

**T.R.
VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIVES OF AFRO-
AMERICANS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE**

MA THESIS

**PREPARED By
Sergen BAYDAŞ**

**ADVISOR
Assist. Prof. Dr. Zeki EDİS**

VAN 2023

**T.C.
VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI**

**DİL VE EDEBİYAT PERSPEKTİFİNDEN AFRO-AMERİKANLARIN
SOSYAL VE KÜLTÜREL YAŞANTILARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

**HAZIRLAYAN
Sergen BAYDAŞ**

**DANIŞMAN
Dr.Öğr. Üyesi Zeki EDİS**

VAN 2023

KABUL VE ONAY

Sergen BAYDAŞ tarafından hazırlanan “ Dil ve Edebiyat Perspektifinden Afro-Amerikanların Sosyal ve Kültürel Yaşantıları Üzerine Bir Çalışma ” adlı tez çalışması aşağıdaki jüri tarafından OY BİRLİĞİ / OY ÇOKLUĞU ile Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalında YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak kabul edilmiştir.	
Başkan: Doç.Dr. M. Metin BARLIK Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu naylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Danışman: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Zeki EDİS Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu naylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Üye: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Samet KALECİK Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu onaylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Üye: Unvanı Adı SOYADI Anabilim Dalı, Üniversite Adı Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu onaylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Yedek Üye: Unvanı Adı SOYADI Anabilim Dalı, Üniversite Adı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu onaylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Yedek Üye: Unvanı Adı SOYADI Anabilim Dalı, Üniversite Adı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD Bu tezin, kapsam ve kalite olarak Yüksek Lisans Tezi olduğunu onaylıyorum/onaylamıyorum	
Tez Savunma Tarihi:	30/03/2023
Jüri tarafından kabul edilen bu tezin Yüksek Lisans Tezi olması için gerekli şartları yerine getirdiğini ve imzaların sahiplerine ait olduğunu onaylıyorum. Prof. Dr. Bekir KOÇLAR Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürü	

ETİK BEYAN

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü **Tez Yazım Kurallarına uygun olarak hazırladığım bu tez çalışmada;**

- Tez içinde sunduğum verileri, bilgileri ve dokümanları akademik ve etik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi,
- Tüm bilgi, belge, değerlendirme ve sonuçları bilimsel etik ve ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu,
- Tez çalışmada yararlandığım eserlerin tümüne uygun atıfta bulunarak kaynak gösterdiğimi,
- Kullanılan verilerde herhangi bir değişiklik yapmadığımı,
- Bu tezde sunduğum çalışmanın özgün olduğunu

bildirir, aksi bir durumda aleyhime doğabilecek tüm hak kayıplarını kabullendiğimi beyan ederim. (11/04/2023)

Sergen BAYDAŞ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Sergen BAYDAŞ

VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
Mart, 2023

DİL VE EDEBİYAT PERSPEKTİFİNDEN AFRO-AMERİKANLARIN SOSYAL VE KÜLTÜREL YAŞANTILARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

ÖZET

Amerika toplumu içerisinde sosyal ve kültürel yaşantılarını kabul ettirmekte ve saygı görmekte güçlük çeken Afro-Amerikanlar, bu zorlukları farklı yollarla aktarmaya gayret etmişlerdir. Özellikle 20. yüzyılda ortaya koydukları eserlerle gerek siyasi gerekse ailevi meselelerini gün yüzüne çıkarmışlardır. Bu bağlamda yazdıkları eserlerin bazıları sadece bilinçlenme değil, aynı zamanda düzene karşı bir duruş niteliğinde olmuştur. Eserleri aracılığıyla iç dünyalarına bir bakış imkanı sunan Afro-Amerikanlar, kendilerine özgü dil ve konuşma yapısını edebi eserlerinde kullanmıştır. Dünyaca kabul edilen Standart İngilizce ile karşılaştırıldığında, Afro-Amerikanların kullandığı dilin farklı bir yapıya sahip olduğunu gözlemlemek mümkündür. Kullanılan bu özgün dilin, sosyal hayata adapte olma sürecini etkilediği söylenebilir. Ten renkleri ve kendilerine özgü dil yapısıyla Amerikan toplumunda yer edinmeye çalışan Afro-Amerikanlar, maruz kaldıkları zorlu şartları aktarabilmek amacıyla farklı yollara başvurmuştur. Bunlardan birisi ise edebiyattır. Günümüzde hala izleri görülen problemleri eserlerinde tüm dünya okurlarına iletmeye çalışmışlardır. Harlem Rönesansı ve Yurttaşlık Hakları Hareketi gibi aktiviteler aracılığıyla sosyokültürel, sanatsal ve edebi gelişim göstermeyi hedeflemişlerdir. Bu tezin amacı ise, dil ve edebiyat penceresinden Afro-Amerikanların sosyal ve kültürel yaşantılarını incelemek, Afro-Amerikan yazarların eserlerini analiz ederek toplumsal meselelerini ele almak ve kullandıkları dilin yaşantıları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afro-Amerikanlar, kültür, dil, tarih, edebiyat

Sayfa Sayısı: IX + 81

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Zeki EDİS

M.Sc. Thesis

Sergen BAYDAŞ

VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
March, 2023

A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIVES OF AFRO-AMERICANS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ABSTRACT

African Americans, who have endured challenges to be accepted and respected in American Society, attempted to express these challenges with different mediums. They highlighted sociopolitical and family matters, which were at peak levels in the 20th century. Some of their work is written to raise awareness and stand against the status quo. Afro-Americans, leading us to glance at their inner world, also used their unique language style in their work. Compared to the form of Standard English, which is accepted globally, it is possible to observe that their vernacular language has a genuine character. It is also possible to assume that their language influenced their societal adaptation. African Americans made efforts to take place in American society with their skin color and unique language structure. In this respect, they used literature to reflect the difficult conditions that they went through. African American authors aimed to mirror their social challenges to readers worldwide, some of which still exist. With the help of movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement, African Americans aimed to progress in sociocultural, art, and literary fields. This study aims to examine the social and cultural lives of Afro-Americans from the perspective of language and literature, analyze their societal matters through writings of Afro-American writers and identify the effects of their language on their lives.

Keywords: Afro-Americans, culture, language, history, literature

Quantity of Page: IX + 81

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Zeki EDİS

CONTENTS

ÖZET	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CONTENTS	vi
SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	3
1. AFRO-AMERICAN SOCIETY	3
1.1. Social and Cultural Examination of Afro-Americans	3
1.2. Slavery in the Afro-American Society	4
1.3. Religion Under Slavery	8
1.4. AAVE	10
1.4.1. History and Development of AAVE	11
1.4.2. The Structure	15
1.4.2.1. The Similarities and Differences Between AAVE and Other Dialects	24
1.4.2.2. The Absence of Copula	28
1.4.3. Attitudes Toward the Use of AAVE	33
1.4.4. Education and AAVE	36
1.5. The Emergence of Afro-American Literature	40
1.5.1. The Narrative of Slavery	42
1.5.2. AAVE in Literature	44
1.6. The Black Movement	47
1.7. Afro-American Feminism	52
1.8. The Harlem, Its Success, and Its Failure	56
1.8.1. Its Success	57
1.8.2. Its Failure	58
CHAPTER II	61
2. BLACK AMERICANS	61
2.1. Family Concept	61
2.2. African Americans in the West	64
2.3. Housing Issues	66

CHAPTER III.....	69
3. ARGUMENTATIONS.....	69
3.1. Discussions on AAVE	69
3.2. Discussions on Social Life.....	72
3.3. Discussions on the Black Movement and Harlem	73
CONCLUSION	75
REFERENCES	77
CURRICULUM VITAE	
LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORJİNALLİK RAPORU	



SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Bu çalışmada kullanılmış kısaltmalar, açıklamaları ile birlikte aşağıda sunulmuştur.

Kısaltmalar

AAVE

CORE

FHA

NAACP

SE

Açıklamalar

African American Vernacular English

Congress of Racial Equality

Federal Housing Administration

National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People

Standard English

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Zeki Edis, for his invaluable guidance and support throughout my master's program. His expertise and encouragement helped me complete this research and write this thesis.

I would also like to thank Assist. Prof. Dr. Metin Barlık and Assist. Prof. Samet Kalecik for serving on my thesis committee and providing helpful feedback and suggestions.

I am forever thankful for the unconditional love and support of my wife and my parents throughout the entire thesis process. Without their understanding and motivation, this journey would not have been possible.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works written by Afro-Americans were hardly analyzed by seeking connections with political organizations, different ideologies, or Civil Rights campaigns that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s (Cain, 1988). Instead, they were evaluated by their literary quality and strength as a work of art. Many American critics assumed that Afro-American literature could be assessed without the involvement of historical or racial elements. However, some critics rejected this approach of New Criticism during the 1960s, and they sought to put more emphasis on history and culture. It has helped others to gain a new perspective in the field of Afro-American literature. Besides, it has made literary works more valuable in readers' eyes. Baker also argues that literature cannot be separated from the historical and cultural elements which have a big influence on it and still surround it (Baker, 1985). He adds that an efficient criticism of Afro-American literature must include an evaluation of vernacular culture, which can be defined as the cultural forms made by indigenous people. Thus, it can be claimed that culture, history, and literature are interconnected. They are to be analyzed as a whole in this study.

Afro-American literature is a significant field for understanding and drawing conclusions about society. Language, too, is a crucial aspect of the analysis of Afro-Americans. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a dialect of Standard American English (SAE) mainly spoken by African Americans (Baugh, 2000). Yet, it is not simply a dialect of technical distinctions from the standard language. It is a dialect that is comprised of history and cultural meaning. AAVE would not likely be seen as a unique dialect by someone with little knowledge of American culture and history. It is commonly believed by speakers of Standard English that AAVE is nothing more than a marred version of their language, containing mistakes in grammar and pronunciation (Pullum, 1999, 40). In this regard, the importance of AAVE both for Afro-Americans and the academic field is to be explored in this thesis.

African Americans were accommodated in different regions of the continent. Naturally, there were other language structures and new challenges for them in society. The rejection of AAVE as a vernacular language has made it even more difficult. Some speakers of other English dialects think that AAVE is entirely distinct from different

varieties of English. Some African Americans who speak AAVE might assume the same, and some may even relate this distinctiveness to ethnic pride (Salikoko S. Mufwene, 1998). The connection between AAVE and ethnicity is another subtitle of this thesis, and it is to be analyzed regarding regional and environmental factors.



CHAPTER I

1. AFRO-AMERICAN SOCIETY

1.1. Social and Cultural Examination of Afro-Americans

Defining and understanding African American society has complexities due to race and ethnic debates. A clarification on race and ethnicity matters is needed to justify the Afro-American community rightly. In the 1930s, racism was at first used as a positive term by fascists to indicate the emphasis they put on race, and then it became a term to express criticism of fascism. While the word *race* never entirely separated from the field of ethnic studies, defining *racial* as a part of *ethnicity* became popular in the academic area (Sollors, 2002, 98). It is also argued that the term *ethnic group* is wide enough to contain racial groups. After all, Solomon states that their difference is not to be exaggerated, and scholars should not believe that conflicts depending on racial divergence are inevitably more critical than those relying on ethnic distinctions (2002).

Hall believes that America has always had an array of ethnicities, and as a result, the structure of ethnic hierarchies has determined its cultural politics (Hall, 1993). Black American vernacular traditions have also been contained and defined within those hierarchies. From an outside look at the United States, mainstream American popular culture has always retained specific customs and traditions which can only be related to black American cultural traditions. (Hall, 1993). This understanding or misunderstanding has led other people to believe that there is a strict line between the life styles of white Americans and black Americans.

Another perspective on Afro-American culture states that to comprehend the development of Afro-American culture and community, one must understand the contribution that the African experience made in the making of the American black people (Rawick, 1972). While Rawick claims that there is no necessity to argue that Afro-American behavior was *African*, the change and adaptation processes that the enslaved people underwent should be examined. Although there were substantial differences between European and African social structures and improvements before and after the beginning of the slave trade, some similarities are crucial to comprehend

the basis and history of slavery and racism. To exemplify, in Europe and Africa, most people were country folk, and life was slow. Farming techniques had not changed dramatically for hundreds of years. Storytellers on both continents chose similar sources for their themes, and spiritual forces were called upon with similar charms (Rawick, 1972). However, he adds that these similarities are not to be exaggerated since he rejects the theory that the success of a society is measured by the ability to bring millions of people together in a single political unit. Besides, West Africans were not in the pursuit of developing social institutions from which European Capitalism arose in the fifteenth century.

Until the fourteenth century, sources for basic human needs such as food, shelter, and clothing were produced adequately in West Africa. They even exported what surplus to Europe and Egypt. Yet, they could not develop a fine urban economy (Rawick, 1972). On the political side, there was no unification over West Africa, and no group extended its power over a large area to legitimize its rule. Only military-political groups created their own “kingdom” in a small place, like many others. Islamic groups invaded essential parts of West Africa, but the faith of the Prophet did not become the accepted religion that could bring together the entire area. Even though the urban traders were Muslim, people who mainly engaged in agriculture in rural areas were not (Rawick, 1972).

West-African people never became an entirely urban society. The core unit of life was the village in West Africa. A village comprised several family units where a man, his wife or wives, children, their grown children, and their families lived, worked in fields, or grazed animals (Rawick, 1972). The heads of family units made decisions that could potentially affect the whole village, and links with other villages were forged by marriages. As for the work arrangements, discipline and subsistence were valued in society.

1.2. Slavery in the Afro-American Society

Slavery has been regarded as a natural form of human existence throughout history. Yet, it was not always based on race because whites enslaved white people or black people were enslaved by blacks, who sometimes enslaved one another. Besides, enslaved people were treated differently in various cultures. In the Ottoman Empire,

for example, enslaved people could belong to a higher social class (Rawick, 1972). It was a strategy to benefit intelligent men and women, to help them adopt to their new places, and to handle prisoners of war. Slavery in the New World, however, changed the concept of slavery. A large percentage of enslaved people were Africans, so this turned slavery into a vision based on race. In the English colonies, a theory that supported the idea that non-white people were inferior to whites emerged. It led to the exclusion of blacks from the “natural rights of man” (Rawick, 1972).

After the United States declared independence from 13 English colonies in 1776, Americans possessed a large area in the West along with the Atlantic frontiers. Most white Americans believed their liberty depended on black slavery (Flamming, 2009, 2). According to this belief, whites would be free only if black people were settled at the lowest class of society. In this way, there would be no class conflicts among whites. The rich whites already had Africans to do their work in plantations, and even the poor or ordinary whites would have the opportunity to prosper in the new republic. However, it cannot be claimed that this was the only judgment of white people. Others believed that slavery was inconvenient to the foundation ideals of the United States, which favored liberty, equality, inalienable rights, and the pursuit of happiness (Flamming, 2009). Yet, despite the latter view, black slavery spread to many parts of the continent in the years to come.

Rawick puts forward that the study of slavery has been misunderstood due to incorrect opinions related to West Africans at the time of the beginning of the slave trade and the years which followed. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europeans and Americans reflected the African community as if it had always been the same before the slave trade (Rawick, 1972). Since slavery was an essential aspect of society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was presumed by foreigners that slavery had always been the ultimate social reality of fourteenth-century West Africa. Since human sacrifice and ritual cannibalism practices were observed in nineteenth-century West Africa, it was presumed that those practices had been even more widespread before. Still, they had diminished thanks to the civilization that Europeans brought. These were all misinformation, Rawick claims. The truth is that nineteenth-century African society was known with notoriety as a result of the Atlantic

slave trade and the class conflicts which came with it. Thus, the social structure of African was altered.

On the other hand, many African quasi-states became powerful and more developed because they were involved in the slave trade. They provided enslaved people for Europeans and Americans, and in return, they gained more strength and prestige. However, internal conflicts brought upon by foreign actors began to consume all their wealth owing to the slave trade. Eventually, those quasi-states were picked apart (Rawick, 1972).

From the European and American points of view, the slave trade provided a solid basis for the development of capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Africa, on the other side, the slave trade was an obstacle to capital accumulation. Capitalism demanded the capital be taken from slave labor and the mines of the New World. Its purpose was to ensure that the capital stock was returned to the mother country and that the workforce was kept in its place, thus cheapening the expenditures. In West Africa, slavery prevented the local community from freely leaving their lands. They were captives in their own country, and their involvement in the slave trade increased in servile categories. For this reason, many West African inhabitants were kept under servitude by the end of the eighteenth century (Rawick, 1972).

Rawick later reminds us of the critical question argued in the academic field. Why did Africans happen to be better-enslaved people than the American Indians who were discovered in the New World? The generally accepted assumption is that the West Africans were already used to slavery, but American Indians were not. Besides, there is another false assumption that American Indians were too noble and proud to accept slavery and were more courageous in their revolt against being enslaved.

These ideas blur the process of West African adaptation to slavery. It is falsely claimed that slavery in West Africa is similar to the one inherited in the United States in the nineteenth century, where the master possessed the work and the enslaved person. Another misinformation is that African rulers were selling enslaved people to Europeans and Americans because it was traditional for them to do so (Rawick, 1972). While some critics believe that West Africans already had a type of slavery before the arrival of Europeans and Americans, this belief is highly rejected by other critics stating that slavery was a new way of exploiting African people through the

cooperation of African heads and Europeans. To meet the demands of Europeans, West African rulers created a system that included punishments and selling of people who opposed them to supply the slave trade.

Rawick leaves the false assumptions about West African slavery behind. He then puts the emphasis on another issue. This issue can be explained as the belief that American Indians were poor enslaved people, but West Africans were fitting ones. However, this is not the case. Rawick stated that “As people from two different societies with similar social structures, American Indians and West Africans went through equally challenging times while they tried to adapt themselves to slavery” (Rawick, 1972). A respectable amount of evidence shows that African people were on the brink of suicide or quite desperate under slavery.

Rawick claims that making a slave work on a regular basis cannot be done by using force. A social organization of work and the internalization of attitudes enabling work are needed (Rawick, 1972). People who can perform daily and steady work with a sense of unity and who can take the initiative are also demanded in that industry. West African people had all these abilities at that time. People from a folk society gain work discipline because they are responsible for their relatives. However, the working system imposed by the New World slavery could not be based on kinships. The purpose of production significantly changes in favor of the market economy. Demands of production were always more important than all the other human needs.

The past of Africans and the attitudes of enslaved Afro-Americans were linked in several ways. The enslaved Afro-Americans made use of what they carried with them from their lands to adapt to the new circumstances and to survive (Rawick, 1972). People tend to alter their behaviors when necessary, and they reject the change if possible. In severe conditions, people change rapidly, or they cannot survive. In milder circumstances, on the other hand, people may act to preserve the habits of the past.

The pressure on Afro-Americans pushed them to be more creative or innovative to adapt to the change. Especially North American blacks were under extreme pressure. Despite the rough conditions of the United States, African habits and traditions could not be completely wiped out thanks to their creativity. Africans were forced to migrate to North America so that they would be enslaved and work in different places such as plantations, mines, small farms, and towns. Their labor was

exhaustive, and they worked from sun to sun forcibly with threats, lashes, and fear of death. Although they had an excessive work schedule, they managed to build a life outside of work. That life helped them create slave communities in their region (Rawick, 1972).

1.3. Religion Under Slavery

Religion was an essential aspect of enslaved people's lives. Enslaved Africans were rooted in societies where sacred and secular activities were undifferentiated. For these people, religious activities used to be areas in which they could improve their creativity and gain communal strength (Rawick, 1972). The attitudes of masters concerning the religion of enslaved people were variable. In North America, there was little pressure on enslaved people to become Christians in the eighteenth century. While some enslaved people never became Christians, others adopted Christianity in their way. Hence, it can be said that there was enough time for West Africans to settle their religious forms in North America due to the fact that there were no attempts to Christianise them in the first century of slavery.

In the nineteenth century, things began to change, and religion was attempted to be used by whites to control society (Rawick, 1972). Behaviors of masters altered as well, and they put more pressure on enslaved people to become Christians. Nevertheless, these efforts were in vain. Enslaved people carried on the black religion, and it attained more strength despite external pressures. The common belief is that for enslaved people, religion was a way of escaping from the harsh conditions of the world of work, and it also gave them hope for salvation in the future.

The religion of enslaved people kept them alive mentally, presenting them with a reason to fight for their freedom. In their prayer meetings, Africans turned into enslaved Americans, whereas American-born enslaved people renovated their connection with Africans with the help of sharing ideas (Rawick, 1972). The evidence shows that prayer meetings used to be held once a week on plantations and that slaves from other plantations also used to participate. They would get together to sing, pray and strengthen their bonds. The memoirs of the enslaved people at that time indicate that enslaved people mostly had a dual religious belief. They would go to a church with whites on Sundays and organize prayer meetings at night (Rawick, 1972).

Enslaved African people comprehended that the official religion was used to control the society, and it is understood that attempts to convert them to the official religion mostly failed. Their religious activities strengthened their social bonds. In their religious meetings, people gathered to evaluate current events, show their gratitude to God, and make communal tactics (Rawick, 1972). From these meetings emerged the modern black church, which is still essential in the contemporary Afro-American community.

The enslaved people in North America used a different version of West African concepts. Blending African and American forms, they created a new idea. The relationship between the preacher and the congregation is quite intense in the black church (Rawick, 1972). The congregation is seen as a sacred family in which the preacher is the head of this family. A similar relationship is seen in West African villages where the elder's contact with the Unknown is shown via his relationship with his community. Elders naturally had power in the community, but their influence was not originating from any legal authorities. It was a traditional respect for the reason that they were believed to act for the sake of their community in all circumstances, not for their own good (1972). Additionally, their sermons, rooted in Africa, gained other meanings than those that were relatable to the current black community at that time so that they could reflect urban life. It means that African religion has gone through a cultural reenforcement in its form when it has been reinterpreted for the purpose of adapting to contemporary life in America.

Repetitions of African religious rituals took an important place in other parts of North American black spiritual lives (Rawick, 1972). The conversion experience can be counted as a significant example. Experiences, where a person faints and is subjected to religious conversion, are popular among Christians in the Southern region of the United States. However, when the interviews that were taken in the 1920s with black people enslaved previously are observed, it is seen that they talk of specific features which are unique to blacks.

I was killed dead by the power of God one evening about four o'clock. Like a flash I saw my soul in the form of an angel, leap from my old body which was lying at the greedy jaws of hell. When I saw this, I prayed again to the Lord to have mercy. Then there appeared before me a little man dressed up in white linen and with golden locks hanging over his shoulders and parted in the middle. He said: "Follow me and I will lead you to the father." (Rawick, 1972, 45)

This pattern in the story is repeated, and it shows similarities with other excerpts. Most of them claim to have seen “the little man,” and with him, they testify to have been reached to God.

I got very faint and started to praying. Then I died and I saw my body lying on the edge of a deep gap. A little man came up and said, “Arise and go.” I said, “Lord, I can’t get up or move else I will fall.” He reached out His hand, anointed my head and said, “Arise and follow me for I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light.” (Rawick, 1972, 46)

These testimonies of conversion experience are not necessarily unique to African people. After a miserable lifetime, the person deceases in a spiritual way, and he goes to hell. An angel in the guise of a little man or another representative of God appears and takes the person to God. All of these events could be seen or heard in conversion stories from Europe. However, the effects of African belief and culture are not to be ignored in that flow of events (Rawick, 1972). An analogous figure exists in African theology, and it brings originality to the story versions which African people tell.

1.4. AAVE

Most English speakers assume that AAVE is just English containing two extra features: some slang words and many grammatical mistakes (Pullum, 1999). Several scholars have set to disprove this assumption. AAVE is not just a linguistic issue but has also become a political issue.

What makes it very different from other languages spoken in the United States is that it is closely related to a much more prestigious language (Pullum, 1999). Apart from other languages or dialects in the United States, English varieties connected with African Americans have seen much attention. This attention is mainly attributed to the socio-economic discrimination of its speakers rather than its structural and grammatical distinctiveness (Mufwene, 2001, 23). Another primary reason is that Africans have been believed to have influence over the Southern White varieties of Standard American English since the 18th century, thus differentiating them from British and other American English varieties spoken in the North. The importance of AAVE in the United States is not to be underestimated for these reasons. Indeed, it deserves even more attention than it has gotten until today.

A survey conducted to search for published research about the dialects of American English from the 1960s to 1990s found that AAVE has five times more publications than any other varieties of American English and more publications than all of them combined (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 1). In spite of several studies from experts in the field, information on the genesis and early development of AAVE is still limited, and the discussions are still intense.

Accepting AAVE as a dialect or another language has been rejected by many people, including journalists, authors, and authorities. The false assumptions about AAVE being just a street language filled with mistakes have not discouraged scholars in the field. On the contrary, it may have even been one of their sources of motivation. Pullum, giving reference to two books about languages all over the world, states that classifying AAVE as a dialect of English is undoubtedly correct (Pullum, 1999). All the words in AAVE can be easily recognized in Standard English, and most of its grammar is the same as the grammar of Standard English. Some African languages have not changed their syntactic structure and merely replaced the words with English words, and they are called creole languages. However, AAVE is not thought to be one of them. Classifying AAVE as a dialect of Standard English should not be viewed as an insulting thing (1999). It still deserves respect and recognition in society.

1.4.1. History and Development of AAVE

There were attempts to show the differences between the speech of African Americans and White Americans in literature in the 18th century (Mufwene, 2001, 23). However, these efforts were in contradiction with newspapers which presented slaves born in North America as speaking good English, contrary to slaves coming from Africa as speaking poor English. Some scholars also put forward that the speech of African Americans was identical to that of general European American speech in the nineteenth century, but it has differentiated since then (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 14). Due to the same reason, it can be ascertained that African American speech was considerably different, but it has become identical to the vernaculars of European Americans. Mufwene states that “the position to identify the vernacular as the range of English varieties spoken by or among African Americans also makes it irrelevant to determine how much AAE varies internally” (Mufwene, 2001, 24). Henceforth, he

comes to the conclusion that there is a standard AAE contrary to the internal varieties, which can be linked with limited education.

In modern-day studies, AAVE is the term that is used by scholars who conduct research under the title of African American language. Yet, the first definition for this field was different. In January 1973, Robert Williams, who was an important figure and an academician in Afro-American studies, hosted a conference called *Cognitive and Language Development of the Black Child*. Two years after that, he published his book named *Ebonics: The True Language of the Black Folks*. In his book, he made the definition of Ebonics under the Pan-African tradition W. E. B. Du Bois. Nearly 20 years later, he confirmed the international fundamentals of his linguistic creation (Baugh, 2000, p. 15). Williams then explained the core features of Ebonics:

Ebonics has two major dimensions as a language:

1. A lexicon or the vocabulary of the language.

2. Morphology or the study of the structure and form of the language that include its grammatical rules. Ebonics may be defined as the linguistic and paralinguistic features which on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and the United States slave descendent of African origin. It includes the grammar, various idioms, patois, argots, ideolects, and social dialects of Black people

(Black as cited in Baugh, 2000).

As can be seen in this original definition, “Ebonics is the linguistic and paralinguistic consequence of the African slave trade” (Baugh, 2000, 16). It evolved in West Africa along with the previous European colonies formed in North and South America, where slaves were sold for labor. Thus, looking at this earliest definition, it can be inferred that the term Ebonics was not meant to cover only the United States lands. Today, AAVE is used as the general abbreviation for studies of African American language, and its coverage zone has gone much wider.

Over the past half-century, there have been several different hypotheses about the origin and early development of AAVE (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 12). In the 1950s, the Anglicist hypothesis was widely accepted by American linguists, together with the conclusion that African American speech was similar to the rural speech of Southern Whites. This hypothesis suggested that African American speech was derived straight from British-based dialects. Kurath explains this similarity from a traditional dialectologist stand:

By and large the Southern Negro speaks the language of the white man of his locality or area and of his education. As far as the speech of uneducated Negroes is concerned, it differs little from that of the illiterate white; that is, it exhibits the same regional and local variations as that of the simple white folk. (Kurath, 1950, 34)

His statements show us that, from this traditional view, there was a relationship between African American and European American speech, and African American speech was affected and shaped by the other. Apart from the effect of locality, educational status also played a role in this interaction. Another scholar from the traditional dialectologist side, McDavid, supports the views of Kurath with his opinions:

(...) the overwhelming bulk of the material of African Negro speech – in vocabulary as well as grammar and phonology – is, as one would expect, borrowed from the speech of white groups with which Negroes come in contact. Sometimes these contact have been such that Negroes simply speak the local variety of standard English. It is also likely that many relic forms from English dialects are better preserved in the speech of some American negro groups than in American white speech—not merely items of vocabulary but also items of grammar and even of pronunciation. (McDavid & McDavid Jr., 1951, 13).

This hypothesis is called the Anglicist hypothesis because it supports that the origin of AAVE can be traced back to the same source as European American dialects, which were spoken in British countries. According to this theory, people of African descent had a different way of communicating with others in the United States. For this reason, they brought various African languages to North America, including some pidgins and creoles that originated in African lands. As Wolfram and Thomas inform us, “over the course of a couple of generations, only a few minor traces of these heritage languages remained, as Africans learned the regional and social varieties of surrounding white speakers.” (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 13).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Anglicist hypothesis was substituted by the common acceptance of the creolist hypothesis. It argues that the roots of AAVE were based on a widely spoken creole that was found in the African diaspora. As one of the most remarkable representatives of the creolist hypothesis, Stewart claims that:

Of the Negro slaves who constituted the field labor force on North American plantations up to the mid-nineteenth century, even many who were born in the New World spoke a variety of English. (...) Indeed, non-standard speech of present-day American Negroes still seems to exhibit structural traces of a creole predecessor, and this is probably a reason why it is in some ways more deviant from standard English than is the non-standard speech of even the most uneducated American whites. (Stewart, 1975, 234)

The creolist hypothesis rejects the interaction process in language between people of African descent and white Americans but rather distinguishes the importance of creoles originating in the African diaspora. The creolists believed that the current patterns and differences in the speech of African Americans are the result of a structure that has existed for generations and which is acquired through a usual type of language-learning process. Hence, they stated that so-called *Negro* patterns such as the *zero*

copula or the *zero possession* should not be linked with a lack of attention or laziness. Although the creolist hypothesis was not commonly embraced among AAVE analysts, many utilized some parts of it.

The creolist hypothesis was challenged by another new theory called the neo-Anglicist hypothesis. This hypothesis has a common ground with the earlier Anglicist theory. It maintains that “postcolonial African American speech was quite similar to the early British dialects brought to North America” (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 14). However, it differs from the earlier version with a significant new concept. The neo-Anglicist theory specifies that AAVE has altered since then, and it is currently distinct from the contemporary speech of white people. Poplack puts forward that “AAVE originated as English, but as the African American community solidified, it innovated new specific features” (Poplack, 2000, 27). Although the supporters of this hypothesis admit that AAVE was influenced by the British dialects spoken in the nineteenth century, they put the emphasis on the change which has occurred after that period. Another researcher, Labov, claims that “the general conclusion that is emerging from studies of the history of AAVE is that many important features of the modern dialect are creations of the twentieth century and not an inheritance of the nineteenth” (Labov, 2022,130).

The neo-Anglicist hypothesis rejects the direct influence of creole-like structures over AAVE. The similarities with creoles are thought to have occurred due to the mere development of the language. Labov states that “this view of the situation is presented as the best working hypothesis to date, certainly not one that is established beyond challenge” (Labov, 2022, 130). On the other hand, in spite of increasing support in recent years, discussions still carry on concerning the data and findings provided by scholars. Wolfram and Thomas conclude that “the shifting positions on the origin and development of earlier African American speech should caution us to go slow in arriving at conclusions about its earlier status” (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 14). Additionally, Labov claims that “any attempt to state a general consensus can only be momentarily successful” (Labov, 2022, 125). It is made clear that studies on AAVE have a strong tendency to continue in the future, and new theories are likely to emerge.

1.4.2. The Structure

Whether the structure of AAVE is unique or not is a matter of debate among researchers. Martin and Wolfram state that “those syntactic structures purportedly found only in AAVE are in fact part of dialects spoken by other groups, especially but not limited to Anglo-American vernacular English speakers who live in the southern United States” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 11). Even though they admit that every dialect of English is unique, and AAVE is one of them, they clarify that the distinct features of AAVE are not particularly based on the structure of sentences. They choose not to analyze AAVE to make a claim on its uniqueness. However, some researchers like Labov take AAVE as a genuine dialect with a different system.

The earlier versions of AAVE were quite diversified linguistically when African Americans were brought to North America (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 23). Enslaved Africans used to speak different native languages, and they were placed in various locations. Thus, their proficiency levels were not the same, and quite naturally, the transition into a homogenous dialect of English did not take place smoothly. In addition, Wolfram and Thomas inform that “there are obvious differences between earlier African Americans in the North and South, as well as differences among those who lived on large plantations with overseers versus those who lived with families owning just a few slaves” (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 23). For these reasons, the complexity and diversity in the structure of AAVE are inevitable, thus making it more challenging to subclassify AAVE.

AAVE shares the same basic sentence structure with other dialects and varieties of English. The word order in AAVE is subject-verb-object (SVO), the same as other dialects of English. However, Labov believes that “AAVE can be seen as a system in itself, analyzed without reference to other dialects, which has been a repeated theme of research in this area from the very beginnings to the present day” (Labov, 2022, 119). No matter how similar AAVE and other dialects seem, there are considerable details that differentiate them from each other. The sentence structure, the use of verbs, adjectives, or nouns may show diversity. Besides, contextual differences may also be observed in some examples. Green informs in her book that “speakers of AAVE use some of the words that occur in other varieties of English, but they may use them with different meanings” (Green, 2002, 34).

Most of the popular features of AAVE are seen in the syntax of the language, which examines how words are combined to form sentences. Even though there are many words whose pronunciation sounds similar to that of other varieties of English, those words can be used in a different way and may combine with diverse words in AAVE. This is one of the features that makes it a unique language or a dialect in the field. On the other hand, this uniqueness brings forth some prejudgments against AAVE and its users. Green puts forward that “speakers of mainstream English identify the AAVE uses as being different from general English, and they label them as ungrammatical uses of English that make African American sound unintelligent” (Green, 2002, 34). Despite the unethical opinions and misjudgments, I aspire to analyze the characteristics of sentences in AAVE in this section.

The first characteristic I wish to examine is the multiple negative elements in sentences. Negation may occur both in main clauses and subordinate clauses, but the important thing is that it must take place at least in one part of the sentence. Pullum suggests that AAVE is negated the same way other languages are negated. However, he states that “what does differentiate AAVE from Standard English is that negation can be multiply marked” (Pullum, 1999, 48). To exemplify, I excerpt from Martin and Wolfram’s study:

- a. *No way you gonna get that outta here with half-non truck*
- b. *Nobody don’t like that*
- c. *Nobody ain’t never gonna make him take nothing no more*
- d. *Billy can’t see no point in going nowhere no more*
- e. *Sheila don’t like nobody with no attitude*
- f. *He ain’t no genius*
- g. *Nobody saw nothing out there that looked like no bear* (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 20,21)

As it is shown in the examples above, there are several ways to use double negation in sentences. The position where the negation is applied varies. The most common positions are preposed adverbials (a), subject of the sentence (b, c, g), auxiliary or modal verb (b, f), and predicate noun phrases (direct objects or objects of prepositions). Noun phrases can host negation with a negative determiner (e.g., *no student*). For instance, *nobody* may be preferred instead of *anybody*. Adverbials such as *anywhere* or *ever* may also be negated using *nowhere* or *never* (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 21). Standard English *I haven’t ever seen anything like it* accounts for AAVE *I ain’t never seen nothing like it*. Green also notes that “(...) in multiple negation constructions, negation can be marked on auxiliaries (e.g., *don’t*) and indefinite nouns

such as *anybody* (*nobody*) and *anything* (*nothing*) (Green, 2002, 77). The tendency to use multiple negators in a sentence is quite common among AAVE speakers.

In Standard English, using double negators is seen as ungrammatical because they make a positive logically. However, it is not the case for AAVE. The negative meaning of the sentences is not influenced by the use of more than one negator. In other words, those sentences do not become positive. Green informs that “the extra negative elements in AAVE sentences are pleonastic, suggesting that they do not contribute any additional negative meaning to the sentences” (Green, 2002, 78). To show that in an example, in *I didn't see nothing*, *didn't* alone is enough to negate the sentence, but *nothing* does not change or contribute any meaning. Labov and his colleagues believe that this kind of double negation carries social information but they do not go further in discussing their interrelation (Green, 2002, 78). Yet, it might be connected with a few social dynamics such as class, identity, and education.

The multiple negation concept in AAVE is debated for its convenience as a linguistic element. Some people blame AAVE for being illogical for this reason. Yet, Pullum tells us that they “(...) do not know enough logic even to explain what they mean by their critique” and that they “fail to see the crucially relevant fact about natural languages: that the grammar of negation is not the same in all languages” (Pullum, 1999, 48). Every language has its own rules for negation. Pullum also gives an example from Standard Italian and states that the way to say *Nobody telephoned* is *Non ha telefonato nessuno*, literally meaning *not has telephoned no one*. The Italian language demands both *non* at the beginning and *nessuno* -no one- for this sentence to be negated.

In a Standard English negative clause, indefinite words such as *anybody* or *anywhere* can be used. On the contrary, in an Italian sentence, their counterparts (*nobody* and *nowhere*) are required for negation. Contrary to the common belief, this is not an error. It is a grammar rule known as *negative concord*. In negative-concord languages like Italian, negative words are required rather than indefinite words (Pullum, 1999, 49). This analysis refutes the argument of those who assume that AAVE is ungrammatical due to the use of double negation. Moreover, Martin and Wolfram inform that “the essential characteristic of negative concord sentences is the use of two or more negative morphemes to communicate a single negation” (Martin &

Wolfram, 2022, 18). Hence, it is clearly understood that double negation or negative concord is not an invention of AAVE speakers that can be used to underestimate it.

Another characteristic of AAVE that I intend to analyze is its question formation. How it shows similarities and differences from other varieties of English is a matter of debate in the field. Martin and Wolfram express that “AAVE is fundamentally identical to other English varieties in its formation of interrogation sentences” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 30). Similar to other varieties, AAVE permits subject-auxiliary inversion when there is an embedded question. However, it only happens when the sentence does not involve any complementizers (e.g., *if*, *whether*). Sentences with an inversion and a complementizer together are not counted as grammatical in AAVE. To exemplify (1):

- a. They asked could he go to the concert.
- b. They asked if could he go to the concert. (Labov, 1972, p. 62)

In these examples, the first sentence (a) includes a subject-auxiliary inversion, and it is commonly seen in AAVE. Yet, the second sentence (1b) includes a complementizer, so it is not grammatical in AAVE. The prohibition of double complementizers is a feature of English syntax. Martin and Wolfram express that “AAVE generally shares the doubly filled complementizer restriction with other current varieties of English” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 31). On the other hand, Labov proves in his study that some speakers of AAVE produced syntactic structures which are similar to the second sentence (1b) above. It is shown in the examples below (2).

- a. I asked Alvin *whether he knows* how to play basketball.
- b. I asked Alvin *whether did he know* how to play basketball. (Labov, 1972, p. 62)

There is a significant change in the way AAVE speakers respond when they are faced with embedded questions. Labov states that nearly half of the participants respond with a very different word order (as in sentence 2b) even though the sentences are said quite slowly (Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, 1972, 62). However, this does not mean that speakers or listeners do not understand the sentence (2a). They are fully competent in Standard English form, but they quickly transform the sentence using such patterns mentioned above. Besides, the meaning of the sentence remains the same. Labov adds that “it cannot be said that the Standard English rules for yes-no questions lie outside of the AAVE system,” and “it is best seen as a distinct subsystem within the larger grammar of English” (Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, 1972, 63).

It can be concluded from this bit of information that AAVE speakers produce unique patterns when it comes to embedded questions.

Another distinctive AAVE formation in questions is the non-inverted question.

Sample questions are written below (3).

- a. Who that is?
- b. What that thing is?
- c. Why she took that?
- d. They took it? (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 32).

AAVE is not the only variety in producing direct questions using non-inverted word order. However, this style of non-inverted question is not observed in Standard English varieties. It is also not found in Anglo-American varieties. In Standard English (SE), a question seen in (3a) could be produced as an *echo question*, which occurs when the speaker repeats a sentence newly uttered by another person. Yet, AAVE sentences as in (3) might be uttered as non-echo questions as well, “thus setting them apart from their contextually restricted uses in standard varieties” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 32).

AAVE speakers tend to ignore the existence of auxiliaries while producing non-inverted questions. Green states about the use of auxiliaries that “(...) they do not occur obligatorily in questions” and that “in cases in which auxiliaries do not occur on the surface, questions are signaled by using a special question intonation.” (Green, 2002, 42). In daily speech, questions without auxiliaries are quite popular among speakers of AAVE, and they are not counted as ungrammatical. (4)

- a. Is Bob here?
- b. Bob here?
- c. Is Bob gon’ leave?
- d. Bob gon’ leave? (Green, 2002, 42).

These samples show us that auxiliaries can be used at the beginning of questions as in (4a-4c) but they can also be totally removed as in (4b-4d). In cases where auxiliaries are left out of questions, the intonation makes the difference and implies that a question is asked.

The placement of the Wh- word is another aspect that differentiates AAVE from other dialects. In AAVE, a Wh- question word is placed at the beginning of sentences regardless of subject-auxiliary inversion. On the other hand, in other dialects of English, subject-auxiliary inversion and Wh-fronting are inseparable while forming questions. In some cases, “the potential independence of these movements produces a

structural ambiguity for a sentence such as *What you doing?*” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 32). In Standard English, auxiliary deletion is valid only after inversion takes place. In AAVE, on the contrary, the question can well be acquired through a non-inverted structure due to the independence of subject-auxiliary inversion and Wh-fronting.

It is preferable for AAVE speakers to utter non-inverted sentences with the copula (i.e., forms of *be*) rather than other verbs such as *do* or some modal verbs. Yet, it is not valid all the time, and it may exhibit minor changes. Green clarifies that “the modals (along with past tense auxiliary) cannot be left out of questions in all environments, but they can remain in the position following the subject and preceding the main verb” (Green, 2002, 42). It means that the non-inverted question formation still remains the same, but in some cases, modal verbs and the past tense copula must be used or else the meaning can be lost. (5)

- a. You’ll teach me how to swim?
- b. Bruce can swim?
- c. Bruce was running? (Green, 2002, p. 42)

In the samples above, we can observe that modals (*will* and *can*) and the past copula (*was*) are produced in a similar way in the sense that they are not removed from the question. However, it is not a necessity for AAVE speakers to use them before the subject. It is still a non-inverted question. These sentences are also uttered with a question intonation, but “the claim is not that AAVE is the only English variety that uses intonation to signal questions; it is that intonation can be used in this way, also” (Green, 2002, p. 43). Hence, it is plainly visible that non-inverted question formations are variable depending on the word order. It does not change the fact that they are a part of AAVE syntactic structure. Martin and Wolfram draw the conclusion that “non-inverted direct questions must be admitted as a part of AAVE syntax, but they are not a particularly productive pattern in the variety at this stage of its development” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 33).

The relative clause structure is another dimension of AAVE’s characteristics. Like other speakers of Standard English, AAVE speakers sometimes use the Wh-pronouns *where*, *who*, and *when* to indicate relative clauses. Yet, they use the pronoun *that* more often. Either a Wh- pronoun or *that* is used, but they never use both of them

(Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 33). Furthermore, similar to other varieties of English, they may omit both of them if there is an object relative clause. (6)

- a. Sheila the *woman* Bill broke up with.
- b. Alan saw a *car* Charlie sold. (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 33)

In the samples above, the words written in italics are connected to the preposition (*with*) or the direct object (*sold*). These structures enable the speakers to omit the relative pronoun of the relative clause. As Green states, “relative clauses that modify nouns in the predicate nominative or object positions are not obligatorily headed by relative pronouns” (Green, 2002, p. 91). This method is widely preferred both by speakers of Standard English varieties and AAVE speakers. Despite the common ground, Martin and Wolfram express that “AAVE differs from other varieties of English, not in the permissibility of Wh- and *that* deletion, but in the structural context of its application” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 35). AAVE speakers have a different approach to the matter.

Another important difference between AAVE and other English varieties exists in terms of relative clauses, in that AAVE speakers have the capability to use bare *subject relative clauses* (Smith, 1969, 83). Smith points at a relationship between two deviant grammatical characteristics of AAVE, which are the *pleonastic subject pronoun* and the deletion of the *subject relative pronoun*. The use of the pleonastic subject pronoun is quite widespread among AAVE speakers of all age groups. (6)

- a. My mother *she* used to wash and iron and cook.
- b. And then my daughter *she* is a secretary for a store manager.
- c. My brother from Lubbock *he* visit to get his wife and baby.
- d. Some of them *they* put the needle in the fire. (Smith, 1969, 83)

As it can be seen in the examples, an extra subject pronoun (indicated in italics) is used by the speakers, and it is called the pleonastic subject pronoun. The reason why the speakers prefer such a structure is unclear, it may be uttered for emphasis on the head noun, or it may also be a tradition that is inherited from previous creoles spoken in the African diaspora.

The pattern of the deletion of the subject relative pronoun is also remarkably common among the same participants who produced those sentences above. It is not preferred and used in SE as it is in AAVE, thus making this structure another prominent feature of AAVE. (7)

- a. This here is one family eat anything.
- b. I have a brother work at Ralston Purina here in town.

- c. She be the kind like to go. (Smith, 1969, p. 84)

Smith continues to acknowledge that, in some cases, both of these structures can occur together in one sentence. It means that the pleonastic subject pronoun can be used where the deletion of a subject pronoun exists. (8)

- a. The one stay here in Clarksville *she* don't do anything at all.
- a'. The one who lives here in Clarksville doesn't do anything at all. (SE)
- b. My other sister *she* fourteen go to Dogan.
- b'. My other sister is fourteen who goes to Dogan. (SE)
- c. The boy won *he* did a three.
- c'. The boy who won did a three. (SE) (Smith, 1969, 84)

The examples show that there is a correlation between these structures, and they may have an influence on one another. Smith claims that “the pleonasm is in some sense itself a disambiguating formative” (Smith, 1969, 84). We can deduce that speakers of AAVE use pleonasm to clarify the subject of the sentence or to put emphasis on the subject of the relative clause.

The use of double modals is one of the distinctive characteristics of AAVE. Although double modals can be detected in other English varieties, such as southern Anglo-American varieties, there is a structural difference in AAVE. The sentences may look similar merely from the syntactic perspective, but from the lexical view, AAVE exhibits some distinctions from other varieties. (9)

- a. He *might could* do the work.
- b. She *may can* do the work.
- c. They *should can* stay out here.
- d. They *should oughta* go.
- e. They *useta could* do it.
- f. They *might should oughta* do it (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 35)

Martin and Wolfram inform that “although *might could* is the most commonly double modal, a number of productive combinations are possible” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 35). These combinations include even triple modal formation. It is also stated that not every combination is possible in this structure. For instance, *could might* combination is rarely used in AAVE, whereas *might could* is highly frequent. Speakers of AAVE also watch out for tense matching while using double modals. In SE and in most other vernaculars, “the modal carries the tense and is followed by a tenseless main verb” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 35). In AAVE, on the other hand, both modals have the ability to bear the same tense, or speakers may mix tenses. Yet, Paolo notes that “(...) tense matching is the preferred pattern” (Paolo, 1989, 199).

Double modals are not just random lexical patterns without any syntactic background. There are quite a few reasons for examining them from a syntactic view. After all, double modals are a part of the sentence, and they cannot be dealt with separately. Some factors are needed to be taken into consideration syntactically. These factors include inversion, tag question, and negation (Battistella, 1995, 22). Battistella also informs that “while there are speakers for whom question formation of *might could* is impossible, many speakers can form questions by inverting *could*” (Battistella, 1995, 23). (10)

- a. Could we might do it now?
- b. She might could go to the show, couldn’t she? (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, p. 36)

These patterns suggest that *could* is the true modal in the sentences, and *might* is more like a ‘spurious’ modal. The function of *could* concerning tense is prominent. Thus, it inverts while *might* does not. Martin and Wolfram convey that “*could* operates as an authentic modal constituent, while *might* more closely resembles an adverbial specifier” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 36). As it is known that tag question formations affect the tense, samples such as (10b) indicate that *could* is the true modal. Battistella explains it even further by saying, “(...) a final piece of evidence related to the status of *might* as a spurious modal is the existence of forms such as *might didn’t* where the periphrastic auxiliary occurs” (Battistella, 1995, 24). Periphrastic auxiliaries occur when one single modal is not enough to express the tense, thus requiring an auxiliary to convey the meaning. In a context where *might didn’t* is used, it is understood that *might* may not be seen as a true modal.

It must be noted that standardization of the internal structure of double modals has not been made possible yet. As mentioned above, while *might* can be used as an adverbial modal to modify *could*, it is also likely to read or hear sentences in which *might* carries tense. Martin and Wolfram state that “a simple classification of *might* as an adverb like *possibly*, *perhaps*, or *supposedly* does not suffice” (Martin & Wolfram, 2022, 37). They also admit that *might* and *could* do not have equal effects on tense bearing functions, and that *could* is more efficient in that sense.

To conclude this part, it can be said that AAVE has a unique sentence structure. While there are normally similarities with other dialects of English spoken in the United States, I have the opinion that AAVE has many characteristics that set it apart

from other dialects. As some researchers conveyed in their studies, I personally believe that there are still several matters concerning the structure of AAVE that need further research, and we must not haste to conclusions.

1.4.2.1. The Similarities and Differences Between AAVE and Other Dialects

Studies on AAVE show us that it has unique syntactic features when it is compared to SE. Another question in the field is how different it is from other dialects of English. Labov claims that “there is a great deal of evidence to indicate that AAVE is more different than most other English dialects than they are from each other, including the standard English of the classroom” (Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, 1972, p. 36). He supports his claim by stating that if we ignore the fact that AAVE has its own rules, then we have to accept that the speech of black people is nothing but a speech with mistakes. In that case, every study on the syntactic features and development of AAVE would be in vain.

There are still debates over whether the unique features of AAVE (mentioned in the previous part) are just bad English or they are simply not English. Supporters of the latter theory believe that “the ultimate source of most of these features is an underlying creole grammar, traces of which AAVE purportedly still preserves” (Poplack, 2006, 452). Against this theory, Poplack comes up with another idea and states that the ancestors of modern African Americans might have acquired the speech of the British who colonized the United States at that time. This theory leads him to adapt a few different approaches, and one of them is comparing AAVE to SE, from which I will benefit in this part.

It is surely unreasonable to claim that AAVE has an entirely different system from other English varieties. Most of the rules of AAVE are the same as the rules of other dialects of English. However, inside that comprehensive similarity, “there may be subsets of rules which are not easily integrated into other English grammars, and some of these subsets may be located at strategic points, close to the grammatical ones” (Labov, 1972, 37). It is possible that some patterns of co-existent languages may have become identical, whereas some others may have become more diversified. Vocabulary and phrase structures of AAVE may be the same as other dialects of

English, but the grammatical subsystem of tense and aspect can be entirely different (Labov, 1972, 37).

The simple past formation is one of the key subjects in the comparison of AAVE with SE. Poplack states that “unmarked pasts have long been associated with creole or African origins (...) in fact, stem forms are reportedly so common in English-based creoles that some researchers have suggested that their overtly marked counterparts are insertions from another system” (Poplack, 2006, 459). Hence, according to this belief, unmarked past tense forms or the deletion of *-ed* should not be attributed to AAVE and its earlier versions. The interesting thing is that stem forms and marked past tense forms have been observed in the English grammatical tradition for about 500 years (Poplack, 2006, 458). These forms were even used together in the same sentence or context for the purpose of using alternation.

The use of unmarked past tense was not created or brought by AAVE speakers. It is clear that there was variability in using *-ed* and stem forms to indicate past tense in the long history of English. Although there are many examples in AAVE where the *-ed* is not used for marking past tense, it is not a standard rule in its grammar. Thus, unmarked past forms should not be attributed to AAVE alone. Labov supports this view by writing that “only those who are most remote from the speakers and speech of AAVE would claim that the *-ed* suffix is not present in the grammar” (Labov, 1972, 48). Both *-ed* suffix and the unmarked past form can be seen in AAVE structures. (11)

- a. I *looked* at it. It *look* just like Corney.
- b. Now, I was around the fifteenth- fifteen or sixteen, all my people *work* out- Mama *work* all her day. (Poplack, 2006, 461).

In example (11a), there is evidence that both *-ed* suffix and the unmarked past are uttered in the same context by an AAVE speaker. On the other hand, in some cases (11b), speakers may avoid marking past tense and *-ed* is not present.

Poplack puts forward that phonology is the most important factor in determining bare past verbs. According to his findings, “the stem form is favored in the context of a consonant, while a marked form tends to be retained in prevocalic position” (Poplack, 2006, 461). As it is given in (11a), the presence of the consonant cluster is one of the most significant factors that led to the occurrence of bare past forms.

The relation between the past participle and past forms is worth analyzing in AAVE. As we all know, the distinction between these two concepts is obvious in SE. However, “there is usually no distinction with respect to form between simple past and past participles in AAVE” (Green, 2002, 95). Mostly, the same pattern is preferred for simple past and participle contexts. There are minor details about which verbs are used in the participle form and which ones are in the past form. Green explains the situation:

The participle form is often used in the past and past participle environments with the following words: ring (rung), see (seen), sink (sunk), and sing (sung). In these verbs, the change from non-past to participle is indicated by a change in the vowel (e.g., i to u, drink/drunken; sink/sunk). For other verbs, it is the simple past form that is used in all contexts. (Green, 2002, 95)

In sentences where regular verbs are used, it is seen that speakers of AAVE add *-ed* suffix to the end of these regular verbs and form both the past and past participle this way. Yet, there is a morphological difference between some past and past participle forms. It means that, in some cases, the past is marked with *-ed*, whereas the past participle is indicated with *-en* form.

For some verbs, *sing* or *ring*, there is no distinction in terms of past or past participle formation. However, there are also exceptions, in that both past and past participle forms are used. In such circumstances, both forms may be used interchangeably. When ‘bin’ constructions are present, which add the meanings ‘for a long time’ or ‘a long time ago’ to the sentence, verbs are generally marked with simple past form, but there are samples where the participle or *-en* form is uttered as well. (12)

- a. ... look like she would’a bin *called* my name.
... looks as if she would have called my name a long time ago. (SE)
- b. I bin *asked* you to take it home.
I asked you to take it home a long time ago. (SE)
- c. Aw, he bin *gone* – married a ready-made family.
Aw, he has been gone for a long time. (SE)
- d. I could’a bin *went* back.
I could have gone back a long time ago. (SE) (Green, 2002, 96)

It is important to notice that in (12c-d), both past and past participle forms of *go* are used. In examples (12a-b), two regular verbs are present, and they are both in simple past form by taking *-ed* suffix to the end.

In short, the deletion of *-ed* and its use may both be encountered in AAVE. Contrary to the common belief, *-ed* deletion is not a product of AAVE, and it was already present in the long history of the English language. According to Poplack’s research, “overall rates of *-ed* deletion appear reduced in comparison to those of the

Early AAVE varieties but, crucially, the hierarchy of constraints conditioning its occurrence is the same” (Poplack, *How English Became African American English*, 2006, p. 462). In this respect, he draws the conclusion that there is basically no grammatical difference between black and white vernacular English when weak (regular) verbs are conjugated into past forms.

Strong verbs are also significant while analyzing the past tense form in AAVE. Strong verbs are defined as verbs that have irregular past tense forms (e.g., *took*, *slept*, *went*, *saw*, etc.). These strong verbs are categorized into three classes; class I, class II, and class III. Firstly, class I verbs are mostly used with zero marking of the past. When they are used, the verb stem is the same as the participle. (13)

- a. Their turn *come* to clean the- the board.
- b. And then when we were all through, before I *come* home, he come over to the infirmary to see me. (Poplack, 2006, 464).

Poplack writes that “the disproportionate number of “class I” verbs consists of the verb *come*, and *come* has a greater propensity to surface bare than almost any other verb in the language” (Poplack, *How English Became African American English*, 2006, p. 464). This explains the reason why class I verbs are seen in their stem form while being used for the past tense.

The majority of “class II” verbs is comprised of *say* in a similar manner. It is also preferred to be uttered in its bare form in most of the AAVE varieties. (14)

- a. And she took and she throwed me that baby there and she *say*, “I’m going.” (Poplack, 2006, 464).

Regardless of the commonly accepted verb classes mentioned above, Poplack puts forward that all the classes are made up of verbs with related marking choices. According to him, it explains different formations in different communities that speak AAVE varieties. He also informs that “early AAVE tendency to select preterite *come* and *say* (as well as *give* and *run*), has a robust precedent in English” and “other verbs, however, notably *have*, *go* and *be*, are never attested bare in the past tense” (Poplack, 2006, 464).

Later in his study, Poplack rejects the creolist theory on the basis of the flexible use of stem and marked forms of the past tense. He believes that these forms were already present in the English language history, but they have disappeared in standard use over time (Poplack, 2006, 466). He supports the idea that these past tense forms

were neither innovated by the speakers of AAVE nor taken from creoles and adds that they were inherited from the English language itself. Krapp shares a similar opinion:

The Negroes, indeed, in acquiring English have done their work so thoroughly that they have retained not a trace of any native African speech. Neither have they transferred anything of importance from their native tongues to the general language. A few words, such as voodoo, hoodoo, and buckra, may have come into English from some original African dialect, but most of the words commonly supposed to be of Negro origin, e.g., tote, jazz, and mosey, are really derived from ancient English or other European sources. The native African dialects have been completely lost. (McDavid & McDavid Jr., 1951, 5)

Such researchers in the field ignore the influence of African-originated creoles on the development of AAVE. After the 1800s, the tendency to stigmatize non-standard forms as dialectal in standard speech increased. Although they are now unacceptable in SE grammar, they have not been excluded from vernaculars, including AAVE.

In contrast with the researchers who share the common ground with Poplack, creolists such as Hall and Bloomfield believe that “most American Negro dialects were the result of “decreolization” (merger of the creole with other, more nearly standard dialects), and that the existence of a creole presupposed the prior existence of a pidgin” (Dillard, 1975, 12). In other words, creolists reject the idea that the past tense form was a retention from the English language. They believed that such patterns were derived from creoles. As to which group is more accurate, McDavids state that “both of them contained elements of truth, but neither was the whole truth” (McDavid & McDavid Jr., 1951, 6). Briefly, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, reaching an absolute consequence on this matter is not likely at the present time.

1.4.2.2. The Absence of Copula

The absence of copula is one of the most significant and highlighted structures in AAVE. For this reason, I find it more fitting to analyze it under an independent subtitle. Labov describes its importance and writes that “one of the most well-known characteristics of this dialect of English is the absence of the copula in the present before predicate nouns and adjectives, locatives and comitative phrases, and the parallel absence of the forms of *to be* in the auxiliary *be...ing*” (Labov, 1972, 48). This definition shows that the copula absence is observable in multiple different structures of AAVE. (15)

- a. He a friend.
- b. He tired.

- c. He over there.
- d. He with us.
- e. He working with us. (Labov, 1972, 48)

The missing *be* in these examples has led many researchers to infer that there is no present copula or auxiliary *be* in AAVE. This hypothesis seems quite reasonable in that many languages in the world do not contain present copula. The French Creole of the Caribbean, the English Creole of Trinidad, and the English Creole of Jamaica are some of the languages in which the copula does not exist (Labov, 1972, 68). Another factor that makes it reasonable is that several of these languages might have had contact with AAVE, thus influencing one another. If this approach is adopted, then it means that AAVE differs from SE in a significant grammar rule.

The copula appears in many different contexts of AAVE regularly. In spite of the fact that it is deleted in a number of environments, as shown in the examples above, the copula does exist in AAVE, and it is used by the speakers in certain contexts. One of them is the past form of *be*, as in: (16)

- a. I was small; I was sump'm about one years o' baby.
- b. She was liking me... she was likin' George too. (Labov, 1972, 70)

Apart from this simple past tense marker *was*, the first person and its auxiliary is also found on a regular basis: (17)

- a. I'm tired, Jeannette.
- b. I'm not no strong drinker. (Labov, 1972, 70)

Despite rare examples where bare *I* is used without its copula, the vast majority of speakers produce the copula with this subject pronoun. Other contexts where the copula is often used are of *i's*, *tha's*, and *wha's*. It can be shown in: (18)

- a. I's a real light yellow color.
- b. Tha's my daily routine: women.
- c. Wha's a virgin? (Labov, 1972, 71)

The other environments that maintain the use of copula occur when it follows a modal verb and is formed in the infinitive form. Similarly, the infinitive form of *be* is uttered with imperatives. (19)

- a. Be cool, brothers!
- b. Don't be messin' with my old lady! (Labov, 1972, 71)

Despite numerous studies that have been carried out to this day, Walker states that "the copula is probably the most studied but least understood variable in sociolinguistics" (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 77). The ethnolinguistic position of copula absence is also a matter of debate among researchers. For instance, Wolfram puts forward that AAVE shares copula absence with a few Southern white vernaculars

of English, but he also writes that there are important differences between these varieties (Wolfram W. , 1974, 500). These differences are both qualitative and quantitative. Feagin adopts a similar approach and writes that “most of these forms (including copula absence) occur in older forms of British English—including British dialects—as well as in Black English and Atlantic creoles” (Frazer, 1980, 42). These writers avoid evaluating the copula absence solely as a component of AAVE, but rather they suggest that it is shared with other dialects or vernaculars. Wolfram also claims that its use in European American varieties in the Southern lands has usually been attributed to linguistic adaptation to African American speech instead of donor dialects in the British Isles or to autonomous development (Wolfram W. , 1974, 500).

There are, quite naturally, alternative theories concerning the occurrence of copula absence in AAVE. Diachronically, the copula absence played an important role in the discussions about the origin of AAVE as it is considered the most remarkable evidence of creole influence in AAVE. Other analyses, on the other hand, accept the copula absence as a more natural phenomenon that is based on a phonological process of contraction (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 77). However, analysts have hardly reached a consensus on this matter despite intense studies in recent years.

Many sociolinguists claim that copula absence is a prominent feature of AAVE and that this structure is in some ways different from the one that has been observed in earlier varieties of English. Before the study of Martin and Tagliamonte that was carried out in Northern England, the majority of dialectologists had believed that copula absence was not an important pattern of English varieties spoken in the British Isles (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 78). Considering that this study was implemented in 1999, it can be inferred that theories in the field may show great alterations even today. Besides that, most linguists share the view that “copula absence is a widespread trait of English-based creole and pidgin languages spoken in the African diaspora” (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 78). These analyses have led many linguists, especially creolists, to assume that copula absence in AAVE is inherited from a creole predecessor.

It is important to note that there are a number of structural incompatibilities between the use of copula absence in AAVE and its status in English-based creoles.

These incompatibilities have given variationists a fine reason to reject the creolist approach. Wolfram and Thomas explain the situation with examples:

For example, copula deletion appears to feed off contraction, unlike its null copula status in creole and pidgins. Furthermore, copula absence in AAVE does not apply to the 1st sg. Copula form am, again unlike its operation in creoles. And variable constraints related to subject type and to verbal complementation do not parallel the structure of null copula in English-based creoles spoken in the African diaspora. (Wolfram & Thomas, 2002, 78)

These differences have led some researchers to suggest alternative approaches.

It does not necessarily mean that AAVE developed from an extensive creole when copula absence is connected with the influence of creoles. However, recent studies in the field have reduced the possibility that copula absence in AAVE was derived from a creole.

An alternative theory concerning the origin of AAVE is *thick lips* theory, where the absence of copula is seen as an underdeveloped pattern of English. According to this theory, “it matters little whether ‘underdeveloped English’ is said to be the result of intellectual or anatomic deficiencies or black genes or whether it is laid at the door of deprived environment, too loud television sets, absent fathers” (Fasold, 1975, 202). For any linguist, this theory is not acceptable, and it has no credibility in the field. Language acquisition is a natural process, and patterns such as copula absence in AAVE are easily transferred to the next generations. It cannot be explained as a deficient structure of the language.

Copula absence, as I mentioned earlier, deserves a meticulous analysis while comparing the white speech and AAVE. It seems more suitable to separate the copula absence into two subsets, as Labov and Wolfram do; deletion of *are* and deletion of *is*. Deletion of *are* and *is* occurs and does not occur depending on the context. In certain environments, the use of *are* is obligatory. As Labov points out, these environments include where a preceding contraction cannot be applied, where there is an emphasis, tag questions, and negated structures. Infinite forms of *be* are also seen in yes-no questions: (20)

- a. Is he dead?
- b. Are you down?
- c. Are you gon’ give us some money? (Labov, 1972, 71)

Labov notes other examples where *are* and *is* appear in clause-final positions. These positions cover elliptical responses, comparative constructions, and embedded questions after Wh- words. To exemplify each case: (21)

- a. (You ain't the best sounder, Eddie!) I ain't! He is! (*elliptical*)
- b. He is better than the girls is, now. (*comparative*)
- c. It always somebody tougher than you are. (*comparative*)
- d. That's what he is: a brother. (*After Wh- word*)
- e. Do you see where that person is? (*embedded question*) (Labov, 1972, 72)

On the other hand, there are cases where *are* can be deleted, and this can be observed with 1st, 2nd, 3rd plural, and 2nd singular pronouns and with plural nouns. (22)

- a. We ain't going, we just standing still.
- b. You hitting too hard.
- c. You-all tipping the carton.
- d. They just building it back up now. (Wolfram W. , 1974, 503)

After analyzing different contexts where the deletion rule appears or does not appear, we may ask how and why these forms show alterations. It is said that there is a strong influence of the phonological structure of words on the deletion rules. Labov also states that “wherever SE can contract, AAVE can delete *is* and *are*, and vice versa; wherever SE cannot contract, AAVE cannot delete *is* and *are*, and vice versa” (Labov, 1972, 73). In this manner, the comparison between AAVE and SE is at hand. To provide a better understanding of this comparison, I use Labov's examples here: (23)

- a. He's as nice as he says he's. (SE)
He's as nice as he says he. (AAVE)
- b. How beautiful you're! (SE)
How beautiful you! (AAVE) (Labov, 1972, 73)

It is seen that where contraction occurs in SE, deletion can appear in AAVE. It can also happen in the exact opposite way. This relation between SE and AAVE leads us to another question as to how this connection has taken place. Wolfram notes that copula deletion is seen in Southern white speech as well. Since deletion does not appear in any British varieties that were brought to the United States, it is more likely that “white Southern speech initiated copula deletion as an extension of contraction, either independently or along with AAVE” (Wolfram W. , 1974, 522). It is one possibility that these languages influenced one another in the development of copula deletion.

Creolists believe that copula deletion was acquired through decreolization in AAVE. This hypothesis is backed with strong suggestions, such that copula deletion is a common characteristic of creoles, particularly the ones which may have had connections with AAVE (Wolfram W. , 1974, 523). Another suggestion is that copula-related structures can occur in decreolizing languages in time. If this hypothesis is

accepted, then it is not possible to assume that white Southern speech and AAVE went through the same process in acquiring copula deletion. In the former case, deletion occurs with an addition of a rule. In the latter, however, a decreolization process takes place. Whether this change would have occurred without the contact with black speech is open to discussion, “but it seems only reasonable to suggest that contact with AAVE has been influential in the resultant change” (Wolfram W. , 1974, 523). If we consider the historical relations between white and black people in the Southern region of the United States, it is not irrational to consider the AAVE effect in this respect. Cash describes this interrelation:

And in this society in which the infant son of the planter was commonly suckled by a black mammy, in which gray old black men were his most loved storytellers, in which black stalwarts were among the chiefest heroes and mentors of his boyhood... in which nearly the whole body of whites, young and old, had constantly before their eyes the example, had constantly in their ears the accent, of the Negro, the relationship between the two groups was, by the second generation at least, nothing less than organic. (Cash, 1991, 49)

In a society where such an intense social relation between two different communities exists, structural transfers may, quite naturally, occur in their language. Briefly, this hypothesis suggests that the copula deletion in Southern white speech may have derived from decreolized black speech. It is not accepted by all researchers, but, as the creolists claim, it is a strong possibility. Thus, I conclude that SE and AAVE are related to each other in terms of deletion. After considering that there is no evidence of copula deletion in earlier British varieties, I find the creolist theory more reasonable on this subject.

1.4.3. Attitudes Toward the Use of AAVE

The place of AAVE, among other varieties of English, is complicated, and it has a multi-dimensional position. To be accepted as a legitimate variety is compelling for any variety, but it seems even more challenging with AAVE. For many years, AAVE has been treated as a version of English with some grammatical mistakes not only by white people but by African Americans as well. Green notes that “For some African Americans, reference to AAVE as a legitimate variety is a source of embarrassment” and that “AAVE is the incorrect use of mainstream English, and not using the standard correctly suggests that speakers are ignorant, lazy, or both” in the eyes of African Americans (Green, 2002, 221). Similarly, for most speakers of Standard English, the majority of whom consists of white people, AAVE is nothing

more than “(...) a badly spoken version of their language, marred by a lot of ignorant mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, or worse than that, an unimportant and mostly abusive repertoire of street slang used by an ignorant urban underclass” (Pullum, 1999, 40). In this sense, it is seen that there are misjudgments about the existence of AAVE on both sides. What I find more interesting is that some African Americans avoid accepting their AAVE as a different and respectable variety.

The opposition to the use of AAVE comes directly from African Americans themselves. Morgan’s study on this subject demonstrates that their reactions result from race and class issues. In addition, some black people of the middle class stood against the theory that AAVE was remarkably different from standard English in that this difference has caused communication issues for children at school (Green, 2002, p. 221). In their opinion, the acceptance of AAVE as a formal dialect brings problems to their society, and it makes social interaction with white people even more challenging. It is likely that there are historical reasons behind this avoidance. Morgan notes that “During US slavery and until the 1960s in the South, Blacks could not exhibit linguistic agency, nor, under the threat of death, could they initiate verbal interactions with Whites” (Morgan, 2014, 50).

The current opposition may have derived or been influenced by that fear in the past. It can also be looked at from a racial perspective, as Morgan adds that “(...) race mattered and that Black people did not have the same intelligence and ability as Whites and thus needed to be protected from themselves –by Whites- who also regulated the public attitude and behavior of Blacks” (Morgan, 2014, 50). This racialized concept might have altered the attitude of Black people toward their speech. Considering that slavery and the harsh conditions which came with it continued for a long period, that kind of pressure on the speech is not easy to get rid of. Hence, it is possible that it might be one of the reasons why some black people argue against the acceptance of AAVE as a dialect of English.

There are cases in history in which young speakers of AAVE faced difficulties in their educational life. One of the most well-known cases is the King case. It began when the Ann Arbor school officials faced a severe accusation. Green informs that:

The claim was that students (from ages five to eleven) who lived in the Green Road Housing Project in Ann Arbor and who were experiencing academic difficulty at the King School were being placed in programs for the emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and speech impaired, and some were held back or suspended from school. It was also argued that the

defendants had failed to take the language of the students into consideration, a factor that contributed to their not learning to read and use mainstream English proficiently. (Green, 2002, 222).

After this event, the students were treated as disabled children. Their parents sought their rights in court. Thanks to linguists who successfully argued that AAVE has a systemic feature that is not all related to SE, the court decided that the students were speaking a different variety (Morgan, 2014, 109). The institution was also accused of restraining the students from getting a proper education since their vernacular language was not taken into account. In the end, the case was closed in favor of the complainants.

The Ann Arbor case was followed by another case that took place in Oakland in 1996. The Oakland School Administration decided to recognize AAVE as the primary language of African American students who had an education in that district. Their suggestion can be regarded as a milestone for the education of AAVE-speaking children. Green writes that “Their proposal was to use the children’s vernacular in teaching mainstream English by highlighting the contrasts between AAE and classroom English” (Green, 2002, 222). This method has been practiced in teaching SE to improve the linguistic skills of African American students since then. However, this effort was not welcomed by all. There was a growing reaction against this policy, especially in the media. The language of African Americans was being mocked, as Morgan cites from an article published in a popular newspaper: “There is no greater talisman of lower or underclass accent status than the Black accent. Whether in *The Dartmouth Review* or *The Lion King*, Black English is the perpetual symbolic code for ignorance, evil, and jest, the lingo of the hep cats and hyenas” (Morgan, 2014, 106). Although some efforts were made to help African American students receive better education, some people wished to undermine those efforts.

Two different views emerged concerning the language education of African American students despite that period of ridicule. One view suggested that African Americans speak AAVE because “(...) they do not want to participate in American society in the same way as Whites” (Morgan, 2014, 106). In this regard, AAVE is considered to be a variety that children deliberately prefer to speak. It is also thought to be independent of racial, social, or cultural factors. Educational strategy based on this view considers teaching only basic linguistic skills appropriate. On the other hand, as Morgan informs, “The opposing view that emerged during the debate was that Black

people speak AAE for cultural and historical reasons, and because of race and class discrimination” (Morgan, 2014, 106). Supporters of view defended that children should be taught not only the basic skills in language and literacy but the advanced skills as well. Thus, they could be free to chase job opportunities as they wish when they become grown-ups.

The issue of attitude toward AAVE is complicated. It is filled with controversial suggestions that have been made by both African Americans and white people. Apart from people who have negative attitudes toward AAVE, linguists may also have put insufficient effort into describing its linguistic rules and structures. However, it is not certain whether negative attitudes could change if detailed linguistic examinations were made. Green notes that “(...) it would be naïve to think that we could dispel all stereotypes and negative attitudes by presenting linguistic descriptions of AAE, but such descriptions would be helpful in substantiating the claim that it is a legitimate variety” (Green, 2002, 223). Hence, AAVE must be studied thoroughly together with its linguistic characteristics. It is otherwise open to misjudgments. As mentioned in the Oakland case, inaccurate claims may emerge. These claims include the surface assumptions that AAVE is equal to slang or that AAVE is a street language filled with mistakes. More linguistic research is thus significant in the field to restore the credibility of AAVE.

1.4.4. Education and AAVE

Research on the education of school-age speakers of AAVE is one of the topics that has been much debated. The focus of the studies carried out to this day has been on the reading skills and language acquisition of young learners. Yet, the trend is said to be changed in recent years. Green notes that “(...) new and much-needed research is being conducted in the area of communication disorders” (Green, 2002, 226). The issue of communication disorders is also connected to the Oakland case mentioned earlier in this study. African American students are commonly mislabeled as being deprived of communicational skills. Green writes that one of the main reasons for mislabeling those students is that “(...) AAE speakers are compared to their peers outside the developmental range or community” (Green, 2002, 227). In other words, the competence of young speakers of AAVE should be compared to the linguistic

competence of other children in their neighborhood who are not disabled. This method can help researchers reach more accurate conclusions.

Research on AAVE and education has drawn the attention of people from different disciplines such as educators, psychologists and linguists. Their primary source of motivation was the difficulty that African American children faced in schools. Green informs that “The problem that African American youth encounter in reading has been documented in studies that show that reading scores for African Americans in inner cities are well below the mean, below the basic level” (Green, 2002, 228). This problem in literacy education has caused difficulties in communicating for African American children. With respect to solutions, Morgan notes that “While the need to recognize and incorporate social dialect diversity in school has been recognized by linguists and educators, resistance often arises due to a lack of communication and doubt that dialect literacy enhances language education” (Morgan, 2014, 108). Despite the determination of experts to incorporate AAVE into education dynamics, there were those who remained skeptical on the matter.

Some critics argued that black speech was verbally deprived. They thought that it had characteristic laziness in its utterance along with the use of “(...) as few words as possible, sometimes making one gender serve for three, one tense for several, and totally disregarding singular and plural numbers” (Brasch, 1981, 206). Such suggestions were later gathered under the Deficit Theory. This theory defended that African American speakers were incapable of speaking mainstream English in obedience to its rules. Labov argued against that theory and noted that:

These notions are based upon the work of educational psychologists who know very little about language and even less about Black children. The concept of verbal deprivation has no basis in social reality. The myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous because it diverts the attention from real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child. (Brasch, 1981, 273)

Labov strongly criticizes those who claim that African Americans do not speak mainstream English due to their incompetence. He ascertains that the real issue is the incorrect teaching methods, not the learners’ capabilities. Thus, the focal point should be the improvement of learners’ linguistic skills.

Integration of the vernacular into the educational system is regarded as a resolution by linguists and experts. However, societal demands sort ill with the ideas of linguists. People, particularly parents, give more importance to their children's careers. It cannot be expected from linguists to develop educational plans that depend

on the expectations of society. Successful literacy education is crucial to integrating African American youth into American society. Morgan states, “The development and implementation of language and literacy policies that teach without compromising the identity and integrity of all children is the language education challenge of this century” (Morgan, 2014, 108). Thus, it seems possible that proper education for African American children may change the negative attitude toward their vernacular language.

The use of reading materials that contain cultural aspects of the ghetto is another strategy. Although the language in these materials is SE, the context is different and about black families. This contrast has resulted in an anomaly because African American young learners could not relate to the context due to the language difference. It was seen that those stories were not different from the narratives in which white middle-class people were the main characters. Thus, Wolfram and Fasold conclude that “What appears to be needed, then, is a linguistic adaptation or translation of reading materials to a language system which more closely approximates the child’s oral language behavior” (Wolfram & Fasold, 1969, 141). The implementation of this method may help them be more involved in the teaching process, and it may improve their reading and comprehension skills as well.

Parents of African American students, however, disagree with that idea. They think that their children should be taught mainstream English so that they can be more successful in their careers. Green cites that “(...) the majority of black parents whom I have interviewed through the years, spanning both poles of the political spectrum, overwhelmingly stress the past, present, and future role of education as a means of attaining a better life for themselves and their children” (Green, 2002, 230). From their point of view, schools are the places where their children ought to be able to avoid nonstandard street language. They also believe that the street language is less educated, and it poses a threat to their children’s academic success. Green notes that it may not be accurate because “(...) reading literature in AAE would affirm that the students’ variety does have a place in certain contexts in educational settings, which may have the result of encouraging them to read more” (Green, 2002, 230). I find Green’s objection more reasonable on this matter since the motivation for reading must be

provided. In this way, students may be convinced that their vernacular is not just a street language or slang and that AAVE has its place in literature.

A similar proposal consists of a model that can be inspired by Japanese-American after-school programs. According to Baugh, African American street speakers may improve their linguistic skills and meet their educational needs with the help of this model (Burling, 1985). Although Baugh insists on the acceptance of street speech as a respectable way of expression, he suggests that minority speakers should adapt to the dominant language, to SE in this case. After all, he rejects the integration of the vernacular language into the education system.

One sharp criticism against the validation of AAVE is that people who support its use for communication are those who are unaffected by its validation. In addition, those people are seen to be speaking SE without any challenges. Some critics reject the use of AAVE in education in this respect. One of the critics is Walter Mercer, who agrees that AAVE is a systematic language with its own rules and structures, but he argues that:

I maintain that teachers who teach only the black English dialect are doing black children a disservice, even an injustice. They are not building on positive grounds, no matter what the National Council of Teachers of English says. They are building on the sands of condescension, for they reject the idea that the black child has enough brains and abilities to master the dominant speech of his native country. Teachers must demand that black students discard their substandard dialect as a step in the process of discarding substandard citizenship. (Brasch, 1981, 274)

It is understood that teaching SE should be the top priority instead of using AAVE in the teaching process. It also suggests that the mission of teachers is of great importance in this regard. They should avoid discriminating between African American and white students. Besides that, they should implement an equal set of methods, as they may otherwise hinder the learning of African American students. Mercer notes on this subject:

Regardless of the genuineness of the dialect, regardless of how remarkably it may add flavor and soul to a poem or a song or novel, regardless of the solidarity it may lend to a political rally, I say it is illogical, nonsensical, and harmful to teach an innocent black child that it is quite all right to say "I done gone to school." I have also noticed that the black advocates of teaching black dialect all can use impeccable standard English. (Brasch, 1981, 274)

Mercer maintains that if African Americans with an advanced level of English proficiency support that AAVE should be used in schools, the school-age children should also be taught to speak mainstream English. Green evaluates his opinions and writes, "(...) the proponents of AAE are using mainstream English as successful researchers, and they are not giving child AAE speakers the same opportunity to use

the language of the marketplace, a necessary step in reaping the benefits available to them” (Green, 2002, 230). Mercer reflects the emotions of many African Americans. As to the implementation of such a method, there are still concerns. Building a bridge between AAVE and SE requires more elaborative study.

1.5. The Emergence of Afro-American Literature

The importance of writing cannot be overlooked in a society where racism, discrimination, and injustice exist. These issues are the cause of the suffering of African Americans in history. For this reason, they have drawn much attention in the literary works of white and black writers. From the perspective of black writers, writing is regarded as a responsibility. As Gilyard claims, “Writing is social responsibility,” and it should be taken seriously because “When you write, you are being responsible to some social entity even if that entity is yourself” (Gilyard, 1996, 21). In that sense, it is argued that African American writers should do their part and contribute to the social resistance of their people. Gilyard cites:

If information is a resource for advancement and development and is the basis by which people make their decisions, then one of the responsibilities of the poet to the community is to provide information. I don't mean merely news, sports, statistics, advertisements, or the kind of information some leaders use to assault and manipulate the public, but information detailing significant experiences that would allow a person to use her or his imagination, intelligence, and emotions to gain a greater awareness and understanding of self and the outside world. (Gilyard, 1996, 21-22)

In that sense, literature presents a better and more precise understanding of the person's environment, and it can enlighten people about social realities and motivate them to act. Although African Americans encompassed an oral tradition due to the restrictions, they were aware of the significance of literacy. Gilyard notes, “Americans of African descent spring from a tremendous oral tradition but know well the power of literacy, know it to be strong medicine if for no other reason than the fact that it was in large measure legislated away from them” (Gilyard, 1996, 23). Since then, they have sought to benefit from its social influence to raise their voice.

As commonly known, there is a long-termed discussion between those who regard art for people's sake and those who view art for art's sake. When it is considered, it can be claimed that African American writers are more inclined to the former group. Cash relates the appearance of African American literature to societal dynamics, claims:

It seems to me that the decisive factor for the almost sudden appearance of this literature was social – that the outburst proceeded fundamentally from, and represented basically the patriotic response of the men of talent to, the absorbing need of the South to defend itself, to shore up its pride at home, and to justify itself in the eyes of the world. In other words, what we really have in the literature of the Reconstruction era is, in its dominant aspect, a propaganda. (Cash, 1991, 142)

Therefore, literature's purpose is more related to social motives rather than artistic needs. In their narratives, they attempt to call attention to their challenges in American society. In her article which is about the Black Art movement in the 1920s, Zabunyan writes, “The forms of expression were narrative, and most of the time they fit into the traditions relating to African forebears, drawing their origins from the history of slavery” (Zabunyan, 2002, 424). Hence, it can be said that African American writers also address their history that was centered around slavery.

African American Literature emerged with the influence of multiple factors mentioned above. Race, color, and discrimination are some issues that drove African Americans to express themselves by writing. Bruce informs that:

(...) This framework, antedating the first known publications by African American writers, was the product of complex issues of voice and authority, appropriation and attribution in colonial America and metropolitan Britain. Such issues grew out of the tendencies and ambiguities of race relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the tensions and tendencies in understandings of color, similarity, and difference during the first 150 years of British settlement in mainland North America. (Bruce, 2001, 1)

With respect to the influence of race issues, Cain writes that “The major Afro-American literary texts (...) are clearly bound up with the history of race relations in America. One could not hope to speak and write well about these texts without focusing on their relation to, and place within, the struggles of the Afro-American people” (Cain, 1988, 191). It is understood that it is unlikely and unreasonable to separate African American literature from African American history. Their history is a part of their identity and a source of inspiration for Afro-American authors and poets.

The influence of Christianity on the emergence of African American literature should also be taken into consideration. Christianity gave them an opportunity to increase their intellectual level, and it raised the number of literate blacks, including enslaved people. Bruce writes:

It allowed for the possibility of an entrance by black people into an intellectual setting, a realm of thought, and a world of skills that might otherwise have been defined as exclusively white. Giving a place to the black voice, it challenges any definition of intellectuality and intellectual authority based on color. (...) And, of course, it created a subset, however small, of literate slaves, providing an essential underpinning for the emergence of an African American literary life (Bruce, 2001, 17).

Such factors, mentioned to this point, have played a part in the emergence of African American literature. As it can be understood, these factors are mostly social-based. Although the writings of African American authors in the last decades may carry more of an artistic value, the first literary works were mainly concentrated on social issues.

1.5.1. The Narrative of Slavery

The first samples of African American literature are believed to have occurred during the age of slavery. Narratives of enslaved people can be enlightening in that they reflect the lives and experiences of African Americans in the past. In a sense, their writings may be regarded as auto-biographical work. The auto-biographies may function as memorials and give us an insight into their lives. In the last decades, their texts have “(...) received as much close analysis and practical criticism as have other sorts of written discourse” (Davis & Gates, 1991, 147). They are also valuable because they are regarded by some as the roots of African American literature.

The analysis of early African American narrative and fiction is considered to be difficult for literary critics as academic records have caused confusion in the field. It has been discovered that some narratives were written by enslaved blacks, and some have been found to be African American fiction. Late discoveries have pushed analysts to re-evaluate the narrative of slavery. Graham informs that:

‘Our Nig’ was not identified as an African American novel until 1982; ‘The Bondwoman’s Narrative’ was not discovered to be an African American fiction until 2001. (...) ‘Our Nig’ had been thought to be a novel by a white woman. Another title which had been thought to be a novel by a white woman, was shown in 1981 to be a genuine slave narrative written by an African American woman whose name is now on its cover: Harriet Ann Jacob’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. (Graham, 2004, 17)

There is a discussion on the roots of African American fiction. Some claim that early black writers ignored their past and identity, and they created their literature on the foundations of white literature. Others, however, write that African American literature was unique and independent of that of whites. Graham states that neither is true and continues, “The fact is that the African American fiction is rooted in both, but it owes its distinctiveness to the slave narrative” (Graham, 2004, 18). It is pointed out that African American literature has its uniqueness thanks to the existence of slave narratives. Furthermore, Davis and Gates agree with Graham’s opinion, and they note that “the undeniable fact is that the Afro-American literary tradition takes its start, in

theme certainly but also often in content and form, from the slave narratives” (Davis & Gates, 1991, 168). Hence, the influence of slave narratives on the development of African American literature should not be underestimated.

It can be argued that there is a relationship between the slave narratives and later themes of African American texts. The early writers of slave narratives felt responsible for reflecting the lives of enslaved people in an honest manner. It may have influenced black writers of the next generations as they underwent similar sufferings. To put it another way, “The writer of a slave narrative finds himself in an irresolvably tight bind as a result of the very intention and premise of his narrative, which is to give a picture of slavery as it is” (Davis & Gates, 1991, 150). In their eyes, it was their honorable mission to mirror what they went through at that time. Their devotion to the cause is also described by Frederick Douglass, who writes:

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing a light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds - faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts - and solemnly pledging myself anew to the sacred cause, - I subscribe myself. (Davis & Gates, 1991, 157)

The main themes in the slave narratives are, not surprisingly, literacy, freedom, and self-identity. Other themes, sometimes described as subthemes, are the reality of slavery and the need to abolish it. Here is a good summary of the themes that were used:

What typically happens in the actual narratives, especially the best known and most reliable of them, is that the social theme, the reality of slavery and the necessity of abolishing it, trifurcates on the personal level to become subthemes of literacy, identity, and freedom which, though not obviously and at first sight closely related matters, nevertheless lead into one another in such a way that they end up being altogether interdependent and virtually indistinguishable as thematic strands. (Davis & Gates, 1991, 156)

It is reasonable to claim that all these themes are connected to each other in a narrative. They may even lose their meaning in the context if we attempt to make a separation. The main reason behind the interdependence of these themes may be the fact that they were the main issues of almost all blacks. It does not matter if some of them are more dominant in their narratives. What matters is that they are all shared by a group of people living on the same continent.

African American fiction showed great development in the nineteenth century. It was significant in that black authors were able to get beyond the limits of social and literary environments. The rise in the nineteenth century is also vital for understanding the emphasis on the past and the reality of slavery. Moreover, thematic changes have

been observed since the early twentieth century. It is considered to have resulted from major social and demographic changes. Graham writes that “Since the early twentieth century, the African American novel has paid frequent attention to themes of migration, racial confrontation, and adjustment, and the struggle for human, civil, and equal rights” (Graham, 2004, 6). It is possible to infer that African American writers have adapted themselves to the current conditions of their time, and they have reflected those conditions in their stories or novels.

It may be regarded as a success of black writers as they have not been overdramatic in reflecting their history of slavery. Graham gives another instance in regard to their adaptation and notes that “Critics such as Houston Baker, Kimberly Benston, Philip Brian Harper, and Craig Werner have questioned the exclusionary tendencies of modernism, preferring instead to revisit the meaning of modernism and modernity in relation to post-Reconstruction African American life” (Graham, 2004, 6). Hence, in addition to writing about issues of their community, they have also contributed to the improvement of literary movements.

After the occurrence of the slave narratives, African American literature has evolved into a powerful area of representation for black people. Thanks to the authors who have successfully put emphasis on their social issues, they have found a place in the world of literature. Their life stories and real challenges have been fictionalized, and in this way, African Americans have indirectly shared their sufferings.

1.5.2. AAVE in Literature

The use of AAVE in literature is important because it can be a rich representation of the speech of black people, and it can depict their struggle to preserve their speech. Some African American writers reflected the use of AAVE accurately, while others chose to manipulate the dialect and deceive readers. Hurston writes that “If we are to believe the majority of writers of Negro dialect and burnt-cork artists, Negro speech is a weird thing, full of ‘ams’ and ‘Ises.’ Fortunately, we don’t have to believe them” (Green, 2002, 164). In addition to the manipulations and misleading, language was also used to prevent the development of authentic black folk. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. claims, “The concern to depict the quest of the black-speaking subject

to find his or her voice has been a repeated topos of the black tradition” (Gilyard, 1996, 31). It is valuable that this endeavor has also found a place in literary tradition.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, little analysis was done about the dialect use in literary works in American literature. It was thought by many that different dialects did not exist in literature. Ives notes that, in the past, authors believed “(...) that there are no true dialects in America... so far as dialects have been utilized for literary purposes. One may say that there have been only two forms of speech in America, the more or less formal standard and the more or less informal colloquial” (Ives, 1955, 88). In contrast to such beliefs, later research revealed that AAVE is a whole different dialect, and it has been widely used for literary purposes.

The representations of AAVE in early literature, from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, indicate that there were certain patterns in the language system, and they were pointed at by different authors. It is also important to note that the prominent characteristics attributed to African Americans today might be different than those attributed until the twentieth century. Green informs that “One final point is that even when there did not seem to be differences between pronunciations by black characters and general American English, the author makes distinctions by using eye dialect, setting black speech apart from general American English” (Green, 2002, 178). Eye dialect is the intentional use of nonstandard spelling for mainstream pronunciation, and it may help readers distinguish between who is black and who is not in the story.

The use of AAVE in literature became even more important during the Harlem Renaissance. In that period, “(...) writers used events, experiences, and expressions of black lives as their subjects” (Green, 2002, 178). Although there were attempts to depict the lives and language of black people before that period, it was not until the Harlem Renaissance that writers encompassed a systematic manner in that respect. Some authors considered AAVE as a representation of the stereotypical and underclass black community. Nonstandard forms were used to show social inferiority. Ives notes that “(...) social distinctions are indicated by two devices. One is the density of frequency of the nonstandard forms; the other is the choice of nonstandard forms. In general, the greater the density, the lower the class” (Ives, 1955, 89). This view is thought to be unreasonable because the so-called nonstandard forms are indeed

characteristics of AAVE. The use of such forms does not mean that black speech is a sign of ignorance or incompetence.

On the other hand, other authors like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston were two prominent authors who did not pay much attention to mainstream English. Instead, they concentrated more on the life and language of black people. Regarding their use of AAVE, Green writes that “Hurston uses a fair amount of phonological, syntactic, semantic and lexical features in her representation of AAVE. She does indeed use eye dialect, but not to the exclusion of consistent spellings that are intended to represent the pronunciations of African Americans in her works” (Green, 2002, 178). Compared to the early literature, a more comprehensive approach is applied in her use of the language. As for Langston Hughes, we may observe some differences from that of Hurston’s representation of AAVE. Green informs that “(...) the immediately obvious difference is that there is a considerable decrease in eye dialect in Hughes’s writing, which means less focus on spelling manipulations to convey the message that pronunciation in black speech is actually different from that in general American English” (Green, 2002, 185). There are also similarities in Hughes’s representation in the use of lexical items, syntactic patterns, and variations of verb forms. Their contributions are thus valuable as a milestone in depicting black lives and their language use.

After the end of the Harlem Renaissance, the representation of AAVE continued in different forms and with different themes and aesthetic approaches. Graham makes an overall description of the novel of that period and writes that “Collectively, the novels are notable for their concentration on contemporary life and its social and cultural instability – its modernity” (Graham, 2004, 50). The use of double negation, negative inversion, lexical and syntactic variations, and eye dialect is also common in works written since then. Current literary works may also exhibit these features in African American literature. For some authors, it was admitted that “(...) writing of conversation in literary dialect seems truer and more natural than writing of it in the literary standard” (Ives, 1955, 96). This is one of the main motives for African American authors to write their literary texts with black speech forms. Besides being a natural way of writing, the use of vernacular language is helpful for understanding the dynamics of the black community. As Green notes that “(...) representations in the

literature can give us more insight into what features are taken to be associated with black speech” (Green, 2002, 198). All in all, the analysis of these representations has the potential to increase the literary value of written texts in a number of ways.

1.6. The Black Movement

White supremacy in the United States was a commonly accepted norm until the mid-twentieth century. African Americans were not in control of their lives and were mainly forced to do whatever they were told. Social, cultural, and political pressures left African Americans no other choice than to accept their inferiority. The superiority of whites invaded all parts of their lives:

White power meant more than whites controlling the world within which blacks had to live. White power was able to reach into the black community itself and to shape it, to help determine the goals the black community sought, the means devised to seek these goals, the leadership the black community had, the kinds of personal options blacks often felt they had, and even the view that blacks had of themselves. (Bloom J. M., 2019, 157)

Slavery brought about a control mechanism to use on blacks. Any ordinary white person could stop black people on the road and ask for their pass to prove that they had permission to be outside their masters’ property. Waldrep writes, "Uncooperative blacks, those that fled rather than present their pass or explain themselves, could be shot” (Waldrep, 2009, 4). It demonstrates how unvalued the lives of blacks were in the eyes of whites.

The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 gave hope to some African Americans. They believed that the new president could put an end to brutal actions taken against them. Yet, the new management was undesired by whites, particularly by those in the South. Waldrep writes that “Lincoln and his fellow Republicans centralized power in ways that alarmed whites who were comfortable with slavery as a system that not only produced wealth but also disciplined supposedly savage African Americans” (Waldrep, 2009, 4). The beginning of Reconstruction, the strategy to reshape the South after the Civil War, was another beacon of hope for blacks in that region. Although the government took control of much of the lands and centralized the South, conservative white rulers continued to implement racist policies. Blacks were subjected to “harshly discriminatory laws that mimicked slavery” (Waldrep, 2009, 4). The attitudes were a bad copy of those experienced during slavery. These policies pushed Congress to take action, and they seized control of the region in 1876.

After the elections in 1876, the civil rights issue started to lose its significance for some African Americans in the North. On the other hand, the situation was entirely different in the South. The Congress agreed on “(...) acting to provide the Afro-American with freedom, equality, and the vote,” but there was a contradiction as it also “(...) permitted the white South to reduce him to a state of peonage, to disregard his rights, and to disenfranchise him by force, intimidation, and statute” (Sitkoff, 1978, 4). The Supreme Court followed the same path, and they did not implement the alterations designated in the new statutes. African Americans were promised to be protected against disproportionate use of force, but this was not the case. Sitkoff informs that “The Supreme Court denied blacks of protection of the Fourteenth Amendment in all cases except those of official discrimination, and affirmed the power of the individual states to control suffrage requirements” (Sitkoff, 1978, 4). In this way, they allowed racial discrimination in the South instead of preventing it.

Discrimination and segregation became permanent notions in the South. African Americans were helpless, and their difficulties turned into an inevitable way of life. At the beginning of the twentieth century, “More than 90 percent of the Afro-Americans lived in the South, three-quarters of them in rural areas” (Sitkoff, 1978, 10). Some of them fled to the North, and some attempted to return to Africa. Those who fled to the North cannot be assumed lucky, either. Sitkoff informs that “Few who followed the North Star found the Promised Land. Most found squalor, discrimination by labor unions and employees, decayed housing milked by white slumlords, and enmity between white policemen and the black community” (Sitkoff, 1978, 31). Most African Americans thus stayed in the South and obeyed the cruel governance. A minority of Northern elite blacks carried on their civil rights protests, but they were ignored by others. Their endeavors were mostly in vain because they “(...) lacked adequate finances, political leverage, the support of most blacks, influential white allies, and access to the major institutions shaping public opinion and policy” (Sitkoff, 1978, 11).

It was not until the 1920s that African Americans’ sufferings were noticed by a larger group of people. A new notion called the New Negro emerged in that decade. Bloom informs that “It emerged at least partly as a result of blacks having proven themselves fighting in World War I and in response to the spectacular rise of racism

that emerged” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 158). The New Negro was different. After they fought in Europe and returned to the United States, they became more courageous and exhibited fragments of self-emancipation. As Bloom describes, “The New Negro was in the North was independent of whites, aggressive, and insistent upon equality, and had cast off the sense of black inferiority” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 158). However, the emergence of the New Negro in the South was observed three decades later. Only then could African Americans raise nationwide awareness about their discrimination.

African Americans in the West were in a more advanced position compared to those living in the South. Thanks to their determination, they were successful in some of their attempts to increase the efficiency of the civil rights movement. Daniels states that “In California, civil rights activities of Afro-Americans resulted in some victories. During Reconstruction, as a result of their own efforts, and with the aid of their white friends, Black San Franciscans won the right to attend unsegregated public schools” (Daniels, 1990, 50). To increase their social and political power, they founded organizations and social clubs. Some prominent constitutions of their organizations were “(...) the California Colored Conventions, the Executive Committee of San Francisco, the California Colored Citizens’ State Union, the Afro-American League, and the NAACP” (Daniels, 1990, 50). These organizations helped them get a voice in political environments.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) played an important role in the making of a more active African American community. Flamming informs that “The NAACP would focus its efforts on change through the legal system, and it would score landmark victories during the 1940s and 1950s” (Flamming, 2009, 202). Its most significant resistance was against the restrictive covenants that limited Afro-Americans’ freedom in many ways. Moreover, the NAACP struggled for equal terms in public housing since the statutes were in favor of whites, and blacks were deprived of the right to choose where to reside. They could by no means live in a neighborhood with a white majority. The efforts of the NAACP reached a solution, and “(...) the San Francisco Superior Court Judge ruled that the neighborhood pattern was illegal and a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution” (Flamming, 2009, 205). In the end, African Americans were entitled to partly take residence in a white-only district.

Besides NAACP, the Urban League and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) fought for socio-economic equality with protests and actions of civil disobedience (Flamming, 2009, 202). In Los Angeles, African Americans became more successful at finding well-paid jobs. They also outnumbered Northern California African Americans, and they increased their political influence in this way. Blacks in Bay Area gained important civil rights because of their activities in civil life and in politics in the first decades of the twentieth century. Daniels gives some examples of their achievements:

Leon F. Marsh became Berkeley's first Black mail carrier; in the 1920s, Blacks joined Oakland's fire department, although they were segregated in their own firehouse. In the 1940s, Ruth Acty became a teacher in the Berkeley school district, and a black man earned a position in that city's fire department. The writer and actress Maya Angelou became the first Black conductor on a San Francisco cable car in the 1940s. (Daniels, 1990, 52)

These improvements provided blacks with better living conditions, better wages, and partial social acceptance in society. However, they failed to start businesses with high and stable incomes. They faced communal and regional challenges. Daniels notes that “The disadvantages of a group close to slavery, lacking skills and knowledge suitable for big business, and the size of the Negro population thwarted enterprise in both business and politics” (Daniels, 1990, 52). Because of their drawbacks, they could not compete with other entrepreneurs in the West. It is nevertheless a fact that the living conditions in the West altered for African Americans positively. According to Daniels, it was related to three factors, and those were “(...) labor needs in war-related industries, increased activism among the growing Black population, and federal regulations limiting discriminatory hiring” (Daniels, 1990, 52).

The conditions in the South were still severe when compared to the North and the West. African Americans were under great pressure, both socially and politically. They had not yet become the New Negro, as Bloom informs that “It was another three decades until the New Negro began to appear in the South to present a significant challenge to the old style of black accommodation to white power” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 158). Southern blacks were also exposed to a more brutal version of white superiority than blacks in the North and the West. However, things would soon change in their region as well, and they would realize that a fundamental change was possible.

The New Negro in the South emerged after the end of World War II. The socio-economic changes in society helped African Americans change their mindset, and they became more conscious of their race and pride. Bloom writes about the effects of war

“(…) it opened up jobs for blacks, took them off the farms, and set them in the cities. (…) the war exposed blacks to education and to the world and made them more cosmopolitan” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 172). One of the most prominent riots in the 1950s happened in Prince Edward County. It was planned and executed by African American students, and it was an indicator of what was to come in the near future. They were more courageous than ever and thought that “(…) the jail was not big enough to hold them all and that, as long as they stayed together, none would be punished” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 172). After that, the *Brown* decision was implemented by the Supreme Court, and it declared that racial segregation of students in public schools was against the law. Blacks were filled with joy, as they defined that day as a black Monday and the day that they won. Martin Luther King Jr. expressed the importance of the *Brown* decision by saying that “This decision brought hope to millions of disinherited Negroes who had formerly dared only to dream of freedom” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 176). It was a beacon of hope for African Americans on their way to emancipation. Flammig also notes that “Throughout the nation, many whites panicked, and in the South, they organized Massive Resistance movement to fight against this Second Reconstruction. *Brown* thus set the stage for the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which would move beyond the courts and into the streets” (Flammig, 2009, 208).

Shortly after the *Brown* decision, protests against discrimination and segregation increased in the nation. One of them occurred in Montgomery, Alabama, when a woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for violating bus segregation laws. It then spread to other districts, and other blacks gave support with a boycott. The NAACP filed suit against the segregation law, and blacks won an important victory. Following that event, Martin Luther King became a national figure of blacks on television, and it is stated that “His melodic voice, good looks, and rhetoric of nonviolent social change gave black civil rights a new and positive image in America” (Flammig, 2009, 208). As a representative of blacks, King expressed the sufferings of African Americans with plain and strong language. He was well aware of the demeaning influence of white supremacy on blacks, as he stated that “Many Negroes came to the point of losing faith in themselves. They came to feel that perhaps they were less than human. The great tragedy of physical slavery was that it led to mental

slavery” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 192). For this reason, he believed that human dignity was essential because blacks could resist if mental slavery was demolished.

Another prominent protest started with sit-ins. Flammig states that “All across the South, thousands began to ‘sit in’ where they had not been allowed: the lunch counter, the ground floor of movie theaters, and the white-only waiting room of bus stations” (Flammig, 2009, 210). These protests were examples of nonviolent civil disobedience. When the protests were growing, John F. Kennedy was running his campaign for the elections. Martin Luther King was arrested and jailed at the time, and Kennedy needed the votes of blacks to win. Thus, he declared his support for civil rights movements, and King was set free. The prominent black organizations and their civil rights campaigns were all on the news: The Freedom Rides, Mississippi Summer, Birmingham, the March on Washington, and Selma (Flammig, 2009, 211). They became the symbols of racial liberalism, and King’s *I Have a Dream* speech attracted the attention of the whole world. It is widely accepted as a turning point in the history of African Americans. The struggle of blacks continued until the Southern racist political system was reformed in favor of their civil rights. Despite all the efforts and victories, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John and Robert Kennedy spread fear in African American society. As a result, it became more challenging to continue the civil rights movement because Miller informs that “People were afraid to have their emotions hanging out and to attach themselves to heroes” (Miller, 2010, 148).

1.7. Afro-American Feminism

African American feminism or black feminism can be defined as a “woman’s movement that addresses the issues of racism and sexism as they oppress African American women” (Bailey, 2014, 83). Most African American women avoid being called feminists because they think it is a white woman’s movement. However, some critics believe that the life of a black woman should be a study of feminism as her existence is an example of resistance (Bailey, 2014, 83). It is also thought to emerge as a reaction against the male-dominated African American history, as black women have often been ignored in studies about the history of slavery and emancipation. Despite their support for the civil rights movement, “African American women were

repelled by the male chauvinism and sexism exhibited by male Black Power advocates” (Franklin, 2002, 434). Some critics, such as Blassingame and Genovese, are criticized for their statements in this regard. For instance, Blassingame refers to “slave personality types that emerged from an analysis of male political activity,” and his works are filled with “references to slaves’ attempts to preserve enough manhood to rebel” (Higginbotham & Watts, 1988, 13). His perspective is believed to lack sufficient consideration of the efforts of Black women. Similarly, the work of Genovese is found misleading in that it gives great interest to “(...) Blacks’ earliest social networks where men played important roles in organizing work and leisure and accommodating to the imperatives of plantation authority” but, on the other hand, it underrates the important role of black women they played in resistance (Higginbotham & Watts, 1988, 13). It is also known that religion was a significant factor in the resistance, and blacks benefited from it to strengthen their solidarity. Black women’s contributions are said to be ignored here because neither of them addressed their “roles in religious organizations, illegal prayer meetings, and other social groupings” (Higginbotham & Watts, 1988, 14). Such undervaluing is one of the motivations that has led researchers to focus more on black feminism.

While some critics place African American feminism at the center of defending women’s rights, others assert that it is more about defending the rights of African Americans. On the one hand, the forms of resistance in black women’s cultural history are believed to be predecessors of feminism; on the other, the issue of racism is given great attention in the emergence of African American feminism. As a supporter of the former side, Collins believes that “African American women have always been about the business of feminism under the guise of resistance” (Bailey, 2014, 84). Such perspective puts the emphasis on the fighting of black women for their rights as a woman. Conversely, being a supporter of the latter view, Cade “puts the rights of African Americans first and women second, although they may cross-cut one another” (Bailey, 2014, 85). This mentality considers racism as the focal point of black feminism.

Different perspectives on black feminism prove that it is not a monistic movement but a multisided one. It is believed by some that any attempts to separate their gender from their race could harm the fundamentals of black feminism. Feminists

often claim that black feminism is for African American women only, but “the literature seems to set forth that while black feminism is for African American women, its design is a practical all-purpose battle plan against racism and sexism” (Bailey, 2014, 85). Henceforth, it seems more plausible to embrace black feminism in terms of women's rights, gender issues, and racism.

Many African American women complained about the sexist prejudgments they faced in the past. They expressed the masculinist oppression during the civil rights movement in their writings. It is mentioned in an essay written by activist Frances Beale:

Since the advent of Black Power, the Black male has exerted a more prominent leadership role in our struggle for justice in this country. He sees the system for what it is for the most part, but where he rejects its values and mores on many issues when it comes to women, he seems to take his guidelines from the pages of the Ladies Home Journal. Certain Black men are maintaining that they have been castrated by society but that Black women somehow escaped this persecution and even contributed to the emasculation. (Franklin, 2002, 435)

While African Americans were in pursuit of gaining civil rights, black women were mostly ignored by black men. They even became the slave of a slave, and those who looked down on black women were accused of undermining the movement. It was an unfair act to claim that black women had little to do in the movement, and it was also common to overestimate the efforts of black men. It is noted in Eaton's book that “(...) while increased male participation and persuasive rhetoric identifying the black man as ‘king’ increased notoriety and garnered mass support for various organizations, the success was contingent upon female subjugation” (Eaton, 2008, 1). The psychological domination of black men in pursuing freedom was evident, and the oppression grew bigger. Moreover, it is put forward that black women were occasionally regarded as potential damage to the movement, as Eaton writes that “the mythical Strong Black Woman, who exists through a rejection of male domination and systematic gender oppression, is deemed a detriment to the progress of the Black community because of her overbearing demeanor and emasculating tendencies” (Eaton, 2008, 2). This analysis is supported by other critics. For instance, Beale writes that “those who are exerting their manhood by telling black women to step back into a domestic, submissive role are assuming a counter-revolution position” (Franklin, 2002, 435). It was necessary for every man and woman to take part in protests against the oppression of whites. The unjust exclusion of black women, based on their gender, from the civil rights movement both damaged the process and bothered African American women.

The idea that feminism emerged for white women was common among black women. They believed that their troubles and sufferings were not adequately addressed by white feminists and that feminism was about the white woman's problems. Simien writes about white feminism "Its membership and leadership treated the interests of black women as secondary to their own by excluding them from the movement's agenda" (Simien, 2004, 317). Although feminism was supposed to embrace the common interests of all women, women of color were initially absent in the movement. A black activist expresses her feelings about feminism by stating that "Basically it is a white thing. All the officers are white. The spokespersons are white. I know what feminism means, but it is how it is handled. It is a horse of a different color" (Bailey, 2014, 88). They felt the discomfort that black women stayed in the background and white women were in charge of everything. A black activist named Barbara Omolade wrote in her letter of resignation that "Racism at the Women's Action Alliance is pervasive, subtle, and devious (...) It makes effective work from Black women a minor miracle" (Franklin, 2002, 441). In addition, black women were uncomfortable with the issues that white women protested because they faced much worse challenges throughout the years under slavery. Bailey notes that "African American women have been feminists for a long time, and because of their long-term stance of resistance, they are not always understanding of the semi-resistance stance of other women" (Bailey, 2014, 89). African American women had been abused in many ways by white men for many years, so white feminism could not easily convince them to be a natural movement. Another issue was that black women believed that they were different from white women as there used to be a hierarchy. In this hierarchy, African American women belonged to the lower class, and white women were considered superior because of their color. The issue of race is thus evident in the study of black feminism.

African American feminism has been highly influenced by race and gender issues. Black women have had to deal with difficulties because of their color and sex, in addition to other burdens they bear. Simien asserts that "African American women are subject to multiple burdens – joblessness and domestic violence, teen pregnancy and illiteracy, poverty, and malnutrition – that define their cumulative experience with race and gender oppression in the United States" (Simien, 2004, 324). They have suffered both from sexism within the black civil rights movement and racism within

the feminist movement. Henceforth, the black feminist consciousness has emerged as a recognition of black women's challenges, and it aims to raise awareness about their social, racial, and gender discrimination.

1.8. The Harlem, Its Success, and Its Failure

The Harlem Renaissance is generally known as a movement of black artists that emerged in the 1920s and ended shortly afterward. There have been different vocabularies of the movement since its emergence. There are also some critics who "(...) contend that the Renaissance never existed; others concede its reality, but favor such names as New Negro Movement or black modernism" (Mitchell, 2010, 641). Yet, the most accepted and popular term is the Harlem Renaissance today. Although the movement emerged in the 1920s, "the term did not gain popularity until the 1960s" (Mitchell, 2010, 641). The change from the Negro Renaissance to the Harlem Renaissance was not only terminological, but it also influenced how the movement was perceived regarding race and art.

In the 1920s, there were many black writers and critics who rejected the term Negro Renaissance. They believed that such terminology was unrealistic and misleading. One of the black writers, Hubert Harrison, who argued against the term, stated that "Those who think that there is (renaissance) are usually people who are blissfully ignorant of the stream of literary and artistic products which have flowed uninterruptedly from Negro writers from 1850 to the present (the 1920s)" (Mitchell, 2010, 646). Another objection came from Wallace Thurman, who believed that "no black renaissance could exist independent of an American renaissance" (Mitchell, 2010, 646). He asserted that there was an interrelation between these two developments, and the Negro Renaissance could not be evaluated as a different norm. He also held that it was only natural that American white and black authors took a literary interest in the black community as a part of society.

Alain Locke, the author of *The New Negro*, was a prominent figure in the movement. He laid stress on the significance of Africa as a source of artistic inspiration and rejected contemporary trends. In this sense, the Renaissance "(...) allowed African American artists and writers to think of their art according to independent criteria defined by the determination to separate themselves from the mainstream culture"

(Zabunyan, 2002, 424). African American artists and authors were shown a different and original direction where they could express their social realities. While Alain Locke is regarded as the pioneer of the term Harlem Renaissance, he did not use the term in his writings. He first used the New Negro, but later changed it to the Negro Renaissance in order to better describe the literary improvement. Locke suggested that “The Negro Renaissance was limited neither to Harlem nor to the decade of the 1920s” (Mitchell, 2010, 644). In his opinion, the 1920s were only the first years of the movement, and it would continue throughout the twentieth century. Besides, Locke did not limit the Negro Renaissance to black artists alone. He admitted the importance of the contributions of black authors, yet he believed that “(...) black culture had become material for all American artists, regardless of their race” (Mitchell, 2010, 645). In a sense, his concept of the Negro Renaissance was interracial and national. The literary products would be analyzed in terms of their content, and the authors' race would not make any difference. However, some critics misunderstood this concept. They focused only on black artists in their analysis, thus ignoring the interracial dimension. The concept was racialized “(...) and it was consistently applied to the race of the artist rather than the content of the art” (Mitchell, 2010, 648). The misunderstandings spread over the nation and European countries, which led to the confinement of the term to African American artists.

1.8.1. Its Success

The Harlem Renaissance is considered a milestone in the history of African Americans. From the perspectives of art and literature, it was an age of great advancement for black people. Before the beginning of the Renaissance, African Americans had already shown presence in the production of music, poetry, and novels. However, the prominent feature of the Renaissance was that “(...) never before had they done so much, at such a fast pace, and with such confidence and enthusiasm,” and many of them believed that “(...) this cultural explosion would show white America what remarkable things blacks could do and thus lead to greater equality” (Howes, 2000, 5). The Harlem was a stage for African Americans to prove their artistic and literary quality. It also gave them a chance to stand against the stereotypes,

discrimination, and segregation concerning their whole community. Bloom describes this period:

This period was the comet's tail of a great cultural ferment in the nation, the melting pot era, a period of the ascendancy of unbridled free enterprise, of the open beginnings of class struggle and new feeble mutterings of self-conscious labor; of muckrakers and social settlements, of the open and unabashed acceptance of inferior and superior races and civilizations. (Bloom H. , 2004, 167)

Black people questioned their place in American society, and they expanded their self-awareness. Likewise, black artists exhibited their capabilities with novels, poems, and musical work. They all had a common purpose; to reinforce black cultural development. Howes claims that “(...) the Harlem Renaissance had a profound impact on American culture” because he suggests that “It gave African Americans something to be proud of, to learn from, and to build upon” (Howes, 2000, 5). Thanks to the Harlem, African Americans were able to increase their credibility in the fields of art, literature, and music.

1.8.2. Its Failure

Although the Harlem Renaissance is marked as a significant movement in African American intellectual history, it failed to become a permanent norm. The question of why the Harlem Renaissance failed is a subject of analysis among critics. Nathan Huggins believes that “(...) the Harlem Renaissance failed because it remained provincial. Its spokespersons, unfortunately, accepted the province of race as a domain in which to forge a New Negro identity” (Baker, 1987, 89). He adds that African Americans are nothing other than Americans, and it is unreasonable and unnecessary to make a distinction between them in terms of race. In Huggins's view, African Americans “(...) needed only to claim their *patria*, their nativity as American citizens” (Baker, 1987, 89). According to him, race was not the focal point in the Harlem Renaissance, and its relation with race undermined progress.

Huggins emphasizes provinciality as a reason for Harlem's failure, whereas his contemporary historian David Levering Lewis takes an opposing side. Lewis holds that the nativity or the *patria* was never there to claim for African Americans, and they turned to art because “(...) it was the only area in America – from an Afro-American perspective – where the color line had not been rigidly drawn” (Baker, 1987, 90). Art was regarded by them as a step for social and cultural development. However, Lewis notes that it was all an illusion of intellectuals because advanced art could not change

the fact that “(...) black men and women, regardless of their educational and artistic accomplishments, would always be poorer, more brutally treated, and held in lower esteem than their white counterparts” (Baker, 1987, 90). Racial discrimination, according to Lewis, was inevitable, and art alone would not be a way of solution. He continues that the most striking characteristic of the Harlem movement was not the poems or interracial gatherings, but instead the Harlem riot that proved that the artistic advancement was an illusion and that “(...) the renaissance was fated to end with a bang of enraged failure” (Baker, 1987, 91). After all, he suggests that African Americans would not simply take progress with their exceptional authors, poets, or playwrights.

The tragedy of black people was ignored no matter how hard authors tried to give a voice in their writings. The New Negro was overlooked by American whites. The awareness of the black community slightly increased with the Harlem Renaissance, but most American citizens regarded it as a “(...) great playground,” being a rival to Paris. The primary themes and messages of Harlem were kept in the background, as Osofsky notes, “Whatever seemed thrilling, bizarre or sensuous about Harlem life was made a part of the community’s image; whatever was tragic about it, ignored” (Osofsky, 1965, 235). The jazz clubs were seen as places to have unlimited entertainment with black women; the cabarets were correlated with Harlem in the eyes of white intellectuals; the theaters were places for them to have an eyeful of colored women. Hence, the motives of Harlem deviated, and it was abused by society.

After the Great Depression, the dream of the New Negro came to a sudden end. Most black authors gave up writing, and those who continued could find few readers. The illusion of the 1920s was left behind, and the black ghetto was uncovered with all its harsh reality. Locke describes this period, “The rosy enthusiasms and hopes of 1925 were cruelly deceptive mirages,” and about the ghetto, he continues, “(...) a Harlem that the social worker knew all along but had not been able to dramatize... There is no cure or saving magic in poetry and art for precarious marginal employment, high mortality rates, civil neglect” (Osofsky, 1965, 238). The depression first revealed the hidden face of the Harlem, and then it devastated its illusional world. Langston Hughes wrote that “The depression brought everybody down a peg or two, and the Negroes

had but few pegs to fall” (Osofsky, 1965, 238). The artistic and intellectual adventure of the 1920s was thus over.



CHAPTER II

2. BLACK AMERICANS

2.1. Family Concept

The African American family's structure has been changing since the beginning of slavery in the United States. There are also fundamental similarities between their families in the nineteenth century and those in the twentieth century. To better understand the structure, I will first start the analysis with the slave family characteristics. Then, a comparison will be made with the guidance of the latest research.

During the age of slavery, blacks hardly spent time with their families because of the harsh work conditions. Frazier informs that “The character of the slave family was affected to a large extent by the different aspects of the slave system” (Frazier, *The Negro Slave Family*, 1930, 255). In plantations, enslaved people were usually given small, one-room huts to live in. They can hardly be described as houses that we are accustomed to, and the function of those houses was simple:

Since slave mothers and fathers both customarily labored full-time for the master while their children were supervised by the mistress or by an old slave woman, their cabins merely served as places to sleep and as shelters during inclement weather. Most of their dwellings were obviously designed for these simple purposes, not as centers of active family life. (Rawick, 1972, 77)

Enslaved blacks usually spent their time outdoors. They cooked, had a rest, watched their children play games, and gossiped when they were given a group task, and these were mostly done outside of their homes. However, it is a misbelief that they did not have a normal family life. On the one hand, enslaved blacks fought to keep their families together, but on the other, they were not allowed by some masters. In some cases, the father of the family was sent away from his family while the mother was not. It led to a situation in which “the role of the father was much less significant,” and the mother was more dominant in the household (Rawick, 1972, 78). The father could pay visits to his family in such cases, but the authority was in the mother’s hands. Frazier writes:

Even where the Negro father was recognized and played a conspicuous part with the family, he often had the status of a mere visitor when he was on another plantation. When he was on the same plantation, his authority was always limited, and in a crisis, the mother stood out as

the more secure symbol of parental authority and affection. (Frazier, *The Negro Slave Family*, 1930, 258)

Although Rawick finds Frazier's statements to be truthful, he argues that "(...) the bond between the slave father and his children appears stronger than Frazier indicated" (Rawick, 1972, 79). The regular visits of the father when he is sent to another plantation show that they do not easily cut ties with his family. There is also a strong rejection of the common beliefs that the African-American family is rooted in the polygamous African family or that it is a corrupt version of the European-American family structure. As Rawick notes, "The Afro-American family under slavery was part of a distinct, viable black culture, adapted to slavery and deprivation" (Rawick, 1972, 79). The African American family is said to have strong family relationships among its members. In parallel, Frazier writes that "Probably one evidence of the strength of the family was the fact that the threat to sell the children, or the mother or the father from the family was always a potent form of control" (Frazier, 1930, 255). The master was also aware of their strong familial bond, and they used it against them when necessary. The significance of the family is also emphasized by Blassingame's book, as he notes that "The family, while it had no legal existence in slavery, was in actuality one of the most important survival mechanisms for the slave" (Blassingame, 1979, 151).

Enslaved blacks were not allowed to make legal marriage contracts, but it did not change the fact that the family structure was valued. It was well expressed by Blassingame that "The important thing was not that the family was not recognized legally or the masters frequently encouraged monogamous mating arrangements in the quarters only when it was convenient to do so, but rather that some form of family life did exist among slaves" (Blassingame, 1979, 151). Frazier agrees with him, and he writes that "There were a variety of socially approved and culturally sanctioned relationships between men and women as well as less structured sexual contacts which led to the birth of progeny" (Frazier, 1930, 79). Thus, the family relationships of enslaved blacks played an important role in the making of the black community.

The slave family performed a number of traditional family functions, although it maintained big differences between free blacks and whites. Raising their children was an essential mission for the slave parents, as they acknowledged their situation, taught the values of their community, and encouraged them to boost their self-esteem.

Monogamy was encouraged by the masters because of their religious beliefs, but it was mainly preferred to control their slaves. Blassingame informs that “A black man, they reasoned, who loved his wife and his children was less likely to be rebellious or to run away than would a single slave” (Blassingame, 1979, 151). When there was an attempt by slaves to run away, threatening them of being separated from their families was enough to stop them, and it would make them more submissive.

There have been both changes and continuities in African American family structure since the beginning of slavery. After emancipation, new social, political, and economic circumstances altered some characteristics of the black family, but some of them remained the same. It is argued that “(...) if one studies African families of the sixteenth century or the twentieth century, one would find remarkable similarities in the institutional features described” (Sudarkasa, 1980, 38). For instance, concepts of the oneness of being or survival of the tribe are believed to exist in different forms. However, some features, such as extended families and polygamy, which were derived from the African continent, have been lost in the black community in the last century.

The black family had several problems in the twentieth century. One of them was the high rate of illegitimacy, which was linked to some factors such as “(...) their general moral degradation and lack of family control” (Frazier, 1928, 50). It naturally affected their occupational life, and they mostly worked in hard labor. Another issue was desertion among black people. There were cultural and familial differences between the blacks who migrated to a place and those who were previously residents in the area. The differences brought issues to the family. In some cases, the family could lose its integrity, and one of the parents would neglect the family. Yet, it is claimed that “This does not deny the existence of stable life among sections of the Negro population in the South. (...) The change to the city environment is responsible for the loss of stability” (Frazier, 1928, 51). For this reason, it is possible to state that environmental factors had influence over black families, but mostly they preserved the values that were inherited from the past.

2.2. African Americans in the West

It was not until the end of World War II that many African Americans started to live in the West. A number of migrants tried to escape poverty in the Southern states, such as Arkansas and Louisiana. The conditions of the war resulted in the largest migration of African Americans to the West, particularly to San Francisco, “(...) a city whose pre-war African American population was 4.846 or less than 1% of the City’s total population” (Miller, 2010, 6). Black Americans, mostly the young ones, were in search of better-paid jobs and more developed civil rights. For this reason, they migrated to San Francisco to benefit from job opportunities and to run away from racist attitudes in the South. However, racist hostilities followed them in their new residential area, and they were even humiliated by none other than blacks who were already residents in the city. In this manner, Miller cites that “Established black residents were often condescending toward black migrants or criticized their behavior as uncivil or countrified” (Miller, 2010, 8). Newcomers were also blamed for the increase in racial discrimination. It is a surprising fact that African Americans who fled racism in the South were exposed to discrimination by other African Americans in the West.

The white hostility against African Americans in the West was another difficulty in their new environment. New occupational chances were provided to blacks, but racism was continued by whites. Flamming writes that “Basic jobs in industrial plants and basic clerical jobs in offices were opened to African Americans for the first time, giving westerners a new measure of economic stability and a new sense of dignity” (Flamming, 2009, 192). However, it led to another issue because whites thought that the government betrayed them and that they lost their privilege in society. It is not surprising that “(...) white residents were less than thrilled with the City’s burgeoning African American community and once newcomers established themselves in San Francisco there was no hiding from racial animosity” (Miller, 2010, 8). After that, newcomer African Americans were forced to reside in older neighborhoods in the city, and multiethnic neighborhoods were replaced by overcrowded ghettos of blacks. Despite its benefits for the migrants, the migration wave destroyed the black urban life in the West. American whites had already developed restrictive laws to inhibit Chinese people from residing in certain areas, and they applied a similar approach to the blacks. Daniels informs that:

Restrictive covenants played an important role in preventing migrants from locating in certain neighborhoods of the city. White property owners agreed not to sell to non-Caucasians, in covenants that were part of an old San Francisco tradition, first developed to keep the Chinese in Chinatown. After the Japanese left the city in early 1942, white San Franciscans became especially concerned about preventing "invasions." (Daniels, 1990, 169)

Black residents in the West resisted racist attitudes to gain civil rights. They were determined to gain those rights that many Americans already held. To that end, "They fought for basic housing rights. They fought for basic employment rights. They fought for equal treatment in factories and in labor unions" (Flamming, 2009, 193). These endeavors may have served as the initiative of the civil rights movement, although it is commonly believed that the civil rights movement began in the South. In light of such information, it is not unreasonable to root the civil rights movements in the resistance that took place in the post-War West.

The resistance by blacks in the post-War period led to the emergence of racial liberalism. A report published in 1944 concluded that "San Francisco, of all cities in the United States, can least afford to drift along without facing the crisis in race relations. (...) Real racial equality, and the elimination of segregation and discrimination in any form, must be our positive ultimate goal, here in San Francisco above all" (Miller, 2010, 11). It was realized that constitutional modifications were needed for a better adaptation of newcomers. Black activists were insistent on the inclusion of racial equality in the liberal agenda. In the end, white liberals came to an agreement, "and in 1948, the Democratic Party added black civil rights to the official party platform" (Flamming, 2009, 194). It caused a crisis inside the party, and some Democrats in the South decided to leave their party. Yet, it was a victory for the black community living in the West.

The migration of African Americans to the West continued after the end of the War. Their reasons were almost the same as before; better-paid job opportunities and civil rights. Miller notes that there were also social facilities that drew African Americans' attention, as he stated, "Not only were there an abundance of jobs with high wages, there were also a plethora of social, entertainment and business outlets that made for an exciting way of life" (Miller, 2010, 13). In her 1969 autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou describes a district in San Francisco:

On Post Street, where our house was, the hill skidded slowly down to Fillmore, the market heart of our district. In the two short blocks, before it reached its destination, the street housed two day-and-night restaurants, two pool halls, four Chinese restaurants, two gambling houses, plus diners, shoeshine shops, beauty salons, barber shops, and at least four churches. To fully

grasp the never-ending activity in San Francisco's Negro neighborhood during the war, one need only know that the two blocks described were side streets that were duplicated many times over in the eight to ten-square-block area. (Angelou, 2002, 184)

The beauty and liveliness of the city had surely impressed the newcomers. In addition to the better living conditions, the city had a positive effect on their state of mind as well. Angelou writes that “In San Francisco, for the first time, I perceived myself as part of something. Not that I identified with the newcomers, nor with the rare Black descendants of native San Franciscans, nor with the whites or the Asians, but rather with the times and the city” (Angelou, 2002, 184). Along with its other advantages, the West was a great place for the social and emotional well-being of African Americans. However, the great migration brought along some problems, and one of them was housing. It is the focal point of the next subtitle.

2.3. Housing Issues

African Americans went through a massive housing crisis in the post-war period. In the 1950s, many blacks were forced to stay in crowded apartments. Miller informs that “(...) most of the buildings in the Western Addition were designed for three families but that at least %40 housed six or more families who had to share both kitchen and bathroom facilities” (Miller, 2010, 48). Financial difficulties left them no other choice, and it became even more difficult when it was combined with racism. Daniels states that “Black families were more likely to double up in a single dwelling than other San Franciscans. The urban poor use a large proportion of their income for rent, and in this respect Negroes were even worse off than the Chinese, as well as the white residents” (Daniels, 1990, 170). It had severe outcomes such as health issues, indebtedness, municipal expenditures, and insufficient property revenues. No matter how precious life was in San Francisco, African Americans still had to cope with socio-economic challenges. Miller also notes that “(...) nearly 5.000 families and individuals were in need of affordable housing, something that was not only in short supply but, at least for African American San Franciscans, racially rationed” (Miller, 2010, 48). Furthermore, districts with better living conditions were occupied mainly by whites, and blacks were denied to settle in such areas. In this regard, Daniels emphasizes that “The presence of a hardened, set attitude against Negro families having access to more and better living opportunities in areas occupied by whites

prevented the newcomers from a share in the advantages of residency in San Francisco” (Daniels, 1990, 169).

The housing crisis occurred not only for public buildings, but private housing was also a big issue for African Americans. Racial discrimination was one of the primary reasons for the crisis because the government did not see fit to give blacks a loan for housing. The federal government, The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and the banks indirectly ignored the districts where African Americans lived in the majority. Flamming writes that “Nationwide, banks used a uniform system of grading – designating loan applications as safe or unsafe. This system, as it turned out, was determined by race. If blacks lived in an area of the city, bankers classified that area as unsafe for investment” (Flamming, 2009, 198). This segregation excluded black civil rights from the housing system, and blacks were given the message that they were inferior to whites. Flamming adds that “(...) new suburban developments explicitly restricted home ownership to whites only” (Flamming, 2009, 198). These policies brought about overcrowded black ghettos, and it may have disappointed the newcomers, given their great expectations before settling down. Today, housing projects are associated with violence, crime, and poverty due to the racist policies of that time.

The neighborhoods of African Americans were regarded as blighted areas by the authorities, and they were determined to renew those areas. Starting from the 1960s, the federal government made plans to rebuild blighted areas in large cities such as New York, Boston, and San Francisco. The purpose was to replace African Americans in other neighborhoods because some of their districts had the potential to be the financial centers of those cities. As to San Francisco, it was believed that “San Francisco is to the Bay Region what the Island of Manhattan is to the New York Region” (Miller, 2010, 107). Thus, it was essential that the Western Addition, where blacks constituted the majority, would be cleared out. Miller cites the importance of that region:

It is close to the financial district, and contains slopes on which apartments with fine views can be erected. In view of the characteristically low incomes of colored and foreign-born families, only a relatively small portion of them may be expected to be in a position to occupy quarters in the new development.

The interests of the authorities were focused mainly on the recreation of an area with the potential of housing financially stable people who could increase the social

capital of the city. In the years that followed, the situation became even worse as further public housing projects were too expensive for people with moderate incomes. Thus, it was again unlikely for most African Americans to live in redeveloped districts. Miller cites a report stating that “(...) there is a housing crisis in San Francisco particularly affecting old, poor, and Black people” and that “further demolition and displacement will only exacerbate the housing crisis” (Miller, 2010, 125). After all, the African American community lost its cohesion, and what was promised as urban renewal turned into black displacement. The government was after economic interests, and they were not at all concerned with the civil rights of blacks. Their policies were an embodiment of racism and discrimination against African Americans.



CHAPTER III

3. ARGUMENTATIONS

3.1. Discussions on AAVE

One of the most disputed subjects about AAVE is whether it is a language or slang. Although some people believe that AAVE is a language with its own structure and set of rules, others claim that it consists of ungrammatical concepts and slang words. When the Oakland school board put forward that AAVE had to be regarded as a separate language and that African American students would get different education, there were rejections in society. Pullum informs that the school board's effort was misplaced; he writes, "Oakland school board made the mistake of insisting explicitly that it was a separate language" (Pullum, 1999, 43). There was no shame, according to Pullum, in accepting AAVE as a dialect of English. Some examples of African languages have maintained the African syntax and imported the words from English, thus becoming creole languages. However, AAVE is different and is considered a dialect of English. Pullum claims that it is not an insulting thing to say that AAVE is a dialect, and he adds that "AAVE as a dialect of English still deserves respect and acceptance" (45). Mufwene adopts a similar position, and he notes that "(...) Black English is not different enough from standard English to pose any significant obstacle to speaking, reading, or writing it. Black English is simply a dialect of English, just as standard English is" (Mufwene, 2001, 26). From my point of view, AAVE should be treated the same as the other dialects of English. There should be no double standards, as it is a known fact that AAVE has a wide range of speakers in the United States. Despite its differences from SE, it should still be regarded as a respectable dialect of English.

The origin of AAVE is another issue that is debated among scholars. There are various theories about its inception; the Anglicist, the creolist, and the neo-Anglicist hypotheses are prominent ones. The Anglicist hypothesis suggests that AAVE is derived from the British dialects and that African Americans adopted the speech of British people to be able to communicate with the local people in the Southern region. Supporters of this theory found similarities between the speech patterns of white and

black people who lived in the same locality. The Anglicist approach was challenged by the creolist hypothesis, which suggests that AAVE is derived from creoles that originated in the African diaspora. The creolists disclaim the linguistic interaction between white and black folks, and they put forward that structural differences of AAVE are the result of creole transfers that continued for generations. In opposition to the creolist approach, the neo-Anglicist theory emerged. It possessed a mutual common point with the Anglicist theory, stating that AAVE was similar to the speech of white people in the postcolonial era. However, it also adds that AAVE has shown differentiations since then, and it rejects the influence of creoles. Labov, as a supporter of the neo-Anglicist theory, writes that “The creole affinities of AAVE and the creole-like structural properties that we do observe are not to be accounted for by direct transmission, but by the more subtle process of substrate influence and by parallel drift or development” (Labov, 2022, 130). My personal opinion on this matter is that the neo-Anglicist theory maintains a better and wider comprehension of the situation of AAVE. One reason is that it does not entirely ignore the influence of creoles but rather takes it as a mere step of development. Another reason is that it accepts the historical connection between AAVE and whites, and it highlights AAVE’s process of change that has continued to this day. The change is what makes AAVE different from other dialects spoken in the United States.

The attitude towards AAVE in American society has been a complex subject. The acceptance of AAVE as a formal dialect of English has been hardly achieved not only by whites but by black Americans as well. African Americans have their reasons for avoiding such acceptance. They assume that regarding AAVE as a formal dialect means it is different from SE and that such differentiation may cause problems for them in society. Moreover, African Americans were not inclined to use AAVE until the 1960s because of the social pressure applied in the age of slavery. It led them to take extra measures not to speak AAVE if white people were present. White supremacy and black inferiority may have had a serious influence on the attitude of blacks toward their own language. Apart from African Americans, some white people thought that AAVE was a street language without any rules. Thus, it could not be viewed as a legitimate variety. Such negative attitudes have been said to result partly from inadequate research on the linguistic structures of AAVE. More detailed research

on the subject may not erase all the negative attitudes and stereotypes in society, but it may be helpful in attaining a better understanding of AAVE with its components. After all, I take the view that AAVE deserves more elaborate and objective study since it is a way of communication for many American citizens, and it has greatly affected their daily life in many aspects.

Education is one of the aspects in which AAVE has caused issues both for students and educators. As mentioned earlier, the Oakland case showed us that students who spoke AAVE were thought to have mental disabilities or communicational disorders. In this regard, the deficit theory emerged, and it suggested that speakers of AAVE were not able to speak SE in accordance with its rules. This theory was highly criticized by some experts as it was incorrect to label African American students as incompetent. They were in need of better teaching environments in terms of linguistic skills. Only then would it be appropriate to compare them with other students. A few methods were considered to resolve the issue, and one of them was to integrate AAVE into the educational system. However, many African American parents rejected such a method, as they believed that it would prevent their children from acquiring a well-developed mainstream English. It could also pose an obstacle to their children's careers. Many parents regarded AAVE as a less educated language, and they wanted their children to become fully competent in SE.

The adaptation of AAVE into the system was objected to by some critics as well. They claimed that those who desired such adaptation would not be affected by its consequences and that many of them were fluent speakers of mainstream English. They suggested an equal teaching environment where there is no distinction between African American and white students in terms of teaching methods. The supporters of the adaptation were mostly advanced users of mainstream language, and it was believed by the opposers that black students should be provided with the same opportunity. I share the same views with the opposers on this matter. It seems more reasonable to give African American students the same linguistic education as other students. In this way, they may feel more confident in society, and they can be more successful in their academic and professional life.

3.2. Discussions on Social Life

The African American family has shown alterations in its traditions, but it has also preserved some of its inheritance. During the age of slavery, enslaved blacks could hardly spend time with their family members due to harsh working conditions. In some plantations, the father was sent away by masters to better control the family. It was a strategy to prevent mutinies. This strategy created a family structure in which the mother played a more dominant role in the absence of the father. The role of the father should not be underestimated, though. He paid visits to see his children when he had the chance, so it is possible to state that family relations were important for black people. Moreover, threats to sell any members of the family were used as a way of controlling them by masters (Frazier, 1930, 255). It is another piece of evidence that black people cared about their family members even though they could not get married legally. Blassingame holds similar views, and he writes that the family was one of the survival mechanisms for enslaved blacks (Blassingame, 1979, 151). The family was something to live and fight for in the eye of enslaved African Americans.

The preference for monogamy and polygamy among enslaved blacks is a matter of debate. It is argued that masters were pleased with monogamy because they were able to control such families more easily. An enslaved father who was emotionally attached to his wife and his children was more likely to be submissive in the household. For this reason, monogamy was encouraged by masters during the age of slavery.

African American families have faced difficulties since emancipation. One of the difficulties was the high rate of the illegitimacy of family members in the twentieth century. Another one was the issue of desertion. It is claimed to be related to cultural differences between black families. Some black people lived in the regions where slavery had less influence compared to the South. Those who migrated from southern lands had adaptation issues, and it resulted in the loss of integrity for some black families.

3.3. Discussions on the Black Movement and Harlem

The struggles of African Americans began with slavery. They were exposed to social, cultural, and political pressure. White superiority was an accepted notion in American society, and black Americans were mostly believed to be less important. Racial discrimination and segregation policies shaped the lives of African Americans, and those policies determined the rules that they had to obey. Until the 1920s, the majority of black Americans lived in the South. A minority group of Northern elite blacks performed civil rights acts, but their efforts were ignored. Due to the lack of political power and financial issues, Southern blacks had to endure social pressure for many years. In the 1920s, the New Negro emerged as a term that signaled a change of status, and it drew much attention from different authorities.

The New Negro became a powerful concept in the West and the North. African Americans in these regions made progress in their acts for civil rights. They founded civil organizations such as the NAACP and CORE that helped them have more credibility in social and political environments. Black Americans in the West started to play active roles in the business sector. They were given jobs in fire departments, schools, and public transport. These improvements increased their living standards and raised awareness in society. However, life was still difficult for those living in the South, as the New Negro could emerge after decades in their region. After World War II, Southern African Americans became more aware of their race and civil rights. Concerning the socioeconomic changes of the war, Bloom writes that “(...) it opened jobs for blacks, took them off the farms, and set them in the cities” (Bloom J. M., 2019, 172). They started to appear more in education and job environments. Thus, they gained more courage in their pursuit of civil rights and became more confident. The number of protests against segregation laws increased in the region. The endeavors of Martin Luther King gave strength to their civil rights acts. He believed that physical slavery led to the occurrence of mental slavery. African Americans had to get rid of mental slavery to fight for their civil rights.

The Harlem Renaissance is regarded as the era of great advancement for black Americans in terms of art and literature. African Americans had produced literary works before Harlem, but the major difference was that they were more courageous and enthusiastic than ever. The art and literature of blacks in Harlem proved that they

were competent in producing fine work as much as whites. Their mutual purpose was to boost black cultural development with novels, poems, and music.

The contributions of Harlem are undoubtedly important, but its failure is also argued among scholars. There are different views about the reasons for its failure. Huggins claims that it failed because it put too much emphasis on race, and he argues that race was not the focal point of Harlem. Lewis, on the other hand, disagrees with this view. He believes that art was the only area where blacks were not brutally treated because of their race and color. Yet, he adds that black cultural and artistic development would not change the fact that African Americans would be exposed to racial discrimination, and African Americans would always be seen as lesser than whites. From my perspective, Lewis's theories are too sharp to be accepted, as he leaves no room for a chance of progress for African Americans because of their color and race. It may be true that the Harlem Renaissance failed to be a progressive movement, but I firmly believe that it was a remarkable endeavor despite all the restrictions. It would also be unjust to underestimate and ignore the products of many black artists who stood against the exclusion of their people.

CONCLUSION

It is found in this thesis that AAVE is accepted as a formal dialect of English by many scholars. The acceptance of AAVE as a dialect is not an objection to its use and credibility in society. Being regarded as a dialect, AAVE attains a proper place in academic affairs. The latest researchers do not recommend the integration of AAVE into the educational system, as it may pose a danger for African Americans in their education and careers. Many parents of African American students reject the integration of AAVE because they believe that their children should learn mainstream English as other students do. In this way, African American children can adapt to society more quickly. The negative attitudes against AAVE have been commonly seen in the United States, and the prejudgements and defamations have come from both white and black people.

This thesis has discovered that the primary purpose of African American literature is more related to social motives rather than artistic needs. In their narratives, they attempt to call attention to their challenges in American society. After the occurrence of the slave narratives, African American literature has evolved into a powerful area of representation for black people. Thanks to the authors who have successfully put emphasis on their social issues, they have found a place in the world of literature.

The black movement is another branch of analysis of this work, and it is possible to state that African Americans exhibited great resilience to the discrimination and segregation in society. It is also found that most of the blacks lived in the South until the World War I, and their sufferings were much severe than those living in the West and North. Although they managed to force the government to change a few racist laws with the protests, they were still treated inhumanly in majority. The struggle of blacks continued until the Southern racist political system was reformed in favor of their civil rights. The struggle of black women turned into African American feminism. However, it is highlighted that they did not wish to be called feminists, as they thought it was the white women's movement. Black women were excluded from the movement despite the sufferings of many years. They suffered both from sexism within the black civil rights movement and racism within the feminist movement. As a result, the black feminist consciousness emerges as an opposition to such discriminations.

The dynamics of the Harlem Renaissance and its failure are examined in this thesis. The Harlem Renaissance is considered the era of significant advancement for black Americans in art and literature. African Americans had already been active in art and literature before the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance, but the major change was that they felt more courageous than ever in the 1920s. They also proved that African Americans had the artistic potential and capacity to produce artwork as fine as white people. Despite its benefits, the failure of the Harlem Renaissance is debated among researchers. One important theory states that it failed because writers put excessive emphasis on race, thus failing to comprehend the Harlem Renaissance's main idea. Another theory claims that it failed because African Americans would be exposed to racial discrimination no matter how developed their art and literature were then. Ultimately, it is possible to state that the Harlem Renaissance failed to last long enough to give courage and enthusiasm to more black people in the United States.

REFERENCES

- Angelou, M. (2002). *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Random House.
- Bailey, J. J. (2014). Everyday Perspectives on Feminism: African American Women Speak Out. *Race, Gender & Class*, 82-99.
- Baker, H. A. (1985). Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature. *University of Chicago Press*, 290-292.
- Baker, H. A. (1987). Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance. *American Quarterly*, 84-97.
- Battistella, E. (1995). The Syntax of the Double Modal. *Linguistica Atlantica*, 19-44.
- Baugh, J. (2000). *Beyond Ebonics: Linguistic Pride and Racial Prejudice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blassingame, J. W. (1979). *The Slave Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bloom, H. (2004). *The Harlem Renaissance*. Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Bloom, J. M. (2019). *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Brasch, W. M. (1981). *Black English and The Mass Media*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Bruce, D. D. (2001). *The Origins of African American Literature*. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia.
- Burling, R. (1985). Untitled. *Linguistic Society of America*, 204-206.
- Cain, W. E. (1988). Review: Literature, History, and Afro-American Studies. *College English*, 190-205.
- Cash, W. J. (1991). *The Mind of the South*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Daniels, D. H. (1990). *Pioneer Urbanities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Davis, C. T., & Gates, H. L. (1991). *The Slave's Narrative*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dillard, J. L. (1975). *Perspectives on Black English*. The Hague: Mouton & Co.
- Eaton, K. (2008). *Womanism, Literature, and the Transformation of the Black Community*. London: Routledge.
- Fasold, R. W. (1975). J.L. Dillard, Black English: Its History and Use in the United States. *Language in Society*, 198-221.
- Flamming, D. (2009). *African Americans in the West*. California: ABC-CLIO.

- Franklin, V. P. (2002). Hidden in Plain View: African American Women, Radical Feminism, and the Origins of Women's Studies Programs, 1967-1974. *The Journal of African American History*, 433-445.
- Frazer, T. C. (1980). Variation and Change in Alabama English: A Sociolinguistic Study of the White Community. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 41-44.
- Frazier, E. F. (1928). The Negro Family. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 44-51.
- Frazier, E. F. (1930). The Negro Slave Family. *The Journal of Negro History*, 198-259.
- Gilyard, K. (1996). *Let's Flip the Script: An African American Discourse on Language, Literature and Learning*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Graham, M. (2004). *The African American Novel*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, L. J. (2002). *African American English-A Linguistic Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, S. (1993). What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture? *Social Justice*, 104-114.
- Higginbotham, E., & Watts, S. (1988). The New Scholarship on Afro-American Women. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 12-21.
- Howes, K. K. (2000). *Harlem Renaissance*. Detroit: UXL.
- Ives, S. (1955). Dialect Differentiation in the Stories of Joel Chandler Harris. *American Literature*, 88-96.
- Kurath, H. (1950). A Word Geography of the Eastern United States. *Geographical Review*, 510-512.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, W. (2022). Co-existent Systems in AAVE. In J. R. Salikoko S. Mufwene, *African American English* (pp. 119-168). New York: Routledge.
- Martin, S., & Wolfram, W. (2022). The Sentence in African-American Vernacular English. In J. R. Salikoko S. Mufwene, *African-American English* (pp. 11-40). New York: Routledge.
- McDavid, V. G., & McDavid Jr., R. I. (1951). The Relationship of the Speech of American Negroes to the Speech of Whites. *American Speech*, 3-17.
- Miller, P. T. (2010). *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, E. J. (2010). "Black Renaissance": A Brief History of the Concept. *American Studies*, 641-665.
- Morgan, M. H. (2014). *Speech Communities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mufwene, S. S. (2001). What is African American English? In S. J. Lanehart, *Sociocultural and Historical Contexts of African American English* (pp. 21-51). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Osofsky, G. (1965). Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered. *American Quarterly*, 229-238.
- Paolo, M. D. (1989). Double Modals as Single Lexical Items. *American Speech*, 195-224.
- Poplack, S. (2000). *The English History of African American English*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Poplack, S. (2006). How English Became African American English. In A. v. Kemenade, & B. Los, *The Handbook of the History of English* (pp. 452-476). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Pullum, G. K. (1999). African American Vernacular English is not Standard English with Mistakes. In R. S. Wheeler, *The Workings of Language: From Prescriptions to Perspectives* (pp. 39-58). Virginia: Praeger.
- Rawick, G. P. (1972). *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*. Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company.
- Salikoko S. Mufwene, J. R. (1998). *African-American English: Structure, History, and Use*. London: Routledge.
- Simien, E. M. (2004). Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Black Feminism Among African Americans. *Political Science Quarterly*, 315-338.
- Sitkoff, H. (1978). *A New Deal for Blacks*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, R. (1969). Interrelatedness of Certain Deviant Grammatical Structures in Negro Nonstandard Dialects. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 82-88.
- Solomos, D. T. (2002). *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Stewart, W. A. (1975). Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects. In J. L. Dillard, *Perspectives on Black English* (pp. 233-247). The Hauge: Mouton & Co.
- Sudarkasa, N. (1980). African and Afro-American Family Structure. *The Black Scholar*, 37-60.
- Waldrep, C. (2009). *African Americans Confront Lynching*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Wolfram, W. (1974). The Relationship of White Southern Speech to Vernacular Black English. *Language*, 498-527.
- Wolfram, W. A., & Fasold, R. W. (1969). Toward Reading Materials for Speakers of Black English: Three Linguistically Appropriate Passages. In J. C. Baratz, & R. W. Shuy, *Teaching Black Children to Read* (pp. 138-155). Washington DC: Center For Applied Linguistics.
- Wolfram, W., & Thomas, E. R. (2002). *The Development of African American English*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Zabunyan, E. (2002). Black Art: The Constitution of a Contemporary African-American Visual Identity. In D. T. Goldberg, & J. Solomos, *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies* (pp. 423-438). Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Surname, Name : BAYDAŞ, Sergen
Nationality : Turkish
ORCID : 0000-0002-5798-4704

Education

- M.A. in English Language and Literature,
Institute of Social Sciences | Van Yuzuncu Yıl University | 2023
- B.A. in English Language Teaching,
Faculty of Education | Anadolu University | 2017

Experience

- 2017-2018 | Altınbaş University | English Instructor
- 2018 to present | Ministry of National Education | Teacher (English Language Teaching)

Languages

Turkish | Mother Tongue
English | C2
French | A2



LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

11/04/2023

Tez Başlığı / Konusu:

**A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIVES OF AFRO-AMERICANS FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşan toplam IX+81 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 11/04/2023 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından TURNITIN intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinalite raporuna göre, tezin benzerlik oranı % 12 (Yüzde oniki) dır.

Uygulanan Filtreler Aşağıda Verilmiştir:

- Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,
- Teşekkür hariç,
- İçindekiler hariç,
- Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,
- Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,
- Kaynakça hariç,
- Alıntılar hariç,
- Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,
- 7 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinalite Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içemediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

11/04/2023
Sergen BAYDAŞ

Adı Soyadı : Sergen BAYDAŞ
Öğrenci No :19920016010
Anabilim Dalı : İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD
Programı : İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD
Statüsü : Y. Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐

DANIŞMAN

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Zeki EDİS

11/04/2023

ENSTİTÜ ONAYI
U Y G U N D U R

...../...../20....

Prof.Dr. Bekir KOÇLAR
Enstitü Müdürü