Language, Race, and Black Identity in Twenty-First Century America

A corpus study of contemporary U.S. discourse on race
in the (non-fictional) writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates

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Abstract (in Norwegian)

Denne masteroppgaven omhandler språkbruken til Ta-Nehisi Coates, en afroamerikansk forfatter, i hans diskurs om rase i USA. Oppgavens fokus er å finne ut hva Coates sine tekster avslører om rase og rasemessige forhold i dagens USA, særlig forfatterens representasjon av gruppeidentitet blant afroamerikanere.

Datasettet er et egeninnsamlet korpus av Coates (sakprosa) tekster, som har fått navnet *The Corpus of Non-fictional Writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates* (COCO). Korpuset inneholder 468 899 ord som er hentet fra 350 tekster skrevet av forfatteren i løpet av 22 år, fra hans debut i 1996 til 2018.

Metodologien som er anvendt i studien er en tverrfaglig tilnærming som kombinerer korpus-lingvistikk og korpus-pragmatikk, hvor den kvantitative analysen av frekvenstall komplementeres av den kvalitative analysen med finlesing av tekstene. Den korpusdrevne tilnærmingen identifiserer de mest brukte rase-relaterte ordene i COCO, som er adjektivene *black* og *white*, og de mest brukte kollokasjonene med begrepet *black*. Den frekvensbaserte analysen avslører at de mest brukte kollokasjonene med *black* er identitetsrelaterte begreper, som *people*, *America*, og *community*. De fem begrepene som beskriver gruppeidentitet (*black people, black America/Americans, black community/communities, blacks,* og *African(-) Americans*) er gjenstand for en grundig gjennomgang ved å analysere den pragmatiske prosodien til begrepene, sett i lyset av forestillingen om kontroll. Studien konkluderer med at Coates representasjon av afroamerikaneres gruppeidentitet har forskjøvet seg over tid.

Studien og dens funn er et bidrag til det lingvistiske perspektivet i forskning på språk i relasjon til diskurs om rase. Metodologisk viser studien nytten av en tverrfaglig tilnærming som kombinerer korpus-lingvistikk og korpus-pragmatikk i studiet av språk, rase og identitet. Resultatene som er oppnådd gjennom de kvantitative og kvalitative dataanalysene beriker vår forståelse av koblingen mellom språk, rase og afroamerikansk identitet i USA på 2000-tallet.

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ATL	–	*The Atlantic Magazine*
BPP	–	*Black Panther Party*
BS	–	*The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir*
BWM	–	*Between the World and Me*
COCA	–	*The Corpus of Contemporary American English*
COCA-MAG	–	*The Corpus of Contemporary American English,* Magazine section
COCO	–	*The Corpus of Non-Fictional Writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates*
EYP	–	*We were Eight Years in Power: an American Tragedy*
LL	–	Log-likelihood
MD-CADS	–	Modern diachronic corpus-assisted discourse studies
MI	–	Mutual Information
MJ	–	*Mother Jones*
NP	–	Noun Phrase
NY	–	*The New Yorker*
NYT	–	*The New York Times*
OED	–	Oxford English Dictionary
OM	–	*O, the Oprah Magazine*
PBS	–	*Public Broadcasting Service*
TM	–	*Time Magazine*
TNC	–	Ta-Nehisi Coates
VV	–	*The Village Voice*
WCP	–	*Washington City Paper*
WM	–	*Washington Monthly*
WP	–	*The Washington Post*

People evolve a language in order to describe
and thus control their circumstances,
or in order not to be submerged
by a reality that they cannot articulate.
(And, if they cannot articulate it,
they are submerged.)

– James Baldwin (1997: 5)

1. INTRODUCTION

The words in the epigraph belong to James Baldwin, a black American author who wrote extensively on race and racial relations in the United States during the civil rights era (1954–1968). The quote above signifies the importance of language as a way of describing the world people find themselves in. The world, as well as language, is constantly evolving. Thus, each generation (re)invents a 'language', more specifically, a linguistic repertoire, which reflects political, socioeconomic, and cultural changes in their environment.

In twenty-first century America, one writer in particular stands out as an articulation of black American experience: Ta-Nehisi Coates. Coates's writings are characterized by the notion of making sense of his personal experience growing up as a black male in present-day America. Some scholars identify Coates as one of the "Black intellectuals who are steadfast in their commitment to raise the level of the discourse on race in America" (Alim & Smitherman 2012: xvii). In fact, Coates himself explicitly states that he sees his writings as a "representation of the collective brain-power of a black community" (Coates 2011). After the publication of Coates's book, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (2017), one of the reviewers noted: "[Coates] developed a set of linguistic tools that have opened up new ways for black Americans to describe the world" (Tensley 2017). The present study sets out to examine the language used in Coates's non-fictional writings and to analyze some of the linguistic tools he is employing as he describes the experience of black Americans in the twenty-first century.

This introductory chapter is divided into three parts. Section 1.1 presents biographical information about Ta-Nehisi Coates. Section 1.2 discusses the aim of the study, poses the

research questions and presents the methodological approach taken in order to answer those questions. Section 1.3 describes the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Ta-Nehisi Coates: his life and career[1]

Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates (born on September 30, 1975) is an American writer and journalist who has gained national recognition for his writings on race in the United States. Coates grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, in what he refers to as, "a relatively [black] nationalist community" (Coates 2012a). His father, William Paul Coates, was a former member of the *Black Panther Party* (BPP) and a founder of Black Classic Press, a publisher of African American titles (Sparks 2019). Coates's mother was a teacher who reportedly made Ta-Nehisi write essays about his misbehavior as a form of discipline (Coates 2008: 29). Coates was brought up in the black community: he lived with his parents and seven siblings, went to black public schools, attended Howard University (a historically black institution); in fact, as he notes, up until high school, he "had no white friends" and his experience of the 'white world' was limited to TV and trips to the shopping mall (Coates 1997). From 1993 to 1999, Ta-Nehisi Coates attended Howard University majoring in history, but he never completed the program. (Interestingly, all of Coates's siblings, except him, have a college degree). However, during his time at Howard, Coates discovered the "vastness of black people across space-time" (Coates 2008); and Howard was also the place where Coates's idealistic views on the history of black people were challenged by his professors (Coates 2015a).

Coates began to pursue his career in journalism in the late 1990s when he worked as a reporter for *Washington City Paper.* From 2000 until 2007, Coates was a journalist or freelance writer at various publications: *The Village Voice, Washington Monthly, The Washington Post, Time Magazine,* etc. It was a difficult time in Coates's life as he struggled to maintain jobs and attain economic stability. Coates's partner at that time (later, his wife), Kenyatta Matthews, encouraged Ta-Nehisi to continue writing even in the midst of financial struggles and his own self-doubts.

It was in February 2007, as Coates had just "lost [his] third job in seven years", that Barack Obama announced his presidential campaign (Coates 2017: 5). Obama's campaign and his election as the first African American president of the United States led to a

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[1] This section on Coates's biography is based mostly on the writer's own reflections in his writings from 1996 until 2018.

defining moment in Coates's life and career. Coates (2017: 8) acknowledges that Obama's presidency opened up new opportunities for black writers, including himself. In 2008, Coates started what became a decade-long career of writing for the prestigious national publication, *The Atlantic*. During his time at *The Atlantic* Coates wrote his most acclaimed essays, one of which, "Fear of a Black President" (2012), won the National Magazine Award for Essays and Criticism in 2013, while the other, "The Case for Reparations" (2014) received the George Polk Award for Commentary.

In addition to being honored for his essays and journalistic achievements, Coates has also been recognized for his curation of *The Atlantic*'s online blog which he maintained from 2008 until 2015. *Time Magazine* (2015) named Ta-Nehisi Coates one of the 30 most influential people on the Internet in 2015, noting that Coates and his regular readers, nicknamed the Horde, have built what's been called "the best comment section on the internet" (Holland 2015). *The Atlantic*'s blog moderated by Coates was established for public thinking, as a place for conversation, with topics ranging from discussions of political, economic and social events in real time to video gaming, music, NFL (National Football League), and what foods are the healthiest for you. Coates himself acknowledges the impact that the Horde has had on his thinking as a person and as a writer, saying that "growing intellectually in public, with all your flaws exposed, […] is a trial. […] I'm sticking with it because I think it makes me better" (Coates 2012b). Coates (2013a) refers to the blog as his "notebook", noting that "[w]riting for the website has fundamentally changed how I write in print". In fact, as Coates (2013a) notes, the essay "Fear of a Black President" was being written from early to mid 2012 "on this blog, with some assistance from you [the regular commentators]". However, after Coates began receiving national recognition, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the online comment section, and eventually Coates had to withdraw from it. Nonetheless, the early success of this online community helped Coates to sharpen his perspective and writing style, and it propelled him into the national spotlight (Holland 2015).

There was one more thing that Coates had sharpened with his online commenters, the French language, as the writer used the blog to practice his foreign language skills. Coates was 36 years old when he began studying French. Second-language acquisition, a process that Coates (2013b) described as "creating another self", has had a profound impact on him both personally and professionally as seen in his own reflections:

Words, and their organization, always carry more than their literal meaning. Rappers have always been aware of this, and understanding the secondary meaning of words has always been the work of poets. It seems only right, that a writer should explore languages and try to spend time with as many as he or she can. That I should arrive at such an obvious conclusion at this late date is humbling.

Beyond writers, I wonder what it means for the broader country. My understanding (correct me if I'm wrong) is the rest of the world tends to be more bilingual than America. Does that have any impact on how we think? On our imagination? On our ability to see? I'm sure linguists and psychologists have spent some time thinking about this. (Coates 2012c)

At age 37, Coates applied for his first passport and spent the summer of 2013 in Paris, France, taking a seven-week French immersion program. Ta-Nehisi Coates and his family lived in France during the winter of 2015 when he was a visiting fellow at the American Library in Paris (The *American Library in Paris* 2020). In September of the same year, Coates became a recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Fellowship[2] (also known as a 'genius' grant) for "interpreting complex and challenging issues around race and racism through the lens of personal experience and nuanced historical analysis" (*MacArthur Foundation* 2015).

Coates's work as a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* created a platform for him to become a nationally recognized writer and public intellectual. In the period from 2008 until 2017, Ta-Nehisi Coates published three non-fictional books: *The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir* (2008), *Between the World and Me* (2015), which won the 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction, and *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (2017). Coates's first fictional novel, *The Water Dancer,* was released in September 2019. In addition, from 2016 until 2020, Coates has been the writer for the Marvel comics series *Black Panther* and *Captain America*.

1.2 The study

The aim of the study is to examine general linguistic patterns in Coates's non-fictional writings on race in the United States. The main focus guiding the inquiry is to find out what Coates's writings reveal about race and racial relations in contemporary American society. The study empirically investigates the interrelations between language, race, and group

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[2] The MacArthur Fellowship is "a $625,000, no-strings-attached grant for individuals who have shown exceptional creativity in their work and the promise to do more" (*MacArthur Foundation* 2015).

identity in Coates's non-fictional writings. More specifically, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which words/terms occur most frequently in Coates's writings, and how does the writer use those words/terms in his discourse on race in the United States?
2. In what ways does Coates represent the group identity of black Americans in the twenty-first century?

The data set is a self-compiled corpus of Ta-Nehisi Coates's writings, named *The Corpus of Non-fictional Writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates* (COCO), with a size of 468,899 words. COCO is a suitable dataset for the purposes of the study as it provides a large amount of authentic language data allowing the researcher to determine linguistic patterns in Coates's discourse on race (Hoffmann 2007: 69). COCO contains 350 texts written by Coates over a 22-year period, from 1996 until 2018. In a *PBS* (2017) interview, Coates indicated that he feels that he has completed his 20-year-long journey in search of answers to explain the differences between his life as a black person in West Baltimore and the way that the broader country represented itself. In this sense, COCO could be considered as a relatively comprehensive dataset as framed within a particular period in Coates's discourse on race.

Methodologically, the study utilizes an interdisciplinary approach combining corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics, where the quantitative analysis of frequency counts is complemented by the qualitative analysis of close reading. More specifically, the study employs a corpus-linguistic and corpus-pragmatic examination of Coates's non-fictional writings in order to reveal how Coates linguistically and pragmatically represents black American identity in his discourse on race. The main objective of the study is to contribute to quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis in the field of language and race in the United States.

After the initial investigation of the corpus, it has been observed that the two most frequent race-related content items in the dataset are the adjectives *black* and *white.* These terms, *black* and *white*, according to Ashcroft (2003: 39), are considered "the most powerful signifiers in the contemporary racial landscape". Thus, the two terms have been selected for further analysis due to their relevance to discourse on race. A closer examination of linguistic patterns with the terms revealed that the term *black* frequently collocates with nouns describing group identity, such as *people, community,* and *America.* The linguistic uses of the

group identity terms – *black people, black America/Americans, black community/ communities,* as well as *blacks* and *African(-)Americans* – were, therefore, compared and contrasted in order to determine how Coates represents the group identity of contemporary black Americans. More specifically, the analysis of the five main terms was performed by a diachronic comparison followed by a close examination of the pragmatic prosody of the terms through the prism of the notion of control. Control, or, more specifically, "being or not being in control of events and of one's environment" is one of the ways by which speakers/writers express their evaluative attitudes, as realized in communicative discourse (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 67). The notion of control, as adopted in this study, indicates evaluation of the terms in COCO as the following: *being in control* is (typically) associated with positive evaluation and *not being in control* – with negative evaluation. The findings of the study suggest that Coates's representation of black American group identity has shifted over time.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 has presented the biography of Coates in section 1.1, followed by section 1.2 which highlighted the aim of the study and research questions, and the present section which describes the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the theoretical background: section 2.1 discusses the key theoretical concepts, section 2.2 presents previous research within the field of linguistics in relation to race in the Unites States. In addition, section 2.3 reviews two recent sociolinguistic studies which employ a combination of corpus linguistic methods and qualitative analysis. Chapter 3 is divided into four main sections: section 3.1 highlights the usefulness of the interdisciplinary approach employed in this study, sections 3.2 and 3.3 outline the methodological approach of the study, which is a combination of corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics, and finally, section 3.4 describes the process of compiling the data set, COCO. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data and a discussion of the results. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the study and offers suggestions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the theoretical background for the present study. It is divided into three sections. Section 2.1 presents the conceptual framework by describing key theoretical terms, such as *race/racism* and *(social) identity/group solidarity.* Section 2.2 offers a discussion of previous research which has been conducted in relation to race and language. Section 2.3 discusses two recent sociolinguistic studies which employ a combination of corpus linguistic methods and a qualitative approach.

2.1 Key theoretical concepts

The present study examines language use in discourse on race in the United States. *Race* and *racism*, as well as *(social) identity/group solidarity,* which will be relevant for the data analysis and discussion, are important concepts across several fields of study (e.g., political science, anthropology, sociology, etc.). These terms can be understood differently from within different perspectives, and they present different sets of implications. Therefore, it is important to define these concepts as used in this study.

2.1.1 Race and racism

The concept of *race* can be ambiguous and difficult to define. As Ta-Nehisi Coates (2013c) points out, *race* has no coherent or fixed definition. According to Alcoff (2003: 5), many theorists agree that the concept of *race* as a form of identity "arguably originat[ed] with Kant's anthropological writings and [was] made possible by the developments in biological explanation" at the end of the 18th century. However, it is widely accepted today that there is no connection between the concept of *race* (as a description of human beings) and biological reality (see Reynolds & Lieberman 1993). Nonetheless, *race,* though not considered a biological reality, is yet manifested in a social reality. Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 2) define *race* as a social construct which is closely linked to the notion of *racism.* In contrast with the 'non-existence' of *race, racism* is "a well-attested social phenomenon" (Todorov 1986: 370). The political, social, and economic impact of human differences (based on race, gender, nationality, etc.) is "no less powerful whether in the end we decide the differences are natural or humanly constructed" (Alcoff 2003: 6).

The concept of *racism* could be defined, in a broad sense, as "a type of behavior which consists in the display of contempt or aggressiveness toward other people on account of physical differences (other than those of sex) between them and oneself" (Todorov 1986: 370). This broader definition accounts for racist attitudes and acts of racism in different settings around the world.

This study aims to analyze contemporary discourses on race in the United States – a particular geographical, historical, political, and socioeconomic setting. The notions of *race* and *racism* in the United States imply a binary distinction between two signifiers, *black* and *white* (Ashcroft 2003: 39). Coates (2013c) points out that "the notion of what constitutes 'white' and what constitutes 'black' is a product of social context". However, the terms themselves are not stable categories, as the meanings of *black* and *white* have "change[d] over time in response to political and economic needs" (Spears 1999: 16).

The terms, *black* and *white*, are "integrated into a racial hierarchy arranged on an inferiority-superiority scale", with *black* signifying inferior social status (Spears 1999: 19). Thus, the black–white dynamics imply asymmetric power relations as the position of superiority suggests domination, power, and control, whereas inferiority (e.g., for black Americans) is associated with subordination, powerlessness, and lack of control.

As mentioned above, the concept of *race* is used to legitimize racist acts and ideology. However, it is important to note that the "affected groups have adopted the idea of 'race' […] turn[ing] the concept around and us[ing] it to construct an alternative, positive self-identity" as well as using the concept for political resistance (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 2).

2.1.2 Social identity and black solidarity
Stuart Hall (1990: 225), a Jamaican-born British sociologist and cultural theorist, defines identities as "names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past". This definition highlights the fluidity of the notion of identity, particularly in today's globalized and multicultural society, as well as the connection of identity to "the past": lived experiences, historical events, etc. Thus, as Alcoff (2003: 3) emphasizes, "identities need to be analyzed not only in their cultural location but also in relation to historical epoch". Thus, the present study focuses on discourse on race in contemporary America (also referred to as the post-civil rights era).

As mentioned earlier in relation to *race*, the impact of placing a person in a social category of identity (based on race, gender, ethnicity, etc.)[3] has a range of dramatic consequences for that person (or a group of people) as it affects educational opportunities, career possibilities, social (and sometimes even physical) mobility, interactions with police, etc. (Alcoff 2003: 3). The instances of such discrimination experienced by marginalized groups (e.g., the black population in the United States) contribute to the formation of a group identity which is based on shared experience.

Shelby (2007: 1) highlights two bases for group identification among contemporary black Americans: one is based on racial (ethnic) identity and cultural heritage, whereas the other is based on "the black experience of unjust treatment and discrimination", also referred to as common oppression. According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census, 14% of the total U.S. population, or 42 million people, identify themselves as Black or African American, either alone or in combination with one or more other races (Rastogi et al. 2011: 3). However, black Americans are an ethnically and culturally diverse group with increasing intraracial economic stratification, which makes it harder to maintain a common black ethnic or cultural identity (Shelby 2002: 233, 250, 253; Blake 2016). Thus, Shelby (2002: 249, 254) argues that the most important component of black solidarity in the fight against racism is not a collective black identity based on cultural/ethnic background, but a group identity built on the basis of "common oppression and commitment to resisting it".

2.1.3 Language, race, and identity

In the introduction to a collection of essays on identity, Alcoff (2003: 3) makes a claim that in order to understand identities, "we need to study psychology, culture, politics, and economics, as well as philosophy and history". Surprisingly, the list of disciplines does not include the field of linguistics or sociolinguistics. It is surprising because language and discursive practices have been considered essential in the formation of identity and culture (Mallinson & Kendall 2013: 157). For example, from the perspective of linguistic anthropology, language is viewed as one of the symbolic resources available for cultural production of identity as "speakers produce and reproduce particular identities through their

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[3] *Race* is not the only, but one of the social categories of identity. As Chun (2011: 404) underlines, there is no single social dimension which "can exhaustively define a community, an identity". However, as the aim of this study is to examine discourse on race, the notion of identity is discussed primarily from the angle of race and race relations.

language use" (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 369). Alim, Rickford & Ball (2016: 4–5) also observe that "language is often overlooked as one of the most important cultural means that we have for distinguishing ourselves from others".

Linguistic inquiry is also important in relation to the concepts of *race* and *racism,* because these concepts are manifested discursively. On the one hand, "racist opinions and beliefs are produced and reproduced by the means of discourse" and, on the other hand, discourse also "serves to criticize, delegitimize, and argue against racist opinion and practices" (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 1–2).

Language, identity, and culture are "inextricably intertwined and mutually constitutive" (Mallinson & Kendall 2013: 163). Thus, the present study sets out to explore these interrelations between Coates's language use and the social identity of black Americans in the twenty-first century.

2.2 Previous research on language and *race*

Throughout the twentieth century sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists and cultural theorists conducted a number of studies examining race and language (e.g., Boas 1940; Labov 1972; Spears 1999), and the topics of race, language, and culture seem to be even more prominent in the twenty-first century (e.g., Alim & Reyes 2011; Bucholtz 2011; Ibrahim 2020). However, there has been a need to theorize language and race as a unified social process (rather than as two independent disciplines) within and across language studies (Alim & Smitherman 2019). To address this need, a large number of U.S. researchers have collectively forged a new field of study called *raciolinguistics* (Alim, Rickford & Ball 2016). Raciolinguistics, as a field of study, brings together diverse methods of linguistic analysis in order to tackle "critical questions about the relations between language, race, and power" in various ethnoracial contexts, demonstrating that *race* is not only a social, but a sociolingustic construct (Alim, Rickford & Ball 2016: 3; Alim & Smitherman 2019: 230). Alim, Rickford and Ball (2016) highlight the ongoing research in this emerging field. For example, Blake's (2016) sociolinguistic study which discusses the (social and linguistic) classification of Black/African American groups in the twenty-first century, is an example of theorizing language through the lens of race. In her study, Blake (2016) employs race theory to explain sociolinguistic variation among black New Yorkers as she analyzes the use of three linguistic variables associated either with New York City, African American and Creole English speech (Blake 2016: 160).

Methodologically, the studies included in the volume edited by Alim, Rickford and Ball (2016), employ a variety of approaches to linguistic analysis: from sociolinguistic interviews and observations (variationist sociolinguistics) to ethnographic and discourse analytic methods. However, there were no studies in the volume that employ corpus linguistic methods in any combination for the analysis of race, language, and culture, as the current study employs.

2.3 Previous studies combining corpus linguistics and qualitative analysis

The present study examines the intersections of race, language, and culture (identity) by combining corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics. The study draws on previous research which utilizes similar methodological approaches – a combination of corpus linguistic methods with a qualitative analysis – particularly Brindle's (2016) study of white supremacist language and Avila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno's (2016) study of gendered discourse of Irishness and migration experiences.

Brindle's (2016) study presents the analysis of a corpus comprised of texts from a white supremacist website, Stormfront. The study examines the corpus through the notion of homosexuality as it describes and explains the construction of heterosexual masculine identities displayed on the Stormfront forum. Brindle (2016) performs a linguistic analysis of the data by combining corpus linguistic methods and a critical discourse analysis. The findings of the study indicate that the language used by the members of the Stormfront forum is characterized by fundamental traits of heterosexuality and whiteness, which demonstrates a construction of the superior in-group identity in opposition to groups defined as inferior – women, gay men and lesbians as well as racial minorities (Brindle 2016: 198–199, 202).

Similarly to Brindle's (2016) study, the present study also employs a corpus-driven approach as a starting point for analysis. The approach combines an analysis of frequency, keywords, collocation, and concordance. The main difference in corpus linguistic methods employed in the present study compared to Brindle's (2016), is that Brindle's use of keyword analysis was substituted with the examination of the saliency of the two most frequent content words in the study due to difficulty in obtaining a reference corpus wordlist compatible with the software.

Another difference between Brindle (2016) and the present study is the difference in qualitative analysis approach. Brindle (2016) utilizes a critical discourse analysis approach in

his study, whereas the present study approaches the data analysis by employing a corpus pragmatics approach.

The combination of corpus linguistic methods and a qualitative corpus pragmatics approach is utilized in Avila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno's (2016) study. The study examines the notions of gender and the conceptualization of Irishness through a linguistic analysis of post-famine Irish emigrants' personal correspondence (Avila-Ledesma & Amador-Moreno 2016: 102).

In comparison with the study mentioned above, the present study employs a similar combination of methods, as it adopts, in part, a collocation-based method for the analysis of nouns/noun phrases and their pragmatic meanings in context as innovatively used in Avila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno's (2016) study. However, Avila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno (2016) employ a corpus-based approach as a starting point for the analysis as the units under examination (*home* and *country*) are predetermined by the researchers. In contrast, the present study uses a corpus-driven approach to determine the units for analysis.

Building on the previous research on language and race, the present study aims to contribute to the emerging subfield of sociolinguistics, raciolinguistics, by examining the terms of group identity among black Americans as constructed in the writings of Ta-Nehisi Coates. The study also contributes to the fields of corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics as it employs both methodological approaches in examining the discourse on race in the United States.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This chapter presents the methodological approach and data collection strategy used to address the study's research questions. The chapter is divided into four main parts: section 3.1 highlights the usefulness of an interdisciplinary approach for this inquiry; section 3.2 introduces the corpus linguistic tools employed in the study; section 3.3 presents the corpus-pragmatics approach used in the study; and section 3.4 discusses data design and the data compilation process. The content and structure of this chapter follow the structural patterns of previous corpus studies, particularly Brindle's (2016) study of white supremacist language and Avila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno's (2016) study of gendered discourse of Irishness and migration experiences.

3.1 Interdisciplinary approach

This study is focused on the interrelation between language, race, and identity. Mallinson and Kendall (2013: 154) see an interdisciplinary approach as a useful tool in the analysis of language, identity, and culture. They emphasize that "language helps constitute and/or is constituted by identity, positionality, and social organization" (ibid.:157).[4] The study utilizes a complementary interdisciplinary approach in order to identify units for analysis and explain the findings. The methodological framework brings together quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach is operationalized through corpus linguistic tools, whereas the qualitative analysis is performed using a pragmatics approach. The data for the study is generated through the use of a self-compiled specialized electronic corpus of Coates's non-fictional writings, COCO.

Adolphs (2006: 129) proposes that "the use of [corpus linguistic] methodologies is best combined with other types of approaches". In particular, the quantitative methods of corpus linguistics can provide new insights and raise new research questions in the analysis of "cultural aspects of language", such as pragmatics and the study of culture (Adolphs 2006: 119). Carter (2010: 67) described such a combination of approaches as "a relatively objective methodological procedure that at its best is guided by a relatively subjective process of

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[4] Mallinson and Kendall (2013:157) describe *positionality* as a more fluid concept of identity, which defines identity as "a practice and resource that shapes and manifests social practice". The authors refer to the study by Anthias (2002: 493) where she argues that the concept of 'identity' has lost much of its heuristic potential and proposes employing the concept of "narratives of location and positionality".

interpretation". The quantitative tools of corpus linguistics provide this study with a certain degree of objectivity because they allow the researcher to minimize pre-conceived ideas and human bias; whereas a pragmatics approach offers a contextual interpretation of the results of the data analysis. In that way, the interdisciplinary approach provides this study with a relatively balanced methodology in analyzing the language use of Ta-Nehisi Coates in his discourse on race.

3.2 Corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics has been defined from different standpoints: some researchers argue that it should be considered as a linguistic theory, a domain of research in its own (Tognini-Bonelli 2001), while others regard it as a methodological basis for conducting linguistic analysis (Meyer 2002; Lindquist 2009). In this study, corpus linguistics is utilized as a methodological approach.

Corpus linguistics provides a description of general patterns in language use observed in corpora, typically large collections of computer-readable texts. More specifically, corpora are collections of authentic texts, which are selected according to explicit design criteria, and are considered representative of the language use under investigation (for example, a linguistic analysis of the language in general, of a particular language variety, or variation within genres, etc.) (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 2, 55).

A corpus linguistic methodological approach is an empirical approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 2). The method is based on the use of a corpus which is seen as "a source of systematically retrievable data" (Leech 1991: 9). In other words, corpus methods add to the "systematicity of an analysis" by providing empirical data with a degree of objectivity (Mahlberg 2013: 8).

3.2.1 Corpus-driven approach

There are various approaches to corpus studies, e.g., *corpus-driven* and *corpus-based* approaches (Lindquist 2009: 26). The present study adopts a corpus-driven, rather than corpus-based, methodological approach. In a corpus-based approach, units for analysis are determined by a researcher at the beginning of the process, whereas in a corpus-driven approach the selection of units for analysis is a part of the analytical process. In the latter approach, the units for analysis are identified through computational techniques based on the frequency of the units in the dataset. This process facilitates the formulation of the research

questions according to the evidence extracted from the corpus (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 84). Mahlberg (2013: 13) highlights some advantages of a corpus-driven approach as one "that gives priority to the data and derives linguistic categories and models on the basis of patterns that are apparent from the data". The present study examines language use in race discourse. This area of research could be potentially controversial as the researcher might have a human bias towards the object of the study. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to look at what is in the corpus rather than to be guided by his/her own ideas about the topic. A corpus-driven approach helps to "keep the assumptions minimal" (Mahlberg 2013: 13; cf. Mahlberg 2005).

In addition, Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 87) argues that a corpus-driven approach reflects a "holistic approach to language" which emphasizes the link between the text, its verbal context and the wider context of culture. Therefore, a corpus-driven methodological approach provides a good starting point for the analysis. Two issues which are particularly important in a corpus-driven approach, the authenticity of the texts and the representativeness of the language included in the corpus, are discussed in section 3.4.1.

The following sections offer a more detailed discussion on some of the corpus linguistic tools, such as frequency word lists, keywords, concordance lists, and collocations, which are used in the present study.

3.2.2 Frequency word lists

As mentioned above, a corpus-driven approach aims "to derive linguistic categories systematically from the recurrent patterns and the frequency distribution that emerge from language in context" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 87). This methodological approach based on frequency observation underlines the understanding that "language use and lexical choice is not […] a random phenomenon" but it consists of patterns (Brindle 2016: 42–43). In addition, the linguistic patterns are utilized by speakers to communicate ideology and culture. Therefore, the analysis of frequency in COCO is particularly relevant for this study.

One of the ways the analysis of a corpus is performed is through the creation of frequency lists. A frequency list contains all the words in a corpus with the number of occurrences displayed for each individual word. A frequency list is a useful tool in determining typical or characteristic patterns in a corpus. It is important to keep in mind that this method analyzes language, either in terms of what is frequently present in the dataset, or

Table 3.1 The twenty most frequent words in COCO (raw frequency).

Rank in COCO	Word	Frequency (raw)
1	THE	27,083
2	OF	13,864
3	A	11,375
4	AND	11,332
5	TO	10,572
6	IN	7,865
7	THAT	6,095
8	BY	5,865
9	WAS	4,762
10	IS	4,181
11	FOR	4,016
12	Q	3,895
13	I	3,704
14	BUT	3,421
15	HE	3,379
16	HIS	3,321
17	IT	3,262
18	WITH	3,242
19	ON	3,179
20	AS	3,063

in terms of what exhibits low-frequency or even what is completely missing from a frequency list. As Brindle (2016: 44) points out "words [which are] not present on a frequency list may be as noteworthy as those which are on it".

The starting point for this study was the list of all the words in the corpus arranged in terms of frequency. However, it is been observed that the most frequent words displayed on such a list for any type of corpus are function words (e.g., determiners, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, modal verbs, etc.). When the overall word list based on COCO was created by using software for linguistic analysis, *WordSmith Tools* version 7 (Scott 2019), the same observation is true for the calculations of word frequency. For example, the top 20 most frequent words in COCO are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.2 The twenty most frequent content items in COCO (raw frequency)

Rank in COCO	Word	Frequency (raw)
22	BLACK	2,786
44	SAYS	1,167
46	WHITE	1,092
59	PEOPLE	887
72	NEW	723
76	OBAMA	665
77	TIME	626
83	YEARS	573
87	OTHER	539
90	AMERICA	522
91	NEVER	513
93	NOW	504
98	WORLD	482
101	YEAR	478
102	ALBUM	475
103	AMERICAN	474
106	AFRICAN	461
107	SCHOOL	456
109	OWN	445
111	WHILE	442

Based on the overall word list of COCO, an additional word list was compiled which consisted of the 20 most frequent content items such as nouns, lexical verbs, adjectives and adverbs (see Table 3.2).

As shown in Table 3.2, the most frequent content items on the list are *black, says,* and *white*. The word *says* was excluded from the analysis as it is considered a technical term (see section 4.1). The two race-related terms were selected as the node words for closer examination. Such word lists provide an insight into the range of themes covered by Ta-Nehisi Coates in his non-fictional writings. In addition, the analysis of data gathered from the word lists served as a basis for further analysis of the linguistic context in which the node

words occur. This step in the analysis is performed via a close examination of concordance lines and collocations, the procedures which are discussed in sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.5.

However, frequency calculations alone cannot be used as ultimate evidence of the significance of a word in the corpus; the word could be frequent in a specialized corpus just because it is frequent in general language. As Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 9) emphasizes, "corpus work should always be comparative and evidence from a specific-domain corpus should be compared with evidence from a general purpose corpus". The procedure which allows the researcher to compare word frequencies between COCO and a larger reference corpus, so-called keyword procedure, is discussed in the following section.

3.2.3 Keywords/keyness

The notion of keyness is based on the comparison of word frequencies in a smaller specialized corpus against another, much larger, reference corpus. Words that surface as being more frequent in a smaller corpus compared to the reference corpus are called *keywords*.

A keyword analysis can be used in addition to the frequency procedure described in section 3.2.2. A keyword list "provides a degree of prominence, instead of frequency alone" (Brindle 2016: 44). A keyword procedure is a comparative type of analysis which can help to identify differences in lexis between COCO and a corpus of general language use, for example, *The Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA).

A keyword procedure could be performed by utilizing a keyword option in the software for linguistic analysis. For example, *WordSmith Tools* (Scott 2019) performs a computerized procedure as it compares patterns of frequency in two pre-existing word lists: one from a smaller specialized corpus and another from a larger, reference corpus. Since COCO is mostly comprised of online magazine articles, it was important to choose a relevant reference corpus which would be comparable with the texts in COCO. The magazine section of COCA (COCA-MAG) contains a genre of texts similar to COCO (magazine articles and feature stories). COCA-MAG (127.3 million words) is comprised of the texts from nearly 100 different popular magazines issued in the USA from 1990 until 2019 (https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/, accessed April 30, 2020). Therefore, COCA-MAG serves as a relevant reference corpus for this study.

However, the word list of the magazine section of COCA is not freely and easily available. Due to the time and space limitations of this particular project, the keyword

comparison of the node words, *black* and *white,* in the two corpora is performed by a statistical measure, log-likelihood (LL). The LL statistic provides a statistical comparison of relative frequencies of *black* and *white* in two corpora: COCO and COCA-MAG. This type of comparison gives a general overview of how the two corpora relate to one another. It should be noted that the numbers provided above include both, relevant (race-related) and irrelevant (e.g., descriptions of colors, etc.) instances of the adjectives in the two corpora.

The calculations are performed by using the Log-likelihood and Effect size calculator available via the Lancaster University Center for Computer Corpus Research on Language (UCREL): http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html (last accessed May 5, 2020). The UCREL tool utilizes the same main statistical tests as the computerized keyword procedure in *WordSmith Tools 7.0*: Log-likelihood test, Log ratio, and BIC (Bayers Factor). The statistical significance of the differences between use of the terms *black* and *white* between the two corpora is presented in Tables 3.3 and 3.4, respectively.

Table 3.3 The term *black* in COCO and COCA-MAG (raw numbers)

Black	COCO	COCA-MAG	Overuse (+)/ Underuse (−)	LL
Frequency of word	2,786	59,801	+	8901.43
Corpus size	468,899	127,352,014		

Table 3.4 The term *white* in COCO and COCA-MAG (raw numbers)

White	COCO	COCA-MAG	Overuse (+)/ Underuse (−)	LL
Frequency of word	1,092	58,612	+	1775.74
Corpus size	468,899	127,352,014		

The term *overuse* describes key words which are unusually frequent in the target corpus (COCO) compared to the reference corpus (COCA-MAG), whereas the term underuse describes key words which are unusually infrequent in the target corpus (Rayson 2008: 523). The high LL scores (8901.43 for *black* and 1775.74 for *white*) clearly indicate the significant overuse of both terms in COCO compared to the reference corpus, COCA-MAG.

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2		LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio
Word	2786	0.59	59801	0.05	+	8901.43	1165.32	8882.76	0.00001	12.65	3.66	12.72
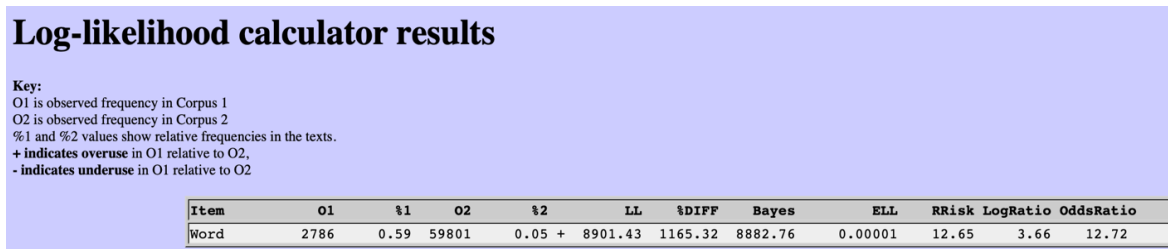
Figure 3.1 Screenshot of the Log-likelihood calculator results for the term *black*

Log-likelihood calculator results

Key:
O1 is observed frequency in Corpus 1
O2 is observed frequency in Corpus 2
%1 and %2 values show relative frequencies in the texts.
+ indicates overuse in O1 relative to O2,
- indicates underuse in O1 relative to O2

Item	O1	%1	O2	%2		LL	%DIFF	Bayes	ELL	RRisk	LogRatio	OddsRatio
Word	1092	0.23	58612	0.05	+	1775.74	406.01	1757.07	0.00000	5.06	2.34	5.07
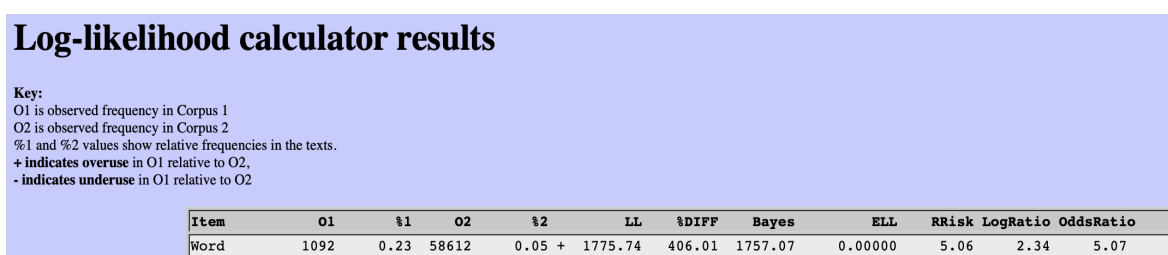
Figure 3.2 Screenshot of the Log-likelihood calculator results for the term *white*

More specifically, based on the values of relative frequencies given in percentage (%1 and %2 in Figures 3.1 and 3.2), it is observed that the term *black* occurs in COCO almost 12 times more compared to COCA-MAG and the term *white* is used nearly 5 times more in COCO. Therefore, both adjectives *black* and *white* could be considered keywords, or so-called salient words, in COCO.

3.2.4 Concordance

A concordance is a list of all occurrences of a word or a string of words, a cluster, in its linguistic context throughout the corpus. An analysis of the concordance lines combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. As Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 3–4) argues, the corpus offers unique access to "the individual instance, which can be read and expanded on the horizontal axis of the concordance" and, at the same time, to "the social practice retrievable in the repeated patterns of co-selection on the vertical axis of the concordance".

A concordance analysis foregrounds lexis. Brindle (2016: 42) notes that a corpus linguistic description of language highlights lexical choices, which "facilitates the understanding of discourses and ideological approaches constructed within the texts". In other words, a corpus-driven approach brings to the surface the interconnection between an item and its linguistic environment: "the merging of item and environment" leads to the

assumption of "an 'extended unit of meaning' bringing together the lexical, the grammatical, the semantic and the pragmatic levels" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 11).

due to other authors] January 22, 1999 [News] Failing **Black** Studies On the evening of Jan. 10, 1986, more
issue [Feature Story? / Politics] My President Was **Black** A history of the first African American White
enable—other forms of violence. Long before the **Black** Lives Matter movement raised the problem of
the feeling of dread, and their lingering influence on **black** Americans' attitudes towards police and other
for years had been America's premier caretaker of **black** history, was on its way to a messy, ignoble death
Magazine] [without QUOTES] April 12, 2006 Not So **Black** and White I can't get the insipid theme song
, it was ASALH that had relentlessly pushed to make **black** history a respectable phrase. It was ASALH that
that had established Negro History Week and, later, **Black** History Month. It was ASALH, through its
History Bulletin, that had popularized the teaching of **black** history in public schools. And in the days when
We Lost to the White Man' The audacity of Bill Cosby's **black** conservatism Last summer, in Detroit's St. Paul
Homes closed in on us, the moon ducked behind its **black** cloak and Fell's Point dilettantes shuffled in
academic journals refused to publish the works of **black** scholars, it was ASALH that had founded the
insipid theme song from Ice Cube's new reality show **Black.** White out of my head. Everywhere I go hear
. Put differently, we should seek not a world where the **black** race and the white race live in harmony, but a
race live in harmony, but a world in which the terms **black** and white have no real political meaning. The
how hip-hop was once a dialect for young **black** people to express a broad range of experience.
, Vol. 34, Iss. 3 (Mar 2002): 20-24]. Confessions of a **Black** Mr. Mom One man's crusade to redefine
got more mileage out of the travails of the young **black** male than any other artist in hiphop. And Tupac
to prevent those same white ethnics from engaging in **anti-black** racism. Yet for a starker example, it may
anthem for young blackAmerica-mostly because young **black** America had the means to listen. Say what you

Figure 3.3 Screenshot example of concordance lines from COCO (*WordSmith Tools*)

WordSmith Tools (Scott 2019) contains a concordance option which allows the researcher to create a list of all the instances of the search item, which is labeled 'the node word', in its context(s). The list displays the node word (for example, the term *black*) in the central position with the preceding and following words to its left and right, as shown in Figure 3.3.

The examination of the concordance lines gives examples of the typical collocates of a node word. The observation of those examples can display the patterns of the environment in which the node words usually occur in the co-text (a text that is displayed on the computer screen to the left and right of the node word), which, in turn, contributes to the understanding of the meaning of the node word. The contextual environment of the units under examination is important as it could provide a possible explanation as to why certain words are frequent in the corpus. Therefore, a concordance analysis supplements every type of analysis in the study.

One of the challenges in using a concordance analysis is presented by the fact that a huge dataset produces numerous concordance lines which are difficult for one researcher to

interpret (Hunston 2002: 52). However, this project examines a dataset of approximately 469,000 words, which is considered a manageable amount of data for analysis.

3.2.5 Collocations

A relationship between two words (called 'collocates') which frequently occur near or next to one another constitutes a linguistic structure termed 'collocation' (Lindquist 2009: 78; Brindle 2016: 45). Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 4) emphasizes that "every linguistic item occurs in a context and that context is highly relevant for the determination of the meaning of the item". The typical collocates of a particular word evoke certain associations and encompass connotations contributing to the meaning of the word(s) in context. Therefore, a collocation analysis is important in gaining insights into word meaning(s).

WordSmith Tools identifies the collocates of a word by providing the number of times a collocate occurs near or next to the node word. For example, in COCO the node word *black* frequently collocates with the following lexical words: *people*, *America*, *white*, *community*, *women*, *president, first, young*; whereas the node word *white* often occurs with such collocates as *black*, *people*, *House*, *America*, *supremacy*, *class*, *Americans*, *women*.

The frequency of a collocation alone does not necessarily point to its significance within a discourse (Brindle 2016: 46). In addition to frequency count, the statistical measure of mutual information (MI) is utilized in calculating collocations. Calculations are performed by using the MI formula which "measures the collocational strength", or in other words, the relationship between the node word and each collocate (Lindquist 2009: 76). The MI-score is calculated based on the number of instances of the co-occurring word found in the designated span of the node word (the Observed frequency), and the number of instances that might be expected in that span (the Expected frequency), taking into account the frequency of co-occuring word in the entire corpus (Hunston 2002: 70). Thus, the MI-score is "the Observed divided by the Expected, converted to a base-2 logarithm" (Hunston 2002: 70). *WordSmith Tools* provides settings for displaying collocates with an MI score of 3.0 (or higher) which is considered to be significant (Hunston 2002: 71). It is important to be aware that the MI score can be high for rare, low frequency words. Therefore, the units with a high MI score but low frequency should not be considered for examination. In this project, the collocates with an MI score of 3.0 or higher in R1 position (immediate to the right) and frequency occurrences of 10 or more were selected for analysis.

However, in addition to a collocational analysis, concordance analyses should be performed in examining the context of the collocates. The analyses of concordance lines and collocates help to uncover pragmatic prosodies of the items under investigation. The notion of pragmatic prosody is discussed in section 3.3.1.

3.2.6 Modern diachronic corpus-assisted discourse studies (MD-CADS)

Corpus data is well-suited for diachronic studies of language, particularly the way the language changes over a period of time. Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 265) propose a form of corpus linguistics which they named *modern diachronic corpus-assisted discourse studies* (MD-CADS). MD-CADS is a diachronic comparison of two or more corpora which are compiled "to be as similar in content, composition and structure as possible" (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 265). As the authors (ibid.) note, such an approach allows the researcher to observe changes in language patterns and discourse practices which occur over relatively brief periods of time.

COCO is a suitable dataset for the MD-CADS approach because the corpus was compiled and stored in chronological order which makes it possible to divide COCO into sub-corpora for a diachronic type of analysis. As presented in Chapter 4, COCO was divided into five time periods based on major political and social events in the United States, namely Obama's and Trump's presidential campaigns, elections, and terms in office. The diachronic comparison of the use of the terms *black* and *white* from 1996 until 2018 uncovered some interesting patterns in Coates's discourse on race. The findings of the data analysis using MD-CADS and some possible explanations are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.3 Corpus pragmatics

The main concern of pragmatics is "how language is used in communication", for example, between a writer and a reader (Rühlemann & Aijmer 2015: 2). Leech (1983: 2) points out that the meaning of words varies from context to context. The use of a particular word and its meaning are determined by a user of the language. Therefore, a pragmatic approach offers an analysis of the units based on their contribution to the pragmatic interpretation of the utterance in context, not its semantic representation (Aijmer 2008: 12).

One of the areas of pragmatics, sociopragmatics, prioritizes social context – social situations and cultures – in examining pragmatic meanings of a particular instance of language use. In that way, a sociopragmatic perspective can offer explanations for the

linguistic choices of a writer, in this case, Ta-Nehisi Coates, by looking at the way he exploits language "to generate particular meanings, [to] take up particular social positionings" (Culpeper 2011: 2).

The identities of a speaker/writer and a hearer/reader (their shared or different background) are crucial in a communicative situation because of the complexity of the interplay between inferences and interpretations. In other words, what is said may be interpreted differently by different recipients of the message (Rühlemann & Aijmer 2015: 2). Furthermore, the dialogical nature of communication implies that the production of an utterance is influenced by what was said before and, at the same time, it creates a contextual platform for what follows. As Coates's writing style is characterized by "'speech-like' forms, such as epistolary and/or e-mediated communication" (e.g., blogs), it could be argued that he, as a writer, is in a dialogue with his readers (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 2).

A pragmatic approach is a qualitative type of analysis as it is based not on frequency observations, but on a close reading of individual texts, or in other words, 'horizontal' reading of the concordance lines. One of the challenges for the pragmatic analysis of corpora could be a limited access to social and textual contexts (Romero-Trillo 2008: 6). This research project addresses this issue by narrowing the scope of the study, focusing on one particular writer, Ta-Nehisi Coates. In addition, the experiential and reflective style of Coates's writings provides extensive contextual information for the qualitative stage of the data analysis.

Furthermore, it is important to employ a dataset that provides relatively easy access to the contextual information: for example, chronologically ordered data; full-text articles/whole texts rather than excerpts, and so on. COCO, which was compiled for the purposes of this study, contains only full-text articles which are organized in chronological order from 1996 until 2018 (see Appendix I and Appendix II).

Corpus pragmatics presents a fusion of pragmatics and corpus linguistics. In other words, a corpus-pragmatic approach brings together the qualitative methodology of pragmatics and the quantitative methodology of corpus linguistics (Rühlemann & Aijmer 2015: 12). As highlighted above, both fields are focused on a description of language in use and it seems quite natural to integrate the methodological approaches from those fields in this particular study.

3.3.1 Pragmatic prosody

One of the key areas in the field of pragmatics which is particularly relevant to this study, is the notion of prosody. The concept of prosodic meaning has been termed by some linguists as 'semantic prosody' (Sinclair 1991), or 'pragmatic prosody' (Stubbs 2001), or, more recently, 'evaluative prosody' (Partington 2015). All these terms reflect the aspects encompassed in the concept of prosodic meaning. (For more detailed discussion on the concept(s) of semantic/pragmatic prosody, see Stewart 2010). This study uses the term *pragmatic prosody* as the term corresponds with the name of the field of *pragmatics*.

Pragmatic prosody reflects a conceptualization of a speaker's evaluation of or attitude towards the entities spoken about in a discourse. This notion is based on the fact that "speakers co-select lexical items depending on their evaluation of the affairs mentioned" (Rühlemann & Aijmer 2015: 19). Pragmatic prosody implies the communicative relationship between the writer and the reader as well as an expression of writer/speaker attitude.

The notion of attitude, which is central to pragmatic prosody, is closely related to the notion of evaluation, as a speaker/writer needs to evaluate an entity first, before the attitude towards it is expressed. Partington (2015: 280) points out that in every-day communication "speakers/writers both give experiential messages about the world and simultaneously express their own evaluative attitude to it, approving or critical". However, evaluations should not be viewed simply as personal judgements by a speaker. In the interactive nature of human relationships and communication, evaluation can be seen as "the engine of persuasion" as speakers/writers "seek to impose, overtly or covertly, particular values and stances" on the audience (Partington 2015: 280). Furthermore, as Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 46) argue, evaluations express "group belonging by (seemingly) offering a potential service to the group by warning of bad things and advertising good ones".

Analysis of concordance lines, a method described in section 3.2.4, is employed in this study in order to describe the prosodic meaning of the selected items. A concordance-based analysis allows the researcher to uncover the links which are established between a word and a set of related words in a discourse (Brindle 2016: 47–48). Therefore, the pragmatic prosody – positive or negative – of a word can be described through patterns in collocations.

However, in some instances the identification of an item in terms of its prosodic evaluation could be based not on immediate collocates, but on the context of the whole sentence or even a part of the text. In other words, a limited length of co-text in the standard

concordance-line presents a challenge in applying a concordance-based method to a study of pragmatic prosody in a discourse, because the collocations need to be interpreted based on a larger context. The solution could be a full-text (rather than excerpts) dataset for the purposes of the qualitative analysis. For example, a sentence such as: "*In the real world, Obama is married to a black woman*" (Coates 2007), seems neutral when examined on its own, outside of its context. However, a close reading of the article makes it clear that, according to Coates, the utterance projects a positive evaluation as it contributes to the view of Obama's identity as a 'real' black rather than a 'half-white-half-black' person.

This study addresses the issue of limited context in the concordance lines by using full-text articles in COCO as a way to provide access to the contextual information of the texts. As described in section 3.4.2, COCO is stored in three different folders and one of the folders contains full-text articles in order to examine the instances under analysis in their pragmatic context.

3.3.2 The notion of control

The positivity or negativity of prosodic meaning can be evaluated from various angles. This study employs the notion which is frequently associated with positive and negative evaluation, namely "the notion of control – or a lack of it – over events and one's environment" (Partington 2015: 280). As Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 67) note, the notion of control is one of the highly important psychological constructs "shaping both the form of language and linguistic interaction". Linguistically, control can be used either in expressions which indicate polarity (having or not having, acquiring or losing) or in expressions indicating a degree of control (*tighter*, *complete*, etc.) (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 68).

The notion of control is relevant to the study's analysis of discourse on race as racial relations portray asymmetrical power relations which imply power and control by the dominant group(s) over marginalized groups. More specifically, the analysis of pragmatic prosody in terms of control is performed through examination of identity terms such as *black people, black America/Americans, black community/communities, African(-)Americans,* and *blacks*. It is important to remember, that in the context of power relations, the prosodic meaning of the units "is essentially linked to point of view so that there is often not one indisputable interpretation of attitude" (Hunston 2007: 256). Thus, particular attention has to be paid to whose point of view is being expressed in Coates's writings: his own, or is the

voice attributed to someone else? The analysis of data in light of the notion of control is presented in section 4.5.2.

3.4 Data

The dataset for this study is a self-compiled specialized corpus of Ta-Nehisi Coates's non-fictional writings, COCO. The corpus was compiled in August–October 2019. The following sections cover various aspects of the data gathering process. Section 3.4.1 describes the parameters of the corpus design. Section 3.4.2 describes the selection of the data and the actual process of compiling COCO.

3.4.1 Corpus Design: The authenticity and representativeness of the corpus

As stated above, this project utilizes a corpus-driven approach which prioritizes the data. Therefore, the authenticity and representativeness of the corpus are two important issues that need to be considered and addressed by a researcher in corpus design (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 54, 88). A corpus, which is assumed to be representative of a particular type of language usage, allows a researcher to use the evidence from the corpus to make generalized statements which could be applied to a larger sample of the language use under investigation (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 57).

Biber (1993: 243) defines representativeness of a corpus not only in terms of the sample size, but, more importantly, in terms of the target population whose language use is represented in the corpus. However, Mahlberg (2013: 9) points out that claims about corpora as representative, in terms of the English language as a whole, are quite unrealistic. She proposes that "a more useful approach is to assess whether [corpora] are adequate for the purpose they are to serve" (ibid). The purpose of the present study is narrow: a linguistic analysis of the language use of a particular writer (Coates) in a particular genre (non-fictional writings) and a particular discourse (race discourse). Therefore, the corpus design, as described below, was guided by those parameters.

The corpus for the present study (COCO) is a collection of the non-fictional writings by Coates for a period of over 20 years (1996–2018). The main part of COCO consists of the online articles accessed via ten publication websites as described in section 3.4.2. Coates has been either on staff with the publications, or he was one of their guest columnists or was a contributor. By including articles from ten various publications, an attempt was made to ensure that COCO is representative of Coates's language use.

The issue of authenticity was addressed by ensuring that only the texts written by Coates are included in the corpus. Therefore, all the articles that listed co-authors were excluded from COCO. In addition, as mentioned in the section below, any identifiable quotations of other writers/interviewees in Coates's texts, were manually deleted. Thus, COCO contains only utterances authored by Coates, which is particularly important for the quantitative part of the analysis.

In summary, the representativeness of COCO has been ensured by including nearly all the articles by Coates published from 1996 until 2018 and by representing the various thematics of the texts as well as the variety of the sources. The issue of authenticity has been addressed by including, as far as possible, only utterances/texts produced by Coates in COCO. Based on the corpus design parameters, COCO could be considered adequate for the purpose of the study.

3.4.2 Data Compilation

The corpus is comprised of publicly available online articles written by Ta-Nehisi Coates from 1996 until 2018 and one of the author's non-fictional books: *The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir (BS)* [5] (2016/2008). The other two monographs by the author (*Between the World and Me (BWM)* and *We were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy (EYP))* were not available to be added to COCO due to copyright restrictions. All reasonable efforts were made to obtain permission from the publisher to use those works in COCO, but, unfortunately, permission was not granted. Furthermore, it should be noted that even though some of the online articles contain multimodal components, such as audio and/or visual data and hyperlinks, those components were not included in COCO. In other words, COCO contains only the running-text articles and a monograph.

The majority of the articles were obtained from the news outlet websites. Two of the publications – *The Atlantic (ATL)* and *Time Magazine (TM)* – required subscriptions in order to access full-text of the articles. Three publications – *Washington City Paper (WCP); Washington Monthly (WM);* and *The Village Voice (VV)* – permitted free online access to the texts. The articles from the remaining five publications – *The Washington Post (WP); Mother Jones (MJ); The New York Times (NYT); O, the Oprah Magazine (OM);* and *The New Yorker (NY)* – were accessed via University of Bergen Library system (Oria). One memoir by

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[5] The monograph was published by a British publisher. The text was checked for spelling variation and it showed that the spelling was consistent with American norm.

Coates, *BS*, was available via the University of Bergen Library. For the full list of items included in COCO, see Appendix I.

The process of data compilation began in August 2019, and at that time, most of the full-text online articles were freely accessible via the news outlet websites (which are based in the United States). However, starting from October 1, 2019, some publications began to require a subscription to access the articles, others (such as *Philadelphia Weekly*) denied online access to its content for inquiries from a country belonging to the EEA ("Unavailable due to legal reasons", due to new GDPR rules). In some ways, such restrictions could have limited the possibility of including as many articles as possible, but by this point, the major part of COCO had been compiled.

COCO is organized into text files by the year of publication, type of text (article or monograph), and source (name of the publication (WCP, WM, VV, ATL, etc.) or title of the monograph).

The corpus consists of 42 text files, containing a total of 350 texts – 349 articles and one monograph (see Table 1 in Appendix II). The total number of words in the corpus is 468,899 words (see Table 2 in Appendix II).

The articles cover a range of topics from news articles and feature stories to reviews of various hip-hop and performance poetry artists as well as book reviews. However, the overarching focus in all the articles by Ta-Nehisi Coates is closely related to socio-political and cultural issues in the African American community. Below are some examples of the thematical range of Ta-Nehisi Coates's articles:

- *Washington City Paper* (1996–2003): music (rap, hip-hop) and performance poetry reviews, news;
- *The Washington Post* (1998–1999, 2002): reviews of hip-hop artists;
- *Washington Monthly* (2001–2002, 2004): race and culture (African American cultural issues);
- *The Village Voice* (2002–2004): news and politics, education, social issues, art and culture, music reviews;
- *Mother Jones* (2002, 2005): book reviews;
- *Time Magazine* (2005–2009, 2016): music/hip hop, social issues, media, sports/American football, race and culture;
- *The New York Times* (2005, 2011–2013): arts and culture, politics;

- *O, the Oprah Magazine* (2006): family, social issues;
- *The Atlantic* (2008–2018): politics, social issues, art, history, personal notes/reflections, etc.;
- *The New Yorker* (2009): music/hip hop;
- *The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir* (2016/2008): black family, father-son relationship, manhood in Black America.

During the process of data compilation, it was observed that several texts – six articles from *Washington City Paper* (1998–1999) and five from *Time Magazine* (2005–2007) – were co-written by Ta-Nehisi Coates and several other writers/journalists. Since the aim of this research project is to examine the language use of a particular author, Ta-Nehisi Coates, the decision was made to exclude those eleven co-written articles from COCO because of the difficulty in determining precisely whose language is under examination. (Those articles are saved in separate files: 1998 (DELETED)-TNC-A-WCP and 1999 (DELETED)-TNC-A-WCP and *Time Magazine* files).

In addition, the online archive of *The Atlantic Magazine* contains over 7000 blog posts written by Ta-Nehisi Coates who was the magazine's blog moderator from 2008 until 2015. Some of those blog posts are quite short, comprising only one or two sentences and hyperlinks, others are quite extensive responses to other commentators on the blog. The nature of blog writing tends to be less formal and conversational; therefore, the language is more informal compared to the articles published by the magazine. Thus, the decision has been made not to include those blog posts in COCO due to the large number of the posts and due to the different, less formal, style of writing. However, it is important to note that the blog posts provide a window on the development of Coates's language and, in particular, word choice, for his later major articles and books. It could be interesting to include the blog posts in a future research project in order to track the chronological developments in Coates's language use and possibly identify dramatic turns in his thinking and writing on race in America.

One of the challenges in compiling a corpus containing newspaper and magazine articles was the nature of the writing genre of the articles (reportage, interviews, essays, political commentary, etc.). The majority of the articles contained a number of utterances by other individuals (quotes from the interviews, hip-hop lyrics, etc.). In order to be able to analyze the language use of the writer himself, such utterances were manually deleted from

the files, replacing the quotes/lyrics with notes such as [*Q by (the name of the person)*]. In that way, the edited files retained the information about the existence of the deleted material (quotes/lyrics). The edited files (without quotes) were converted into text files, which were later compiled into COCO for further analysis. The elimination of the quotes from the files was one of the necessary steps to ensure the relevance of the data set for the present study. Additionally, the files of the full-text articles (with quotes) were saved in a separate folder to provide contextual information for analysis as necessary.

The data is stored in the form of 42 files, both in plain text format and in Document format, in three separate folders (doc files with quotes, doc files without quotes and txt files) in a standard PC. Unfortunately, the dataset (COCO) is not currently available for distribution to other interested researchers due to copyright restrictions.

In this study, COCO has been explored for linguistic patterns using corpus linguistics tools, such as analyses of frequency, collocations, and concordance. The following chapter presents the findings and offers a discussion of the results of the data analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the results that were yielded from the dataset by employing the procedures described in the previous chapter. As mentioned before, the study utilizes a corpus-driven approach as a starting point for the data analysis through the observation of frequency patterns in COCO. Section 4.1 describes the process of selecting items for the analysis, based on frequency observations. Section 4.2 employs the MD-CADS approach in order to diachronically compare and discuss the frequencies of the items – *black(s)*, *white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* in COCO. Section 4.3 identifies the most frequent collocations with the adjective *black,* such as *people, America, community,* etc. Section 4.4 diachronically compares the use of the five group identity terms in COCO. Section 4.5 presents the collocation analyses of the five group identity terms which were manually examined in order to uncover patterns in representation of the group identity of black Americans[6] in Coates's writings. Section 4.6 summarizes the results of the data analysis.

4.1 Frequency in COCO

The word list of the twenty most frequent content items in COCO (see Table 3.2 on p. 17) provides evidence that the words *black, says,* and *white* are the most frequent content words in the corpus, producing 2786, 1167 and 1092 hits respectively. The verb *says* is placed high on the list due to the type of genre, reportage, which is characteristic of Coates's work as a journalist, especially in the earlier years of his career. Therefore, *says* could be considered a technical term of the genre and it was not selected for further analysis.

      The individual instances of the adjectives *black* and *white* were manually examined. The examination revealed that 91% of the use of *black* and 86% of the use of *white* occurs with nouns describing human identity (for example, *people, community, America, women,* etc.). and abstract nouns such as *supremacy, racism,* etc. In that way, the use of the terms is related to the thematical focus of Coates's writings – social, political and cultural issues of the African American community, or in other words, the discourse on race in the United States. The remaining 9% of all the instances of *black* and 14% of the instances of *white* in COCO (250 and 148 hits respectively) are descriptions of the color of objects, such as *black*

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[6] The same procedures could be applied in analyzing Coates's use of the adjective *white* and plural noun *whites.* However, due to time and space constraints, such analysis is beyond the scope of this study.

leather jacket, white sedan, a black-and-white floral dress, etc. or proper names/titles such as *Black Thought* (artist's name)*, Black Panther* (comics), *the White House, Mr. White, Lord Black*, etc. For the purposes of the study, such instances of the adjectives *black* and *white* were not included in the analysis. However, the decision was made to include some of the expressions related to the *Black Panther Party* (BPP)*,* an African American political organization operating from 1966 until the 1980s in the United States (Duncan 2020). For example, the name of the organization itself has implications for the identity and historical struggle of black Americans. Therefore, it is relevant to include the instances of BPP in COCO in the analysis. The instances of another expression, a *black beret,* are also included in the analysis. Even though, at first sight, the adjective *black* in this expression describes the color of an object, the more detailed reading of Coates's writings revealed that *black beret* is used as an identity marker, a symbol of membership in the BPP, as illustrated in the example below:

> (1)   Yet the broad-based defiance of those years has been reduced to a single icon: **the black beret**. And so it is the beret that these neophytes identify with, not what it took to make it mean something. (COCO, 1996–WCP December 20).

In addition to the adjectives *black* and *white* (as related to race), the plural nouns *blacks* and *whites* (245 and 168 hits respectively) were selected for the analysis because the nouns directly refer to the ethnic/racial identity of people.

Furthermore, it was noticed that COCO contains several instances of another term referring to black Americans, *African(-)American(s)*[7]. The search for *African*American**[8] yielded 390 hits across the corpus. The term was selected for further analysis in order to examine differences (if any) in contextual use of the two items referring to black Americans. The term *white* did not have any alternative term in Coates's writings: the terms *Anglos, Caucasian, Caucasoid* had only one instance each and the term *whitey* – 6 instances in COCO.[9] COCO was checked for the use of some other potential terms referring to ethnic/racial identity of the American population, such as *Asian(s)* (11 hits), *Mexican(s)* (3

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[7] COCO was also checked for the instances of the terms such as *nigger/s, Negro/es*, *nigga/s* and *the N-word,* however, such items were not included in the analysis due to low frequency counts (99, 53, 26 and 5 respectively) and quotational context, e.g. references to hip-hop lyrics, historical terms (e.g., *house negro*), etc.
[8] The symbol * was used to account for spelling variation (with or without hyphen) and to extract singular and plural forms of the item.
[9] Due to low frequency and a specific textual context (quotation-like utterances), the instances of *Anglos, Caucasian, Caucasoid,* and *whitey* were excluded from the further analysis.

hits), *Hispanic(s)* (19 hits), *Latino(s)/Latina(s)* (57/2 hits). The frequency counts for the above items were relatively low, with *Latino(s)* producing the highest frequency of them all, 57 hits across the corpus (normalized frequency 12.2 per 100,000 words). Due to low frequency in COCO, items such as *Asian(s), Hispanic(s), Latino(s)/Latina(s),* etc., were excluded from the analysis in this study.

After the searches described above, the following items were selected for further analysis: *black(s), white(s)* and *African(-)American(s).* Table 4.1 provides statistical information for the items included in the analysis.

Table 4.1 Statistical information on *black(s)*, *white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* in COCO
(raw frequency)

Item/Term	Overall hits in COCO	Irrelevant hits in COCO	Total hits for analysis	Total (sing. + pl. forms)
Black	2786	(–) 250	2536	
Blacks	245	0	245	2781
White	1092	(–) 148	944	
Whites	168	0	168	1112
African(-)American(s)	390	0	390	390

4.2 Diachronic analysis: *black(s), white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)*

As described in section 3.2.6, the MD-CADS approach was utilized in order to track the diachronic developments in Coates's use of the terms *black(s), white(s)* and *African(-)American(s).* The diachronic comparison provides some additional insights into changes in patterns observed in Coates's discourse on race over time (see Figure 4.1). The numerical data in Figure 4.1 is presented in the form of normalized frequencies per 100,000 words.

The data covering 22 years was divided into five time periods: 1996–2000 (*Period 1*), 2001–2005 (*Period 2*), 2006–2011 (*Period 3*), 2012–2015 (*Period 4*) and 2016–2018 (*Period 5*). The main reason for the selection of these time periods is the U.S. presidential elections of 2008, 2012 and 2016 (including the presidential campaigns prior to the elections), in which Barack Obama (2008, 2012) and Donald Trump (2016) won the presidency. These three major political events have had an enormous effect on U.S. political discourse, in general, and on race discourse, in particular.
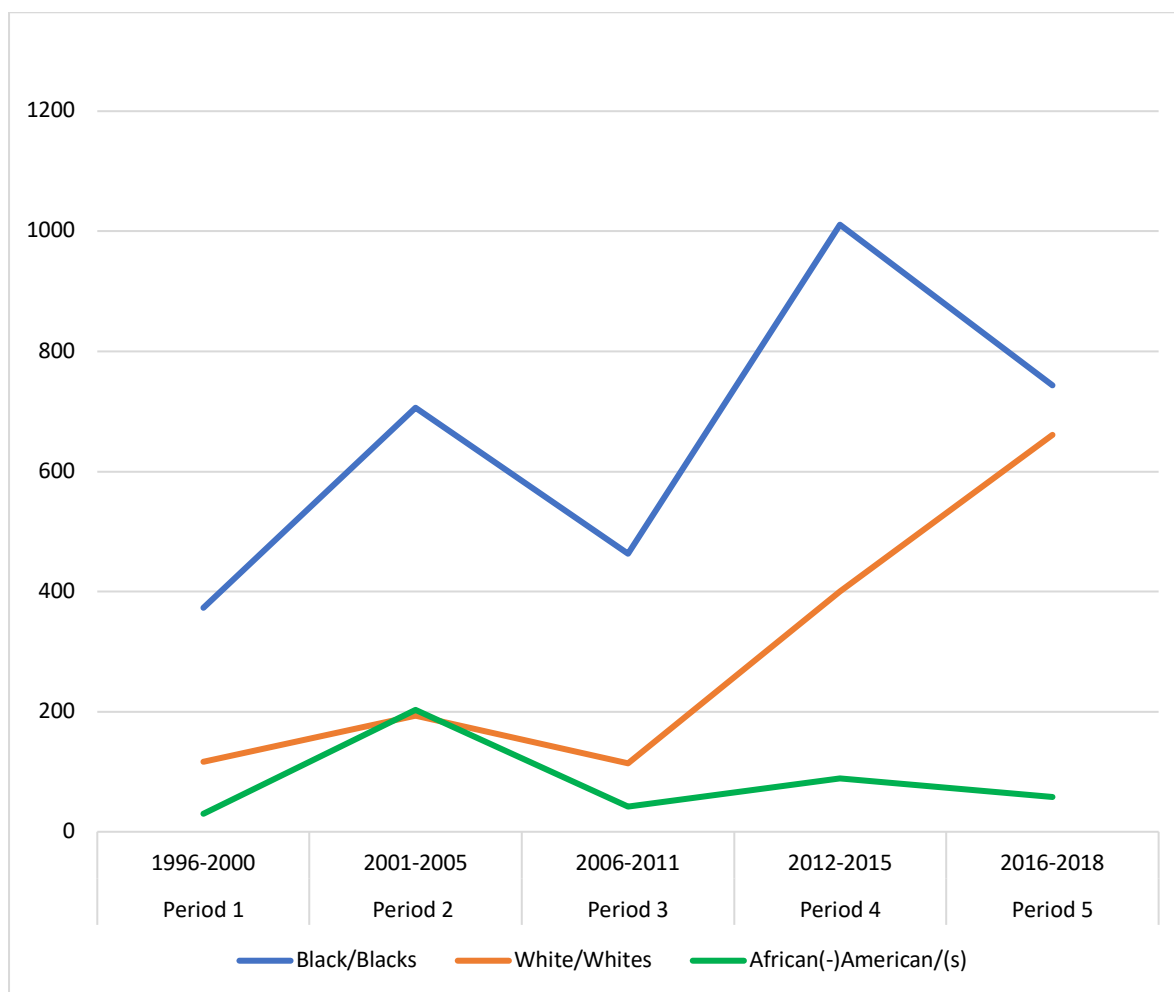
Figure 4.1 Diachronic comparison of the terms *black(s)*, *white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* in COCO (normalized frequency, per 100,000 words).

As shown in Figure 4.1, the three items under investigation – *black(s), white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* – for most of the time (Period 1 – Period 4) follow the same general pattern. For example, all three terms show an increase in usage during Period 2 and a decrease in Period 3, then once again an increase in Period 4, although to a different degree. However, in the last period, Period 5, some divergence from the common trajectory can be observed. The use of *black(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* decreases, at the same time as the use of the term *white(s)* continues to increase.

One interesting observation is that the use of the terms referring to race – *black(s), white(s)* and *African(-)American(s)* – decreases in Period 3 (2006–2011). This development coincides with Obama's presidential campaigns (2007, 2011), election (2008) and the first

term in office (2009–2012). There could be several possible explanations for this development. One possible explanation is that Obama's election as the first black (African American) U.S. president had inspired the notion of *post-racial America,* the idea that American society is ready to cross the color line(s) which have been dividing it for centuries. At the same time, during this time period Coates had been propelled onto the national stage in his writing career by becoming a staff member at *Time* magazine in 2005 and later, in 2008, – a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* magazine. Thus, another explanation for the decrease in the use of terms referring to race in Coates's writings could be his personal quest to find his niche as a black writer. Coates (2017: 113) observes the tendency among African American journalists to "avoid being tagged as 'black' lest they be 'boxed in' and unable to pursue more 'universal' topics such as the economy and global policy". However, towards the end of Obama's first term (ca. 2010–2011), Coates (ibid.) embraces the idea of being "*The Atlantic's* 'Black Writer'" referring to his identity as well as his interests. In a way, Coates makes a conscious decision as a writer to focus on race and racial issues. This could be confirmed by the fact that, as shown in Figure 4.1, the frequency of *black(s)* more than doubled (from 463 to 1011 per 100,000 words) and the frequency of *white(s)* increased nearly four-fold (from 114 to 400 per 100,000 words) in Coates's writings in Period 4 compared to the previous period.

The term *black(s)* in COCO is much more frequent than *white(s)* in the beginning of Coates's career as a writer (1996–2005), but the two terms increase and converge in use during the most recent years (2016–2018). Figure 4.1 illustrates that the wide gap in frequency between the terms *black(s)* and *white(s)* in Period 1 (ca. 220% difference) is much smaller in Period 5 (with only 13% difference). It could be argued that race and racial relations (and polarity) in the United States are increasingly becoming the focus in Coates's writings.

The last period (2016–2018) in COCO is characterized by the continuous increase in the use of *white(s),* whereas the use of *black(s)* decreases. The more frequent use of the term *white(s)* in Period 5 corresponds with the political environment following Trump's election in 2016 as the U.S. president. Approximately two-thirds of the (relevant) instances of *white(s)* in Period 5 (244 out of total 384 instances; 64%) occur in the texts published in *The Atlantic* in 2017, including two lengthy essays "My President was Black" and "The First White President". In the first of the two essays Coates reflects on the two-term presidency of Barack Obama and on what came next, while in the other essay the writer argues that Donald

Trump's presidency is the negation of Barack Obama's legacy. In that way, the events in the political realm of the nation and the increasing urgency (for Coates) to talk about racial issues provides one of the possible explanations for the increased use of the term *white(s)* in Coates's writings in 2016–2018.

According to Figure 4.1 the term *African(-)American(s)* is considerably less frequent in COCO compared to the frequencies of *black(s)*. It suggests that the term *black(s)* seems to be a preferred term in Coates's writings for describing the experiences of black Americans. According to Gallup, at the beginning of the 21st century, *black* and *African American* have been the two most often used (socially created) labels to describe blacks in America (Newport 2007). The survey conducted by Gallup in the beginning of 2000s indicated that there was no strong preference among black Americans themselves for either of the terms (Newport 2007). Both terms "emerged from within the group" of black Americans in their attempt to redefine themselves: the term *black* has been used since the late 1960s and the term *African American* was proposed as the preferred term in 1988 (Martin 1991: 103). According to Blake (2016: 159), in the twenty-first century America, the terms *black* and *African(-)American* are used interchangeably; however, she also highlights an increasing diversity in black communities within the United States. It would be interesting to conduct a corpus-based linguistic study to examine which term, *black* or *African American*, is most frequently used in contemporary American English and if the frequency of occurrences varies by register, and what exactly each term implies. This inquiry is beyond the scope of the present study; however, it could be considered as an area for further research.

After the close reading of the instances of *African(-)American(s)* in COCO, it has been observed that the term is used in specific contexts:

    a.   As a reference to statistical information regarding the American population/voters:

    (2)   Just look at the 2000 election, when nine out of 10 **African American** voters backed the robotic Al Gore, even though he paid them little more than lip service. (COCO, 2003–VV September 23).

    (3)   In New York, however, the black voting bloc isn't as strong, and a broad 'minority bloc'— Asian Americans, **African Americans**, Hispanics—doesn't really exist. (COCO, 2003–VV August 26).

    (4)   In 1970, 15 percent of **African Americans** between the ages of 18 and 24 went to college. (COCO, 2004–VV July 6).

(5)   But the depth of his commitment would seem to belie such suspicions, and in any case, they do not seem to have affected his hold on his audience: in the November Pew survey, 85 percent of all **African American** respondents considered him a "good influence" on the black community, above Obama (76 percent) and second only to Oprah Winfrey (87 percent). (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

(6)   Thomas's great-great-great-uncle was the first **African American** in the Michigan state legislature. (COCO, 2011–ATL April 2011 issue).

b.   As a part of the name of an institution/organization/entity related to the African American population:

(7)   In 1965, they founded the New School of **African American** Thought here. (COCO, 1997–WCP August 8).

(8)   There's no promise that **African-American** Studies programs at Ivy League schools will always enjoy the current groundswell of support. (COCO, 1999–WCP January 22).

(9)   For those who dream of a National **African American** Museum, something always comes along to jolt them awake. (COCO, 2003–VV July 8).

c.   As a part of the reference/response to others who used the term in their research/ writing, etc.

(10)   Frazier—who received his undergraduate degree from Howard—was famous for his pitched battles with anthropologist Melville Herskovitz over whether any traces of African culture could still be found among **African-Americans**. (COCO, 1999–WCP February 19).

(11)   The Lost-Found Nation, for most of its existence, has steadily pursued reparations for **African-Americans** for slavery—a cause to which Farrakhan has given tacit approval at best. (COCO, 1999–WCP May 14).

(12)   The book is a thorough history of mob violence directed against **African-Americans** over nearly a century after the end of slavery, starting in 1886 and not truly ending until 1964, when the last known mob-directed lynching occurred with explicit assistance and approval from local police officials. (COCO, 2001–WM January 1).

(13)   While the Smithsonian has since made efforts to diversify, critics say there is still a glaring omission—a museum dedicated exclusively to **African Americans**. (COCO, 2002–VV November 26).

d. As an alternative term used interchangeably with the term *black(s)* to avoid repetition:

(14) In fact, for the legions of <u>black</u> people who grew up like Michelle Obama—in a functioning, self-contained **African American** world—racial identity recedes in the consciousness. (COCO, 2009–ATL January/February issue).

However, it has been observed that approximately two-thirds of the instances of the term *African(-)American(s)* occur in COCO as the plural form of the noun, *African(-)Americans* (242 instances out of 390; 62%), which is an identity-related term. The corpus has been checked for the use of other group identity terms with *African(-)American*, but their numbers of occurrences were low (e.g., *African(-)American community* occurs only 3 times, and *African(-)American people* does not occur in the corpus at all). Thus, *African(-)Americans* is considered as a possible variable for examination of identity-related terms in COCO.

The next section of this chapter describes the close examination of the collocations with the adjective *black* in COCO. The collocation analysis revealed that the adjective *black* is often followed by nouns describing group identity (such as *people, America, community, families, folks,* etc.). The next stage of the data analysis focuses on the adjective *black* followed by the collective/plural nouns (such as *people, America, community,* etc.) as well as on the nouns *blacks* and *African(-)Americans*.

4.3 Group identity terms with *black*

The concordance procedure in *WordSmith Tools 7.0* enables the researcher to examine collocate patterns with a selected node word. The collocate pattern list is arranged in order of frequency (the minimum length is 1, minimum frequency 10). The list displays "lexical patterns in the concordance" (Scott 2019). For example, as illustrated in Table 4.2, the adjective *black* in COCO is frequently preceded by modifiers (*young, other, first*) and prepositions (*among, between*, *about*) and the item is followed by nouns describing human/group identity, such as *people, America, community, women,* etc. As shown in Table 4.2, R1 position contains words to the immediate right of the search (node) word. Table 4.3 displays the most frequent collocates of *black* in R1 position in COCO.

According to the data presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3, it could be said that Coates frequently utilizes the term *black* in relation to the group identity of black Americans.

Table 4.2 Part of Collocation Pattern List (span of – 3 to +3) for the search-word *black* in COCO (1996–2018), generated by *WordSmith Tools 7.0*.

Rank in COCO	L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3
1	BLACK	BLACK	YOUNG	BLACK	PEOPLE	WHITE	BLACK
2	WHITE	AMONG	FIRST		AMERICA	BLACK	AMERICA
3	PEOPLE		AMONG		COMMUNITY	MOVEMENT	WHITE
4			BETWEEN		WOMEN	CLASS	THEIR
5			OTHER		PANTHER	WOULD	PEOPLE
6			ABOUT		THOUGHT	THERE	CRIME
7			HISTORICALLY		PRESIDENT	PARTY	
8					FAMILY	COULD	
9					VOTERS		
10					POWER		
11					WRITERS		
12					HISTORY		
13					COMMUNITIES		
14					WOMAN		
15					FAMILIES		
16					AMERICANS		
17					NATIONALIST		
18					FOLKS		
19					WHITE		
20					MALES		

However, the frequency of occurrence does not always provide evidence on the strength of the relationships between the collocates. Therefore, Table 4.4 presents the list of collocates of *black* (in R1 position) ordered by MI-Score, with a minimum frequency of 10 occurrences. After the comparison of the two collocation lists (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4), it is noted that the collocates describing group identity are present on both lists.

Table 4.3 The top twenty (content) collocates of *black* (in R1 position) in COCO (1996–2018), ordered by frequency

Number	Word	Frequency (raw)
1	PEOPLE	243
2	AMERICA	143
3	COMMUNITY	77
4	WOMEN	64
5	PANTHER	50
6	THOUGHT	48
7	PRESIDENT	45
8	FAMILY	31
9	MALE	31
10	VOTERS	30
11	POWER	27
12	HISTORY	25
13	WRITERS	25
14	COMMUNITIES	23
15	FAMILIES	23
16	AMERICANS	23
17	WOMAN	23
18	ARTS	22
19	NATIONALIST	20
20	FOLKS	20

In other words, the terms such as *black people, black America, black community/ communities*, are the most frequent collocates of the adjective *black* in COCO and they also have an MI-score above 3.0 (5.53, 5.53 and 5.42/5.81 respectively), which is considered to be significant (Hunston 2002: 71).

Further analysis is concentrated on the similarities and differences in the use of collocations such as *black people, black America/Americans* and *black community/communities,* as well as the term *blacks* and *African(-)Americans*, in Coates's non-fictional writings over time, which is discussed in the next section.

Table 4.4 The top twenty (content) collocates of *black* (in R1 position) in COCO, ordered by MI-score

Number	Word	MI-score	Frequency (raw)
1	THOUGHT'S	7.39	11
2	BOURGEOISIE	6.98	15
3	PANTHER	6.81	50
4	MALES	6.74	19
5	NATIONALIST	6.72	20
6	MALE	6.47	31
7	AMERICA'S	6.27	17
8	LEADERSHIP	5.89	13
9	COMMUNITIES	5.81	23
10	VOTERS	5.75	30
11	PEOPLE	5.53	243
12	AMERICA	5.53	143
13	WRITERS	5.52	25
14	JOURNALISTS	5.46	11
15	FAMILIES	5.46	23
16	COMMUNITY	5.42	77
17	PERSON	5.38	18
18	FATHERS	5.32	10
19	FOLKS	5.31	20
20	LEADERS	5.30	18

4.4 Diachronic comparison of five group identity terms

A diachronic analysis usually highlights differences or change in language use over time. However, as Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 303) argue, the search for differences in the data could be complemented by the search for similarity which offers "a more complete picture of the data" and provides "robustness to the analysis". Therefore, the following analysis focuses on both similarities and differences in the representation of black Americans in Coates's writings over the period of 22 years.

Table 4.5 shows concordance patterns with the most frequent collocates which occur in R1 (the immediate right) position following the adjective *black* during five periods in

COCO. The number of occurrences (raw frequency) is indicated in the parentheses. It should be noted that the instances of titles (such as *Black Panther*/comics) and proper names (such as *Black Thought)* were excluded from the analysis.

Table 4.5 Concordance patterns with *black* (R1) in COCO over five periods (raw frequency)

Period 1 (1996–2000)	Period 2 (2001–2005)	Period 3 (2006–2011)	Period 4 (2012–2015)	Period 5 (2016–2018)
people (27)	*America* (70)	*people* (42)	*people* (81)	*people* (51)
women (25)	*people* (42)	*America* (30)	*President* (24)	*writers* (18)
America (24)	*community* (31)	*community* (16)	*family* (23)	*President* (17)
arts (21)	*women* (21)		*America* (14)	*women* (11)
history (18)	*voters* (19)		*families* (11)	*communities* (10)
community (14)	*male* (18)		*community* (10)	
folks (14)	*vote* (16)			

As illustrated in Table 4.5, the collocates describing the group identity of black Americans – *black people, black America, black communit(y/ies)* – are consistently used by Coates in his discourse on race over the 22-year period, although the frequency order of the terms differs from one period to another. However, in Period 5 there is a noticeable absence of the terms *black America* and *black community* (singular) from the collocate pattern list (but the collocation with the plural noun *communities* is present on the list). After examining the collocation list, it is noted that in Period 5 the collocations of *black* with *community* and *America* in 2016–2018 occur 6 and 5 times respectively (Table 4.5 displays items with the minimum frequency of 10 or more). The collocation *black women* is also quite frequently used in Coates's writings (the 4th most frequent item in R1 position as shown in Table 4.3 on p. 41). However, this study, due to time and space limitations, focuses on the three terms of group (non-gendered) identity mentioned above.

Compared diachronically, the three terms displayed patterns shown in Figure 4.2. The search parameters were chosen to be as the following: *black people*, black America** and *black communit** (244, 187, and 102 hits across the corpus as shown in Table 4.6) in order to retrieve instances of plural and genitive cases of the nouns, as well as the instances of *black America(ns)*.
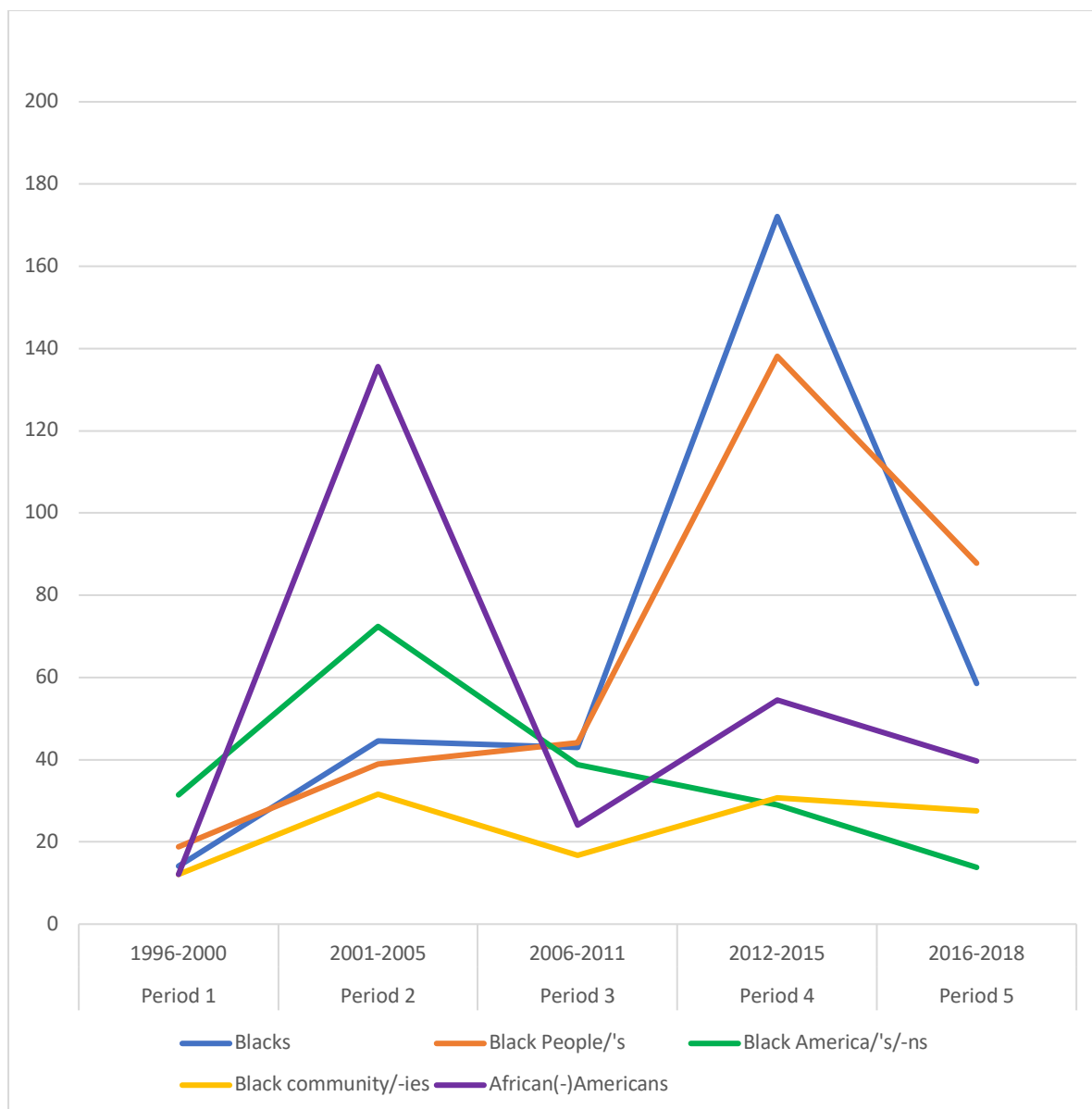
Figure 4.2 Diachronic comparison of five group identity terms in COCO (normalized frequency, per 100,000 words)

In the case of the search expression *black America**, the term *black America/'s* occurs in COCO 160 times, *black American*[10]– 4 times, and *black Americans* – 23 times. The plural nouns *blacks* (245 hits in COCO) and *African(-)Americans* (242 hits in COCO) are also included in the analysis because it directly refers to the human group identity.

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[10] There were only four instances of *black American* (sing.) attested in COCO. In all the instances, *black American* is the adjective phrase modifying a following noun (lore, history, leadership, etc.). Thus, the collocation is associated with the notion of collective identity rather than a reference to a singular person (as in *a black American*).

Table 4.6. Statistical information on five group identity terms in COCO over five periods
(raw frequency)

Item/Term	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2011	2012–2015	2016–2018	Total
Black people*	28	42	42	81	51	244
Black America*	47	78	37	17	8	187
Black communit*	18	34	16	18	16	102
Blacks	21	48	41	101	34	245
African*Americans	18	146	23	32	23	242

However, according to the patterns displayed in Figure 4.2 (normalized frequencies), the development in Period 3 suggests some kind of re-evaluation in Coates's representation of black American identity as the number of occurrences decreases, to a larger or smaller extend, for all the terms but *black people* which slightly increases during the period. The use of the terms *black people* and *blacks* dramatically increases in Period 4 overtaking the terms, *African(-)Americans* and *black America/Americans.* The term *black community/communities* displays some fluctuations from Period 1 to Period 5 but the use of the term stays relatively stable compared to the other terms.

The five terms under analysis were subjected to a close-reading procedure to determine patterns in contextual use. The contexts in which the instances of *black people, black America, black community, blacks,* and *African(-)Americans* occur, were manually examined. The findings of the qualitative stage of the analysis are presented below.

4.5 Group identity of black Americans in the context of Coates's writings

The instances of the group identity terms – *blacks, black people, black America, black community* and *African(-)Americans* – were manually examined in order to determine the collocates of each term across the corpus. The terms selected for analysis are noun phrases (NPs) describing group identity – either as a human collectivity (*black people, blacks, African(-)Americans)* or an abstract entity (*black America, black community*). The term's syntactic patterns with modifiers/determiners and predicates (verbs) provide most insightful

information into the contextual uses of those terms. Therefore, the four syntactic patterns were chosen as an initial framework for contextual analysis:

    a. Modifiers/determiners of the term;

    b. Possessive form of the term as a modifier/determiner of NPs;

    c. Verbs with the term as object;

    d. Verbs with the term as subject.

The concordance lines containing the group identity terms in COCO were manually examined. The collocates (verbs, nouns/NPs, adjectives, etc.) of the terms *African(-)Americans, black people, blacks, black America/Americans* and *black community/ communities* were organized into two main groups based on the function of a collocate in a clause: (i) modifiers/determiners as well as the collocates which are modified by the terms (for example, an NP preceded by the term with possessive *'s,* as in (15)), and (ii) verbs with the terms in the object or subject position of a clause.

    (15) In the case of P.G. County, the brutality is cast against the backdrop of **black America**'*s power base*, the largest concentration of the black middle class in the country. (COCO, 2001–WM June 1).

The following sections present the data analysis of the group identity terms in COCO. Section 4.5.1 presents the analysis of modifier/determiner collocates which occur with the terms. Section 4.5.2 provides quantitative and qualitative analyses of the terms' verb collocates through an in-depth discussion of the contextual uses and pragmatic prosody of the items under investigation.

4.5.1 Analysis of modifier/determiner collocates of the terms

    According to Table 4.7, the modifier/determiner collocates (51 instances) which occur with the term *African(-)Americans* in COCO can be almost equally divided into three groups: attributive adjectives (such as *young, other, poor, elderly,* etc.); noun phrases/expressions (*post-civil-rights, rank-and-file, well-to-do,* etc.); and quantifiers/numerals (*many, few, most, 6 million, all,* etc.*).*

Table 4.7 Modifier/determiner collocates of *African(-)Americans* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Modifiers/determiners of *African(-)Americans*	51	*many* (11)/ *other* (6)/ *young* (3)/ *few* (3)/ *most* (3)/ *poor* (2)/ *two* (2)/ *churchgoing* (1)/ *working-class* (1)/ *well-to-do* (1)/ *"less educated"* (1)/ *elderly* (1)/ *eligible* (1)/ *rank-and-file* (1)/ *first* (1)/ *upwardly mobile* (1)/ *civil-right-movement* (1)/ *post-civil-rights* (1)/ *all* (1)/ *intelligent* (1)/ *articulate* (1)/ *benighted* (1)/ *upper-class* (1)/ *today's* (1)/ *middle-class* (1)/ *fewer* (1)/ *6 million* (1)/ *actual living* (1)

As displayed in Table 4.8, the term *black people* in COCO often collocates with two types of modifiers/determiners: 65% of the instances (19 out of 29 tokens) are quantifiers/numerals (*all, more, most, few, many, some, five, two, nine)* and the remaining 35% are attributive adjectives (such as *poor, young, actual*, *impoverished*, etc.).

Table 4.8 Modifier/determiner collocates of *black people* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Modifiers/determiners of *black people*	29	*all* (4)/ *most* (4)/ *poor* (3)/ *few* (3)/ *more* (2)/ *two* (2)/ *young* (1)/ *everyday* (1)/ *actual* (1)/ *impoverished* (1)/ *long-dead* (1)/ *enslaved* (1)/ *famous* (1)/ *five* (1)/ *nine* (1)/ *some* (1)/ *many* (1)
Black people as modifier/determiner of NPs	6	*middle-finger* (1)/ *gusto* (1)/ *hard feelings* (1)/ *long fight* (1)/ *Americanness* (1)/ *need* (1)

After the concordance lines with the terms were analyzed, it was noted that the terms (more precisely, their possessive forms) also function as modifiers/determiners of nouns/NPs.
The possessive form of a noun is typically used to show ownership or possession. Even though the use of the possessive form of the terms is not very frequent in COCO (with the exception of *black America)*, the instances of such patterns provided some colorful collocates. The term *black people* with possessive *'s* is attested 6 times in COCO, as in (16) – (17).

> (16) For almost two decades, Farrakhan has served as **black people's** *official middle finger* to the Man. (COCO, 2001–WM January 1).

(17) In short, he became a symbol of **black people's** *everyday, extraordinary Americanness*. (COCO, 2017–ATL January/February 2017 issue).

Table 4.9 displays 66 tokens of modifier/determiner collocates of the term *blacks.* The term mostly collocates with attributive adjectives, such as *enslaved, young, free, conservative,* etc., and NPs functioning as modifiers like *post-Jim Crow, [the] Nixon-era,* etc. Several instances of the term *blacks* with determiners as collocates (e.g., *many, all, some* etc.) occur in COCO. There was no attestation of the possessive form of *blacks.*

Table 4.9 Modifier/determiner collocates of *blacks* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Modifiers/determiners of *blacks*	66	*enslaved* (7)/ *many* (6)/ *young* (6)/ *free* (5)/ *murdered* (3)/ *middle-class* (2)/ *affluent* (2)/ *all* (2)/ *country's* (2)/ *poor* (2)/ *conservative* (2)/ *emancipated* (1)/ *light-skinned* (1)/ *straight-haired* (1)/ *oppressed* (1)/ *2,000* (1)/ *20,000* (1)/ *average* (1)/ *approval-seeking* (1)/ *urban* (1)/ *'bad'* (1)/ *post-Jim Crow* (1)/ *disadvantaged* (1)/ *younger* (1)/ *bestial* (1)/ *the Nixon-era* (1)/ *few* (1)/ *town's* (1)/ *freeborn* (1)/ *more* (1)/ *most* (1)/ *some* (1)/ *southern* (1)/ *ignorant* (1)/ *loafing* (1)/ *those* (1)/ *toiling* (1)/ *undeserving* (1)

Compared with the other terms, *blacks* has the highest number of collocates which are attributive modifiers (51 instances out of 66; 77%). One reason for such a high proportion could be due to aesthetic reasons as the writer's choice of attributive modifiers with the noun *blacks* is wider than with the NPs (which are already modified nouns) such as *black people, black America, black community,* etc. Another reason for a high number of modifiers with *blacks* is that the term could be used more broadly, referring to individuals within a collectivity as well as to the collectivity as a whole, as in (18) – (19) respectively.

(18) The conservation firm initially estimated that the remains of about *50 slaves and free* **blacks** remained at the site. (COCO, 1999–WCP February 5).

(19) Obama understands what *all* **blacks**, including myself, know all too well — that Amadou Diallo's foreign ancestry could not prevent his wallet from morphing into a gun in the eyes of the police. (COCO, 2007–TM February 1).

The modifier/determiner collocates of the term *black America/Americans* (31 instances), as in Table 4.10, are primarily adjectives and NPs functioning as attributive modifiers: *young*, *poor*, *urban*, *middle-class*, *working-class*, *modern*, *conservative*, *real*, *upscale*, *polite*, *other*, *Nas's* (an American rapper)*, '80s* (the 1980s)*, millennial*, *mainstream*.

Table 4.10 Modifier/determiner collocates of *black America/Americans* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Modifiers/determiners of *black America/-ns*	31	*young* (9)/ *poor* (2) / *urban* (2)/ *middle-class* (2)/ *working-class* (1)/ *modern* (1)/ *conservative* (1)/ *real* (1)/ *upscale* (1)/ *polite* (1)/ *other* (1)/ *Nas's* (1)/ *pre-1968* (1)/ *'80s* (1)/ *millennial* (1)/ *mainstream* (1)/ *all* (1)/ *many* (1)/ *most* (1)/ *no* (1)
Black America/-ns as modifier/determiner of NPs	46	*leadership* (2)/ *ambassador* (2)/ *carnival of excess* (1)/ *champion* (1)/ *elite* (1)/ *best and brightest* (1)/ *bluebloods* (1)/ *history* (1)/ *culture* (1)/ *Rockefellers and Carnegies* (1)/ *successes* (1)/ *mood* (1)/ *stake* (1)/ *loyalty* (1)/ *state of mind* (1)/ *puppet government* (1)/ *dementia* (1)/ *nostalgia* (1)/ *house of repentant sinners* (1)/ *skyrocketing rate of out-of-wedlock births* (1)/ *power base* (1)/ *last angry man* (1)/ *interactions with the police* (1)/ *problems* (1)/ *attitudes towards police* (1)/ *award show* (1)/ *most recalcitrant mayor* (1)/ *formidable potentate* (1)/ *intellectual divide* (1)/ *dismal vital statistics* (1)/ *most credentialed social stratum* (1)/ *lore* (1)/ *conservative analysis* (1)/ *ancien regime* (1)/ *heart* (1)/ *unchallenged status* (1)/ *fate* (1)/ *image of its women* (1)/ *worst self-conceptions* (1)/ *sense of patriotism* (1)/ *tenuous hold on citizenship* (1)/ *most energetic, ambitious, thrifty countrymen* (1)/ *ignored* (1)/ *poor* (1)

The term *black America* with the possessive *'s* is utilized by Coates as a modifier or determiner of NPs more frequently (46 tokens), compared to the other terms' possessive forms, as illustrated in Table 4.10 and examples (20) – (22). In other words, *black America* in COCO is perceived as an (abstract) entity which signifies notions of belonging, ownership and/or possession.

(20) Jack Frost, it turned out, never stood a chance against **black America's** *carnival of excess*. (COCO, 1999–WCP March 12).

(21) And it's members of the black upper class – people like Gates and Obama and Ford, **black America's** *most credentialed social stratum* – who are most sensitive to overzealous policing and racial profiling. (COCO, 2009–TM August 10).

(22) But despite Obama's post-election reluctance to talk about race, he has always displayed both an obvious affinity for black culture and a distinct ability to defy **black America's** *worst self-conceptions*. (COCO, 2012–ATL September 2012 issue).

According to Table 4.11, a total of 12 instances of modifier/determiner collocates with the term *black community/communities* were identified in COCO. Most of the collocates are attributive modifiers, such as possessive nouns/NPs (*the city's, New York's*); NPs *(the post-1970s, lower-class*); and adjectives/adjective phrases (*urban, southern, deeply religious,* etc.). The possessive form of the term *black community* occurs 4 times, as illustrated in (23).

(23) The cause? The hordes of barebacking bisexual black men, driven underground by the **black community's** *entrenched homophobia*. (COCO, 2004–VV August 3).

Table 4.11 Modifier/determiner collocates of *black community/communities* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Modifiers/determiners of *black community/-ies*	12	*the city's* (2)/ *New York's* (1)/ *Prince George's* (1)/ *the post-1970s* (1)/ *urban* (1)/ *lower-class* (1)/ *southern* (1)/ *deeply religious* (1)/ *formidable* (1)/ *entire* (1)/ *any* (1)
Black community/-ies as modifier/determiner of NPs	4	*problems* (1)/ *shiniest gems* (1)/ *penchant for conspiracy* (1)/ *entrenched homophobia* (1)

In summary, the term *African(-)Americans* collocates with a variety of modifiers/determiners: attributive adjectives, NPs/expressions, and quantifiers/numerals. The term *black people* most often occurs with quantifiers such as *all, most, many, few,* etc. The collocates which modify the term *black America/Americans (*such as *millennial, modern, mainstream)* indicate a national-level, public-sphere context, whereas the collocates used with *black community/communities* (such as *southern, deeply religious*) point to a more intimate, local-level context. Furthermore, the modifiers of the term *black America*, such as *urban, upscale, middle-class, working-class*, point to intraracial stratification among black Americans. A similar emphasis on intraracial stratification is apparent in Coates's choice of modifiers with the term *blacks* (e.g., *affluent, middle-class, poor*) and with the term *African(-)Americans* (e.g., *upper-class, middle-class,*

working-class, etc.), with a substantial concentration of these type of modifiers in the earlier periods, Period 1 and Period 2.

4.5.2 Analysis of verb collocates of the terms

The identity-related terms under analysis frequently collocate with verbs, either in the subject or object position in a clause. The position of the term (e.g., *black people, black America,* etc.) as the subject in a clause typically indicates the semantic role of the term, either as AGENT (the initiator and controller of an action), EXPERIENCER (the entity which is aware of an action/state, but which is not in control) or THEME[11] (the entity which moves or is moved by an action, or whose location/property/state is described); whereas the term's position as the object in a clause potentially indicates the semantic role of PATIENT[12] (the entity affected by an action or the entity undergoing a process without a visible change) (Saeed 2016: 150). In English, the semantic role of PATIENT could be also marked through the use of passive voice constructions with transitive verbs. The passive voice construction is an utterance which implies structural alterations in order to turn an active voice clause into the passive voice: different verb form (the past participle form preceded by the auxiliary verb *be*) and reversal of the subject-object positions (Saeed 2016: 167). As Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 44) note, in English, the notion of transitivity, which indicates "who does what to whom largely by what", is expressed grammatically by "placing participants in a particular order in an utterance and thus assigning responsibility for an action". The passive construction is employed by speakers in various contexts/discourses, e.g., when the speaker describes the situation from the point of view of the PATIENT rather than the AGENT, or when the speaker wishes to obscure the identity of an AGENT (Saeed 2016: 167). Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 44) refer to this showcase example of transitivity as "grammatical and textual evaluation" in the discourse.

As discussed below, the terms under analysis usually occupy the subject position in a clause (rather than the object position). However, several instances of passive voice constructions have been observed in COCO, as illustrated in (24) – (26). The concordance

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[11] For the purposes of this study, the semantic roles of EXPERIENCER and THEME are combined in one term EXPERIENCER/THEME as these roles imply that the participant is not in control of an action.

[12] Saeed (2016) points out that there is some variation in the use of the term PATIENT: some linguists (e.g., Radford 1988 as cited in Saeed 2016: 152) make no distinction between PATIENT (the entity that undergoes a visible change in state as a result of some action) and THEME (the entity that is moved by an action, but does not undergo a visible change), whereas others adopt the distinction between the two terms. In this thesis, the term PATIENT is used as a combined term for PATIENT and THEME.

lines containing the five group identity terms (in the subject position of a clause) were manually examined and passive voice constructions were identified. The results of the analysis are presented further in this section.

> (24)   Before the decision, when **African Americans** *were asked* whether homosexual relationships should be legal, 58 percent said yes; afterward that figure dropped to 36 percent. (COCO, 2003–VV, September 23).

> (25)   **Black people** *were viewed* as a contagion. (COCO, 2014–ATL, June 2014 issue).

> (26)   **Blacks** *were* only *spared* the rope because they were viewed as property, and the death of a slave meant a lost investment. (COCO, 2001–WM, January 1).

The author's verb choice is influenced by the participants' semantic roles in the discourse. It has been observed in COCO that the terms referring to the group identity of black Americans (with the functions of the subject or object in a clause) imply either the semantic role of PATIENT, AGENT or EXPERIENCER/THEME in an utterance. In other words, the terms (such as *African(-)Americans, blacks, black people, black America/Americans, black community)* are used to describe either the entity affected by an action/subjected to a process; the entity in control of an action and its environment; or the entity's state or experience.

In addition to being grammatically marked, evaluation can also be expressed conceptually in a discourse, without the use of explicit linguistic clues (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 45). As mentioned previously, this section offers a closer look into pragmatic prosody of the verb collocates with the five identity-related terms through the theoretical lens the notion of control.

The examination of prosodic meaning provides a description of evaluation in a bi-dimensional sense: positive vs. negative, desirable vs. undesirable, etc. (Partington 2015: 279–280). The notion of control (or lack of it), in particular, has been frequently associated with positive and negative evaluation, where being in control of events and one's environment is perceived as positive, illustrated as (positive: being in control) and not being in control – is generally perceived as negative illustrated as [negative: not being in control][13] (Partington 2015: 280).

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[13] Throughout the thesis, analysis of pragmatic prosody is illustrated by using round brackets, (…), to annotate positive evaluation and square brackets, […], to annotate negative evaluation, as proposed by Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 43).

Considering the semantic roles of the participants in the discourse world, it could be said that the notion of being in control implies the role of AGENT, an active doer and controller of the action, whereas the notion of not being in control implies the role of PATIENT, an entity undergoing or subjected to a process (Saeed 2016: 150). Therefore, the verbs that occur as the collocates of the group identity terms in the object position and the verbs with the terms in the subject position in passive voice constructions would typically have a negative evaluation because such constructions would communicate lack of control by a participant (e.g., *blacks, black people, black America,* etc.). However, in a discourse, negative evaluation could be reversed if it is embedded into a structure with overall positive evaluation (and vice versa), an example of a phenomenon referred to by Partington, Duguid and Taylor (2013: 48) as *embedded evaluation.* Embedded evaluation might be utilized by speakers/writers to maintain cohesion of evaluation throughout a text/discourse as well as for rhetorical effect. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the differences in evaluative voices: whether the author performs his/her evaluation or whether he/she assigns evaluations to others (Partington, Duguid, & Taylor 2013: 54).

Verbs with African(-)Americans *as object*

Table 4.12 on the following page presents a list of verb collocates which occur with the term *African(-)Americans* in object and subject positions in COCO. The verbs with the term as the object in a clause (30 tokens with 29 verbs) can be divided into four groups: (i) verbs associated with negative connotations (*attack, plague, lure, deny, murder, put [to death], threaten, strip of*); (ii) verbs with neutral/positive connotations (*face, bring [under], implore, tug, involve, leave, make believe, recruit, transform, cast, concentrate, signal, court, foreordain, repay, mark, beset, ship*); (iii) verbs referring to perceptions/beliefs (*view, describe*); and (iv) verbs referring to verbal guidance (*teacheth*).

The verbs in group (i), in addition to prescribing the role of PATIENT to the participant in the object position (*African(-)Americans)*, also imply negative consequences of the described actions, as in (27) – (29).

(27) Rather than focusing on the accounting, Dray's book derives much of its power through graphically detailing the means by which mobs <u>*put*</u> **African-Americans** <u>to death</u>. (COCO, 2001–WM, January 1).

(28)   Over the past two months, Cosby has used his legendary wit to *attack* **African Americans** with a stream of invective that normally would have black columnists spilling ink by the gallon and the NAACP calling for boycotts and pickets. (COCO, 2004–VV, July 6).

(29)   Black problems—poverty, education, crime, unemployment—are generally also Latino problems. Thus it's hard to envision a Latino agenda that would somehow *threaten* **African Americans**. (COCO, 2003–VV, May 13).

Table 4.12 Verb collocates of *African(-)Americans* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Verbs with *African(-) Americans* as object	30	*view* (2)/ *attack* (1)/ *plague* (1)/ *bring under* (1)/ *lure* (1)/ *deny* (1)/ *describe* (1)/ *face* (1)/ *implore* (1)/ *involve* (1)/ *leave* (1)/ *make believe* (1)/ *murder* (1)/ *put to death* (1)/ *recruit* (1)/ *threaten* (1)/ *tug* (1)/ *teacheth* (1)/ *ship* (1)/ *transform* (1)/ *cast* (1)/ *concentrate* (1)/ *signal* (1)/ *court* (1)/ *foreordain* (1)/ *repay* (1)/ *strip of* (1)/ *beset* (1)/ *mark* (1)
Verbs with *African(-) Americans* as subject	92	*be* (12)/ *view* (4)/ *vote* (4)/ *have* (2)/ *experience* (2)/ *make up* (2)/ *see* (2)/ *understand* (2)/ *tend* (2)/ *need* (2)/ *volunteer* (1)/ *support* (1)/ *exhibit* (1)/ *treasure* (1)/ *get* (1)/ *believe* (1)/ *cast* (1)/ *kill* (1)/ *go* (1)/ *like* (1)/ *die* (1)/ *derive* (1)/ *countenance* (1)/ *enter* (1)/ *create* (1)/ *know* (1)/ *celebrate* (1)/ *push* (1)/ *make* (1)/ *back* (1)// *consider* (1)/ *lag* (1)/ *petition* (1)/ *internalize* (1)/ *frustrate* (1)/ *hate* (1)/ *hold* (1)/ *suffer* (1)/ *think* (1)/ *honor* (1)/ *confront* (1)/ *ask* (1)/ *buy* (1)/ *recoil* (1)/ *want* (1)/ *cope* (1)/ *denounce* (1)/ *purchase* (1)/ *meet* (1)/ *accept* (1)/ *reject* (1)/ *utter* (1)/ *begin* (1)/ *complain* (1)/ *migrate* (1)/ *face* (1)/ *live* (1)/ *concur* (1)/ *reach* (1)/ *restrict* (1)/ *feel* (1)/ *remain* (1)/ *rank* (1)/ *trust* (1)/ *raise* (1)/ *grapple* (1)/ *wrong* (1)

However, most instances of the verbs in group (i) suggest figurative or hypothetical contextual uses, as in (28) – (29) rather than uses in a literal context, as in (27). For example, the verb *attack* in (28) is used to refer to an action of criticizing rather than a physical attack. Therefore, the nature of negative consequences implied in the collocations with the term *African(-)Americans* with the verbs from group (i) is somewhat downplayed.

The concordance lines with the verbs in groups (ii) – (iv) were subjected to close reading procedure. It has been observed that there were several instances referring to the political settings involving African Americans, as illustrated in (30) – (33).

(30) That speech at Bob Jones University during the campaign, the nomination of Attorney General John Ashcroft, your perceived glee at executing black criminals in Texas, and your refusal to send Colin Powell to the United Nations racism conference have all undermined your halfhearted attempts *to bring* **African Americans** <u>under</u> the GOP's big tent. (COCO, 2001–WM, October 1).

(31) Yet your party-mates seem to *view* **African Americans** as perpetual dissidents — as if we somehow emerge from the womb quoting Das Kapital—and consequently, are out of reach come Election Day. (COCO, 2001–WM, October 1).

(32) What's more, the Alliance for Marriage, for instance, has very consciously *recruited* **African Americans** in its efforts to pass a constitutional amendment banning gay unions. (COCO, 2003–VV, September 23).

(33) Gay marriage and abortion *tug* **African Americans** toward the Republican Party. (COCO, 2004–VV, November 2).

The contextual environment of the verbs in groups (ii) – (iv) with *African(-)Americans* as object in COCO highlights the role of black Americans as a body politic (or a voting bloc) in the U.S. political terrain. For example, in (30), Coates describes the politician's failed *attempts to bring African Americans under the GOP's big tent*, in (32) – African Americans being *recruited* to support anti-gay-marriage legislation, and in (33) – political issues such as *gay marriage and abortion* influence black Americans' political affiliation. Thus, even though the term *African(-)Americans* in such usage projects the semantic role of PATIENT, Coates pragmatically assigns *African(-)Americans* with a somewhat limited degree of control over events as political support of black Americans is sought after by the political parties.

Overall, the term *African(-)Americans* in the object position (the role of PATIENT) in COCO is evaluated positively in terms of control. More specifically, Coates employs the term in the contexts discussing political environment (campaigns, elections, etc.) in which the writer assigns *African(-)Americans* with a degree of control over events and their environment.

Verbs with African(-)Americans *as subject*

The concordance analysis of the term *African(-)Americans* in the subject position (92 instances) reveals the following verb choice by Coates (see Table 4.12): (i) verbs related to state or experience, sensory/cognition verbs (*be, view, have, experience, make up* (= form, constitute)*, see, understand, tend, need, exhibit, believe, like, die, know, consider, lag*

[behind], internalize, hate, suffer, think, reach [the conclusion], hold [dear], honor, recoil, want, cope, face, live, concur (= agree)*, feel, remain, rank, trust, treasure, celebrate [their ties]*); and (ii) action verbs[14] (*vote, volunteer, support, get, cast, go, derive, countenance, enter, create, make, push, back, petition, confront, buy, denounce, complain, purchase, meet, accept, reject, begin, migrate, raise, utter, grapple;* [passive voice constructions*: kill, frustrate, ask, restrict, wrong*]).

More than half of the verbs that occur with the term *African(-)Americans* in the subject position in COCO (35 verbs out of 67; 52%) are the verbs in group (i) which usually assign the semantic role of EXPERIENCER or THEME to the participant. As mentioned earlier, the semantic role of EXPERIENCER is defined by Saeed (2016: 150) as "the entity which is aware of the action or state described by the predicate, but which is not in control of the action or state"; whereas THEME describes "the entity which is moved by an action, or whose location is described". Thus, the role of EXPERIENCER/THEME implies the participant, in this case *African(-)Americans,* who is not a controller or initiator/doer in the described situation, as in (34) – (37).

(34) While there exists a good deal of writing on jazz and the blues, a lot of it was done by white writers, which shows how much we **African-Americans** *treasure* our music. (COCO, 1996–WCP, October 4).

(35) **African Americans** *have* tremendous respect for him [Colin Powell], and only among the hardcore black nationalists do you hear Powell dismissed as a sellout. (COCO, 2001–WM, October 1).

(36) **African-Americans** *may have internalized* some ugly stereotypes about our intellect. But where common sense rules, we believe ourselves to be king. (COCO, 2002–WCP, November 8).

(37) Many **African Americans** *concurred* that crime was a problem. (COCO, 2015–ATL, October 2015 issue).

At the next stage of the analysis, verbs describing an action or process, the verbs in group (ii), were examined through concordance analysis. Five of these verbs, ca. 8%, (*kill, frustrate, ask, restrict, wrong*) occur in passive voice constructions, implying that the term projects the semantic role of PATIENT, as illustrated in (38) – (39).

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[14] In this study, the term *action verbs* is used in its general meaning as describing an act/action. There are many ways to categorize verbs into subclasses (e.g., action, process, production, movement, utterance, manipulation, etc.), but such precise categorization is unnecessary for the present study.

(38) In 1991, 50.4 **African Americans** per 100,000 *were killed*. (COCO, 2003–VV June 3).

(39) In warring against that paradox, **African Americans** *have* historically *been restricted* to the realm of protest and agitation. (COCO, 2012–ATL September 2012 issue).

As discussed earlier, passive voice constructions reverse the subject-object order: the subject position is occupied by the participant with the semantic role of PATIENT (the entity affected by an action, not in control of it). Thus, the term *African(-)Americans* as subject in passive voice constructions displays the role of PATIENT, rather than AGENT or EXPERIENCER/THEME, implying that *African(-)Americans,* linguistically, are not regarded as being in control over events and their environment.

The concordance lines containing the other 27 action/process verb collocates with *African(-)Americans* as subject, 40%, were further examined. Particularly verbs which imply the notion of volition or exercise of power/control, such as *vote, volunteer, accept, confront, reject, create, back, denounce,* were subjected to more detailed examination in order to explore their pragmatic meanings.

The collocation of *African(-)Americans* with the verb *vote*, in combination with the verb phrase *cast [votes]*, occurs 5 times in COCO, as illustrated in (40) – (42).

(40) In 2000, **African Americans** actually *cast* more <u>votes</u> for Al Gore than they had for Bill Clinton. Overall, 56.8 percent of all eligible **African Americans** *cast* <u>votes</u> (61.8 percent of eligible whites voted). (COCO, 2004–VV, January 6).

(41) While **African Americans** in several states *voted* to ban gay marriage, **they** also *voted* overwhelmingly against George Bush. (COCO, 2004–VV, November 2).

(42) But November's electoral math is clear — **African Americans** *didn't* just *vote* in 2012, **they** *voted* at a higher rate than the general population. (COCO, 2013–ATL, March 2013 issue).

The verb *vote* (intransitive)*,* as well as *cast [a vote],* is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) as "to give a vote, to exercise the right of suffrage; to express a choice or preference by ballot or other approved means" (OED *s. v. vote v.)*. The definition highlights a conscious decision to express a preference, which ascribes the role of AGENT to the participant, *African(-)Americans*. The context of the instances further emphasizes the role of *African(-)Americans* as the entity acting with volition and making conscious choices. Thus,

the use of the term *African(-)Americans*, in this case, is positively evaluated by Coates in terms of control projecting a relatively high degree of control over events and one's environment.

Another verb collocate of *African(-)Americans,* which implies volition and agency is the verb *create,* as in (43). OED defines the meaning of the verb *create* as "to bring into being, cause to exist; *esp.*to produce where nothing was before" (OED, *s. v. create v.*).

> (43) Nevertheless, there is a substantial community of well-to-do **African Americans** who *have created* their own aristocratic institutions — debutante balls, country estates and whatnot — and who should be receptive to much of your message. (COCO, 2001–WM, October 1).

At first sight, the instance of *African Americans [creating] their own aristocratic institutions* seems to project a positive evaluation in terms of one's control over events and the environment. However, this particular instance occurs in the article "Dear Mr. President: From a Black Dude", an open letter addressed to President George W. Bush. In this article, Coates adopts an overall sarcastic tone, which could also be detected in the usage of words, such as *well-to-do, own aristocratic institutions, debutante ball, country estates, and whatnot.* In other words, Coates expresses criticism of increasing stratification within the African American community. In that way, implicit irony seems to override, or reverse, the seemingly positive evaluation of the verb *create* (see Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013: 110–111).

The verb *confront* with the meaning "to face in hostility or defiance; to present a bold front to, stand against, oppose" (OED *s.v. confront v.*), as in (44), is used figuratively by Coates as the verb is preceded by the adverb *loudly,* implying verbal opposition.

> (44) At those times when **African Americans** *have* loudly *confronted* the issue of police brutality, they have frequently turned it into an employment issue, singling out the lack of minorities within various police departments as the root of the problem, rather than the behavior of the officers overall. (COCO, 2001–WM, June1).

In addition, the context of the utterance suggests that Coates deems verbal opposition of *African Americans* to *the issue of police brutality* as incomplete as it does not address *the root of the problem.* In that way, Coates linguistically and pragmatically downgrades a degree of control ascribed to *African Americans* in this case.

In summary, the pragmatic meaning of the term *African(-)Americans* (as subject) in COCO indicates both positive and not so positive evaluation. The term in the subject position collocates with 67 verbs, 52% of which imply the term's semantic role of EXPERIENCER/THEME, 40% the role of AGENT, and 8% the role of PATIENT, as in passive voice constructions. The roles of EXPERIENCER/THEME and PATIENT, as a way of grammatical evaluation, refer to participants who are not in control of events and their own environment. The role of AGENT implies an entity who is in control of an action described by the verb. In some instances, the term *African(-)Americans* is evaluated positively in terms of control, as in (40) – (42); whereas other examples, as (43) – (44), project not so positive evaluation (but not negative) as Coates criticizes certain issues within the community of black Americans (e.g., intraracial economic stratification, lack of collective action, etc.).

Verbs with black people *as object*

Verbs which occur with the term *black people* in COCO are displayed in Table 4.13. According to the information presented in the table, the verbs occurring with the term *black people* in the object position (50 tokens with 44 verbs) across the corpus could be divided into four groups: (i) verbs associated with negative connotations (*murder*, *fail*, *sidestep*, *ignore*, *keep out* (= block/exclude), *duck*, *blame*, *criticize*, *condemn*, *confine*, *ail, denude*, *deny*, *erase*, *exclude*, *haunt*, *target, lead off*, *pin into*, *reduce*, *brutalize*, *lynch*, *oppress*); (ii) verbs with neutral/positive connotations (*give*, *shield*, *treat*, *bring*, *compel*, *make*, *turn*, *exempt*, *help*, *raise*, *find*); (iii) verbs referring to perceptions/beliefs (*view*, *stereotype*, *see*, *feature, interpret*); and (iv) verbs referring to verbal guidance (*tell, teach*, *educat*e, *address*, *lecture*).

The verbs in group (i) clearly have negative evaluation as the participant (*black people*) is not in control of the events which lead to negative consequences for the participant, as in (45) – (48).

(45) Lately, too, it seems your handlers have advised you to *ignore* **black people** and make Hispanics the mascot minority for the Republican Party. (COCO, 2001–WM October 1).

(46) In 1949, a group of Englewood Catholics formed block associations intended to "keep up the neighborhood." Translation: *keep* **black people** *out*. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

Table 4.13 Verb collocates of *black people* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Verbs with *black people* as object	50	*give* (3)/ *see* (3)/ *fail* (2)/ *murder* (2)/ *view* (1)/ *stereotype* (1)/ *tell* (1)/ *treat* (1)/ *shield* (1)/ *target* (1)/ *sidestep* (1)/ *bring* (1)/ *duck* (1)/ *feature* (1)/ *ignore* (1)/ *blame* (1)/ *compel* (1)/ *criticize* (1)/ *make* (1)/ *teach* (1)/ *turn* (1)/ *ail* (1)/ *condemn* (1)/ *confine* (1)/ *denude* (1)/ *deny* (1)/ *educate* (1)/ *erase* (1)/ *exclude* (1)/ *exempt* (1)/ *haunt* (1)/ *help* (1)/ *keep out* (1)/ *lead off* (1)/ *pin into* (1)/ *raise* (1)/ *reduce* (1)/ *address* (1)/ *brutalize* (1)/ *interpret* (1)/ *lecture* (1)/ *lynch* (1)/ *oppress* (1)/*find* (1)
Verbs with *black people* as subject	77	*be* (20)/ *have* (4)/ *work* (3)/ *vote* (3)/ *live* (3)/ *feel* (3)/ *enjoy* (3)/ *know* (3)/ *experience* (2)/ *get* (1)/ *accept* (1)/ *care* (1)/ *seem* (1)/ *play* (1)/ *like* (1)/ *choose* (1)/ *become* (1)/ *seek* (1)/ *see* (1)/ *shill* (1)/ *resent* (1)/ *change* (1)/ *hate* (1)/ *show* (1)/ *remake* (1)/ *do* (1)/ *cut out* (1)/ *talk* (1)/ *keep* (1)/ *face* (1)/ *heave* (1)/ *speak* (1)/ *sense* (1)/ *achieve* (1)/ *view* (1)/ *injure* (1)/ *lynch* (1)/ *feed* (1)/ *subject* (1)/ *leave* (1)/ *fight* (1)/ *ask* (1)

(47) The fallen Confederacy's chroniclers grasped this historiographic challenge and, immediately after the war, began erasing all evidence of the crime—that is to say, they *began erasing* **black people** —f rom the written record. (COCO, 2012–ATL February 2012 issue).

(48) A black president would always be a contradiction for a government that, throughout most of its history, *had oppressed* **black people**. (COCO, 2017–ATL January/February 2017 issue).

The collocations with the verbs in groups (ii) – (iv) were subjected to a more detailed concordance analysis. The verb *give* occurs 3 times with *black people* in the object position in the following contexts, as in (49) – (51):

(49) The false hopes of the '70s *gave* **black people** what they had always wanted: the chance to participate in society, no matter how morally bankrupt that society might be. (COCO, 1997–WCP August 8).

(50) His chief function was to *give* **black people** a vicarious thrill at the expense of white Americans; they got to watch Johnson slap around the best of white America's pugilists and then walk off with one of its daughters at the end of the night. It was a cheap, reactionary, and somewhat sexist thrill, and it did

very little to change the reality of African-American life. (COCO, 1999–WCP, October 1).

(51) That's terrible advice for a kid. But it's in line with those who think of Obama as a messiah who can *give* **black people** some manners, a God-child descending from the heavens to teacheth benighted African Americans the virtues of books and proper English and the evils of Pacman Jones and blaming the white man. (COCO, 2008–TM November 24).

Example (49) displays evaluative embedding which is illustrated using round and square brackets to distinguish between positive and negative evaluations as follows: [*The false hopes of the '70s* (*gave black people what they had always wanted*)]. The positive evaluation of getting something that someone had always wanted is reversed by the subject of the clause, *the false hopes of the '70s* which implies a negative rather than positive outcome of the transaction. The context of (50) provides a similar case of embedded evaluation implying that something possibly good (*a vicarious thrill*) that was given to black people was done [*at the expense of white Americans*], and it was evaluated negatively by the author as [*cheap*], [*reactionary*] and [*somewhat sexist*].

The context of (51) as well as the verbs in group (iv) – particularly, *teach*, *educate*, *lecture* – used as collocates of *black people,* evoke a somewhat patronizing notion implying black people's perceived need to be educated or taught by someone, as if they lack capacity to learn on their own. However, in (52), the context of the utterance makes a distinction between a *backward* and *real question,* and 'the real question' puts *black people* into the subject position of the clause.

(52) Thus the question of what Obama has to *teach* **black people** is exactly backward. The real question is what **black people**, through Barack Obama, *have to show* America and the world. (COCO, 2008–TM November 24).

In that way, Coates, by reversing the order of the participants in the discourse, assigns *black people* some control over the events. However, this sense of control is downplayed by Coates framing the utterance as a question rather than a statement.

The concordance analysis of verbs such as *help* and *shield* which generally have positive connotations, revealed that in both instances the verbs are preceded by the adverb *never,* as in *never help black people* and [it] *never shielded black people from plunder*. The

adverb *never* adds negative evaluation to the utterances and amplifies the lack of control in the lives of black people.

In summary, the term *black people* in the object position (= the semantic role of PATIENT) is evaluated negatively as it presents *black people* as not being in control of the events and their environment. The negative evaluation is further amplified by the context of the utterances, which signals that not only do *black people* lack control over events, but those events often produce negative/undesirable consequences for *black people.*

Verbs with black people *as subject*

The analysis of the concordance lines with *black people* in the subject position (77 instances) highlights the following verb choice by Coates (as in Table 4.13): (i) verbs related to state or experience, cognitive/sensory verbs (*be, have, live, feel, enjoy, know, experience, care, seem, play, like, become, see, face, sense, view, hate, resent*); and (ii) action verbs (*vote, choose, seek, work, shill,*[15] *change, get, accept, remake, heave, achieve, show, fight, do, talk, speak, keep;* [passive voice constructions*: cut out, injure, lynch, feed, subject, leave, ask*]).

Approximately half of the verbs that collocate with the term *black people* as the subject in a clause (18 out of 42, or ca. 43%), are verbs related to experience/sense/cognition or state/position as in group (i). These types of verbs are typically chosen by speakers/writers to describe the situation from the perspective of EXPERIENCER or THEME. In other words, even though the term *black people* is in the subject position, its verb collocates (e.g. *be, live, enjoy, sense, etc.)* describe a state/experience/sense over which the participant (*black people)* does not have control, as in (53) – (54).

(53) Chuck took all the things that **black people** *felt*, but rarely said, and told the world. (COCO, 1998–WCP, June 5).

(54) Neighborhoods where **black people** *lived* were rated "D" and were usually considered ineligible for FHA backing. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

The next step is to examine the term's verb collocates describing an action or process. Seven of these verbs, 17%, (*cut out, injure, lynch, feed, ask, subject, leave*) in COCO are used in passive voice constructions, as illustrated in (55) – (56).

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[15] According to *Merriam-Webster* (2020), *shill* (v.) is defined as: (1) "to act as a shill (a decoy (as for pitchman or gambler)); (2) to act as a spokesperson or promoter". *Urban Dictionary* (2005) defines *shill* as to act as "a person engaged in covert advertising".

(55) **Black people** *were viewed* as a contagion. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

(56) Between 1882 and 1968, more **black people** *were lynched* in Mississippi than in any other state. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

The reverse order of participants in passive voice constructions, where the participant in the subject position projects the role of PATIENT, implies that the instances of *black people* with the 7 action verbs do not describe an action or process which is controlled or instigated by the participant in the subject position.

The other 17 action/process verbs (40%) which collocate in COCO with the term *black people* were subjected to further examination. As shown in (52), such analysis often requires a stretch of text rather than a single sentence outside of the surrounding context. After the initial analysis, the verbs that have implications for the exercise of control/power (such as *choose, vote, change*, *remake, achieve*, *fight*) were closely examined as discussed below.

The verb *choose* is defined by OED as "to take by preference out of all that are available; to select; to take as that which one prefers, or in accordance with one's will and preference" (OED *s. v. choose v.)*. The definition implies the notion of volition, or in other words, control over one's actions. There is only one instance of the verb *choose* as a collocate of *black people* (57), however, the analysis of the context surrounding the instance reveals the hypothetical setting ("*even if….").*

(57) In spite of all the gains African Americans have made in the past few decades, systemic racism is still waging war on the black community, <u>even if</u> **black people** *choose* <u>not to see it</u>. (COCO, 2001–WM January 1).

In addition, the verb *choose* is the main verb in the verb phase, *choose not to see it,* which invites an interpretation of *prefer to ignore something.* The larger context of the collocation under analysis ("[…] systemic racism is still waging war on the black community, even if black people choose not to see it") displays a clearly negative evaluation, as *black people* are portrayed as not having control over events.

Another verb collocate of *black people* which is linked to the notion of making a choice is the verb *vote* as in "to express a choice or preference by ballot or other approved

means" (OED *s.v. vote v.*). Three instances of the verb *vote* following the term *black people* were observed in COCO as in (58) – (60).

(58) I have no doubt that you are being told that by virtue of divine edict, **black people** <u>will never</u> *vote* <u>Republican</u>; that hating conservatives is our birthright; that at least since the 1930s, our foreheads have been stamped "property of DNC." Thus, your party-mates believe that, for as long as the Statue of Liberty presides over Ellis Island and Old Faithful boils in her subterranean home, then sure as clockwork, the black people of this nation will never vote Republican. (COCO, 2001–WM October 1).

(59) In 2000, when the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies did a survey on Sharpton's popularity, only 37 percent of African Americans had a favorable impression, and just 10 percent of nonblacks viewed him kindly. Ralph Nader (40 percent favorable rating) was more popular among blacks than Al Sharpton—and we all know how many **black people** *voted* Green. (COCO, 2003–VV April 15).

(60) Yet there is an underappreciated fact about black America that anyone armed with a decent survey could see: **Black people** *vote* <u>like Democrats, but on social issues they think like Republicans.</u> Whether the GOP can ever lure churchgoing African Americans from the revival tent to the party's so-called big tent remains a matter for debate. Now the controversy over gay marriage, a potent brew of religion and politics, is giving Republicans another shot—but don't bet on their converting it. (COCO, 2003–VV September 23).

In the instances above, Coates seems to underline a tension between black Americans and their representation by the U.S. political parties, Democrats and Republicans. In a way, the situations portrayed in (58) – (60) involve asymmetrical power relationships: black Americans and the country's political establishments. Even though black Americans have a right to vote, they might not always vote in their own interests, and therefore, lose ability to control or influence the state of affairs.

The verb *change* is used by Coates in critiquing a statement by another writer, Debra J. Dickerson, the author of the book *The End of Blackness,* as in (61).

(61) This is the book's ultimate failure–it broaches no new theories for how African Americans should consider themselves. Despite arguing for the uselessness of "blackness," Dickerson presents very little evidence of why **black people** <u>should</u> *change* <u>their names</u>. Instead she relies on generalizations, at best, and stereotypes, at worst, to prove her case. But ultimately she proves the opposite of her thesis–the book has convinced me, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there

are definitely a group of people in this country who are black. (COCO, 2004–WM April 1).

The context of (61) suggests that Coates negatively evaluates the proposition "black people should change their names" and he reinforces positive evaluation of the ability of black people to maintain control over their names.

The verb *remake* (reflexive) refers to the notion of transforming or reinventing oneself (OED, *s. v. remake v. 2*). The verb generally implies having control over one's character, image or way of life, which is further amplified by the use of the adverbial *through force of will* in (62)*.* However, the contextual use of the utterance is presented as an idea, not a reality (not yet, at least). In addition, the evaluation is assigned to another voice, Malcolm X,[16] though Coates himself seems to echo the statement.

> (62) For all of Malcolm's invective, his most seductive notion was that of collective self-creation: the idea that **black people** could, through force of will, *remake themselves*. […] For black people who were never given much of an opportunity to create themselves apart from a mass image of shufflers and mammies, that vision had compelling appeal. (COCO, 2011–ATL May 2011 issue).

Example (63) illustrates the use of the verb *achieve* as a collocate of *black people.* The verb *achieve* (transitive) is defined by OED as "to carry out successfully, bring to a successful conclusion" (OED *s. v. achieve v.2*).

> (63) For realists, the true story of the Civil War illuminates the problem of ostensibly sober-minded compromise with powerful, and intractable, evil. For radicals, the wave of white terrorism that followed the war offers lessons on the price of revolutionary change. White Americans finding easy comfort in nonviolence and the radical love of the civil-rights movement must reckon with the unsettling fact that **black people** in this country *achieved* the rudiments of their freedom through the killing of whites. (COCO, 2012–ATL February 2012 issue).

In this case, it could be argued that this utterance exemplifies embedded evaluation as lexical items interact with each other. Coates chooses to employ a positive evaluation as he refers to the Civil War and black people's achievement of their freedom: (*that black people in this*

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[16] Malcolm X was an American Muslim minister and civil rights activist in the early 1960's.

country achieved the rudiments of their freedom). However, the author surrounds this statement with items of negative evaluation: [*the unsettling fact*], [*the rudiments of* (*their freedom*)] and [*through the killing of whites*], giving this part of the sentence overall negative evaluation. In addition, in (63), Coates presents two different points of view, where the strings *white Americans, easy comfort, nonviolence,* and *the radical love of the civil right movement* coheres by contrast with *reckon, the unsettling fact, the killing of whites.*

In the following example, (64), the term *black people* occurs in the context of military terms such as *war, fighting,* and *the battle.* Coates connects "the battle …during Reconstruction"[17] to the present day by using the adverb *still* in collocation with *black people* and *fighting,* implying that black Americans in the South have been trying to gain control over their lives for the past 140 years.

> (64) The symbols point to something *Confederate*'s creators don't seem to understand—the war is over for them, not for us. <u>At this very hour</u>, **black people** all across the South are <u>still</u> *fighting* <u>the battle which they joined during Reconstruction</u>—securing equal access to the ballot—and resisting a president whose <u>resemblance to Andrew Johnson is uncanny</u>. (COCO, 2017–ATL August 4).

In summary, the term *black people* is consistently evaluated negatively by Coates from the perspective of the notion of control. The verb collocates of *black people* in the subject position (42 verbs) project the term's semantic role either as EXPERIENCER/THEME (43%), AGENT (40%), or PATIENT, as in passive voice constructions (17%). The roles of PATIENT and EXPERIENCER/THEME, as a way of grammatical evaluation, imply that the participant is not in control of events and their environment. The contextual examination of the collocates of *black people* with action verbs (= the semantic role of AGENT) reveals Coates's overall negative pragmatic evaluation. In other words, the term *black people* is used by Coates in the contexts which highlight the participant's lack of control and at the same time add emphasis to negative/undesirable consequences of not having control over events.

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[17] According to Foner (2020), Reconstruction, in U.S. history, is the period (1865–1877) following the Civil War, "during which the attempts were made to redress the inequalities of slavery".

Verbs with blacks *as object*

Table 4.14 presents verb collocates of the term *blacks* in object and subject positions in the corpus.

Table 4.14 Verb collocates of *blacks* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Verbs with *blacks* as object	35	*keep (2)/ exclude (2)/ acknowledge (1)/ offer (1)/ have (1)/ lampoon (1)/ push (1)/ depict (1)/ fault (1)/ unite (1)/ woo (1)/ ticket (1)/ arrest (1)/ bar (1)/ criminalize (1)/ educate (1)/ encourage (1)/ equate (1)/ force out (1)/ kidnap (1)/ sell (1)/ oppress (1)/ keep out (1)/ plague (1)/ purge (1)/ render (1)/ require (1)/ see (1)/ shunt (1)/ lobby (1)/ yank off (1)/ beat (1)/ fear (1)*
Verbs with *blacks* as subject	100	*be (30)/ have (3)/ use (3)/ live (3)/ kill (3)/ study (2)/ commit (2)/ feel (2)/ benefit (2)/ flee (2)/ tend (2)/ stop (2)/ want (1)/ give (1)/ cast off (1)/ treat (1)/ concern (1)/ spare (1)/ account for (1)/ fall into (1)/ fight out (1)/ make up (1)/ clamor (1)/ find (1)/ affect (1)/ tie (1)/ know (1)/ need (1)/ lose (1)/ start (1)/ think (1)/ advance (1)/ hire out (1)/ watch (1)/ render (1)/ worry (1)/ unite (1)/ lack (1)/ devolve (1)/ pay (1)/ label (1)/ lynch (1)/ hide (1)/ herd (1)/ suffer (1)/ disqualify (1)/ compete (1)/ beat (1)/ join (1)/ inhabit (1)/ rob (1)/ incarcerate (1)/ practice (1)/ work (1)/ uproot (1)/ protest (1)*

The verbs occurring with *blacks* as object (35 instances with 33 verbs) were divided into four groups: (i) action verbs associated with negative connotations (*exclude*, *push*, *force out*, *purge*, *shunt*, *yank off, keep out* (= exclude)*, ticket*, *bar*, *arrest*, *lampoon*, *fault*, *criminalize*, *kidnap*, *sell [blacks]*, *oppress*, *plague*, *beat*, *fear*); (ii) action/process verbs with neutral/positive connotations (*offer, have, unite, woo, encourage, acknowledge, keep, render, lobby, require*); (iii) verbs referring to perceptions/beliefs (*depict, equate, see*); and (iv) verbs referring to verbal guidance (*educate*).

Group (i) contains a subgroup of verbs referring to a (forceful) removal/exclusion, such as *exclude*, *push*, *force out*, *purge*, *shunt*, *yank off, keep out*, as in (65) – (68).

> (65) Wilson, born into the Confederacy and the first postbellum president to hail from the South, *was* at that very moment *purging* **blacks** <u>from federal jobs</u> and remanding them to separate washrooms. (COCO, 2012–ATL February 2012 issue).

(66) Two years after that, whites picketed and planted explosives in South Deering, about 30 minutes from downtown Chicago, *to force* **blacks** *out*. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

(67) But long before birtherism, Trump had made his worldview clear. He fought to *keep* **blacks** *out* of his buildings, according to the U.S. government; called for the death penalty for the eventually exonerated Central Park Five; and railed against "lazy" black employees. (COCO, 2017–ATL October 2017 issue).

(68) In 1947, after a few black veterans moved into the Fernwood section of Chicago, three nights of rioting broke out; gangs of whites *yanked* **blacks** *off* streetcars and beat them. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

The verbs describing some type of removal are used by Coates both in figurative senses (65) – (67) and literal situational contexts (68). In other words, Coates highlights two types of removal to which blacks were subjected: exclusion of black Americans from the job market and government policies as well as acts of physical abuse and violence experienced by black people.

Verbs with general positive connotation in group (ii), such as *unite* and *encourage* were analyzed in their context. The verb *unite,* according to OED, describes the action-process of combining or joining (something) with another (OED, *s. v. unite v.1).* In (69), Coates places the collocation of *unite* with *blacks* in a circumjacent environment of negative evaluation: the negation [*there...is no single issue*] at the beginning of the clause and [*with the visceral power of segregation and its accompanying WHITES ONLY sign*] at the end of the clause.

(69) For activists looking to rally around race, this has presented a problem over the past few decades: there simply is <u>no single issue</u> that *unites* **blacks** <u>with the visceral power of segregation and its accompanying WHITES ONLY sign</u>. (COCO, 2009–TM August 10).

The instance of the verb *encourage* in a combination with the term *blacks* in the object position (70) was subjected to a close-reading procedure.

(70) North Lawndale had long been a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, but a handful of middle-class African Americans had lived there starting in the '40s. […] North Lawndale's Jewish People's Institute <u>actively</u> *encouraged* **blacks** to move into the neighborhood, seeking to make it a "pilot community for interracial living." <u>In the battle for integration then being fought around the country</u>, North Lawndale <u>seemed to offer promising terrain</u>. But out in the tall

grass, <u>highwaymen</u>, <u>nefarious</u> as any Clarksdale kleptocrat, were <u>lying in wait</u>. (COCO, 2014–ATL September 2014 issue).

The entire stretch of text is examined in (70) as evaluation of a particular situation crosses over sentence boundaries. According to OED, the verb *encourage* (const. *to* with noun as object) is defined as "to inspire with courage sufficient for any undertaking; to embolden, make confident" (OED, *s. v. encourage v. 2a)*. The positive meaning of *encourage* (as it refers to the actions performed by the subject of the clause, *North Lawndale's Jewish People's Institute*) is emphasized by the use of the adverb *actively,* defined as "by one's own action; voluntarily, deliberately, spontaneously, positively" (OED, *s. v. actively adv.*). The phrase *actively encouraged* with *blacks* in the object position contributes to overall positive evaluation as black people are encouraged (in a way, they are being empowered) to move into an interracial neighborhood. Thus, it could be argued that Coates emphasizes that a degree of control is being given to black people by the active encouragement by the actor (*North Lawndale's Jewish People's Institute*). In the next sentence, the positive evaluation of the possibility to establish a community for interracial living (*North Lawndale seemed to offer promising terrain)* is contrasted with the expression of negative evaluation, [*The battle for (integration)… being fought*], implying some type of resistance to the idea of integration in many places across the country. In the last sentence of (70), the sense of (even a small degree of) control for blacks is undermined by the author's use of expressions of explicit negative evaluation such as the following:

- [*highwaymen*], defined as "a thief who robs travelers on a road" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020);
- [*nefarious*], defined as "flagrantly wicked or impious: evil" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020);
- [*lying in wait*], defined as "holding oneself in a concealed position to watch and wait for a victim for the purpose of making an unexpected attack and murdering or inflicting bodily injury on the victim" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020).

Overall, the term *blacks* in the object position (= the semantic role of PATIENT) in COCO, similarly to *black people,* displays negative evaluation which is intensified by Coates's use of action verbs with clear negative/undesirable consequences (such as the verbs in group (i): *push, criminalize, kidnap, sell,* etc.). Furthermore, the description of attempts to provide

black Americans with some degree of control over their own environment, as in the case of the verb *encourage* in (70), is counteracted by the use of strong negatively evaluated items (*highwaymen*, *lying in wait*, etc.) in the context of the discourse.

Verbs with blacks *as subject*

The collocational analysis of verbs with the term *blacks* in the subject position (100 instances) in COCO revealed the following verb choice by Coates (see Table 4.14): (i) verbs related to state or experience, sensory/cognition verbs (*be, have, live, feel, benefit, tend, want, concern, need, think, watch, worry, know, lack, lose, find [themselves], suffer, fall into, account for, make up (=* form, constitute*), inhabit)*; and (ii) action verbs (*use, study, commit, flee, stop, cast off, fight out, clamor, tie, start, advance, hire, render, devolve, pay, hide, compete, join, practice, work, uproot, protest;* [passive voice constructions: *kill*, *give, treat, spare, affect, unite, label, lynch, herd, disqualify, beat, rob, incarcerate, stop*]).

One third of the verb collocates with the term *blacks* as subject (21 out of 57, or ca. 37%) are verbs describing experience/sense/cognition (*feel, suffer, worry, think,* etc.) or state/position (*live, inhabit, account for*, etc.). As mentioned previously, such verbs typically evoke a scene with the participant as EXPERIENCER/THEME (the entity which is not in control of the action or state), as in (71) – (73).

(71) But as much as affluent **blacks** *want to believe* that money and power can insulate them from the effects of racism in this country, it is a delusion. (COCO, 2001–WM June 1).

(72) Obama understands what all **blacks**, including myself, *know* all too well — that Amadou Diallo's foreign ancestry could not prevent his wallet from morphing into a gun in the eyes of the police. (COCO, 2007–TM February 1).

(73) Obama's formula for closing this chasm between black and white America, like that of many progressive politicians today, proceeded from policy designed for all of America. **Blacks** disproportionately *benefit* from this effort, since they are disproportionately in need. (COCO, 2017–ATL January/February 2017 issue).

The verb collocates with *blacks* describing an action or process were subjected to a more thorough analysis. Fourteen of these verbs, 24%, (*kill, give, treat, spare, affect, unite, label, lynch, herd, disqualify, beat, rob, incarcerate, stop*) in COCO are employed in passive voice constructions, as in (74) – (75).

(74) **Blacks** *were* only *spared* the rope because they were viewed as property, and the death of a slave meant a lost investment. (COCO, 2001–WM January 1).

(75) In 1970 the national correctional system was much smaller than it is today, but even so, **blacks** *were incarcerated* at several times the rate of whites. (COCO, 2015–ATL, October 2015 issue).

Since the subject position in passive voice constructions is occupied by the participant with the semantic role of PATIENT (the entity affected by an action, not in control of it), the instances of *blacks* with the 14 action verbs do not describe an action or process over which the participant has any degree of control.

The remaining 22 verbs (39%) in group (ii) describing an action or process were further examined. First, the verbs that are connected to the notion of control were subjected to further analysis in their contextual environment.

The verb *use* has a variety of definitions which depend on the contextual use of the verb (OED, *s. v. use v.*). Coates employed the verb *use* with the term *blacks* in two different contexts. In COCO, there were found 2 instances of the verb *use* referring to consumption of drugs, as in (76) – (77).

(76) This might well have been true as a description of drug enforcement policies, but it was not true of actual drug abuse: Surveys have repeatedly shown that <u>**blacks** and whites</u> *use* drugs at remarkably comparable rates. (COCO, 2015–ATL October 2015 issue).

(77) To reiterate an important point: Surveys have concluded that <u>**blacks** and whites</u> *use* drugs at roughly the same rates. And yet by the close of the 20th century, prison was a more common experience for young black men than college graduation or military service. (COCO, 2015–ATL October 2015 issue).

In both instances, the author makes a reference to surveys, or statistical information, which points to the fact that drug abuse among black Americans is approximately at the same level as among white Americans. Both instances occur in the same text ("The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration") as Coates, by repetition, aims to emphasize his argument: relatively equal level of offence does not result in equal treatment by police, as in (77). In such a context, the neutral connotation of the verb *use* acquires negative evaluation as the verb is complemented by the noun *drugs.* The definition of *drugs* as "an illegal substance that causes addiction, habituation or a marked change in consciousness" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020)

implies a negative evaluation in general as well as from the perspective of being in control of events and one's own environment.

The second context of usage of the verb *use* in COCO (defined by OED (*s.v. use v.*) as "to visit frequently"), as in (78), involves asymmetrical power relationships as Coates uses the term *inferior* three times in one sentence. The contextual use of the verb with collocates, *blacks* and *inferior*, implies the subordinate position of *blacks* which accounts for a negative evaluation of not having control.

> (78) **Blacks** *used* inferior public pools and inferior washrooms, attended inferior schools. (COCO, 2012–ATL September 2012 issue).

Two action verb collocates with the term *blacks*, *start* (79) and *advance* (80)*, are preceded by the auxiliary *should* which expresses obligation/expediency, rather than the notion of being in control of an action. Furthermore, both of the instances occur in the context where the point of view and the evaluation is attributed to other voices: Bill Cosby in (79) and Booker T. Washington (80).

> (79) Instead of waiting for handouts or outside help, Cosby argues, disadvantaged **blacks** *should start* by purging their own culture of noxious elements like gangsta rap, a favorite target. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

> (80) He [Booker T. Washington] argued that southern whites should be given time to adjust to emancipation; in the meantime, **blacks** *should advance* themselves not by voting and running for office but by working, and ultimately owning, the land. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

Some action verbs (*hire out*, *protest,* etc.*)* project negative evaluations as the instances of the verbs co-occur in the context of negation, as in (81) – (82).

> (81) **Blacks** could never *hire out* their labor. (COCO, 2016–ATL June 27).

> (82) West's thoughts are not original—the apocryphal Harriet Tubman quote and the notion that slavery was a "choice" echoes the ancient trope that slavery wasn't that bad; the myth that **blacks** do not *protest* crime in their community is pure Giulianism; and West's desire to "go to Charlottesville and talk to people on both sides" is an extension of Trump's response to the catastrophe. These are not stray thoughts. They are the propaganda that justifies voter suppression, and feeds police brutality, and minimizes the murder of Heather Heyer. And Kanye West is now a mouthpiece for it. (COCO, 2018–ATL May 7).

The context in (82) links the collocation, *blacks do not protest crime in their community,* to *the myth* as well as to *Giulianism,* political rhetoric by Rudy Giuliani.[18] In other words, Coates negatively evaluates the statements by the other voices (West and Giuliani) as inaccurate.

In addition to action verbs which had possible implications for the notion of control, the examination of the instances with the verbs *flee* and *cast off* revealed implications for the conceptualization of group identity of black Americans.

In (83), the verbs *hide* and *flee* are used as the collocates of *blacks* as Coates describes a situation during the American Civil War (1861–1865). In such context, the verb *flee* is employed in a general type of usage, as "to run away from or as from danger, to take flight, to try to escape or seek safety by flight" (OED, *s.v. flee v.*).

> (83) The Confederate army, during its march into Pennsylvania, routinely kidnapped blacks and sold them south. By the time Lee's legions arrived in Gettysburg, virtually <u>all of the town's free **blacks**</u> had *hidden* or *fled*. (COCO, 2012–ATL February 2012 issue).

The first instance of the verb *flee* in (84) is similar to the one in (83) as it is also used with its general meaning. However, the situational context of the first instance of *flee* in (84) refers to a different event, the Great Migration, the relocation of approximately 6 million African Americans in the United States out of the rural Southern states to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West that occurred between 1916 and 1970 (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2020).

> (84) The runaway slave is a fixture in the American imagination. As the writer Isabel Wilkerson notes in her account of the Great Migration, **the blacks** who *fled* the South during the 20th century "did what human beings looking for freedom, throughout history, have often done. They left." There is also a less reputable history of *fleeing* among African Americans — the tradition of those blacks light enough to "pass" as white and disappear into the overclass. (COCO, 2016–ATL October 2016 issue).

Coates echoes the statement by another writer, Isabel Wilkerson, which compares the act of *fleeing* to the notion of escape from oppression into freedom. This interpretation of the

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18 Coates refers to Rudy Giuliani's criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement. For reference, see https://insider.foxnews.com/2016/07/11/rudy-giuliani-black-lives-matter-violence-chicago-fox-and-friends (last accessed April 7, 2020).

collocation *blacks who fled* implies a level of control as the decision to leave is followed through. However, Coates adds another interpretation of the notion of *fleeing* in the African American context, as in the second instance of *flee* in (84): black Americans who have lighter complexion reject their black identity in order to assimilate into the white majority. In this latter case, the notion of *fleeing* (there is no explicit use of the verb *flee* in this context) is negatively evaluated by the author as he states that it is [*less (reputable)*] and that those blacks [*disappear into (the overclass)*].

Another verb that is used by Coates with reference to black American identity is the phrasal verb *cast off*. Example (85) illustrates an explicit link between the contextual use of the verb and black American identity as the NP *their identity* functions as a direct object of the verb *cast off*.

> (85) Black identity, like any ethnic identity, is more than a matter of simple genealogy; it also involves culture and politics. Fighting against white racism is at the heart of black identity, so much so that a generation ago, men who were considered pro-black were called race men. But Graham's interviewees have only a surface interest in struggle. The only fight they deem worthy is the battle to be white. At its worst, this psychosis is manifest when <u>light-skinned, straight-haired</u> **blacks** *cast off* <u>their identity</u> and literally become white. More often, though, the desire to be white is manifest in more innocent ways. (COCO, 1999–WCP May 21).

Even though the verb *cast off* in the context of (85), as well as the notion of *fleeing* in the second instance in (84), implies a conscious decision by the subject of the clause and could be interpreted as an expression of having a degree of control over one's life and environment, the context of the utterances suggests a strong negative evaluation by the author as both notions are explicitly linked to the rejection of black identity. In other words, the use of such verbs in figurative contexts, such as the second instance in (84) and example (85), provides a negative evaluation, whereas the verb *flee* used literally, as in the first instance in (84), is interpreted positively.

In summary, the term *blacks* in COCO, similarly to the term *black people*, frequently portrays negative evaluation by the author. The instances of 57 verbs with *blacks* in the subject position display the term's semantic role either as AGENT (39%), EXPERIENCER/THEME (37%), or PATIENT in passive voice constructions (24%). The analysis of action verb collocates with the term in the contextual environment reveals negative pragmatic prosody, as action verbs are employed either with auxiliaries such as

should implying obligation or expectation as in (79) – (80), or with negation elements such as *not* and *never* as in (81) – (82). The close reading of the instances of the verb *flee* with the term *blacks* indicates an attempt to describe some degree of control that black Americans can exercise over their own environment, as in the first instance of *flee* in (84). However, that is the only instance of the term *blacks* displaying a somewhat positive evaluation with regards to the notion of control.

Verbs with black America *as object*

The verbs that collocate with the term *black America/Americans* in the subject or object positions in a clause in COCO are displayed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Verb collocates of *black America/Americans* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Verbs with *black America/-ns* as object	12	*define* (2)/ *characterize* (1)/ *pervade* (1)/ *present* (1)/ *represent* (1)/ *remix* (1)/ *fail* (1)/ *offer* (1)/ *seize* (1)/ *haunt* (1)/ *upbraid* (1)
Verbs with *black America/-ns* as subject	32	*be* (7)/ *lose* (2)/ *have* (2)/ *produce* (1)/ *make* (1)/ *suffer* (1)/ *dismiss* (1)/ *endure* (1)/ *grow* (1)/ *find* (1)/ *invoke* (1)/ *sweat* (1)/ *use* (1)/ *win* (1)/ *need* (1)/ *experience* (1)/ *touch* (1)/ *hear* (1)/ *share* (1)/ *walk* (1)/ *live* (1)/ *embrace* (1)/ *finish* (1)/ *force* (1)

Verb collocates of the term as object (12 instances with 11 verbs) are almost equally divided between three groups: (i) action verbs associated with negative connotations (*seize, fail, haunt, upbraid*); (ii) action verbs with neutral/positive connotations (*offer, remix, pervade*); and (iii) verbs referring to perceptions/beliefs (*define, characterize, present, represent*).

The verbs in group (i) portray negative evaluation as the participant, *black America/Americans,* experience negative effects of the actions described by the verbs, as in (86) – (87).

(86) Ironically, the apathy that has seized Howard, and indeed *seized* **black America**, is nothing but the final fulfillment of the integrationist dream. (COCO, 1999–WCP February 19).

(87) The oft-celebrated G.I. Bill similarly *failed* **black Americans**, by mirroring the broader country's insistence on a racist housing policy. (COCO, 2014–ATL June 2014 issue).

Approximately one-third of the verbs occurring with *black America/Americans* refer to perceptions and (re)presentation of the entity described by the term, as in group (iii), as illustrated in (88) – (90).

(88) We are—and I say this with big pride—the progeny of slaves. If there's any majesty in our struggle, it lies not in fairy tales but in those humble origins and the great distance we've traveled since. Ditto for the dreams of a separate but noble past. Cosby's, and much of black America's, conservative analysis flattens history and smooths over the wrinkles that have *characterized* **black America** since its inception. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

(89) The publications that *defined* **black Americans**—the *Chicago Defender*, *Ebony*, and *Jet*—were also products of Chicago. (COCO, 2009–ATL January/February 2009 issue).

(90) The past 40 years have *presented* **black America** through the distorting prism of crack, crime, unemployment, and skyrocketing rates of incarceration. (COCO, 2011–ATL May 2011 issue).

Compared to the terms *black people* and *blacks,* the term *black America/Americans* (in the object position) does not co-occur with many action verbs which have explicit negative connotations or imply negative/undesirable consequences. One explanation for such a development is that *black America* (the term used more frequently than *black American(s)* in COCO*,* 160 and 27 tokens, respectively) describes an abstract entity, an imagined collectivity of black Americans, not specific people. This usage of the term also offers an explanation for the number of verbs in referring to the representation/definition of *black America* (verbs in group (iii)).

In summary, the term *black America,* as an abstract entity, collocates with verbs which tend to have more neutral connotation or descriptive properties. The term *black America/Americans* in the object position in the clause projects the semantic role of PATIENT which, as mentioned before, points to the fact that the participant is not the controller of an action. However, the actions described by the 11 verb collocates which occur with *black America/Americans* in the object position in COCO, do not have explicitly

negative or overtly undesirable consequences (in contrast with the use of the terms *blacks* and *black people*).

Verbs with black America/Americans *as subject*

Based on the information in Table 4.15, the analysis of the concordance lines with *black America/Americans* in the subject position (32 tokens) reveals Coates's choice of the following verbs: (i) verbs related to state or experience, sensory/cognition verbs (*be, have, suffer, endure, experience, grow accustomed to, hear, sweat, lose, find [themselves], need, share* (= think the same)*, live*); and (ii) action verbs (*produce, make, dismiss, invoke, use, win, walk, embrace, finish;* [passive voice constructions*: force, touch*]).

More than half of the verbs that collocate with the term *black America/ Americans* (13 out of 24; 54%) are verbs related to state, experience, sense or cognition. Therefore, the semantic role of the participant (*black America/Americans)* suggests the role of EXPERIENCER/THEME, an entity which is not in control of an action, as in (91) – (92).

(91) One thing is certain, though: While white America might celebrate Farrakhan's evolution, **black America** *has suffered* a real loss. (COCO, 2001–WM January 1).

(92) Racism is not merely a simplistic hatred. It is, more often, broad sympathy toward some and broader skepticism toward others. **Black America** ever *lives* <u>under that skeptical eye</u>. (COCO, 2012–ATL September 2012 issue).

Example (92), in particular, reflects asymmetrical power relationships as black Americans live [*under that* [*skeptical eye*]] of racism. In other words, black Americans live in an environment that they don't have control over (as the EXPERIENCER/THEME, not the AGENT); and in addition, they find themselves in an inferior position which is implied by the preposition *under*. Furthermore, through the use of the adverb *ever* and the NP *that skeptical eye* Coates creates a scene of continuous surveillance/control.

The remaining 11 verbs which co-occur with *black America/Americans* in the subject position are action and process verbs. Two of the verbs (*force, touch*), 8%, are used in passive voice constructions, as in (93) – (94), projecting the semantic role of PATIENT on the term *black America/Americans*.

(93) Virtually <u>all of **black America**</u> *has been*, in some shape or form, *touched* by that rebirth. (COCO, 2011–ATL May 2011 issue).

(94) HBO's *Confederate* takes as its premise an ugly truth that **black Americans** *are forced* to live every day: What if the Confederacy wasn't wholly defeated? (COCO, 2017–ATL, August 4).

The other 9 action/process verbs (38%) have general positive or neutral connotations (*embrace, produce, make,* etc.) and they were examined further in their context.

The verb *embrace* (figurative use) with a general meaning of "to accept" has two possible definitions depending on its collocates: either "to accept gladly or eagerly, to avail oneself of (an offer, opportunity, etc.)" or "to accept, submit to (death, adverse fortune) with resignation or fortitude" (OED, *s.v. embrace v.2*). The former definition would imply a more positive evaluation in terms of having control; whereas the latter would be interpreted as lack of control over events, as it would imply the role of EXPERIENCER/THEME. As illustrated in (95), the collocation of the term *black Americans* and the verb *embrace* (used as in the first definition) followed by a direct object, the NP, *the tradition of God Damn America.*

(95) And even those **black Americans** who *embrace* the tradition of God Damn America do so not with glee but with deep pain and anguish. (COCO, 2012– ATL September 2012 issue).

The expression *the tradition of God Damn America* by itself does not provide a clear positive or negative interpretation (from the perspective of the writer). Coates expands the utterance by explicitly stating that the act of *embracing* is done [[*not (with glee)*] *but with* [*deep pain and anguish*]]. In other words, the act is not performed joyfully but with a degree of fortitude. Therefore, the prosodic meaning of *black Americans who embrace* is associated with negative evaluation as it implies that the participant is not entirely in control of events.

The verbs *produce* and *make*, which could be categorized more precisely as production verbs, are generally defined as "to bring into being or existence" (OED, *s. v. produce v.; make v.*). Both verbs imply a participant with the semantic role of AGENT.

In example (96), the collocation of *black America* with the verb *produce* occurs with expressions such as *the vanguard of black American leadership* and *the two most visionary leaders*, in which the words *leadership* and *leaders* imply the notion of control.

(96) From the 1960s into the early '70s, <u>the vanguard of black American leadership</u> took some tremendous hits. We lost Malcolm and Martin, arguably the two most visionary <u>leaders</u> **black America** *has* ever *produced*. (COCO, 1996–WCP December 20).

In other words, the prosody associated with the term *black America* could be considered as positive in this example. However, the context in (96) also evokes the sense of loss and uncertainty through the use of the verb phrase *took some tremendous hits* and the verb *lost.* In that way, the extent of control associated with the term *black America* is pragmatically decreased.

Example (97) displays a similar discourse strategy by the author. At the beginning of the sentence, Coates combines *black America* with the verb *made* and the NP *impressive gains in the job and education sector.*

(97) Over the past two decades, **black America** *made* <u>impressive gains in the job and education sector</u> — or anyway, <u>half of black America did</u>. In a study of young, "less educated" African Americans with only a high school diploma, Holzer and his partner Paul Offner discovered that the employment rate for women rose from 37 percent in 1989 to 52 percent in 2000. The rate actually fell for men, from 62 percent to 52 percent. According to Holzer, in the 16-24 age range there is actually a higher percentage of black women employed than black men — a stunning statistic, given that many black women in this demographic are also unwed mothers. (COCO, 2003–VV June 3).

The expression *impressive gains*, in particular, provides a positive interpretation of the pragmatic prosody of the term *black America* as it projects a level of control over one's environment*.* However, the sense of control is downplayed as Coates in the last part of the sentence states that this achieved only by *half of black America*. The context provided in the rest of (97) links *impressive gains* with *a stunning statistic* of young black women being employed more than young black men. By employing such adjectives as *impressive* and *stunning* to describe black women's achievements over the past 20 years*,* Coates seems to employ irony as he implicitly criticizes black men for their lower employment rate. In that way, the prosody of *half of black America* (referring to black women) is evaluated more positively in terms of control over one's environment than the other half of black America (black men).

Another interesting example of positive pragmatic prosody is illustrated by Coates's use of the verb of motion *walk* with the term *black America*, as in (98). The full extract is

provided below in order to present the collocation (*black America is walking*) within its contextual environment.

> (98) On the night of his victory, Barack Obama talked about Ann Nixon Cooper, a black woman who, at the age of 106, had voted for him. But when Obama told her story, he presented her not just as someone who'd been born a generation after slavery and had seen segregation, but as a woman who'd seen the women's-suffrage movement, the dawn of aviation and the automobile, the Depression and the Dust Bowl, and Pearl Harbor. He presented Nixon Cooper as an African American who was not doubly conscious, just conscious. That is the third road that **black America** *is walking*. It's not coincidental that two black people from the South Side are leading us on that road. If you're looking for the heralds of a "post-racial" America, if that adjective is ever to be more than a stupid, unlettered flourish, then look to those, like Michelle Obama, with a sense of security in who they are—those, black or white, who hold blackness as more than the losing end of racism. (COCO, 2009–ATL January/February 2009 issue).

The immediate context of the collocation *black America is walking* identifies the path as *the third road*, not left or right, but in the middle. Earlier in the same article, 'American Girl', Coates (2009) describes the act of "black folks […] taking a third road" as *being themselves* as they move into mainstream America. Therefore, the prosody of the term *black America* in this particular context projects a strong positive evaluation in terms of having control over one's environment which is expressed through the image of confident movement.

As illustrated by the examples above, the term *black America/Americans* projects an overall positive evaluation by the writer in terms of control over events and one's environment. The term *black America/Americans* in the subject position occurs with verbs that suggest the following semantic roles: EXPERIENCER/THEME (54%), AGENT (38%), and PATIENT (8%), as in passive voice constructions. As discussed previously, the roles of PATIENT and EXPERIENCER refer to a participant who is not in control of the described situation. As the analysis of pragmatic prosody was performed using the notion of control, it's been discovered that the term *black America/Americans* occurs in COCO in the contextual environment which conveys a degree of control (even though the control is often downgraded by subtle remarks by the writer).

Verbs with *black community/communities* as object

Table 4.16 presents the verb collocates of the term *black community/communities* in object and subject positions in COCO. Verbs which occur with the term as object (12 instances with 11 verbs) could be divided into four groups: (i) action verbs associated with negative connotations (*devastate, face, dog* (= "to bother or pester persistently" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020))*, brutalize, plunder*); (ii) action verbs with neutral/positive connotations (*find, save, court, absolve*); (iii) verbs referring to perceptions/beliefs (*equate*); and (iv) verbs referring to verbal guidance (*tell*).

Table 4.16 Verb collocates of *black community/communities* in COCO

Pattern	Freq.	Examples
Verbs with *black community/-ies* as object	12	*devastate* (2)/ *face* (1)/ *tell* (1)/ *find* (1)/ *absolve* (1)/ *save* (1)/ *court* (1)/ *dog* (1)/*equate* (1)/ *brutalize* (1)/ *plunder* (1)
Verbs with *black community/-ies* as subject	16	*be* (4)/ *need* (1)/ *look* (1)/ *say* (1)/ *excuse* (1)/ *overflow* (1)/ *tumble* (1)/ *demonstrate* (1)/ *characterize* (1)/*commit* (1)/ *burn* (1)/ *refuse* (1)/ *feed* (1)

The term *black community/communities* in the object position portrays the semantic role of PATIENT, an entity which is affected by the action described by a verb. In addition, group (i) contains verbs (5 out of 11; or 46%) that have strong negative connotations because the actions described by those verbs lead to negative/undesirable consequences for the PATIENT, as in (99) – (100).

(99) But brutality understates what the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] did in those years: It didn't just *brutalize* **black communities**; it *terrorized* them. (COCO, 2016–ATL October 2016 issue).

(100) Race was implicit in Santelli's harangue—the housing crisis and predatory lending *had devastated* **black communities** and expanded the wealth gap — and it culminated with a call for a "Tea Party" to resist the Obama presidency. (COCO, 2017–ATL January/February 2017 issue).

Approximately one third of the verbs employed by Coates in collocations with *black community/communities* are verbs that generally have neutral or somewhat positive connotations (e.g. *save, court, find,* etc.). The instances of such verbs were subjected to the

close reading procedure. For example, in (101), the term *black community* functions as the direct object of the verb *court*.

> (101) When political strategists argue that the Republican Party is missing a huge chance *to court* **the black community**, they are thinking of this mostly male bloc — the old guy in the barbershop, the grizzled Pop Warner coach, the retired Vietnam vet, the drunk uncle at the family reunion. He votes Democratic, not out of any love for abortion rights or progressive taxation, but because he feels — in fact, he knows — that the modern-day GOP draws on the support of people who <u>hate </u>him. This is the audience that flocks to Cosby: culturally conservative black Americans who are convinced that integration, and to some extent the entire liberal dream, <u>robbed</u> them of their natural defenses. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

The verb *court* is defined by OED as "to seek to win or attract (any one) to do something" (OED, *s v. court v.*). The context of (101) suggests that *the Republican party (GOP)* is missing an opportunity to gain support from *the black community.* Even though, at first sight, it might seem that *the black community* has a degree of control over the situation as it can offer/provide support which the GOP is seeking to gain, it is important to identify whose point of view is being related. In this particular example (101), the pragmatic prosody of the collocation *to court the black community* is attributed to the supposed evaluator, namely *political strategists*. The following context of (101) unveils the writer's evaluation of the discourse situation, which is painted with negative undertones as Coates employs items associated with negative evaluation, such as the verbs *hate* and *robbed.*

In another example, (102), the term *black community* collocates with the verb *save.*

> (102) Americans hope Obama's election can *save* **the black community**. But <u>we're saving</u> <u>ourselves</u>. (COCO, 2008–TM November 24).

The instance in (102) is a short introduction to the article, 'The Messiah Myth', written by Coates right after Obama's victory in the U.S. presidential election of 2008. In the context of (102), the collocation *save the black community* reflects the evaluation assigned to the voice other than the author himself, the voice of *Americans*. In this contextual environment, *the black community* is perceived as something that needs to be saved by someone. However, in the second sentence of (102), Coates reverses the order of the participants in the discourse at the same time as he assigns himself the role of a representative voice for the black community by using the inclusive pronoun *we.* In a way, Coates offers a positive evaluation

of the term *black community* in terms of control: the writer states that a collectivity (which he himself is a part of) has a power within itself to *save itself* and that the *black community* is actively using that power (the present progressive form of the verb, *'re saving*, implies a dynamic situation). In other words, the pragmatic prosody of the term *black community* in (102) is evaluated positively by the writer.

In summary, the term *black community/communities* in the object position reflects the semantic role of PATIENT, the entity not being in control over events/environment in its immediate context. However, in some cases, as in (102), the analysis of pragmatic prosody reveals a reversed evaluation (from somewhat negative to more positive) as the order of the participants in the discourse is reversed as a way to present different (opposing) perspectives. The collocation analysis of *black community* (as object) with 11 verbs revealed that the term projects both negative, as in (99) – (100), and positive, as in (101), evaluation by the writer in terms of control. It has also been observed that most of the verbs with overt negative connotations (e.g. *devastate, brutalize, plunder*), as in group (i), occur in the period 2016–2018 in COCO.

Verbs with black community/communities *as subject*

According to Table 4.16, the term *black community/communities* in the subject position in COCO (16 tokens) collocates with verbs that could be divided into two groups: (i) verbs related to state or experience, sensory/cognition verbs (*be, need, look* (= expect, hope)*, burn* (intransitive)*, overflow, tumble*); and (ii) action verbs (*excuse, say, demonstrate, commit, refuse;* [passive voice constructions: *characterize, feed*]).

Approximately half of the verbs that collocate with the term *black community/ communities* as the subject in a clause (6 out of 13; 46%), are verbs related to state/experience/sense/cognition as in group (i). These types of verbs are typically chosen by speakers/writers to describe the situation from the perspective of EXPERIENCER/THEME, as in (103) – (105). In example (105), the verb *burn* is used as an intransitive verb as it does not require an object; thus, *burn* describes an event/action experienced (rather than initiated) by the participant, *the city's black communities.*

(103) These neo-Panthers feed no children, provide no health care or clothing. While **the black community** *tumbles* under the assault of crack, fratricide, and teenage pregnancy, the young turks mug at the mirror, too vicious, too

cool, too tragic, to risk ruffling their berets. (COCO, 1996–WCP December 20).

(104) Ann Warren, Priest's mother, is a pious woman. The type of every-Sunday-churchgoing lady **black communities** *are overflowing* with. Her faith in her son almost equals her faith in her God. (COCO, 1997–WCP February 14).

(105) Like so many urban riots during the long, hot summers of the 1960s, Detroit's began with law enforcement. On July 23, 1967, the Detroit police raided an after-hours watering hole on the West Side. For several days, the city's **black communities** *burned*. As in other cities, the riot demarcated the end of "the good life." In fact the good life, to the extent it ever existed, had begun decaying long before. (COCO, 2015–ATL October 2015 issue).

The other 7 verbs that collocate with *black community/communities* in the subject position in COCO are action-type verbs, as in group (ii). Two of the action verbs (15%), *feed* and *characterize,* occur in passive voice constructions, as in (106) – (107).

(106) It rests on the notion that the **black community**, more than other communities, *is characterized* by a bunch of hapless layabouts who spend their days ticking off reparations demands and shaking their fist at the white man. (COCO, 2008–TM November 24).

(107) And should crime rates rise again, there is no reason to believe that black people, **black communities**, black families *will not be fed* into the great maw again. (COCO, 2015–ATL October 2015 issue).

The use of these verbs in passive voice constructions implies that the term *black community/communities* projects the semantic role of PATIENT, indicating the participant's lack of control over events.

The remaining 5 verbs in group (ii) (39%) were further analyzed in context through the prism of the notion of control. In example (108), the term *black community* collocates with the verb *refuse* which is defined as "to decline to do something; to reject" (OED, *s. v. refuse v.*) implying a conscious choice and an action intentionally performed by an animate subject (a person, a group of people, collectivity, etc.). Therefore, *black community* has the semantic role of AGENT.

(108) If anything, the effort to reinstate a poll tax appears to have backfired. **The black community** *refused* to comply with expectations, and instead *turned out* in droves. In 2012, minority turnout across the country exceeded 2008 levels; unlike the turnout of other minorities, however, black turnout was not fueled by

demographic growth but by a higher percentage of the black electorate <u>going to the polls</u>. For the first time in history, according to a study by Pew, black turnout may even have exceeded white turnout. (COCO, 2013–ATL March 2013 issue).

The description of events in (108) is framed within a discourse on Obama's re-election as the U.S. president in 2012. The contextual environment points to several expressions of the participant (*black community*) being in control of events. For example, the *black community* does not act as expected by observers, but consciously makes a decision to *turn out* at the polls. The volitional aspect of the latter action is amplified by the fact that the reason for the high percentage of black voters was not due to demographic growth, but, in fact, more black Americans perform a dynamic action of *going to the polls*. In other words, the *black community* in (108) is portrayed as having the ability and will to control events. Therefore, the pragmatic prosody of the term *black community* in (108) has a positive evaluation in term of control, as projected by the author.

Another action verb with the aspect of volition, which collocates with the term *black community* in COCO, is the verb *commit* (109), defined as "to carry into action deliberately" (*Merriam-Webster* 2020).

(109) Cosby was an avowed race man, who, like much of his generation, <u>had come to feel</u> that black America had lost its way. The crisis of absentee fathers, the rise of black-on-black crime, and the spread of hip-hop all <u>led Cosby to believe that</u>, after the achievements of the 1960s, **the black community** *was committing* <u>cultural suicide</u>. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

The immediate context of (109) suggests that the *black community was* [*committing cultural* [*suicide*]], which would be evaluated negatively in terms of control. Even though the verb *commit* describes a deliberate action performed by the participant (= the semantic role of AGENT), its collocate, the NP *cultural suicide,* implies the notion of losing control over one's environment. But the extended context of (109) specifies that the expression *the black community was committing cultural suicide* is attributed to the perspective of another voice, more precisely Bill Cosby. In addition, Coates, by the use of the verb phrases *had come to feel* and *led Cosby to believe*, makes it clear that, in his opinion, Cosby's perspective is a belief or feeling rather than a fact. Thus, Coates implicitly disagrees with Cosby's negative evaluation of *black community [...] committing [...] suicide* as the writer does not consider it as a statement that reflects reality.

In summary, the term *black community/communities* in the subject position collocates with the verbs that project the following semantic roles on the term: EXPERIENCER/ THEME (46%), AGENT (39%) and PATIENT (15%) as in passive voice constructions. The term *black community/communities* (with action verb collocates) is assigned somewhat positive evaluations in terms of control over events and one's environment.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the analysis of syntactic and pragmatic features associated with the five terms of group identity in COCO: *African(-)Americans, black people, blacks, black America/Americans* and *black community/communities.* Concordance lines with the terms were analyzed in terms of the semantic roles (grammatically expressed evaluation) and in terms of pragmatic prosody (pragmatically expressed evaluation). The distribution between the semantic roles of the terms in the subject position in COCO is presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17 The distribution of semantic roles of group identity terms (as subject) in COCO

Term (as subject)	EXPERIENCER/THEME	AGENT	PATIENT	Total
African(-)Americans	52%	40%	8%	100%
Black people	43%	40%	17%	100%
Blacks	37%	39%	24%	100%
Black America/Americans	54%	38%	8%	100%
Black community/ -ies	46%	39%	15%	100%

The data results were examined through the notion of control in order to discover Coates's representation of group identity of black Americans as being in control vs. not being in control over events and their environment.

The pragmatic meaning of the term *African(-)Americans* in COCO projects an overall positive evaluation in terms of control. Yet, *African(-)Americans* as subject is often followed by verbs describing state or experience, which suggests that the term is most frequently used with the semantic role of EXPERIENCER/THEME (52%). The term with the role of AGENT (40%) is usually employed by Coates in the contexts discussing political issues as related to the African American community. At times, Coates assigns an evaluation to the term, which is not entirely positive, as he criticizes particular issues within the African

American community, for example, economic inequality within the group, which is also emphasized by the use of modifiers (*upper-class, middle-class, poor, lower-class)* with the term. According to Figure 4.2, the use of the term *African(-)Americans* was at its peak in Period 2 (2001–2005), one of the earlier periods in Coates's career, followed by a dramatic decrease in the subsequent period.

The term *black America/Americans* is also evaluated positively by Coates in light of the notion of control. However, 54% of the instances of *black America* in the subject position reflect the semantic role of EXPERIENCER/THEME, whereas the role of AGENT accounts for only 38% of the instances. The term's collocations with action verbs often occur in contexts which highlight *black America* as the entity with a degree of control over events and their environment, particularly in the context of political events (elections, campaigns, etc.). The term is also used by Coates with collocates (such as *make impressive gains, produce, walking),* which reinforce a positive construction of group achievement within a collectivity. However, as shown in Figure 4.2, the use of the term has been continuously decreasing in Coates's writings from Period 3 (2006–2011) until Period 5 (2016–2018).

The term *black community/communities* also displays some positive evaluation in COCO. However, similarly *black America/Americans,* the term's use in the subject position, which corresponds with the semantic role of AGENT, constitutes 39% of the instances; whereas the term's role of EXPERIENCER/THEME is more frequent (46%). The examination of the context of the instances of *black community/communities* as object revealed some instances of reverse prosodic evaluation, as in example (102). As shown in Figure 4.2, the use of the term in COCO had low frequency but has remained relatively stable (with some fluctuations) over the whole period from 1996 until 2018. However, it has been observed that in Period 5 (2016–2018), the use of the term *black community/communities* (in the object position) collocates with verbs describing negative outcomes of actions, such as *plunder, brutalize, devastate*, etc.

The term *black people*, contrary to *African(-)Americans, black America* and *black community,* is associated with negative evaluation in terms of control. *Black people* in the object position frequently collocates with verbs which, in addition to assigning the semantic role of PATIENT to the term, also imply negative or undesirable consequences for the participant affected by the actions. The term *black people* in the subject position slightly more often projects the semantic role of EXPERIENCER/THEME (43%) compared to AGENT (40%). When analyzed pragmatically, the instances of the verbs that project the

semantic role of AGENT of the term were evaluated negatively in terms of control as the instances were either negated or used in a hypothetical context.

The term *blacks* in COCO displays an overall negative evaluation when analyzed in terms of having control over events and one's environment. The term *blacks* in the object position, similarly to *black people*, is used with a number of verbs describing actions which imply possible negative consequences for the participant. In particular, *blacks* (as object) collocates with the verbs describing (forceful) removal/exclusion (as *push, force out, yank off*, etc.), both in literal and figurative contexts. The term (as subject) is slightly more often associated with the semantic role of AGENT (39%) compared to EXPERIENCER/THEME (37%). However, the pragmatic analysis of the instances with action verbs revealed that the usage of the term has negative evaluation in terms of control as the participant's degree of control over events is undermined or downgraded. In addition, nearly a quarter of the instances of *blacks* in the subject position (24%) occurs in passive voice constructions which implies the semantic role of PATIENT. According to Figure 4.2, both terms, *black people* and *blacks,* increased in usage in Period 4 (2012–2015), but declined in the following period (2016–2018).

The information presented in Figure 4.2 and the analysis of pragmatic prosody presented in section 4.5.2 suggest that Coates, in the beginning of his career, by frequently using the terms *African(-)Americans* and *black America/Americans,* represents the group identity of black Americans as a group (more specifically, a voting bloc) which has a degree of control over events and their environment. However, the graph in Figure 4.2 displays a decrease in usage of the terms in Period 3 (2006–2011), implying some sort of re-evaluation. Period 3 also corresponds with the U.S. presidential campaign and election of Barack Obama in 2008 as well as Obama's first term in office (2009–2011). In Period 4, 2012–2015, (thus, during Obama's second term in office), the uses of the terms *black people* and *blacks,* which portray overtly negative evaluation in terms of control, dramatically increase. It could be argued that in that period, Coates focuses on representing stories of individuals in his writings as a way of emphasizing common experiences shared by many black Americans. In other words, the writer moves away from the use of identity terms which represent black Americans as a homogeneous group and concentrates his attention on emphasizing the diversity of black Americans brought together by shared experiences.

Considering the findings in the data analysis in the light of Shelby's (2002) theoretical framework on black solidarity and group identity, it could be argued that:

1. Coates, by decreasing the use of *African(-)Americans* and *black America* in his writings, moves away from the attempts to construct a positive social group identity, "one that could be a basis for pride, dignity and collective self-affirmation", as a basis for black solidarity (Shelby 2002: 265).

2. The increased use of the terms *blacks* and *black people* in the contexts that describe negative consequences for the group or project overall negative evaluations in terms of control, suggests an attempt by Coates to construct a group identity for black Americans which is based on common oppression, rather than cultural and ethnic background (Shelby 2002).

3. The term *black community*, which Coates employs with relatively consistent frequency from 1996 until 2018, could be identified as a term which Coates uses as a description of a common black ethnic/cultural identity (which according to Shelby (2002) is important but not necessary for collective action/black solidarity). In addition, in Period 5 (2016–2018) the collocate *communities* (plural) is more frequent than *community* (singular) with the term *black.* Therefore, it could be argued that Coates, by using the plural noun *communities,* highlights diversification among black Americans in the twenty-first century.

In other words, from 2012 onwards, Coates shifts the emphasis in his construction of black solidarity from one based on cultural and ethnic identity to one which has its basis in the shared experiences of anti-black racism. In a way, Coates calls for collective action as he emphasizes common oppression as the basis for black solidarity as a way of providing resistance to white supremacy.

5. CONCLUSION

In the twenty-first century, black Americans find themselves immersed in an evolving political and sociodemographic reality in the United States. The political changes have included key events such as the election (and re-election) of Barack Obama as the first African American U.S. President, followed by the election of Donald Trump, whose presidency, as Coates (2017: 344) argues, has been seen as "the negation of Obama's legacy". On the sociodemographic level, the black population in the United States has become more diverse, as communities of other black ethnics/ethnicities (e.g., Caribbean Americans, Afrolatinos, etc.) are being established alongside communities of African Americans "historically anchored to the United States" (Blake 2016: 160). However, as Blake (2016: 154) points out there is a tendency for phenotypically black people in America to be eventually identified (and treated) as African American (see also Ibrahim 2020). All these changes in social reality were prerequisites to changes in the language which describes (and also constructs) those realties.

The purpose of this study has been to examine the language use of Ta-Nehisi Coates in his discourse on race in present-day America. The study has presented the analysis of linguistic patterns in Coates's writings revealing how the writer represents group identity among contemporary black Americans. This concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of the study and offers suggestions for further research.

The analysis and discussion of the data results, presented in Chapter 4 of the thesis, have revealed frequently used and salient terms in Coates's writings on race as well as linguistic patterns in the writer's representation of black American identity.

The most frequent and salient content items in COCO have been found to be the adjectives *black* and *white*. Coates's frequent use of the racial binary, history-linked categories emphasizes the fact that it is nearly impossible to escape the racialist dynamic in discourse on race (Ashcroft 2003: 51). At first sight, it might seem that Coates reinforces the black-and-white binary distinction in his writings. However, it could be argued that such polarizing emphasis is utilized by Coates in order to use the concept of *race* for political resistance against anti-black racism (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 2).

The MD-CADS approach employed in the study revealed a diachronic distribution of the terms over the 22-year period of Coates's writing career. Generally speaking, it could be

argued that the frequency fluctuations of *black(s)* and *white(s)* coincided with the major political events in the United States, namely Obama's, and later Trump's, election and presidency. In that way, Coates's use of the terms *black(s)* and *white(s)* can be seen as a reflection of the contemporary political and social environment in the United States. Furthermore, based on a diachronic comparison of the terms, it has been observed that the difference in frequency of *black(s)* and *white(s)* in COCO has been dramatically reduced from ca. 220% in Coates's earlier career (1996–2000) to ca. 13% in the most recent period (2016–2018). This development could also be viewed as empirical evidence for Coates's use of the binary terms as a way of resisting anti-black racism, or in other words, white supremacy. However, more research is needed to examine the use of the term *white* in COCO. Coates (2015b) himself, in the later periods of his career, perceives America's struggle as not to become "post-racial, but post-racist [as] we should seek not a world where the black race and the white race live in harmony, but a world in which the terms *black* and *white* have no real political meaning". However, Coates realizes that a world in the latter sense, in his time, is still unattainable.

In combating the racial binary, Coates does attach political meaning to the term *black* as he frequently utilizes the term to represent the group identity of black Americans. The analysis of collocations with the adjective *black* revealed that the term's most frequent collocates in COCO are nouns describing group identity – *people, America,* and *community.* The term *black* frequently collocates with *women* in COCO as well (see Table 4.3 on p. 41). However, the present study examines the representation of identity based on one marker of identity, *race.* Thus, the research questions investigating the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in Coates's writings could be posed for further research.

The colocations *black people, black America/Americans, black community/ communities,* as well as *blacks* and *African(-)Americans*, were subjected to further analysis in order to examine the way Coates linguistically and pragmatically represents group identity among contemporary black Americans. By using the notion of control as the framework for analyzing pragmatic prosody, the study's findings have indicated that Coates employed different terms in the earlier and latter periods of his writing career. For example, the term *African(-)Americans* and *black America/Americans* are the most frequent group identity terms in COCO in Period 2 (2001–2006), whereas in Period 4 (2012–2015) the terms *blacks* and *black people* overtake the former terms in overall frequency. It could be argued that the shift from the use of *African(-)Americans* to *blacks/black people* in COCO recognizes an

increasing heterogeneity among black ethnics in the United States. The theoretical framework on black solidarity proposed by Shelby (2002) has been particularly beneficial in attempts to explain the shift in terminology. The study has concluded that in the course of his writing career, Coates's representation of the group identity of the twenty-first century black Americans shifts from an identity based on cultural and ethnic commonalities to an identity which has its basis in the shared experiences of anti-black racism (also referred to, by Shelby (2002), as common oppression).

Overall, the study and its findings contribute to the research on language and race from a linguistic point of view. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the usefulness of the corpus-linguistics and corpus-pragmatics analyses in the study of language, race, and identity. Particularly, the linguistic analysis of grammatical evaluation (the semantic roles) and pragmatic evaluation (pragmatic prosody) in discourse in terms of control could be employed in other (cross-linguistic) studies exploring language, society, and culture. The results obtained through the quantitative and qualitative analyses enrich our understanding of interconnectedness of language, race, and black identity in twenty-first century America.

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Appendix I

List of items in the *Corpus of Non-fictional Writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates* (COCO) (1996–2018). Dates of compilation: August – October 2019.

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Appendix II

Table 1. Number of texts in COCO (1996–2018)

	WCP	WP	WM	MJ	VV	NYT	OM	TM	NY	ATL	BS-M	Total
1996	26											26
1997	40											40
1998	30	4										34
1999	39	3										42
2000	14											14
2001	9		5									14
2002	12	1	2	1	3							19
2003	4				29							33
2004			1		37							38
2005				1		1		5				7
2006							1	8				9
2007								3				3
2008								2		1	1	4
2009								1	2	1		4
2010										2		2
2011						4				3		7
2012						4				2		6
2013						7				2		9
2014										1		1
2015										3		3
2016										28		28
2017										5		5
2018										2		2
Total:	174	8	8	2	69	16	1	19	2	50	1	**350**

Table 2. Number of words in COCO (1996–2018)

	WCP	WP	WM	MJ	VV	NYT	OM	TM	NY	ATL	BS -M	Total
1996	20115											20115
1997	34411											34411
1998	30962	1541										32503
1999	48921	1273										50194
2000	11947											11947
2001	9101		13822									22923
2002	10178	465	4842	219	3730							19434
2003	3303				26740							30043
2004			1433		29189							30622
2005				283		1446		2921				4650
2006							3472	6247				9719
2007								3542				3542
2008								1630		5432	53673	60735
2009								831	4487	3628		8946
2010										3360		3360
2011						3075				5912		8987
2012						3204				12121		15325
2013						5887				1666		7553
2014										12321		12321
2015										23470		23470
2016										28471		28471
2017										23924		23924
2018										5704		5704
Total:	168938	3279	20097	502	59659	13612	3472	15171	4487	126009	53673	**468899**