1984 that an article about Black people is first/solo-authored by a Black person: John Baugh’s “Steady” in volume 59.1. Several articles were published before this in *AmSp* that in some way dealt with Black language – sometimes in derogatory and superficial ways as indicated in the second point above – but it took almost 60 years of the journal’s existence to publish a feature, first/solo-authored article by a Black scholar on any subject and, of course, that author was a Black male. The first Black woman to publish a feature article as first/sole author in *AmSp* was Kean Gibson in volume 63.3 in 1988 on Guyanese and Jamaican Creoles. As Table 4.2 indicates, the 1980s coincide with an increase in the percentage of feature articles at least including POCs or Black people specifically that are more representative of the percentage of the population in the

TABLE 4.2 *American Speech* feature articles first, or sole-authored by POCs

Years	Volumes	Issues	All Feature Articles	POC Authors	Percentage POC Authors
1925–1928	1–4.2	32	191	0	0.0%
1929–1935	4.3–10	34	283	0	0.0%
1936–1944	11–19	36	225	0	0.0%
1945–1953	20–28	37	210	0	0.0%
1954–1961	29–36	33	163	0	0.0%
1962–1969	37–44	32	169	0	0.0%
1970–1977	45–52	32	116	1	0.9%
1978–1985	53–60	32	125	3	2.4%
1986–1993	61–68	32	124	12	9.7%
1994–2001*	69–76	32	169	17	10.1%
2002–2009	77–84	32	111	7	6.3%
2010–2018	85–93.2	34	111	9	8.1%
Totals:					
93 years	93 volumes	398 issues	1997 articles	49 POC authors	2.5% POC authored

\* Includes volumes 75.3 and 75.4 in 2000 which were special issues for the 75th diamond anniversary of *American Speech*. The two issues included 65 (31 and 34, respectively) short articles, each from a different scholar, with a total of seven POC authored articles.

United States specifically and North America generally. This indicates it took 60 years for a POC to tell a story from the perspective of a POC and have the opportunity for counterstories. Unfortunately, as a product of the times, the story told excluded Black women as a source of AAL and privileged AAHAMs – the racial equivalent of excluding Black people as American, I would propose.

Fifth, it is apparently more acceptable for White people to research POCs than actual POCs. Table 4.3 shows that, of the 247 feature articles including POCs, 80.2 percent are by White authors and only 19.8 percent are by POC authors. From 1925 until 1970, no feature articles were authored by POCs about POCs.

The 49 POC authored articles by 28 different POC authors in the history of the journal have only been published since 1984: twenty Black-identified authors, ten males and ten females; nine Asian/Pacific Islander-identified authors, three males (all Japanese from a 1996 special issue in honor of Professor Takesi Sibata) and six females; and two Latino-identified authors. None of the feature articles about Native American language were published by a Native American-identified author. None of the feature articles including Spanish language were written by a POC with the exception of one full-length article in volume 58.1 from 1983 and another which appeared in the 75th Diamond Anniversary double issues in 2000 that only included short articles (see Table 4.4). As expected, men of color outnumber women of color in feature articles published.

TABLE 4.3 *American Speech* feature articles with POC data authored by Whites compared to POCs

Years	Total Feature Articles	POC Data Included	White Authored	Percentage White Authored with POC data	POC Authored	Percentage POC Authored with POC data
1925–1928	191	10	10	100.0%	0	0.0%
1929–1935	283	19	19	100.0%	0	0.0%
1936–1944	225	10	10	100.0%	0	0.0%
1945–1953	210	10	10	100.0%	0	0.0%
1954–1961	163	6	6	100.0%	0	0.0%
1962–1969	169	6	6	100.0%	0	0.0%
1970–1977	116	17	16	94.1%	1	5.9%
1978–1985	125	16	13	81.3%	3	18.7%
1986–1993	124	29	17	58.6%	12	41.4%
1994–2001*	169	52	35	67.3%	17	32.7%
2002–2009	111	35	28	80.0%	7	20.0%
2010–2018	111	37	28	75.7%	9	24.3%
Totals:						
93	1997	247	198	80.2%	49	19.8%

\* Includes volumes 75.3 and 75.4 in 2000 which were special issues for the 75th diamond anniversary of *American Speech*. The two issues included 65 (31 and 34, respectively) short articles, each from a different scholar, with a total of seven POC-authored articles and four White authors.

TABLE 4.4 *American Speech* feature articles by POCs

POC	Black		Latinx		Asian		POCs Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1970–1979	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
1980–1989	1	9	0	1	0	0	1	10
1990–1999	3	7	0	0	0	3*	3	10
2000–2009+	8	6	0	1	0	0	8	7
2010–2018	1	3	0	0	5	0	6	3
Totals	13	25	0	2	6	3	19	30

\*These authors are all from a 1996 (71.2) special issue dedicated to a Japanese scholar  
+Includes the 75th anniversary double issues of short articles

## Conclusions: Where Do We Go from Here?

The goals of this chapter were, first, to critique the status quo in ALVCS research and researchers with respect to race and gender and, second, make a case for more inclusive, critical, and intersectional ALVCS research addressing more complex questions around language and identity, as well as interrogating researcher

identities and their subjectivities by using CRT, intersectionality, and Black feminist methodologies. As the survey of *AmSp* revealed, most of the participants and researchers are WHAMs. Even when they are not WHAMs, they are male POCs. When POCs and women of color, that is to say not WHAMs, engage in research and research their own communities, it is not only more representative of humanity but also broadens our understanding of all of humanity from multiple perspectives.

I started this chapter with my salient identities and subjectivities. I believe all researchers need to not only be cognizant of their subjectivities, but they also need to articulate them and the impact they have on their research methods and methodologies. ALVCS researchers need to understand that their identities impact the questions they ask, the methodologies they use, and their interpretation of the data. I know some on the U.S. Supreme Court do not believe their WHAM identities impact their world-view or interpretation of the U.S. Constitution or even inform their legal theories – but they do. Ironically, they do believe this is the case if the Justice is not WHAM. Hence, the all-too-familiar situation of POC scholars being told they are too close to their subject (i.e., subjective) to study it, but WHAM and White, heterosexual, cis-females can research anything because they, alone, are/can be “objective”.

I cannot stress enough the importance of diversifying all fields of study. ALVCS research and other fields continue to substantiate the permanence of racism and, when that is not working or is scrutinized, then it is about interest convergence. All of this leads to the need for counterstories that identify, illuminate, and critique neoliberalism, racism, sexism, etc. Opportunities to write pieces such as this help shine a spotlight on the issues using a CRT, intersectionality, Black feminist lens. Doing so means moving beyond the false quantitative-qualitative binary, the Black-White binary, and the lack of human diversity and intersecting and intersectional identities that make social science research complex, fluid, and colorful. In addition, I would suggest further engaging in interdisciplinary research that allows use of Black feminist theory and CRT in a study of ALVCS since individuals and communities exist in those areas that are more complex than simplistic, territorial myopia allow.

What do I suggest? Tell our own counterstories. Use our own tools (Lorde, 1984). Say it like it is. Can you hear (see) me now? You will.

## Notes

- 1 I use the term “Black” to refer to the socially constructed racial classification of those who are of dark-skinned African ancestry (although it is not indicative of one’s skin color) and “African American” to refer to the ethnic group of Americans who are African slave descendants or who have African ancestry.
- 2 I use the term “African American Language” to refer to all variations of language use in African American communities, recognizing that there are many variations within the umbrella term, including Gullah, Standard African American Language, and African American Vernacular Language as well as varieties that reflect differences in age/

generation, sex, gender, sexuality, social and socioeconomic class, region, education, religion, and other affiliations and identities that intersect with one’s ethnicity/race and nationality (Lanehart and Malik, 2015, p. 3). I simply define African American Language as language spoken by or among African Americans. (see Mufwene, 2001). That is not to say non-Blacks cannot speak it or use it, just as those who are not Japanese can still learn or acquire and use Japanese (e.g., my son is learning Japanese and wants to live there someday). Likewise, it does not mean that all African Americans speak AAL because not all African Americans, just like not all people of Japanese descent or Mexican descent, speak their heritage languages. Like any variety, AAL is part of a community and socioculture and history (Lanehart, 2015b, pp. 866–67).

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