"They Made us into a Race. We Made Ourselves into a People": A Corpus Study of Contemporary Black American Group Identity in the Non-Fictional Writings of Ta-Nehisi Coates

Yulia Hathaway[1] ⬥

Abstract

This article examines representations of contemporary Black American identity in the non-fictional writings of Ta-Nehisi Coates. The dataset is a self-compiled specialized corpus of Coates's non-fictional writings from 1996 until 2018 (350 texts; 468,899 words). The study utilizes an interdisciplinary approach combining corpus linguistics and corpus pragmatics. Frequencies of five identity-related terms in the corpus (*African*(–)*Americans, blacks, black people, black America/Americans* and *black community/communities*) are compared diachronically; then the pragmatic prosody of the terms is analyzed via the notion of control. The findings suggest that Coates's representation of Black American group identity has shifted over time. Specifically, the terms *African Americans* and *black America* are replaced by the terms *blacks* and *black people*. The study's empirical findings, considered through the theoretical framework on Black solidarity, suggest a shift in representation of group identity in Coates's writings from an identity based on cultural and ethnic commonalities to an identity based on the shared experiences of anti-Black racism.

Keywords Ta-Nehisi Coates · Corpus pragmatics · Black American identity · Language and race · Discourse studies

Introduction

In May 2020, Black Lives Matter protests erupted in the United States and around the world. The catalyst was the killing of an African American man, George Floyd, by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The world has again encountered the realities of Black American experience as lived by many African Americans for

✉ Yulia Hathaway
    Yulia.Hathaway@uib.no

1   Department of Foreign Languages, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

⚫ Springer

centuries. In twenty-first century America, one writer stands out as an articulator of Black American experience: Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Ta-Nehisi Coates is an African American writer and journalist who is regarded as one of the public intellectuals committed to raising the level of the discourse on race (Alim & Smitherman, 2012: xiii). Coates's writings reflect upon his personal experience growing up as a Black male in present-day America. In popular culture, Coates has experienced nation-wide recognition and critical acclaim as a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and the author of the 2015 award winning book *Between the World and Me*. Some scholars argue that his work should receive more scholarly engagement and that he should be recognized by the academic community as "a valuable interlocutor on many social and political issues, specifically those that deal with racism in America" (Schultz, 2018: 2).

This article analyzes general linguistic patterns in the representation(s) of contemporary Black American identity in Coates's non-fictional writings (Hathaway, 2020). The dataset is a specialized self-compiled corpus of Coates's writings from 1996 until 2018, *The Corpus of non-fictional writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates* (COCO), comprising 468,899 words (Hathaway, 2019). The empirical evidence was examined to answer a set of research questions. How does Coates represent Black Americans' group identity in the twenty-first century? How do(es) his representation(s) of Black Americans change over time? How does his representation correlate with political and socio-cultural implications of what it means to be a Black American in contemporary American society?

Based on frequency counts, five identity-related terms were selected for analysis: *black people, black America/Americans, black community/communities, African(–)Americans* and *blacks.* First, occurrences of the terms were compared diachronically. Then, they were subjected to a corpus-pragmatic examination of their contextual uses to uncover similarities and differences in representation of twenty-first century Black American identity in Coates's writings. The results show that Coates's use of group identity terms changes over time. Specifically, terms like *black America/Americans* and *African(–)Americans*, used frequently in the early 2000s, were replaced by *black people* and *blacks* in the following decade.

The article is organized as follows: the next two sections introduce the theoretical concepts relevant to studies on language, race and identity and discuss previous research. Then the data and methodology used for the study are described followed by a presentation of the main findings based on frequency observations and pragmatic analyses of the five identity-related terms over time. The article ends by discussing the findings in the context of Coates's writings and through the framework on Black solidarity proposed by Shelby (2002), presenting the conclusions and offering suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Concepts Relevant to the Study

This article examines language use in a specific context: discourse on race in the United States. Discourse is here understood as language used for communicative purposes, particularly in an attempt to affect other people's beliefs and

behavior (Partington et al. 2013: 5). Since this article analyzes representations of Black American identity in the discourse on race, terms like *race* and *racism,* as well as (*social) identity/group solidarity*, were relevant for the analysis and discussion. These are important concepts across fields like political science, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, etc., and they can be understood differently from various perspectives, presenting diverse sets of implications. Therefore, it is important to define these concepts.

Race and Racism

Many theorists agree that there is no connection between the concept of *race* (as a description of human beings) and biological reality (Alcoff, 2003: 5, see also Reynolds & Lieberman, 1993). Nonetheless, *race* is manifested in the social realm. 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/ethnicity, gender, nationality, etc.) is "no less powerful whether in the end we decide the differences are natural or humanly constructed" (Alcoff, 2003: 6). Recently, amid world-wide anti-racist protests following the death of George Floyd, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* was challenged to broaden its definition of *racism* to address contemporary issues of racial inequality (BBC News, 2020). As a result, in addition to *racism*'s definition as a belief that racial differences reflect superior/inferior human traits and capacities, Merriam-Webster.com (2020) describes *racism* as "the systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another" and/or "a political or social system founded on racism and designed to execute its principles".

This article analyzes contemporary discourses on race in the United States. In this particular geographical, historical, political and socioeconomic setting, the notions of *race* and *racism* imply a binary distinction between two signifiers, *black* and *white* (Ashcroft, 2003: 39). These terms are not stable categories, as the meanings of *black* and *white* have changed over time as a result of political and economic environment, with *black*, however, repeatedly signifying inferior social status (Spears, 1999: 6, 19). The polarized racial dynamics imply asymmetric power relations as the position of superiority suggests domination, power, and control; whereas inferiority is associated with subordination, powerlessness, and lack of control.

While the concept of *race* has been used to legitimize racist acts and ideology, it is important to note that the affected groups have repurposed the idea of 'race' to construct an alternative, positive self-identity and used the concept for political resistance (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 2).

Social Identity and Black Solidarity

In today's globalized multicultural society, *identity* is a fluid category. Social identities are defined as "names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1990: 225). However, as

Chun (2011: 404) underlines, no single social dimension can provide a comprehensive definition of an identity or a community. Thus, *race* is just one of many social identity categories. However, as this study examines discourses on race, identity is discussed primarily from the angle of race and race relations.

Racial discrimination experienced by the Black population in the United States has contributed to the formation of a group identity based on shared experience. Shelby (2005) 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 experience of racial injustice and discrimination, or *common oppression* (Shelby, 2002: 232). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 14% of the American population, 42 million people, identify as Black or African American (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/cultural group identity (Blake, 2016; Shelby, 2002: 250). Therefore, Shelby (2002: 254) argues that the most important component of Black solidarity in the fight against racism is a group identity built on the basis of "common oppression and commitment to resisting it".

Empirical Background

Identity has been explored within various disciplines: e.g. psychology, sociology, political science, and linguistic anthropology. Scholars recognize that identity is constructed and maintained discursively, through linguistic practices and repertoires: "speakers produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004: 369; also Mallinson & Kendall, 2013: 157). But ironically, there have been few linguistic analyses of the construction and representation of identity. Furthermore, as Alim et al. (2016: 4–5) observed, "language is often overlooked as one of the most important cultural means that we have for distinguishing ourselves from others".

Throughout the twentieth century scholars in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and cultural studies conducted research examining race and language (e.g., Boas, 1940; Labov, 1972; Spears, 1999), and the topics of race, language and culture seem to be 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 within and across language studies (Alim & Smitherman, 2019). To address this need, some U.S. researchers have forged a new field, *raciolinguistics,* which brings together diverse methods of linguistic analysis to critically assess the relations between language, race, and power, demonstrating that *race* is not only a social, but a sociolinguistic construct (Alim et al. 2016: 3; Alim & Smitherman, 2019: 230). One example of theorizing language through the lens of race is Blake's (2016) sociolinguistic study which employed race theory to explain Black New Yorkers' variation in the use of three linguistic variables associated either with New York City, African American English or Creole.

The application of corpus linguistic tools allows researchers to utilize large sets of authentic language to answer research questions, or, as here, to examine

interrelations between, language, race, and Black American identity. Recently, a number of studies have combined corpus linguistic methods with qualitative analyses to explore interrelations between language and identity. For example, Brindle (2016) employed corpus linguistic tools, critical discourse analysis and notions of homosexuality in examining the construction of heterosexual white masculine identity in Stormfront, a white supremacist website. The findings illustrated that the language used on Stormfront displayed fundamental traits of heterosexuality and whiteness, demonstrating the construction of the superior in-group identity in opposition to groups defined as inferior - women, gay men, lesbians and racial minorities (Brindle, 2016: 202).

The combination of corpus linguistic methods and qualitative corpus pragmatics was utilized in Ávila-Ledesma and Amador-Moreno's (2016) study of gendered discourse of Irishness and migration experiences. The authors innovatively used a collocation-based method for the analysis of nouns/noun phrases (*home* and *country*) and their pragmatic meanings in post-famine Irish emigrants' personal correspondence.

This study contributes to the previous research by using corpus-linguistic and corpus-pragmatic approaches to analyze language, race, and identity from a linguistic point of view. It presents a linguistic study of Coates's writings as representation(s) of Black American identity, which is a novel contribution. In these ways, the study contributes to discourse studies on race and identity demonstrating how patterns in representation of Black American group identity in a micro sociolinguistic setting can change in response to political, demographic and social environment.

Data and Methodology

Corpus

The dataset used here is a self-compiled corpus of Coates's non-fictional writings, *The Corpus of Non-Fictional Writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates* (COCO), comprising 468,899 words. COCO contains 350 texts—349 articles/essays extracted from the websites of 10 U.S. news outlets (*Washington City Paper, The Washington Post, Washington Monthly, The Village Voice, Mother Jones, Time Magazine, The New York Times, The Atlantic, The New Yorker* and *O, the Oprah Magazine*) and one monograph, *The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir* (2016/2008). COCO covers a period of 22 years, from the beginning of Coates's career in 1996 until 2018.

COCO is an adequate dataset in terms of representativeness and authenticity as the corpus consists only of texts authored by Coates (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 54). Texts listing co-authors were excluded. In addition, utterances by other individuals (e.g., quotes, interview responses, lyrics, etc.) were identified manually and excluded. Likewise, multimodal components, e.g. audio and/or video data and hyperlinks, which appear in some of the online articles were excluded. Thus, the dataset contains only the running-text articles and a monograph and is suitable for linguistic analysis of Coates's usage. For the full list of texts included in COCO, see Hathaway (2020).

Table 1 The term *black* in COCO and COCA-MAG

Black	COCO	COCA-MAG	Overuse (+)/under-use (−)	LL
Word frequencies (N)	2786	59,801	+	8901.43
Corpus size	468,899	127,352,014		
Relative Frequencies (per 100,000 words)	594	47		

The corpus consists of 42 files in text format, organized chronologically by year and then by publication, which makes it possible to divide COCO into sub-corpora which are parallel in structure and content.

Analytical Framework of the Study

The study employs a corpus-driven, rather than corpus-based, approach. Instead of pre-determined units, the selection of units for analysis is part of the analytical process, and evidence extracted from the corpus facilitates the formulation of the research questions (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84). *WordSmith Tools 7.0* (Scott, 2016) was employed to identify units for analysis based on frequency in COCO.

Since the study examines language use in race discourse, which is potentially controversial, as the researcher might have a human bias towards the object of the study, it is important to look at the corpus content rather than be guided by one's own ideas about the topic. A corpus-driven approach helps to minimize assumptions (Mahlberg, 2013: 13; cf. Mahlberg, 2005). This also reflects a "holistic approach to language" which emphasizes the link between the text, its verbal context and the wider context of culture (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 87). Therefore, a corpus-driven method, which analyzes frequencies, collocations and concordances, provides a good starting point for analysis.

The corpus-linguistic analysis of COCO revealed that the most frequent content item in the corpus is the word *black* with 2786 tokens. In addition to the frequency count, the prominence of *black* in COCO was measured using a log-likelihood (LL) statistic calculated via the UCREL online tool http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html (accessed May 5, 2020). The LL procedure compared relative frequencies of *black* in COCO and the Magazine section of Corpus of Contemporary American English, COCA-MAG (Davies, 2008), showing that *black* is a salient item in COCO. Table 1 presents the statistical significance of the differences in use of the term *black* between the two corpora.

Based on the values of the relative frequencies per 100,000 words (594 in COCO, 47 in COCA-MAG), *black* occurs over 12 times more in COCO compared to COCA-MAG. However, the adjective *black* occurred in both relevant, race-related uses as in (1) and non-relevant uses as in (2).

(1) From the 1930s through the 1960s, **black** people across the country were largely cut out of the legitimate home-mortgage market through means both legal and extralegal. (COCO, 2014-ATL June 2014 issue).

(2) A row of models of indeterminable race, wearing **black** dresses, stood off to the side having their photographs taken with various guests. (COCO, 2009-NY January 25).

All irrelevant uses (250 tokens, 9% of the total) were excluded. However, some expressions related to the *Black Panther Party* (BPP), an African American political organization (Duncan, 2020), were included. For example, the name of the organization itself has implications for the identity and historical struggle of Black Americans. Therefore, it was relevant to include instances of BPP in the analysis. Instances of another expression, a *black beret,* were also included. Though at first sight the adjective *black* here describes the color of an object, a 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 (3).

(3) 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).

Lexical patterns with the node word *black*, extracted using the concordance procedure in *WordSmith Tools*, revealed that the adjective *black* is frequently followed by nouns describing human/group identity, e.g. *people* (243 tokens)*, America* (143) and *community* (77). However, the frequency of a collocation alone need not indicate its discourse significance (Brindle, 2016: 46). The statistical measure of mutual information (MI) was used to measure the strength of the relationship between the node word and each collocate (Lindquist, 2009: 76). MI-scores of 3.0 or higher, which are considered significant (Hunston, 2002: 71), were retrieved via *WordSmith Tools* for collocations of *black* in the immediate right (R1) position with minimum frequencies of 10. The procedure provided the following significant MI-scores: *black people*—5.53, *black America*—5.53 and *black community*—5.42. These collocations were selected for further analysis. Also, plural nouns referring to group identity were included in the analysis of representations of Black Americans in COCO. Overall frequencies for three of five identity terms—*black people* (243 hits), *blacks* (245) and *African*(–)*Americans* (242)—show that Coates uses all three terms with equal frequency. However, diachronic comparison revealed interesting differences in frequency distributions of the terms in five sub-corpora.

The diachronic comparison was performed using a *modern diachronic corpus-assisted discourse studies* (MD-CADS) approach, as proposed by Partington et al. (2013). This allows us to observe changes in language patterns and discourse practices over relatively brief periods. COCO was divided into sub-corpora of similar structure and content based on year of publication: *Period 1* (1996–2000), *Period 2* (2001–2005), *Period 3* (2006–2011), *Period 4* (2012–2015) and *Period 5* (2016–2018). The periods correspond with major U.S. political events: the U.S. presidential elections of 2008 and 2012, when Barack Obama was elected and

re-elected president, and 2016, when Donald Trump was elected. These sub-corpora allow us to explore how a changing political environment might be reflected in Coates's representations of Black American identity.

Contextual uses of the five identity-related terms were examined from a corpus-pragmatics perspective to explore linguistic and pragmatic environments of the terms. One challenge in the pragmatic analysis of corpora is limited access to social and textual contexts (Romero-Trillo, 2008: 6). This issue was addressed by focusing on one author, Ta-Nehisi Coates. Coates's experiential and reflective style of writing provides extensive contextual information for the qualitative analysis.

The qualitative analysis involves 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 way in which speakers/writers express their evaluative attitudes, as realized in communicative discourse (Partington et al. 2013: 67). The notion of control, as adopted here, indicates evaluation of terms in COCO as follows: *being in control* is typically associated with positive evaluation and *not being in control* with negative evaluation.

The group-identity terms most frequently occupied the subject position in COCO and collocated with verbs. The syntactic pattern of subjects with predicates (verbs) provided the most insightful information into contextual uses. The position of a term as the subject in a clause typically indicates its semantic role, either as AGENT (initiator and controller of an action), EXPERIENCER (an entity which is aware of an action/state but not in control) or THEME (an entity which moves or is moved by an action, or whose location/property/state is described) (Saeed, 2016: 150). In English, the semantic role of PATIENT (an entity affected by an action or undergoing a process without a visible change) can be expressed in two ways: either by placing the affected entity/participant in the object position (4) or by using passive voice constructions with transitive verbs, which is characterized by reversal of the subject-object positions (5). In English, transitivity, which indicates "who does what to whom largely by what", is an example of "grammatical and textual evaluation" in the discourse (Partington et al. 2013: 44).

> (4) 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).
>
> (5) 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).

In addition to being marked grammatically, evaluation can also be expressed conceptually in a discourse, without explicit linguistic clues (Partington et al. 2013: 45). The examination of prosodic meaning provides a description of evaluation in a bi-dimensional sense: positive vs. negative, desirable vs. undesirable (Partington, 2015: 279-280). The notion of (lack of) control, in particular, is often associated with positive or negative evaluations: being in control of events and one's environment is perceived as positive and not being in control is generally perceived as negative.

Considering the semantic roles of referents in a discourse, control implies the role of AGENT, an active doer and controller of the action, whereas not being in control

Table 2 Concordance patterns with *black* (R1) in COCO over five periods (raw frequencies)

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)			

implies the role of PATIENT, an entity undergoing or being subjected to a process (Saeed, 2016: 150). Therefore, the verbs that occur as collocates of the group identity terms in the object position, and the verbs with the terms in subject position in passive voice constructions, would communicate lack of control by participants. However, negative evaluation in a discourse could be reversed if it is embedded into a structure with overall positive evaluation (and vice versa), an example of *embedded evaluation* (Partington et al. 2013: 54). Embedded evaluation might be utilized by speakers/writers to maintain cohesion of evaluation throughout a text/discourse as well as for rhetorical effect (e.g. the use of irony).

Control is relevant to the analysis of discourse on race because race relations portray asymmetrical power relations which imply power and control by the dominant group(s) over marginalized groups. Here lies a challenge as well, since 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 was paid to differences in evaluative voices: whether the author performs his/her evaluation or he/she assigns evaluations to others (Partington et al. 2013: 54). The linguistic and pragmatic uses of the terms were interpreted in the light of the theoretical framework on Black solidarity, as proposed by Shelby (2002).

Results

Diachronic Comparison of the Terms

The most frequent right (R1) collocates with the adjective (*people, America* and *community*) are used consistently in Coates's discourse on race over the 22-year period, although the frequency order of the terms differs between periods, as illustrated in Table 2. However, in Period 5 there is a noticeable absence of the collocates *America* and *community* (singular), though the collocation with the plural *communities* is present. Note that in Period 5 collocations of *black* with *community*

Table 3 Distribution of group identity terms in COCO over five periods (raw frequencies)

Item/Term	Period 1 (1996–2000)	Period 2 (2001–2005)	Period 3 (2006–2011)	Period 4 (2012–2015)	Period 5 (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
Total size of sub-corpus	149,170	107,672	95,289	58,669	58,099	468,899

and *America* occur 6 and 5 times respectively (Table 2 displays items with a minimum frequency of 10).

The distribution of the identity terms in five COCO sub-corpora is presented in Table 3. The search parameters were *black people*, black America** and *black communit** (with 244, 187 and 102 hits respectively across the corpus) where the asterisk (*) was used as a wildcard character allowing us to retrieve instances of plural and possessive uses of the nouns as well as instances of *black American(s).* The term *black America/'s* occurred 160 times, *black American*[1] 4 times, and *black Americans* 23 times.

Diachronically, the normalized frequencies of the five terms per 100,000 words are shown in Fig. 1. *Black America** and *African*Americans* were the most frequent terms in Period 2 (2001–2005). However, in Period 3 (2006–2011), rates decreased to various extents for all the terms but *black people*, which slightly increased during the period. Interestingly, this development coincided with Obama's presidential campaign and election as the first African American U.S. president.

The decrease in frequency of race-related identity terms suggested some kind of re-evaluation in Coates's representation of Black American identity. In Period 4 (2012–2015), the use of *black people* and *blacks* increased dramatically, overtaking *African(–)Americans* and *black America*. The term *black community/communities* displayed fluctuation from Period 1 to Period 5 but their use stayed relatively stable compared to the other terms. The five terms under analysis were subjected to a close-reading procedure to determine patterns in contextual uses. The findings of the qualitative stage of the analysis are presented below.

---

[1] There were only four instances of *black American* (sing.). These all used *black American* as the adjective phrase modifying a noun (*lore, history, leadership*, etc.). Thus, the collocation is associated with the notion of collective identity rather than a reference to an individual.
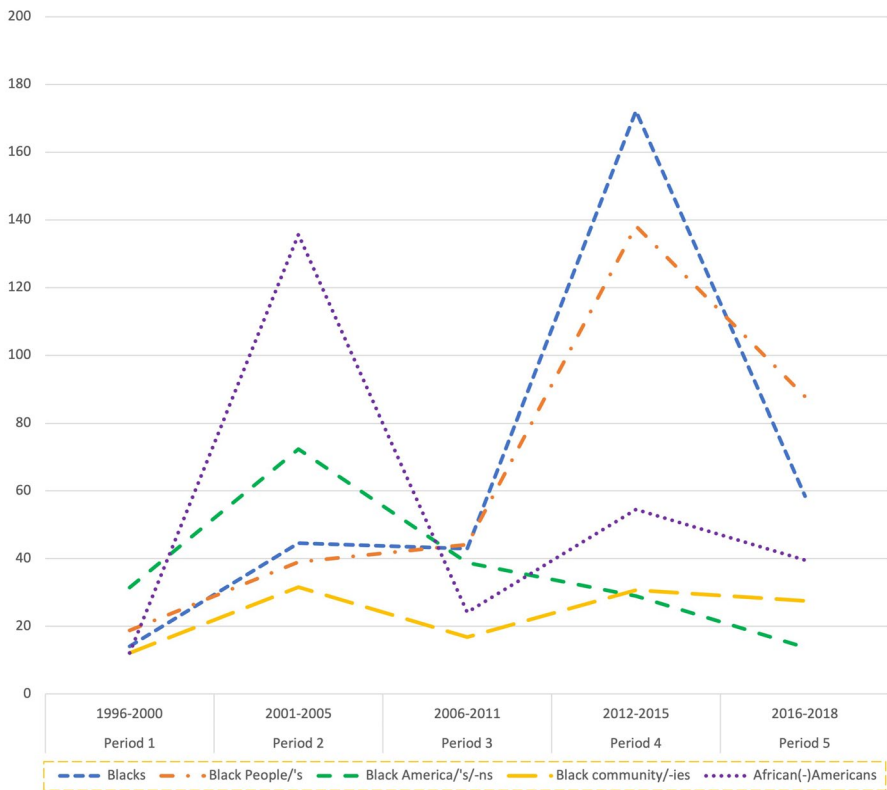
Fig. 1 Diachronic comparison of five group identity terms in COCO (normalized frequency, per 100,000 words)

Analysis of Pragmatic Evaluation of the Terms

To uncover differences and similarities in the representation of Black Americans in COCO, an analysis of semantic and pragmatic features associated with the five terms was conducted. Concordance lines with the terms as subject were analyzed in terms of semantic roles (grammatically expressed evaluation) and pragmatic prosody (pragmatically expressed evaluation).

Coates's verb choice is influenced by participants' semantic roles. Based on the frequency and types of verbs with the terms as subject in COCO (Table 4), we observe that the group identity terms in subject position implied the semantic role of AGENT (6), EXPERIENCER/THEME (7) or PATIENT, as in (5). In other words, the terms refer to either an entity in control of an action and its environment, one whose state or experience is described, or one affected by an action/subjected to a process, respectively.

(6) At this very hour, **black people** all across the South are still *fighting* the battle which they joined during Reconstruction—securing equal access to the

Table 4 Verbs with the terms as subject in COCO

Term	Tokens (raw freq.)	# of types of verbs	Examples
African(−)Americans	92	67	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)/die (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)/wrong (1)
Black people	77	42	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)/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)
Blacks	100	57	Be (30)/have (3)/live (3)/kill (3)/study (2)/commit (2)/feel (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)
Black America/Americans	32	24	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)
Black community/communities	16	13	Be (4)/need (1)/look (1)/say (1)/excuse (1)/overflow (1)/tumble (1)/demonstrate (1)/characterize (1)/commit (1)/refuse (1)/feed (1)

Table 5 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

ballot—and resisting a president whose resemblance to Andrew Johnson is uncanny. (COCO, 2017–ATL August 4).

(7) 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).

For example, verbs related to state, experience, sense or cognition (e.g., *be, have, know, want, suffer, enjoy, think,* etc.) assigned the role of EXPERIENCER/THEME; whereas action verbs (e.g., *produce, fight out, vote, choose, give, compete,* etc.) implied the role of AGENT, unless they were used in passive voice constructions which would reverse the order of participants and assign the role of PATIENT to the term in subject position.

The distribution of semantic roles in subject position is presented in Table 5. Here, two terms, *African(–)Americans* and *black America/Americans*, exhibit similar patterns of distribution—more than half of the verbs (52 and 54%, respectively) relate to experience, cognition and descriptions of state. In addition, these terms are used less frequently in passive constructions (8% as PATIENT) compared to the other terms. Considering the diachronic distribution of instances of the five terms (see Fig. 1), *African(–)Americans* and *black America/Americans* were most frequently used in Period 2 (2001-2005).

To identify the pragmatic meaning(s) of the terms, the concordance lines of *African(–) Americans* and *black America/Americans* with verbs projecting the semantic role of AGENT (a performer and controller of an action) were subjected to the close reading procedure. Particular attention was paid to action verbs implying volition or exercise of power/control, such as *vote, accept, confront, reject, create, denounce, make, embrace,* etc. The procedure revealed overall positive evaluation of both terms in light of the notion of control. For example, the collocation of *African(–)Americans* with *vote* and the verb phrase *cast [votes]*, occurs 5 times in COCO, as in (8)–(10).

(8) In 2000, **African Americans** actually *cast* more votes for Al Gore than they had for Bill Clinton. (COCO, 2004–VV, January 6).

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

(10) 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).

Vote (intransitive) and *cast [a vote]* are defined as "to give a vote, to exercise the right of suffrage; to express a choice or preference by ballot or other approved means" (Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (2020) *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 further emphasizes the role of *African(–)Americans* as acting with volition and making conscious choices. Thus, the term *African(–)Americans*, is in this case positively evaluated by Coates in terms of control, projecting a relatively high degree of control over events and one's environment.

However, at times Coates seems to question the level of control exercised and acted upon by Black Americans. For example, *confront* meaning "to face in hostility or defiance; to present a bold front to, stand against, oppose" (OED 2020 *s.v. confront v.*), as in (11), is used figuratively by Coates as it is preceded by the adverb *loudly,* implying verbal opposition.

(11) 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).

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

Similarly, the term *black America/Americans* projected a positive evaluation by Coates in terms of control. In (12), the collocation of *black America* with the verb *produce,* which is defined as "to bring into being or existence" (OED 2020, *s.v. produce v.)*, occurred with expressions like *the vanguard of black American leadership* and *the two most visionary leaders*, in which *leadership* and *leaders* imply control.

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

Hence, the prosody associated with *black America* could be considered positive in this example. However, the context in (12) also evokes a sense of loss and uncertainty via the verb phrase *took some tremendous hits* and the verb *lost.* Thus, the extent of control associated with the term *black America* is pragmatically decreased.

Another interesting example of positive pragmatic prosody is illustrated by Coates's use of the motion verb *walk* with *black America* as in (13). The full extract is provided below in order to present the collocation (*black America is walking*) within its contextual environment.

(13) 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. […] 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 *black America is walking* identifies the path as *the third road*. 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 context projects a strong positive evaluation in terms of having control over one's environment expressed through the image of confident movement.

As mentioned earlier, *African(–)Americans* and *black America/Americans*, two positively evaluated terms in COCO, were replaced by *black people* and *blacks* in Period 4 (2012–2015). In contrast with the former terms, the latter occurred in more negative contextual environments with regard to control. For example, *black people,* like *African(–)Americans,* collocates with the verb *vote* as in "to express a choice or preference by ballot or other approved means" (OED 2020 *s.v. vote v.*). Three instances of *vote* following the term *black people* were observed as in (14)–(15).

(14) I have no doubt that you are being told that by virtue of divine edict, **black people** will never *vote* Republican; that hating conservatives is our birthright; that at least since the 1930s, our foreheads have been stamped "property of DNC." (COCO, 2001–WM October 1).

(15) Yet there is an underappreciated fact about black America that anyone armed with a decent survey could see: **Black people** *vote* like Democrats, but on social issues they think like Republicans. (COCO, 2003–VV September 23).

However, here Coates seems to underline a tension between Black Americans and their representation by the Democratic and Republican parties. The situations portrayed in (14)–(15) involve asymmetrical power relationships: between Black Americans and the political establishments. Though Black Americans have a right to vote, they might not always vote in their own interests, and therefore, lose the ability to control or influence affairs.

Example (16) illustrates the use of the verb *achieve* with *black people*. *Achieve* (transitive) is defined as "to carry out successfully, bring to a successful conclusion" (OED 2020 *s.v. achieve v.2*).

(16) 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).

Arguably, this utterance exemplifies embedded evaluation as lexical items interact with each other. Coates employs a seemingly positive evaluation referring to the Civil War and Black people's achievement of some degree of freedom: *that black people in this country achieved the rudiments of their freedom*. However, he surrounded 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 (16), Coates also presents two different points of view: the strings *white Americans, easy comfort, nonviolence,* and *the radical love of the civil right movement* cohere in contrast with *reckon, the unsettling fact,* and *the killing of whites*.

The contextual examination of collocations of *black people* with action verbs revealed Coates's overall negative pragmatic evaluation. In other words, the term *black people* is used in contexts which highlight participants' lack of control and at the same time add emphasis to negative/undesirable consequences of not having control.

Similarly, negative pragmatic evaluation was observed in COCO with the term *blacks*. For example, two action verb collocates with the term, *start* (17) and *advance* (18)*,* were preceded by the auxiliary *should* which expresses obligation/expediency, rather than control. Furthermore, both instances occur in contexts where the point of view and the evaluation are attributed to other voices: Bill Cosby in (17) and Booker T. Washington (18).

(17) 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).
(18) 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 because they co-occur in the context of negation, as in (19).

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

In addition to action verbs with possible implications for the notion of control, examination of instances with the verbs *flee* and *cast off* revealed implications for the conceptualization of Black Americans' group identity. In (20), the situational context of the first instance of *flee* refers to the Great Migration, the movement of approximately 6 million African Americans from the rural South into the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West between 1916 and 1970 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020). Coates echoes writer Isabel Wilkerson who compares the act of *fleeing* to the notion of escape from oppression into freedom. This interpretation of *blacks who fled* implies a level of control as the decision to leave is followed through. However, in the second instance of *flee* in (20) Coates adds another interpretation of the notion

of *fleeing* in the African American context: Black Americans with a lighter complexion reject their Black identity to assimilate into the white majority.

> (20) 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).

In this case, the notion of *fleeing* (there is no explicit use of *flee* here) is negatively evaluated as it is *less reputable* and those blacks *disappear into the overclass*.

Another verb used by Coates with reference to Black American identity is the phrasal verb *cast off*. Example (21) 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 *cast off*.

> (21) 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 light-skinned, straight-haired **blacks** *cast off* their identity and literally become white. (COCO, 1999–WCP May 21).

Though the verb *cast off* in (21), like the notion of *fleeing* in the second instance in (20), implies a conscious decision by the subject and could be interpreted as having a degree of control over one's life and environment, the context suggests a strong negative evaluation by the author since both notions are explicitly linked to rejection of Black identity. In other words, the use of such verbs in figurative contexts provides negative evaluations, whereas *flee* used literally is interpreted positively. However, this is the only instance of the term *blacks* displaying a somewhat positive evaluation with regards to the notion of control.

The term *black community/communities* projected somewhat positive evaluation collocating with 5 action verbs in COCO (*excuse, say, demonstrate, commit, refuse*). For example, the verb *refuse*, defined as "to decline to do something; to reject" (OED 2020, *s.v. refuse v.*), implies a conscious choice and an action intentionally performed by an animate subject (a person, a group of people, collectivity, etc.).

> (22) **The black community** *refused* to comply with expectations, and instead *turned out* in droves. In 2012 […] black turnout was not fueled by demographic growth but by a higher percentage of the black electorate going to the polls. (COCO, 2013–ATL March 2013 issue).

The description of events in (22) is framed within a discourse on Obama's reelection 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 observers expect, but consciously makes a decision to *turn out* at the polls. The volitional aspect of this action is amplified by the statement that the high turnout of Black voters was not due to demographic growth, but to the fact that more Black Americans performed the dynamic action of *going to the polls*. In other words, the *black community* in (22) was portrayed as having the ability and will to control events. Therefore, the pragmatic prosody of the term *black community* in (22) had a positive evaluation in terms of control as projected by the author.

Another action verb implying volition which collocates with *black community*, is the verb *commit* (23), defined as "to carry into action deliberately" (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

> (23) Cosby was an avowed race man, who, like much of his generation, had come to feel 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 led Cosby to believe that, after the achievements of the 1960s, **the black community** *was committing* cultural suicide. (COCO, 2008–ATL May 2008 issue).

The immediate context suggests that the *black community was committing cultural suicide*, which would be evaluated negatively in terms of control. While the verb *commit* describes a deliberate action performed by the participant (AGENT), its collocate, the NP *cultural suicide*, implies loss of control over one's environment. But the extended context of (23) specifies that the expression *the black community was committing cultural suicide* is attributed to the perspective of another voice, Bill Cosby. Using the verb phrases *had come to feel* and *led Cosby to believe*, Coates 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 he does not consider it a statement that reflects reality.

In summary, the diachronic comparison of the terms (Fig. 1) and the analysis of pragmatic evaluation show that, in his early career, Coates frequently used the terms *black America/Americans* and *African(–)Americans* to represent Black Americans as a group which has some control over events and their environment. However, as also displayed in Fig. 1, the use of these terms decreased in Period 3 (2006–2011) signaling some sort of re-evaluation. In Period 4 (2012–2015), the use of *black people* and *blacks*, which portrayed more negative evaluation in terms of control, dramatically increased while the more positively evaluated *black America/Americans* and *African(–)Americans* decreased in usage. The term *black community/communities* remained relatively stable in frequency over time; however, the plural form became more frequent in Period 5 as a possible reflection of diversification among Black Americans in Coates's writings.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the language of Ta-Nehisi Coates in his discourse on race in present-day America, particularly patterns in his representation of Black American group identity. According to Gallup, in the early 21st century, *black* and *African American* have been the two most often used (socially created) labels to describe Blacks in America (Newport, 2007). The Gallup survey of the early 2000s indicated that there was no strong preference among Black Americans themselves for either term (Newport, 2007). Both terms "emerged from within the group" of Black Americans in their attempt to redefine themselves: *black* has been used since the late 1960s and *African American* was proposed as the preferred term in 1988 (Martin, 1991: 103). According to Blake (2016: 159), in twenty-first century America, *African*(–)*American* and *black* are used interchangeably; however, she also highlights an increasing diversity in Black communities within the United States.

This corpus-pragmatic study illustrated changing patterns in the representation of Black American group identity in Coates's writings over a 22-year period. The results revealed that *African*(–)*Americans* and *black America/Americans* with overall positive evaluation in terms of control were subsequently replaced by *blacks* and *black people* which were evaluated more negatively in terms of control. The changes coincided with major political events in the United States, namely the Obama's and Trump's presidencies. However, the narrow scope of the study (the language use of only one writer) does not necessarily reflect the variety of meanings and pragmatic evaluations attached to the terms more widely. It could be beneficial to conduct quantitative and, if possible, qualitative analyses comparing uses of *African American(s), blacks, black people,* etc. in general American English or other specialized datasets (newspapers, magazines, social media, etc.).

The study also identified differences in sociocultural meanings attached to the group identity terms describing Black Americans in Coates's writings. Considering the findings in the light of Shelby's (2002) theoretical framework on Black solidarity and group identity, it could be argued that:

1. By decreasing his use of *African*(–)*Americans* and *black America*, Coates moves away from 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. Increased use of *blacks* and *black people* in 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 based on common oppression, rather than cultural and ethnic background.
3. The term *black community*, which Coates employs with relatively consistent frequency from 1996 until 2018, could be identified as a term used to describe a common black ethnic/cultural identity which according to Shelby (2002) is important but not necessary for collective action/Black solidarity. Also, in Period

5 (2016–2018) the plural collocate *communities* is more frequent with *black* than *community* (singular). Therefore, it could be argued that Coates's use of the plural highlights diversification among Black Americans in the twenty-first century.

In other words, from 2012 onwards, Coates shifted the emphasis in his representation of Black American group identity from one based on cultural and ethnic commonalities to one which has its basis in shared experiences of anti-Black racism. In this way, Coates emphasized common oppression as the basis for Black solidarity as a way of providing resistance to white supremacy.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

References

Alcoff, L. M. (2003). Introduction: Identities: Modern and postmodern. In L. M. Alcoff & E. Mendieta (Eds.), *Identities: Race, class, gender and nationality* (pp. 1–8). Blackwell Publishing.

Alim, H. S., & Reyes, A. (2011). Complicating race: Articulating race across multiple social dimensions. *Discourse and Society, 22*(4), 379–384.

Alim, H. S., Rickford, J. R., & Ball, A. F. (2016). *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race*. Oxford University Press.

Alim, H. S., & Smitherman, G. (2012). *Articulate while Black: Barack Obama, language and race in the US*. Oxford University Press.

Alim, H. S., & Smitherman, G. (2019). Amazing Grace: An analysis of Barack Obama's raciolinguistic performance. In A. Massip-Bonet, G. Bel-Enguix, & A. Basrardas-Boada (Eds.), *Complexity Applications in Language and Communication Sciences* (pp. 227–248). Springer.

Ashcroft, B. (2003). Language and race. In R. Harris & B. Rampton (Eds.), *The language, ethnicity and race reader* (pp. 37–53). Routledge.

Ávila-Ledesma, N. E., & Amador-Moreno, C. P. (2016). 'The more please [places] I see the more I think of home': On gendered discourse of Irishness and migration experiences. In J. Romero-Trillo (Ed.), *Yearbook of corpus linguistics and pragmatics 2016: Global implications for culture and society in the networked age* (pp. 85–105). Springer.

BBC News. (2020). Retrieved September 30, 2020, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52993306

Blake, R. (2016). Toward heterogeneity: A sociolinguistic perspective on the classification of Black people in the twenty-first century. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 153–169). Oxford University Press.

Boas, F. (1940). *Race, language, and culture*. Macmillan.

Brindle, A. (2016). *The language of hate: A corpus linguistic analysis of white supremacist language*. Routledge.

Bucholtz, M. (2011). *White kids: Language, race, and styles of youth identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and Identity. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 369–394). Blackwell.

Chun, E. (2011). Reading race beyond black and white. *Discourse and Society, 22*(4), 403–421.

Coates, T-N. (2009). American Girl. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved November 22, 2020, from https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/01/-american-girl/307211/

Davies, M. (2008). *The Corpus of Contemporary American English, Popular Magazine Section (COCA-MAG): 127 million words, 1990–2019.* Retrieved May 23, 2020, from https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/

Duncan, G.A. (2020). Black Panther Party. *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Retrieved May 14, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party

Encyclopædia Britannica. (2020). Great migration. Retrieved November 22, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Migration

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence and Wishart.

Hathaway, Y. (2019). *The Corpus of non-fictional writings by Ta-Nehisi Coates (COCO): 468,899 words, 1996–2018*. University of Bergen.

Hathaway, Y. (2020). *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.* MA thesis. University of Bergen. http://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/22810

Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.

Hunston, S. (2007). Semantic prosody revisited. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics, 12*(2), 249–268.

Ibrahim, A. (2020). *Black immigrants in North America: Essays on race, immigration, identity, language, hip-hop, pedagogy, and the politics of becoming Black*. Myers Education Press.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lindquist, H. (2009). *Corpus linguistics and the description of English*. Edinburgh University Press.

Mahlberg, M. (2005). *English general nouns: A corpus theoretical approach*. John Benjamins.

Mahlberg, M. (2013). *Corpus stylistics and Dicken's fiction*. Routledge.

Mallinson, C., & Kendall, T. (2013). Interdisciplinary approaches. In R. Bayley, R. Cameron, & C. Lucas (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 153–171). Oxford University Press.

Martin, B. L. (1991). From Negro to Black to African American: The power of names and naming. *Political Science Quarterly, 106*(1), 83–107.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. (2020). Retrieved December 21, 2020, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/

Newport, F. (2007, September 28). Black or African American? *Gallup News Service.* Retrieved May 20, 2020, from https://news.gallup.com/poll/28816/black-african-american.aspx

Oxford English Dictionary (OED). (2020). Retrieved October 30, 2020 from https://oed.com/

Partington, A. (2015). Evaluative prosody. In K. Aijmer & C. Rühlemann (Eds.), *Corpus pragmatics: A handbook* (pp. 279–303). Cambridge University Press.

Partington, A., Duguid, A., & Taylor, C. (2013). *Patterns and meanings in discourse: Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)*. John Benjamins.

Rastogi, S., Johnson, T. D., Hoeffel, E. M., Drewey, M. P. (2011). The Black Population: 2010. *2010 Census briefs.* Retrieved September 28, 2020, from https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. Routledge.

Reynolds, L. T., & Lieberman, L. (1993). The rise and fall of 'race.' *Race, Sex, and Class, 1*(1), 109–127.

Romero-Trillo, J. (2008). Introduction: Pragmatics and corpus linguistics—A mutualistic entente. In J. Romero-Trillo (Ed.), *Pragmatics and corpus linguistics: A mutualistic entente* (pp. 1–10). Mouton de Gruyter.

Saeed, J. I. (2016). *Semantics* (4th ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

Scott, M. (2016). *WordSmith Tools version 7.0*. Lexical Analysis Software, Stroud.

Schultz, A.-M. (2018). Stirring up America's sleeping horses: Cornel West, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Socratic *parrhesia* (and platonic writing) in the public sphere. *The Journal of Southwestern Philosophical Society, 34*(1), 1–16.

Shelby, T. (2002). Foundations of black solidarity: Collective identity or common oppression? *Ethics, 112,* 231–266.

Shelby, T. (2005). *We who are dark: The philosophical foundations of black solidarity*. Harvard University Press.

Spears, A. K. (1999). Race and ideology: An introduction. In A. K. Spears (Ed.), *Race and ideology: Language, symbolism and popular culture* (pp. 11–59). Wayne State University Press.

Todorov, T. (1986). 'Race', writing, and culture. In H. L. Gates (Ed.), *'Race', writing, and difference* (pp. 370–380). The University of Chicago Press.

Tognini-Bonelli, E. (2001). *Corpus linguistics at work*. John Benjamins.