

Report of Trip to University of Western Cape Bellville, Cape Town, South Africa¹

By: Michele Foster

Original proposal

The original proposal drew up a plan to address critical issues of multicultural and multilingual schooling issues that concern both the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR), one of the priorities of the University of Western Cape and the overarching goals of the University of Missouri Kansas City's Strategic Plan, two of which are Embracing Diversity and Advancing Urban Engagement. Specifically, the proposal noted that during a month long visit, Professor Foster would collaborate with Professor Chris Stroud and Dr. Quentin Williams and together we would craft a proposal around our joint interests, specifically the ethnographies of multilingual schooling. In addition, Foster, Williams, and Stroud proposed to consult with several colleagues who are engaged in research in Cape Town, one who employs a critical framework and conducts work in Manenberg and Delft, two townships outside of Cape Town, and another colleague who works in two multilingual Cape Town primary schools examining how learners in these multilingual, heteroglossic contexts of schools interrupt the deeply-rooted negative, racial stereotypes traditionally linked to language. The proposal noted that Williams had already been working with schools and NGOs helping these institutions understand how to harness Hip Hop and other forms of transgressive and community based literacies to improve children's learning outcomes. Williams also plans to initiate a collaborative relationship with Stephanie Shonekan, a musicologist at the University of Missouri-Columbia who with a special interest in Hip Hop. Taken together, this work will form the basis for a broader collaborative project proposal, one of whose goals would be to inform schools' attempts to create change and new spaces of transformation. Over time a collaborative research project might include course development, teaching, and research with the ultimate goal of submitting grant applications to foundations as well as government agencies.

Issues of diversity continue to be explosive and societally divisive, both in the USA and South Africa. The question of to what extent formal educational

institutions can contribute to social change and individual empowerment is likewise contentious. Furthermore, discourses on the benefits of multilingual/mother tongue education for children continues to emphasize the cognitive benefits mainly, paying less attention to the socio and political advantages, and even less to how cognitive benefits may be enhanced by sociopolitical dimensions of use of multiple languages. With this in mind, we planned to work on a detailed project plan consisting of two phases. We envisaged that the first phase of the planned project would comprise obtaining detailed ethnographies of multilingual schooling. Such ethnographies would detail data on the language varieties students bring to school, employ in both the formal and informal settings of the classroom and larger school community, as well as the language teachers use to communicate in these multilingual contexts.

Scholars and researchers have learned much from their investigations of the language forms that could improve the achievement of urban students. For example, academics now understand and appreciate the verbal strategies underlying indirection found in signifyin' that exploits the gap between the denotative and figurative meanings of words, the metaphors that underpin playin' the dozens, the complex arrangements of language varieties, ethnicities, and identities invoked by youth, discourses that decry mono-lingualism and -culturalism, socioeconomic exploitation, and racial oppression, embrace hybrid identities, pluralism, socio political critique, contestation that are found in hip hop not only are rich language resources, but open up spaces for what Williams and Stroud (2013) describe as convivial linguistic citizenship. ²

Globalized hip-hop has attracted the attention of researchers who have documented the linguistic and cultural phenomena across international settings. Scholars have investigated the global hip-hop cultures in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (Remes, 1998), Berlin, Germany (Kaya, 2001), Sydney, Australia (Maxwell, 2003), New York (Rivera, 2003), Tokyo (Condry, 2006), African, Indian, and Coloured sites in Cape Town South Africa (Williams & Stroud, 2015, 2013), several cities in United States as well as one volume that includes interviews with artists from the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe (Spady, Alim, & Meghelli, 2006). ³ Some scholars have actually used this knowledge to develop curricula and pedagogical practices that build on this knowledge. Regrettably, many educational policy makers are unaware of research and its application, and teachers have yet to fully take advantage of this knowledge of these forms of

self-expression as a vehicle to achieve greater success with marginalized students. ⁴

During the planning meeting in 2016, we noted our plan to conduct site visits, provide information to prospective participants and manage ethical clearances for the project proper. We will also conduct an exhaustive inventory of extant ethnographic research conducted in schools, and prepare a team of collaborators to carry out the fieldwork.

Although we expressed a plan understand the diversity of language forms used by our students more fully, the ultimate goal of our research, however, is to help teachers of marginalized students reflect on their own and their students' language behaviors and ideologies, and develop an awareness and appreciation of the rich resources of these linguistic forms so that they might create and implement more progressive language pedagogies to meet the needs of their students and be better prepared to teach them effectively. This would be the ambit of the second phase of the planned research.

The planning for the second phase will take place concurrently with planning for the first phase. During the second phase, we will employ applied linguists to work with educators to introduce a variety of approaches learned from the earlier phase into the classroom. An aspect of particular importance we intend focusing on here is how the use of multiple languages and speech forms in the classroom requires 'unconventional' engagement of forms of peer-peer teaching, an enhancement of agency and voice among marginalized students, and openness to vulnerability, awareness of diversity as a resource, and a heightened acceptance of societal diversity (previously perceived as threatening) on behalf of the teacher. Work in Belgium (University of Ghent, with which the CMDR has an ongoing collaboration) as well as ongoing work in the United States has suggested that it is possible to design multilingual classroom interventions in ways that (a) improve learning outcomes and educational efficiency in measureable ways that feed into policy-making (evidenced based) and (b) to attain the 'softer' goals of social acceptance and empathy for diversity.

The outcome and significance of the project would be to contribute to a discourse of multilingual education that addresses both cognitive aspects of multilingual education as well as social empowerment aspects. We anticipate

that it would offer some useful reflection how the school might engage more actively in social change, and offer perspectives on how diversity might productively be employed to foster more convivial interactions across difference. Not only is our collaborative research in urban multilingual, multicultural school districts both in the United States, specifically in Kansas City, MO and South Africa, in particular Cape Town timely, but because of their complexity, urban settings are arguably the most challenging contexts in which to work, and evince some of the most intractable of problems in providing adequate schooling to their students.

Planning before Departure

Before my departure for Cape Town, Chris Stroud, of the Center for Multi-literacies and Diversities, who was my official host, invited me to present a paper at a conference on Multilingualism that was to take place early in my visit, on 6-7 March. I had agreed and submitted a title and abstract that follows:

Ebonics and all that jazz: Probing the politics of linguistics, education, and race in the US context

Scholarly work on what is commonly known to the lay audience as Ebonics began 66 years ago and over the past 50 years, linguists have conducted a great deal of scientific research on AAE. It goes without saying that no topic in sociolinguistics in the United States has been studied more than the history, structure, and use of Ebonics, also known as African American English (AAE) African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English or Negro Nonstandard English (NNE).

Despite this lengthy and extensive scholarship and US inhabitants' growing familiarity with hip-hop or Hip-Hop Nation Language (HHNL), a mode of speaking associated with hip-hop culture popularly used by young people in the US and increasingly throughout the world, attitudes toward African American English continue to be negative. Although not the same thing, AAE having been spoken in the US for centuries and having a much longer history than HHNL having been in use only for several decades, employing a specialized vocabulary and used only among distinct social groups, both varieties share a rich and vibrant vocabulary. Still, very little progress has been made toward changing people's—including educators'-- attitudes toward the variety and even less

progress has been made in marshaling this knowledge in the service of improving the academic outcomes for African American students.

Using my own research and that of other scholars, I will explain what we know, how being able to apply what we know could improve the situation, and explore the reasons why we have not been able to make more progress.

University of Western Cape Visit—Problems and Issues

On March 6-7, I attended the Conference at Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS), a free standing research center similar to the Center for Advanced Behavioral Studies at Stanford University, at the University of Stellenbosch. Organized by the Centre for Research on Multilingualism across the Lifespan (Multiling) based at the University of Oslo, of which CMDR is a part, the workshop was a start-up meeting for the participants in what is called INTPART (International Partnership) which is funding that Multiling was awarded for cooperation with UWC, University of Cape Town (UCT), University of Stellenbosch (SU), and Witwatersrand (Wits). Twelve to participants from the local universities be presented papers. The overarching themes of the conference were North/South multilingualism and inter-disciplinarity. The International Partnership and this conference in particular is an example of the dense networks that CMDR participate in and illustrates how its Director, Stroud is able to weave all of the disparate threads together.

The conference/ workshop was a launching event for INPART, a 3- year collaborative research project among 4 South African universities—Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Western Cape, and Witwatersrand-- and the university of Oslo. I presented my paper at the last session of the final day. Because of time constraints that allowed participants only 10-15 minutes to present their papers, everyone including me has to rush through our papers, omitting much of the substance. Although unable to present the paper in its entirety at STIAS, I was able to present the complete version at a seminar sponsored by the CMDR attended by 26 people. The complete program for the conference is attached along with this report. Attending this conference gave me some insight into the kind of relationships that the CMDR is currently engaged in, and highlighted other issues that are currently not considered in these existing partnerships that might be useful for developing and expanding the partnership between Missouri

and UWC even further. By addressing these topics and problems, Missouri could be a standout providing areas of research that the Scandinavian institutions are not only unable to provide, but that would be mutually enriching and beneficial to both Missouri and UWC. These will be discussed later in the report.

Although the CMDR Director and I spoke prior to my visit and he described the assortment of faculty who may contribute to a larger research project of ethnographies multicultural and multilingual communities and schools, the reality on the ground was quite different. First, the CMDR Director was extremely busy during the first two weeks of my visit, making it difficult for us to have a conversation longer than 10 minutes at any one time. Second, when we did finally get a chance to talk at length and subsequently with those he thought might contribute to the larger research agenda mentioned in the original proposal, it became obvious that his knowledge of exactly what their research interests were, the exact nature of the settings in which they conducted their research, and the contributions they could make to larger initial research agenda were partial and incomplete. While at UWC, I was able to speak not only with the individuals Stroud initially identified, but with with several other people one of whom sought me out

when he learned about my own research interests. These discussions, along with what I learned from participating in the INPART Conference at Stellenbosch enabled me to gain insight into the topics that might yield robust research topics and agendas that could serve as the basis from which both parties UWC and Missouri might benefit.

A week and a half before my scheduled departure, Stroud asked me if I would be returning to UWC in May for the 30th anniversary celebration. I told him I wasn't among the invitees. My answer, notwithstanding, he handed me a list of tentative papers to be presented at the 25-27 May meeting. On this draft is listed a paper titled, "Educating in multi-lingualism for change," somewhat modified from the initial title of the proposal that Stroud and I first discussed and that included in my initial UMSAEP proposal. Although Stroud and I did not discuss

the changed title, the rewrite is a more accurate representation of the research topic recommended below.

Before launching in to what is still a working draft of a proposal for joint work between Missouri and UWC, I want to discuss the influences on this research focus. One influence emerges from the STIAS Conference on Multi-lingualism that I attended at Stellenbosch. Many, but not all of the papers, particularly those that had a comparative aspect, presented there focused on the challenges and issues of multi-lingualism absent or with scant attention to previous or current state sponsored institutional structures of domination and subordination. A handful of papers presented at the Conference hinted at these structures. In particular, 3 papers from University of Cape Town, all part of the same session, Translanguaging as a resource for learning mathematics (Tyler), Language, Cognition and Culture: Learning in a multilingual environment (Brookes), and Changing our views on what counts as good language use for literacy learning: heteroglossia in after school literacy clubs (Guzula & McKinney) dealt not only with the issues of multiculturalism and multilingualism, but also touched on the non-progressive, rigid pedagogical teaching strategies as well as negative views about pupils and their families, issues that are also present in many urban schools populated by low-income students of color.⁵

Another meeting with a UWC faculty member, Steward Van Wyk, from the Afrikaans Department provided more insight into both the linguistic and educational situation around which a research project could be formed. Fluent in Afrikaans and a scholar of writers who have written in a variety called Cape Flat Afrikaans, Van Wyk expressed interest in the seminar about African American English that I would be presenting even though he would not be able to attend. He had figured out that the situation regarding Cape Flat Afrikaans, a variety spoken primarily by those labeled “colored” under the apartheid regime and Standard Afrikaans and Cape Flats English and Standard South African English resembled that of African American English and Standard American English.

Although the South Africa and United States contexts are different, Cape Flat Afrikaans is a variety spoken primarily by Colored people who grew up in the area called Cape Flats, the location of UWC. Primarily spoken varieties, Cape Flat Afrikaans and Cape Flats English are stigmatized and considered low status

varieties. Some students who speak Cape Flat Afrikaans or Cape Flat English have difficulty learning to write Standard Afrikaans and Standard South African English and discussions about the need for students to learn Standard Afrikaans to get a decent job or conduct transactions in the marketplace mirror similar discussions about the need for students who speak African American English in the US to learn to speak Standard English to be successful in the marketplace.

He wanted to discuss the approaches being undertaken in which the US to address this situation. From that conversation, I learned how much similarity there is between the circumstances around Standard Afrikaans and Cape Flat Afrikaans, the latter being considered an inferior version of the former and the US situation between Standard American English and African American English, especially the problems facing students whose first variety is the stigmatized one when they try to learn the standard version required in school and the larger world. We spoke about the parallels between the United States and South Africa and Van Wyk thought my presentation and research in this area could shed some light on the Cape Town situation. He mentioned his wife who teaches secondary school and noted that she is concerned about the large number of Black and Brown boys who are failing in school. Later, he invited me to his house where he, his spouse, Emmerentia, and I discussed the similarities between South Africa and the United States. Some of the similarities include: Black and Brown male students suspended at higher rates than other students. Fifty percent and more Black and Brown male students failing to complete high school. Black and Brown female students achieving at much higher levels than their male counterparts. Black and Brown female students who had high rates of unwed pregnancies that interrupt their studies and compel them drop out of school. Immigrant students, who are enrolled and attend schools composed predominantly by students of color and are achieving the top marks and graduating at the top of their classes. Black and Brown parents and teachers complaining that today's students of color, the "born frees," in Cape Town and in the United States, "post civil-rights" who have so many more opportunities for college attendance and career choices but are failing to take advantage of the opportunities. These are but some of the pressing issues that are extant both in South Africa and the United States that could

The last meeting, I had was with Chris Stroud and Caroline Kerfoot, a former faculty member at University of Western Cape, now at the University of

Stockholm, who was on lecturer in linguistics and worked in the area of language education with the faculty in education, is familiar with public schools in Cape Town and surrounding suburbs and has conducted research several local schools.

During this lunch meeting, I learned a lot more about the educational system in South Africa, the particular situation in Cape Town and the Western Cape Province, the role that the area universities play in preparing teacher candidates and in interacting with the local public schools and a host of issues related to education. Like US universities, the two major universities—Cape Town and Stellenbosch-- have not taken on the preparation of teachers for the most under-resourced schools in Cape Town. Rather, the former UCT faculty member noted they focus their energy on preparing teachers for former Model C Schools (all-White), suburban, or private schools. The job of preparing teachers for schools attended by poor children falls on UWC that compared to the better endowed universities is stretched too thin to adequately undertake this task.

Another problem UWC confronts when it comes to preparing teacher candidates stems from not having enough first-rate public school setting and exemplary master teachers in which to place teacher candidates. Therefore, training more teachers for under-resourced schools, the absence of resources at UWC, and the limited number of schools that can serve as practice sites and teachers who can serve as mentors has made preparing teachers who will be successful in under-resourced schools difficult.

Fewer students are passing the Matric level examinations and the pass rate is under 50%, recent pass rates approximately 33%. Asked to evaluate the language scores of the matric students several years ago, Caroline compared South African students to British students and found that South African matric students (12th graders) scored at the same level as as 7th grade students in Britain.

As in much of the US, the approaches that are deemed suitable for classroom practice are not the most progressive and forward-thinking. Because the South African System derived from the old British colonial system, it tends to focus on rote learning, a practice that continued under apartheid, where the purpose of schooling for the majority of colored and Black students was intended not to promote critical thinking, but to create citizens suitable for a regime where

people of color were subordinated. This coupled with large class sizes that are common in too many under-resourced schools means that the pedagogy is still one that focuses on memorization and regurgitation of information with little emphasis on using the information to accomplish larger goals.

A few of the UWC faculty commented to me privately that they believe that this method of instruction at the university level does not promote either the level of engagement to capture students' interest or help really learn, understand, and be able to apply the material. When I gave my seminar, in the interactive style that I prefer, the graduate students were surprised and delighted. Emmerentia, the secondary school teacher whose spouse works in the Afrikaans Department and UWC and I had a long discussion about what it would take to fully engage her Black and Brown students, capture their energy, and creativity that she agreed they possess. I told her that I and others often ask the same question about US students of color.

South Africa also recognizes 11 languages, 9 African and 2 European, but the policy of implementing multi-lingualism in schools that this was intended to cultivate and honor them is spotty at best. Though initially resisted by some of the Black parents, one of the innovations described by Catherine implemented in several schools was teaching students in their home language first and then switching students to English. The program was successful in raising achievement scores, but initially was not fully embraced by the parents it aimed to teach, understandable because frequently the perception of subordinated communities is to view the imposition of mother-tongue instruction as an impediment and an attempt by elites to disempower, disadvantage, and interfere with the educational opportunities and job prospects of children. The woman involved in the program told me that once the parents saw how successful the program was, they were convinced of the merits of having their children begin school learning in their mother tongue and then shifting to English.

Her comments reminded me of a program I instituted –Learning Through Teaching in an After School Pedagogical Laboratory—L-TAPL, where once parents got the chance to observe a different model of teaching that the direct instruction they had encountered and had come to believe was the only way their children could achieve success began to appreciate the more innovative

pedagogical approaches.

So much of the educational conditions and debates in South Africa have parallels in the United States that I am certain that collaborating across countries would be beneficial for both countries. All of the above is provided by way of background for the tentative proposal of work that could be pursued between Missouri and the University of Western Cape. While the work that could be accomplished is much larger than what is outlined below, this brief research agenda is simply an attempt to get the conversation started and the research established. My brief time at UWC has given me lots of ideas about how the relationship between UWC, specifically the CMDR and other units at UWC, particularly the faculty of education and several of the Missouri campuses could lead to a fantastic, solid partnership that could generate some first-rate, cutting edge scholarship, be mutually beneficial while also doing good in their respective communities. My head spins merely thinking about the possibilities. As I have mentioned in previous e-mail correspondence, it is really a matter of getting the right people together to develop a coherent research agenda which to my way of thinking is achievable.

Revised Proposal and Plan of Work

To get started I propose a research project whose revised title if more aptly called ***Educating in multilingualism for change*** that might work with people in the Afrikaans Department and other faculty in the Linguistics Department, specifically Steward Van Wyk, Quentin Williams, and Amiena Peck, all native speakers of Afrikaans and all associated with CMDR, and some of their graduate students to begin working with high school students—speakers of Cape Flats Afrikaans and Cape Flats English—on an intervention research project that would use the strategy outlined in the final chapter (chapter 6), of the book, Articulate while Black, “Change the Game: Language, Education, and the Cruel Fallout of Racism,” by Sali Alim and Geneva Smitherman that argues for using a critical approach to language education that not only challenges linguistic hegemony, but also helps teachers and their students gain a deeper appreciation toward the legitimacy and complexities of different varieties, particularly those that co-exist with a closely related variety that exerts hegemonic control. Alim and Smitherman argue that “[d]espite its grammatical complexity, the language of the Black child has been consistently viewed as something to eradicate, even by

the most well-meaning teachers.”⁶ These teachers are primarily concerned with their students speaking “standard English” rather than “Black English.” Alim and Smitherman note that “despite the vitality of Black Language, teachers continue hearing “what’s not said and missing what is.” What becomes clear is that these teachers miss the stylistic flexibility that characterizes Black language styles, which allow for a rich variety of verbal art games. The same is undoubtedly true regarding teachers’ views of Cape Flats Afrikaans and Cape Flats English.

The UWC research project could draw on and modify the curriculum that was proposed to help African American students develop sociolinguistic awareness and get them more actively involved in the learning process. Modifications to make it more suitable to being implemented in Cape Town along with adapting it to employ more twenty-first century technology than mentioned in the original curriculum would need to be made. Given the legitimacy of Cape Flats Afrikaans and Cape Flats English and the complexities of this communication style, its vitality, how can we change especially teachers’ attitudes toward these varieties in a way that uses students’ knowledge of and creativity in the language to foster learning? The curriculum includes exercises that allow students to develop an awareness of sociolinguistic variation through reflexive, ethnographic analyses. By providing high school students with the critical linguistic and ethnographic tools, Alim and Smitherman suggest that “we can stop apologizing for ‘the way things are’ and begin helping our students imagine the way things can be.” This would enable students to think critically about “the relationships between language, racism, education, and power in society.” A new approach implemented with students could also help teachers reckon with the pedagogical potential of these “non-standard” language styles, professional development that is desperately needed. Although Alim and Smitherman note that there is much the United State can learn from international communities such South African that recognizes the legitimacy of multiple languages or multiple varieties of a language, South Africa still has a way to go to turn this progressive language policy into pedagogical approaches.

A second longer term project would integrate the preparation of new teachers, the professional development of practicing teachers, and the improvement of instruction for elementary school pupils. This could be accomplished by locating a public school near the UWC Campus and establishing it as a professional development or lab school.⁷ The professional

development/lab school could also serve as a site where faculty, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows could conduct research on the language development of multilingual children. At this writing, it is not possible to identify specific faculty who would work and conduct research in the setting, but for the maximum impact, it should include faculty from both the Linguistics department as well those from the Faculty of Education.

A final note about the possible linkages among Missouri, UWC and Ghent. Although I do not know any faculty members at Ghent, recently I became aware that my research on African American Teachers and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy which in educational parlance is a cover term for some of the linguistic approaches specified in this report/proposal, has been cited by two researchers at Ghent, both in Educational Studies.⁸ Since the initial proposal referenced work at the University of Ghent with which the CMDR has an ongoing collaboration, has had some success in designing “multilingual classroom interventions in ways that (a) improve learning outcomes and educational efficiency in measureable ways that feed into policy-making (evidenced based) and (b) to attain the ‘softer’ goals of social acceptance and empathy for diversity,” it may be possible to include them this proposal drawing on the strengths of the 3 institutions and joining forces to creating a tripartite team to conduct the research.

¹ Dates of visit 28 February- 28 March 2016.

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⁴ Hip-Hop Education Center. <hihopeducation.org>

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⁵ R. Tyler, Translanguaging as a resource for learning mathematics; H. Brookes, Language, Cognition and Culture: Learning in a multilingual environment; X. Guzula & C. McKinney Changing our views on what counts as good language use for literacy learning: heteroglossia in after school literacy clubs. Papers Presented at STIAS Conference on Multi-lingualism University of Stellenbosch, South Africa 6-7 March 2016.

⁶ HS Alim and G. Smitherman *Articulate while Black: Barack Obama, language, and race in the US*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁷ M. Foster. An Innovative Professional Development Program for Urban Teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 2004. M. Foster, J. Lewis & L. Onafowora. Grooming Great Urban Teachers *Educational Leadership*, v62 n6 p28-32 Mar 2005

⁸ D. DeNeve & G. Devos. The role of environmental factors in beginning teachers' professional learning related to differentiated instruction. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 2015.