

Black Vernacular Vocabulary

A STUDY OF INTRA/INTERCULTURAL CONCERNS AND USAGE

Edith A. Folb

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EDITH A. FOLB

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edith A. Folb received her bachelor's degree in Speech-English from UCLA, where she graduated summa cum laude and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Her master of arts degree was also from UCLA. She has recently completed her doctoral thesis, a sociolinguistic study of urban Black argot, under a grant from the U.S. Office of Education. Her major area of interest is the nature and function of various American minority vocabularies. She is currently a research fellow with the UCLA Afro-American Studies Center and a post doctoral scholar in Linguistics at UCSD.

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DEDICATION PAGE

to

*John Waggaman
my great friend*

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INTRODUCTION

Within recent years a considerable body of literature has grown up around the study of Black English (see bibliography for a representative listing of works in the field). These studies are primarily concerned with the syntactic and phonological properties of Black English, and not with its lexical features. Little attention has been given to the lexicon of Black English and virtually none to particular sub-sections of that lexicon shared by different dialect groups. This is the question of concern in this monograph.

The particular lexical sub-set being explored in the following discussion is non-standard vocabulary. Specifically, attention is focused on a 138 item glossary of non-standard vocabulary terms elicited from and used by Black male youths living in the South Central Los Angeles ghetto. This glossary formed the basis for an earlier work on non-standard vocabulary usage.¹

In the previous study, answers to four questions were sought: (1) the degree to which non-standard vocabulary terms elicited from the South Central ghetto were known by young males from different racial, economic and/or geographical backgrounds; (2) the factors which affected extra-ghetto recognition and usage of the particular South Central-generated vocabulary; (3) the possible correlation of specific life experiences and specific vocabulary usage; and (4) the degree to which intracultural and intercultural concerns were revealed by shared non-standard vocabulary. For the purposes of this monograph, discussion will focus on question number four.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Some investigators have discussed the possible ways in which a non-standard lexicon functions within a given class or subculture (Barker, 1947; Gumperz, 1964; Lerman, 1967, 1968).

Lerman (1967) has studied the dynamics of subcultural delinquency and points out the close relationship between symbolic deviancy, i.e., the use of argot, and social deviancy. He maintains that knowledge and use of argot, itself a mode of deviance, is 'an indicator of participation in a deviant subculture' (p. 210), and reinforces the value system associated with the deviant behavior of the group.

In a more specific context, Barker (1947) discusses the anti-social and cohesion-producing function of the non-standard Pachuco vocabulary used by a particular group of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest United States. Barker says of the Pachuco group that it 'rejects the cultural norms of both the Anglo and Mexican groups . . . and substitutes those of its own, drawn from anti-social aspects of both cultures' (p. 198).

Within the domain of lexicography, there are several glossaries and dictionaries devoted to the classification of so-called 'deviant speech,' i.e., slang, cant, argot, jargon, jive talk, etc. (Berrey and Van der Bark, 1952; Wentworth and Flexner, 1967; Partridge, 1950, 1968, 1970; et al.).

In addition to these general reference works, there are a number of glossaries which catalogue the non-standard lexicons of special subcultures, particularly that vast subculture referred to as 'the underworld.' For example, the *Dictionary of Underworld Lingo* (1950), is a compilation of argot terms that characterizes segments of the criminal world and its various activities. In a more specialized vein, Braddy (1960) collected argot used by Pachucos in the Southwest United States. Also, Coltharp (1965) compiled a 700 item lexicon of 'calo' argot used among the Tirilones of El Paso.

The foremost authority on American argot, particularly that of the criminal, is David Maurer. His extensive writings on the nature and language of discrete criminal and quasi-criminal professions provide both a rich collection of non-standard lexicons and an on-going and significant statement about the function and scope of argot usage in general (see bibliography for a selected list of his writings).

A number of specialized lexicons have grown out of the interaction between Black culture and other identifiable subcultures. Gold (1957), for example, characterizes jazz parlance as 'the curious mixture of Negro folk expressions with the imagery of the new city life, and the blending of the two with the terms revolving about the music . . .' (p. xiii).

In a more popular vein, though no less informative in content, is Iceberg Slim's (Robert Beck) autobiographical version of the life and language of the Black pimp (1969a), and his subsequent treatment of the confidence man (1969b). Both books provide separate and authentic glossaries of the respective subcultures about which he writes—subcultures in which the Black man figures prominently.

As in the writings of Iceberg Slim, a whole body of non-standard terminology associated with the hard reality of the Black experience—hustling, drugs, street life, jail—can be found in the autobiographies and letters of Malcolm X (1964); Claude Brown (1965); Eldridge Cleaver (1968); H. Rap Brown (1969) and others.

In this context, mention should be made of the extensive non-standard lexicon compiled by Kantrowitz (1969) during his study of the vocabulary of race relationships in an Illinois prison. The exhaustive lexicon² stands as a landmark effort in understanding the kinds of perceptions racially polarized prisoners have of one another as expressed through the names they assign to each other.

Recently, two popular dictionaries have appeared in print, each including some portion of the non-standard Black lexicon (Major, 1970; Landy, 1971). Each acknowledges the continual linguistic and social interaction between Black culture and the various subcultures that it feeds and by which it is nourished.

A final aspect of Black culture that warrants mention is what Kochman (1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1970) and others have termed 'expressive role behavior.' Such behavior is intimately tied to non-standard usage, since it refers to the complex role played by verbal dexterity in the Black community. As Labov (1968), Kochman (1968a, 1969, 1970), Abrahams (1962a, 1962b, 1970), and Dollard (1939) have indicated, there are ritualized speech events in the Black community that allow the youth to hone his verbal skills. These also provide a culture-bound vehicle for the dissemination of attitudes, values and ghetto traditions.³

To a large extent, these speech events represent a hierarchical progression of verbal ability ranging from the lower level 'ritual insults,' such as 'playing the dozens,' to the 'toasts,' which Labov defines as 'long oral epic poems' [often containing] 'complex metrical arrangements' (1968, II, p. 55).

The foregoing discussion of the literature dealing with non-standard lexical usage within and beyond Black culture does not presume to be exhaustive. It does show, however, the extent of the interest in this subject, and the particular aspects of the Black idiom that have been investigated. Despite the amount of research which has been conducted in this sociolinguistic area, no work has attempted to single out the particular questions raised at the beginning of this monograph. Before turning to a consideration of the intracultural and intercultural concerns reflected in shared vocabulary usage, I would like to (1) define what I mean by 'Black vernacular vocabulary,' and (2) briefly summarize my earlier work in the area.

A Definition of 'Black Vernacular Vocabulary'

'Non-standard vocabulary' is an expression that can be variously interpreted. It can apply to the realm of 'slang,' which the *Dictionary of American Slang* defines as 'the body of words and expressions frequently used by or intelligible to a rather large portion of the general American public' (p. vi). It can also refer to the more limited province of 'argot,' which Maurer and others identify with the specialized and oftentimes secret vocabularies of criminal and quasi-criminal professions. It can mean 'jive talk,' that particular segment of the Black idiom identified with the Black musician. Or, it can refer to still other categories of non-standard vocabulary, such as 'jargon,' 'lingo,' 'cant,' 'hip talk,' etc.

None of the terms mentioned above adequately defines the particular lexicon discussed in the following pages, since it includes words and phrases from many sources—argot, slang, jive and hip talk, regionalisms and culture-specific vocabulary. Instead, I have used the expression 'Black vernacular vocabulary' to identify a particular ghetto-generated sub-set of the Black English lexicon which includes colloquial and so-called deviant vocabulary words and phrases taken from the various sources mentioned above.⁴

Review of Earlier Vocabulary Study⁵

In the earlier study on non-standard vocabulary use, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Lower class Blacks use and share a vernacular vocabulary unknown to lower class whites, even when the two groups live in close proximity;
2. The vocabulary cuts across geographical boundaries; lower class Blacks living in geographically separated ghettos share a common vernacular;
3. This vernacular vocabulary is shared by middle class Blacks;
4. A primary factor affecting shared vocabulary usage is shared life experiences.

A current vocabulary of terms and meanings was collected from and validated by a 33 member male 'control' group living in South Central Los Angeles. It was also reviewed by an adult group of males from the same community.

This 138 item lexicon was used to elicit and compare responses from among five 'response' groups, each comprised of 12 male youths. All informants in this study, with the exception of the adult group, were between the ages of 15 and 20. Two of these groups consisted of lower class Blacks separated geographically: one group from South Central Los Angeles (Group A); the other from Venice, California (Group B). The third group consisted of lower class whites from Lennox, California, an unincorporated enclave adjacent to South Central Los Angeles (Group C). The fourth group was comprised of middle class Blacks living in the Baldwin Hills-View Park-Windsor Hills area of Los Angeles (Group D). Group five consisted of middle class whites from West Los Angeles (Group E).

With some qualifications, the hypotheses were substantiated. The data confirmed the existence of a well-formed vernacular vocabulary generated and validated in South Central Los Angeles and well-known to all members of the South Central response group. Lower class whites demonstrated, as a group, limited knowledge of the vocabulary, though they live in close proximity to a sizeable portion of the South Central youths and share certain life concerns characteristic of the lower class milieu.⁶

Lower class Blacks in Venice, California demonstrated a mastery of the vernacular vocabulary roughly comparable to that of the most knowledgeable South Central informants, though over ten miles separates the two Black communities.

Race predominated over economics or geography in the sharing of the vernacular. The largest body of common terminology was that known to the three Black groups. Middle class Blacks did not demonstrate the same facility with the vocabulary that the two lower class Black groups did, but their knowledge was generally superior to that displayed by either white group.

The vernacular vocabulary known beyond the particularly knowledgeable lower class Blacks was generally concentrated among sub-sets of informants within the two white groups and the middle class Black group. These informants were linked together and to informants beyond their respective group through common life experiences that could be classified as illegal or 'anti-social.' One or another of these experiences prevailed within each of the three most knowledgeable informant sub-sets and directly affected their superior facility with the vernacular vocabulary.

The most knowledgeable nucleus within the middle class Black group was comprised of political activists, particularly members of a Black Student Union (BSU); within the lower class white group, of ex-offenders with extensive arrest records; within the middle class white group, of heavy drug users.

Interest categories descriptive of various phenomena differentiated informants along racial, experiential and economic lines. I would like to now focus on these categories and the intra/intercultural concerns they reveal.

INTRA/INTERCULTURAL CONCERNS AND VERNACULAR USAGE

Categories of Vernacular Terms

The 138 item glossary divided itself into eleven categories. These are listed below. The figure in parentheses following each category identifies the number of terms included in that interest category.

- (1) Drugs and drug related acts (23)
- (2) Acts of toughness (16)
- (3) Verbal and physical forms of manipulation (25)
- (4) Generalized physical activity (6)
- (5) Material possessions (13)
- (6) Personal appearance (6)
- (7) Food and Alcohol (7)
- (8) Sex and sex related acts (15)
- (9) Interpersonal relations and personal names (14)
- (10) The outsiders (7)
- (11) Culture-specific miscellany (6)

Though these categories are neither mutually exclusive nor solely related to lower class or Black ghetto culture, they do allow for a meaningful discussion of the sociolinguistic dimensions of the vernacular. In some instances, an expression could be classified under more than one descriptive category. However, each item is assigned to one particular interest category based on the primary definition provided. Complete definitions for all terms are given in Appendix A.

Reference will be made periodically to two published glossaries already mentioned: *The Underground Dictionary* (Landy, 1971), and the *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang* (Major, 1970). Though neither of these lexicons claims to be a definitive compilation of youth culture terminology or Black vernacular vocabulary, they are recent collections representative of both. Their major function in the discussion that follows is to provide, at various points, a source of terms and definitions that compare or contrast with those used in this study. These works are used exclusively as referents and are not intended to verify the 'correctness' of a particular definition on the vocabulary list.

An item was considered to be 'known' at the response group level (i.e., was part of the group's vocabulary), if five or more informants in the group knew its meaning.

1. Drugs and Drug Related Acts.

Of all the activities represented by the terms in the glossary, none binds together youths from different economic, racial and geographical backgrounds more visibly than interest and participation in the so-called 'drug culture.' The twenty-three drug terms on the list known by five or more members of the response groups are as follows: Group A knew all twenty-three of the terms, Group B knew twenty, Group C knew seven, Group D knew ten, and Group E knew three of these terms.

Only six of the twenty-three drug terms were exclusively known to the Black informant groups. However, their overall knowledge of the drug terms was considerable. At least one informant in Group B knew all 23 terms; in Group D 21 terms were known by one or more group members. As mentioned, five or more Group A informants knew all the terms. Turning to the white groups, 10 of the twenty-three drug terms were known by one or more of the heavy drug users in Group E. This number does not account for the three additional entries known by other members of Group E. When we compare this combined figure of thirteen entries known by one or more Group E members to the sixteen entries known by one or more Group C informants, we see that the two white groups have approximately the same facility with the drug terms on the list.

These numbers do not necessarily mean that the same entries were known by both white groups. Four entries, *to be keyed up* ('high from drugs or marijuana'); *fender benders* and *hors d'oeuvres* ('any one of many pills, particularly barbituates'); and *to cap out* ('to pass out or fall asleep from too many pills or too much marijuana') were known by one or more sub-Group C informants, but unknown to any E youth. Conversely, the expression, *to cop a match* ('to secure a

matchbox of marijuana') was unknown to C informants, but known to one of the heavy drug users in Group E. Of interest was that *dubee*, a common 'underground' term for a marijuana cigarette (Landy, 1971, p. 72), was known to five E informants but only one C informant.

Predictably, the most extensive knowledge of these terms rests with the heavy drug users in each of the two white groups.

Six of the sixteen drug terms known to some segment of Group C can be visibly linked to jail contacts. Knowledge of drug terms is much more diffused within Group C than in Group E. If we look at the drug terms according to the kinds of drugs or drug actions identified, other dimensions of shared vernacular usage come to light.

The twenty-three drug terms can be divided into three sub-categories: (a) marijuana (eleven terms); (b) pills (six terms), and (c) activities associated with both marijuana and pills (six terms). Only three of the eleven marijuana items (*gunny*, *schoofer*, *stencil*) were known exclusively by Black subjects. These three terms are of sociolinguistic interest.

According to the adults interviewed, the term *gunny* is an old word which identifies as particularly strong form of marijuana found in Jamaica and Africa (*Black Gungeon*). Over the years, the term has become less specific, i.e., response group informants identified it with marijuana in general. The term is of special note because of its particularly race-bound usage. Though it was known to the majority of Blacks interviewed, the term was unknown to any of the white informants, even the heavy drug users. This suggests that despite the strong shared drug experience between the races, a reserve of 'private' terms exists.

The entry *schoofer* ('marijuana cigarette') and its phonological variants (*skrufer*, *schoofus*, *skrufus*), was unknown outside the Black informant population, and virtually unknown outside the South Central Los Angeles informant group. One B informant knew the term. Though this demonstrates vocabulary usage that is limited to a particular ghetto, it has its phonological counterpart in Venice. The B informant who correctly identified *schoofer* indicated that in Venice the term used to refer to the same thing was *schoobie*. To see if this were true, the term *schoobie* was presented to six B informants who had yet to be interviewed. All six provided the same meaning.

The similar phonological structure evidenced by the two terms suggests the possibility of the South Central term being 'misheard' by a Venice resident and perpetuated within his community in a different but related form. Or, conversely, the term *schoobie* may have been carried back to South Central in an altered form. Whatever the direction of transmission, these terms and others to be considered suggest a possible way in which similar vocabulary identifying similar or identical concepts comes to be transmitted across geographical distances.

Finally, the term *stencil* ('a long, thin marijuana cigarette'), like *skooper*, exemplifies specific South Central vernacular usage. Though all twelve A informants knew the word, only one B informant (an ex-offender) and two D informants (BSU activists) could identify its meaning.

Turning to pill related terminology, we find a somewhat different distribution. Only one item, *blunts* ('diluted capsules of barbituates, particularly (Seconal)'), was totally unknown to the white informants. Furthermore, the term is restricted to usage among the lower class Blacks, particularly those from South Central, with the exception of two D informants.

To some extent, pill related terms were more widely known outside the Black informant population by middle class and lower class white drug users than terms for marijuana. What the comparative data seem to suggest is that there is more intercultural attention directed toward pill usage than to that of marijuana, given this particular informant population. The interviews tend to substantiate this statement.

Marijuana has been, and continues to be, commonly used by youths and many adults.⁷ On the other hand, the intake of barbituates, amphetamines and other pills for 'kicks' is a relatively recent occurrence—particularly among the white middle class youth today. Thus we see the greater attention by Groups C and E to this class of pharmacopia and the terms that identify it.

There are six terms that relate primarily to activities surrounding the use of marijuana or pills. Interestingly, only one of the six terms, *to fire up* ('to light up a marijuana cigarette'), has general currency outside the Black informant population. Four of the six terms *to be keyed*, *to cap out*, *to be wide* (wired), and *throw me out with . . .* (item) are part of the Black vocabulary on the list and virtually unknown, as defined by the control group, to either C or E informants, even to the heavy drug users. Furthermore, these expressions descriptive of both pill and marijuana usage were more widely known among middle class Black informants than many of the more specific pill or marijuana terminology.

A fifth item in this group, *to flake* ('to pass out' or fall asleep as a result of taking too many drugs or too much marijuana'), has its phonological cognate in the Venice vernacular, similar to the case of *skooper/skoobie*. Though only six of the Venice youths knew the term *to flake*, as compared with all of the South Central informants, all B informants knew the expression *to flag* for the same drugged condition. Conversely, no South Central youth demonstrated knowledge of the Venice term.

The expression *to throw me out with something* ('to give me something, particularly marijuana, pills or money') also has a similar form in Venice vernacular. The Venice expression for the same activity is *kick me down with something*. Once again, we can see the development of similar or parallel terms for comparable or identical concepts within two ghetto informant populations.

This phenomenon of similar structures for similar or identical activities is particularly evident within the body of drug related argot.

The phonological or grammatical similarity for similar concepts is also found between racially separated informant groups. A prime example of parallel terminology that divides informants along racial and class lines is the term *black moat* ('a particularly potent form of marijuana'), and the various forms of the word found within different informant groups. Without exception, the Blacks who identified the term referred to it as *black mo*; the lower class whites who recognized the term referred to it as *black mota*; and the middle class whites who knew it called it *black mole* or *black mold*.

The Spanish constraint requiring final vowels would change the *moat* to *mota*. The form *Black mo* is not surprising since in many Black English dialects there is a regular 'final consonant' deletion rule (see Labov, 1967a, p. 25). The white form *mold* for *moat* could represent a 'reinterpretation,' that is, not being able to assign a semantic reading for *moat*, a known word is substituted. This is a common occurrence when words are borrowed, e.g., 'cole slaw' pronounced 'cold slaw.'

Though the drug terminology on this list is the most obvious intercultural link among the five informant groups, it also differentiates the groups along a number of lines. For one, it more clearly separates out the heavy drug users among the white informant population, particularly the middle class youth, than it does the Blacks interviewed. Half of the drug terms on the list are absent from the middle class Black group's collective vocabulary, but more or less reflect usage restricted to Venice and/or South Central. Therefore, we cannot talk, within this interest category, about race-bound terms as much as experience-bound terminology.

Secondly, the drug terms on this list seem to undergo a phonological metamorphosis as one moves from South Central to Venice. No other single body of terms in this glosary contains this number of phonologically similar forms for identical concepts. Though this may be a matter of chance selection of the terms, it is, nonetheless, an interesting phenomenon indicative of stages vernacular vocabulary undergoes.

Finally, the drug vocabulary list represents two kinds of drug activity, the taking of pills and the smoking of marijuana. It does not include terms for 'hard drugs' (heroin, cocaine, opium, etc.). It is interesting to note that the field work did not uncover much interest or involvement in the use of hard drugs on the part of the majority of youths interviewed. With the exception of one B informant who admitted that he was 'strung out behind smack' (heroin), none of the informants regularly used or admitted to regular use of hard drugs. As the data imply and the interviews indicate, particular interest and conversation focused more often on the use of pills than on marijuana. The three groups that demonstrated the keenest interest in such discussions, and were particularly conversant with the terms related to pill use, were the heavy drug users from South Central, Venice and University High School (in West Los Angeles). In this instance, shared terms, shared experiences and shared interest visibly bind together disparate racial and economic informant groups.

2. Acts of Toughness.

If the shared drug terminology on this list tends to highlight the most apparent point on intercultural interest between the ghetto Blacks and the middle class whites in particular, the terms describing acts of toughness regroups the informant population along other lines. That is, shared terminology identifying acts of toughness not only tends to cement the lower class groups in general, but particularly links the three lower class groups through their common jail experience.

There are sixteen entries on the vocabulary list that primarily identify acts of toughness. With the exception of two expressions (*to vamp someone*, 'to sneak up on someone and hit them,' or *to turn out a set* 'to put an end to a party in any number of ways'), one or more C informants correctly identified the meaning of fourteen terms. Nine of these fourteen expressions were known only to one or more of the ex-offenders in Group C. On the other hand, only four terms in this category were known to one or more E informants, with only one of these four terms being known to five or more group members. All the entries but one were known to Group B as a group. *To vamp someone* was unknown to the Venice informants. All the entries descriptive of acts of toughness were known to one or more Group D informants. All the terms were known at the group level by A.

A few of the terms are worth individual note. The expression *to bust (pop) a cap on someone* ('to shoot a gun at someone') was often mistakenly identified by white informants, particularly middle class whites. The expression was heard as *to bust a cap*, or *to pop a cap* ('to take a pill, particularly LSD'). Either the truncated phrase was a part of the informant's vernacular vocabulary or it was a phrase lending itself to interpretation, whether or not it was actually used or known as such.

The expression *to vamp someone* is particularly interesting because of its limited usage. Nine South Central Los Angeles youths and four middle class Blacks correctly identified it. Three of those Group D informants were BSU members. No one else knew its meaning.

The expression *to vamp* has been used by Black Panther Party members, both in conversation and in their publications, to refer to the harassment tactics engaged in by the police. Since the Panther Party has one of its headquarters in South Central Los Angeles and its paper is easily acquired there, it is not surprising that South Central youths would know this particular expression. Nor is it surprising that three BSU youths in Group D would know the expression. As mentioned before, the BSU youths are particularly attuned to militant Black actions. On the other hand, it is reported that the Black Panther Party has never gained a foothold in Venice.

These facts reveal that exposure to common experiences (in this case, the Black militant movement) leads to the inclusion of shared vernacular vocabulary in the lexicons of individuals, despite other differences which separate them.

Though the middle class Blacks and the lower class whites tend to know a comparable number of terms in this category, there are some entries that are known to the lower class whites because of their jail experience, for example the expression, *if you feel froggish* (froggy), *take a leap* (a challenge to fight). According to the adult informants in this study, this is an old expression that has been in use for many years, yet only one middle class Black youth knew it. On the other hand, three of the Group C ex-offenders readily identified it and claimed to have first heard it in jail. The same can be said for the expression *to bust (pop) a cap on someone*. Again, the expression is more widely known among lower class white jail youth than among middle class Blacks.

The fact that terms depicting toughness are generally well-known to the middle class Black informant is not particularly surprising. Whether or not overt acts of toughness, such as physical violence, occur frequently in the experience of the D informant, the concept of toughness is still positively valued as a personal attribute. The militant stance of the BSU members interviewed, coupled with the general tenor of aggressiveness displayed in the Group D interviews, tends to substantiate this. As one BSU youth put it: 'All the brothers have to be tough. To the "Man" you're all niggers.'

On the other hand, the middle class white informant tends neither to identify with acts of toughness nor the terms describing them. 'Make love not war' is a white middle class sentiment.⁸ The 'love-ins' and 'be-ins' of the mid-60's were basically a white phenomenon. In response to the question: 'What do you think the militant Black and white organizations are trying to do?' The typical white middle class response revealed dismay and confusion over the violent tactics being employed.

Finally, the lower class white's identification with acts of toughness, revealed through knowledge of the vernacular, relates to his daily life and the experiences that link him to his Black class counterpart. Furthermore, jail is a great educator. The majority of Group C ex-offenders indicated that many of the terms for toughness on this list were first heard by them during skirmishes, both physical and verbal, with incarcerated Black youths. Acquisition of such vernacular vocabulary may be through forced association as well as voluntary participation in a group. This category of shared terminology seems to be a good case in point.

3. Verbal and Physical Forms of Manipulation.

There are twenty-five entries on the vocabulary list that I have identified with acts of manipulation. By this I mean those physical, verbal and material demonstrations on the part of one individual that have as their prime end the manipulation, advantage-taking, or showing up of another person. Given the youths in this study, I have found these terms to be a particularly keen indicator of different life styles, values, and interests that bring together or separate different segments of the informant population.

In his discussion of language behavior in the Black ghetto, Kochman says:

... language is used by Negroes living within the ghetto ... for the purpose of manipulating and controlling people and situations. ... The purpose for which language is used suggests that the speaker views the social situations into which he moves as essentially agonistic [sic], by which I mean that he sees his environment as consisting of a series of transactions which require that he be continually ready to take advantage of a person or situation or defend himself against being victimized (1968a, p. 38).

Essentially, Kochman is describing the street rationality of the ghetto (see Horton, 1967). However, this manipulative action-taking is not necessarily confined to the lower class Black, nor is it solely a defensive stance. As Kochman points out, it is difficult to imagine a Black male youth, whatever his economic circumstance, who has not witnessed or participated in a variety of manipulative verbal acts as he has grown up. The data in this thesis substantiate the important role played by verbal manipulation, as well as physical and material manipulation, in the lives of Black males.

Of the twenty-five terms for manipulative action in the glossary, only one entry, *to fiend on someone* ('to show someone up—particularly in your car—by dropping the car to the ground through the use of hydraulic lifts'), was unknown to middle class Black youths. Only two Venice informants knew it. It was known to all twelve A informants. On the other hand, the expression *to fonk on someone*, which means exactly the same thing as *to fiend on someone*, is part of the shared vocabulary of the three Black groups. The former expression is a prime example of a South Central specific term, identifying a well-known Black activity.

Thirteen of the twenty-four manipulative action terms are part of the three Black group's vocabulary. Two of these items, *to style* ('to show off what you have') and *to swoop* ('to come upon someone quickly, particularly a young lady, either on foot or in a car'), were known by all Black informants.

Manipulative activities and the terms that describe them are part of the Black experience, regardless of economic or social background. Generally speaking, the types of manipulation described by the vocabulary and shared by Blacks run the gamut of verbal, physical and material maneuvers. However, the distribution of knowledge among the Black informants does suggest that ostentatious display and manipulation of material possessions is more visible among lower class Black youths than among their middle class Black counterparts. Given the fact that the ghetto youth has less to display, it is not surprising that he should display what he does have more intently than the middle class Black youth. (See Frazier, 1957, for another point of view.)

If we turn to an examination of lower class white informant response to manipulative terms, we find a different picture. There are seven items in this category that were totally unknown to any Group C informant, including the ex-offender. This is of particular note, since four of these seven unknown terms, *to lean* ('to lean inward toward the middle of the car while driving—suggests the presence of a console and/or center arm rest.') *to fiend on someone* (see above), *to*

fonk on someone (see above), and *to high sign* ('to show off what you have or do—particularly your car or girl friend'), can be directly identified with 'low-rider'⁹ activities—an area of special interest to both lower class white and Black informants. It should be mentioned, however, that the majority of manipulative terms that relate to the car were known and shared by the lower class groups, particularly among the respective 'low-rider' sets. What the data suggest here, in relation to Group C's knowledge, is that some terms remain secret to a group, regardless of shared interests. A common life style or a similar set of experiences are not the only prerequisites for shared lexicons, though they surely enhance the prospect for such intercultural linguistic usage taking place. More will be said about this point below.

If we turn to Group E, we find that the group shared knowledge of four items (*to bo gart something*, *to be down on someone's case*, *to ride shotgun*, *to shine someone on*) with the other four response groups. An additional seven entries in this category were known by less than five informants, five of these terms by a single E informant; each of the other two terms, by two and three informants respectively. Taken together, Group E's knowledge of vernacular vocabulary identifying manipulative acts is particularly limited. Furthermore, only two of the eleven items known by one or more E informants are specifically concerned with a 'low-rider' or car related activity, and one of those items (*to style*) refers to manipulation beyond one's car.

Just as Group E has virtually no knowledge of terms related to acts of toughness, it has limited knowledge of terminology descriptive of manipulation—particularly car-oriented actions. Once again, the middle class white informant does not share with Blacks or a portion of the lower class white population a concern for the manipulative acts (verbal, physical or possessional) described by the vernacular. This is not to say that he is not a manipulator, only that his manipulative proclivities are not well represented by the terminology in this glossary.

What is of additional interest in this category is the specific meaning assigned to a few of the terms by the white informants. The definitions tend to differentiate the races. For example, *to bo gart* was known at the response group level by all groups. Its general definition is 'to take more than one's share of something' or 'to apply physical coercion to gain one's end.' With the exception of one C informant, the fifteen white youths who provided a definition for the term limited that definition to 'hogging a joint' ('taking more than one's share of a marijuana cigarette').

Similarly, the control group definition of the expression *to burn someone* was: 'to steal something from another, particularly another male's woman.' It was also the definition provided by the majority of Black response group informants. On the other hand, nine E informants and eight C informants indicated it to mean 'to accept money and give no drug in return' (Landy, 1971, p. 42), or 'to exchange diluted or phony drugs for money.' Once again, one C informant identified the term as the Black population had.

These are but two of several items on the list that have different primary meanings for different racial groups. We will see other examples of racially differentiated terminology below.

Such data suggest that terms descriptive of general activity or behavior tend to be specified in terms of the particular group's priorities and concerns. Differentiation of vocabulary meaning can be an important indicator of points of intercultural discontinuity between and among groups that are otherwise linked together, racially, economically or experientially.

4. Generalized Physical Behavior

The six terms that constitute this category provide little additional information about informant interests or responses. Essentially, this group of terms is an addendum to the interest category concerned with forms of manipulation. There are, however, a few observations of interest.

For one, the terms which depict general physical activities such as walking or talking tend to reinforce the prior claim that general activity or behavior tends to be specified in terms of a particular group or individual's priorities. So, for example, two of the terms in this category, *to get down* and *to get it on* can generally be defined as 'to do whatever you are going to do; to get started.' However, the specific acts selected by the informants to exemplify 'what one does' divide the informant populations, once again, in terms of racial and class priorities. For most of the Black informants the term *to get down* meant (1) 'to have sexual intercourse,' (2) 'to fight,' (3) 'to dance,' (4) 'to take some kind of drug or smoke marijuana.' For the white informants who knew the term at all, it meant almost exclusively, 'to take some kind of drug or smoke marijuana.' The more well-known expression, *to get it on*, most often meant 'a fight' for Blacks; for white informants, it meant 'to get high' (to take drugs or smoke marijuana).

Finally, there are two items, *to vamp* and *to tip* that are linked to race and ghetto respectively. The first term, which means 'to leave from somewhere,' was totally unknown to white informants. The second term, which also means to leave some place, but with the additional meaning of 'being some place you should not be, particularly with another man's woman,' is a ghetto-specific expression that was known only to lower class Blacks in this study. According to the adults interviewed, the latter expression is an old term that seems to have been retained in the ghetto-specific vernacular pool, though it is used less frequently than equivalent terms, such as *to creep*. The former term, *to vamp*, had only been recently heard by the adults and may be a new expression.

5. Material Possessions.

There are thirteen terms on the list that relate to or identify material possessions. Four of them are part of the lower class Black vocabulary, seven are part of the overall Black vocabulary, one term is a Group A term, and one item is part of the vocabulary known to all the response groups.

Though the largest number of items identifying material possessions are known by all Black informants, there is a discernibly higher level of knowledge displayed by the two lower class Black groups than by their middle class counterparts. This was also true of the the category describing manipulative acts, though the level is more noticeable here because there are fewer terms. For example, nine of the thirteen terms in this category were known by ten to twelve AB informants, whereas only two were known by comparable numbers within Group D. In addition, three of the seven material possession terms that were part of the overall Black vocabulary were known to only five D informants, indicating a relatively limited knowledge of these terms within Group D.

We have already acknowledged the importance of material possessions and attendant acts of display in the life style of the young Black male. Though both middle class and lower class Black youths, by their own admission, *front off* ('show off what they have'), the data continue to reveal that the ghetto Black is more keenly aware of the terms related to display of both his possessions and himself than the middle class Black and appears, therefore, to be more conscious of display than the D informants.

For the most part, then, terms descriptive of material possessions and their display are most well known among the lower class Black informants. However, there are three terms within this category that are not only well known and mutually shared among the three Black groups, but are also descriptive of possessions much in style and frequently seen among the Black informant population in general. The three terms are *apple hats*, *bisquits*, and *three quarter length piece*.

Apples or *apple hats* ('big-brimmed caps'), were, at the time of the field work, extremely popular items among Black youths, particularly young males. In more recent months, some young whites have adopted the style. The first time I saw this particular type of cap being worn by a young male was over six years ago in Watts. Before that time, I had seen it worn primarily by older men. Today, it has become a popular item of apparel and all but one of the Black informants knew the term that identified it. Interestingly, a few of the white youths I interviewed were wearing *apple hats*; yet, not one of them identified the term for it. The term, if not the faddish cap, has remained 'private' among the Black informants in this study.

If *apple hats* have become somewhat of a cross-cultural fad, the *three quarter length piece* ('a three quarter length leather or suede jacket, often belted') is primarily a Black fashion. Though a large majority of Black youths interviewed identified the term's meaning, only one white youth knew it. My personal observations tend to support the vernacular data. Though the jacket style is extraordinarily popular among both Black male youths and adults, I have not seen it worn outside the Black community with the frequency that I have observed among Blacks.

The term *bisquits* ('male shoes with a large toe area, similar to "Ivy League" type shoes') is another expression known by a major portion of the Black informants interviewed and a sole C informant. Though knowledge of the term is almost

the exclusive domain of the Blacks interviewed, it is not solely a 'Black' vernacular term. I have heard white 'surfers' use it to refer to the same shoe style. Whether or not the term is white or Black in origin, the style is quite popular among Black male youths and adults.

In the case of these three terms, we can see that something that is perceived to be important is named.

On the other hand, there are terms within this category that seem to differentiate lower class and middle class Black tastes in wearing apparel. For example, the term *old man comforts*, refers to a type of shoe that comes in either high or low tops (most often the former) and resembles an orthopedic shoe worn by old men. At the time of the study, this shoe was a popular item in South Central Los Angeles, and to a lesser extent in Venice. At least ten of the ghetto informants interviewed were wearing them. I have seldom seen them worn by middle class Black youths in the Baldwin Hills-View Park-Windsor Hills area. The vocabulary generally reflects this. With one exception, all the lower class Blacks knew the term; only half the middle class Blacks could identify its meaning. None of the whites knew the expression.

Thousand eyes, unlike *old man comforts*, is a modish 'Florsheim' type shoe with a number of perforations in the toe. I have often seen it worn by older males in South Central. Though the term was known to all but one of the lower class Black informants, it was familiar to only four D informants. It seems once again that both the style of the shoe and the term that identifies it are less popular among the middle class Black youth than among the ghetto youth in this study.

This difference in familiarity with certain old vernacular terminology descriptive of old styles or tastes is an important one. It supports the claim made for a ghetto-specific vocabulary pool which more often houses old terms than the Black vernacular per se. These old terms are retained for long periods of time because they still reflect on-going tastes, activities or experiences for the ghetto youth that seem to have been discarded or minimized by the middle class Black. This ghetto-specific conservation of old terms descriptive of on-going tastes will become even more apparent when we discuss terms related to food, alcohol, and personal appearance.

White informant response to this particular category of terms was negligible. Even those ex-offenders in Group C who had experienced repeated contact with Black youths in jail demonstrated little knowledge of these terms. This is especially interesting, since seven of the terms in this category are related to cars. Four of the expressions, *to freak off something* ('to fix something up, particularly your car'); *a hoopdie, a hoopie* ('a car'); *a kitty, a cat, a kitty-cat* ('a Cadillac'); *a blade* ('a large car, particularly a Cadillac') were totally unknown to the 'low-rider' contingency in Group C. A fifth car item, *gangster ride* ('an old car, particularly one resembling Al Capone's or other gangsters of the twenties' and thirties'), was known to only one of the five self-identified 'low-riders' in Group C. The seventh term, *short* ('a car'), and all its phonetic variations, e.g., *shot, shaw, shawl, shout*, was known by all response groups.

We have already seen a certain degree of unfamiliarity among white 'low-riders' with car-related terminology in section 3 (manipulative acts). There are a number of possible explanations for this apparent lack of car-related vocabulary knowledge on the part of the C group. One explanation is that the informants in Group C who have called themselves 'low-riders' are lying or embellishing. However, I personally observed for each of the five self identified 'low-riders' some mark of identification with a 'low-rider' club or set (e.g., low-rider club plaques in one's car, club jackets, cars that had been 'lowered' or painted metallic colors, etc.). Another explanation for the relatively negligible response to the car-related terminology is one already suggested, namely, that certain terms, even those relating to a seemingly cross-cultural or inter-racial activity or interest, still retain a high degree of secrecy among a given group—in this case, among lower class Black youths. The data seem to indicate that the expression 'low-rider' may very well be a cover term that superficially brings together youths of different races. That is, there are Black 'low-riders' and white 'low-riders' and each may well have their specific vernacular vocabulary. There is evidence that the low-rider clubs are very much like other kinds of social clubs in which peers of like interests and similar backgrounds come together. If this is the case, it would lend support to distinct Black-white 'low-rider' vocabulary. This is not to overlook the fact that there is still a body of shared terminology related to a common interest in cars that does transcend race and geography.

Whether or not all the Black youths who identified the car-related terms are 'low-riders' is secondary. In this instance, as in others, there seem to be some terms in the Black vernacular vocabulary pool that are known to Black youths because they are Black rather than because the terms relate to a particular experience that vitally interests them. In this instance, knowledge of the vernacular is more a matter of proximics, i.e., being around those interested in an activity, than personal involvement. A phenomenon can be of such wide-spread importance to a particular sub-culture that even 'non-participants,' the so-called 'lames' living within that culture, come to know of the phenomenon and some of the terms that describe it. This is true of middle class white non-drug users in relation to certain of the drug terms on this list. In this case, the display and identification of possessions, particularly one's car and clothes, are of special import to the Black ghetto youth.

6. Personal Appearance

There are six terms in the glossary that describe one's person or appearance. Three of the six entries are part of the lower class Black vocabulary; two are part of the overall Black vocabulary; the sixth term is shared by Groups A and D.

Though there are only six terms listed in this particular category, they are of interest in differentiating the groups. White knowledge of these six items was non-existent. Only one item was known to one C informant—*to be clean* ('to be well-dressed'). Black informant knowledge of the terms was focused predominantly within the lower class Black groups, with South Central informants displaying the greater degree of knowledge. However, it is of interest to note the kind of personal appearance being described by the vocabulary and the possible implications involved.

Two of the South Central ghetto-specific vocabulary terms, *a do* and *fried, dyed and swooped to the side*, are expressions describing hair that has been straightened in emulation of the white man. *A do* has come to have more generalized meaning, however, and applies to any 'hairdo.' The two terms were known to less than half the Venice informants and, with very few exceptions, to none of the middle class Black informants.

It would seem that the expressions have fallen into relative disuse among the Black informants in the study. This could be explained in terms of the concern with 'Black identity' seen among all segments of the Black population, and the concomitant censure that is directed at those actions and behaviors imitative of whites. This is true for a sizeable portion of the Black population interviewed. Yet, the data and personal observation also suggest that old styles, like the old terms describing them, persist in the South Central ghetto. It is fallacious to assume that every Black person, youth or adult, sports a 'natural' or 'Afro' hair style. There are still a number of Black residents in South Central who wear a close-cropped or 'straightened' hairdo.

Although the sociological implication of the range and type of hair styles displayed by Blacks is enormously interesting, it is not the concern of this study.¹⁰ What is of prime interest is that terms descriptive of certain hair styles have been retained in the vocabulary of a number of ghetto youths.

In addition to the few items in this section that seem to have fallen into relative disuse among the young Blacks interviewed, there are other equally old terms that describe a manner of appearance that is still much in favor among Black males. The terms, *to be decked to death*, *to be clean*, and *to be silked to the bone*, all describe, with somewhat different stress and nuance, the act of being well-dressed. Interestingly, the expression *to be decked to death* is one of two terms on the list that was known at the response group level by A and D., but by only four Venice youths. It is possible to explain A and D knowledge of the item in terms of geography, or, perhaps, the particular informant population.

Mention should be made of the racially different meanings assigned to the expression, *to be clean*. The vast majority of Black informants defined it in terms of being well dressed. With the exception of one C informant who defined it as the Black youths had, all other white informants who defined it offered the definition 'to be free of drugs on your person,' or 'to have given up drug usage.' Once again, the meaning assigned to an expression divides the informants along racial lines.

What is more interesting about the three terms noted above is the obvious source of the reference, that is, the well-dressed, well-groomed, *silked to the bone* ('dressed in silk from your underwear outward') appearance of the pimp. For a large number of the Black youths interviewed, both lower and middle class, the image and implication of the pimp's role is still particularly attractive. And, through the manner of one's conversation to a young lady, through one's dress, through one's car, and through the number of young ladies *strung out behind you* ('in love or infatuated with you'), the young Black male emulates the stance of the consummate hustler among hustlers. Though there are a number of terms in the

glossary that could be directly or indirectly identified with the action or behavior of the pimp, these few terms related to dress are most descriptive of his person, and knowledge of them marks a continued interest in the pimp style among the Black informants interviewed.¹¹

7. Food and Alcohol.

There are seven terms in the glossary that relate to food and eating or alcohol and drinking. One entry, *to scarf* ('to eat') was known at the response level by all the groups; another term for eating, *to chuck*, is part of the lower class Black vocabulary and was known to only one C informant and two D informants. The other five entries were known only to the Black informant population, primarily to the lower class Black youths.

The conservation of old terms that still describe relevant activities within the lower class informant's environment is especially apparent with the terms descriptive of alcohol and drinking. For example, four of the seven entries in this category, *L.I.Q.*, *short dog*, *grapes*, *pluck*, identify kinds of liquor (particularly wine) and the place it is bought. All four items are part of the lower class Black vocabulary; one of them, *L.I.Q.*, was unknown to the middle class Black youths; the other three terms were known to no more than three D informants.

These four terms have been part of the South Central ghetto vernacular for some time, according to the adults interviewed. They continue to be known and used by the lower class Black informants in this study, but not generally by the middle class Black group. Though drinking is admittedly an important part of *coming up* ('growing up') in the Black community as well as in the white community (though less so among all youth today), it is a more visible reality in the lower class ghetto than in the secluded homes of Windsor Hills or Bel-Air.

8. Sex and Sex Related Acts.

There are fifteen terms in the glossary directly related to sex. Several of the response groups knew some portion of these terms: Group A (three terms); Groups AB (four terms); Groups ABD (four terms); Groups AD (one term); Groups ABC (one term); and Groups ABCD (two terms).

Though knowledge of these entries seems particularly diffused among the response groups, the relationship between shared vernacular vocabulary and shared experience is not. Knowledge of sex related terminology among the white middle class informants was negligible. None of the fifteen terms was known by five or more informants. Two terms, *to get some booty* ('to have sex') and *to get some leg* ('to have sex') were known, respectively, by three and four E informants. Three other terms, *to catch* ('to win over a young lady, with the hope of having sex with her') and *poontang* ('the female sex organ'), and *cock* ('the female sex organ'), were each known by a single E informant. These five entries represent all the sexual terminology known to some portion of Group E.

Though the middle class white informant does not seem to share with Blacks a knowledge of the sex related vocabulary on this list, the lower class white ex-offender does. Perhaps no category of argot on this list, with the possible exception of terms related to acts of toughness, seems so clearly to link together the lower class Blacks and whites through the shared experience of jail. Ten of the fifteen sex related terms were known to the ex-offenders in Group C; eight of those ten items were known *only* by the ex-offenders in Group C. Not only the number, but the kinds of sexual references known to ex-jail youths in C are of interest.

There are a small number of identifiable 'jail terms' that seem to be visibly correlated with a shared jail experience. For the most part, the items the ex-offender in Group C knows and shares with the lower class Blacks are terms descriptive of homosexual or bisexual activities. The significance of shared knowledge of such homosexual or bisexual argot is important because it highlights a phenomenon that takes on importance in a circumscribed environment; and the terms for such phenomena are therefore learned by all participants.

Though other sexual terms of a non-homosexual nature were also known and shared by the informants being considered here, this correlation between the jail experience and the language involved is particularly apparent in even this select sample of terms.

There were, in addition, terms known exclusively by the Black population, particularly the lower class Blacks. There are four terms that fall into this category.

The expressions, *to do the thing* and *to do the do*, are both references to sexual intercourse. The first expression is another example of a term that distinguishes Black informants from white informants in terms of the meaning assigned to the expression. In Black terms, the expression is sexual; in white terms, the expression is significantly altered (*to do your thing*) and means 'to do whatever you want.'

A number of Black vernacular terms, when they pass into white usage, become generalized in meaning rather than specified in terms of a particular group interest or maintained in the original Black sense. So, for example, *to do your (the) thing* takes on a general reference rather than a specific sexual meaning. We can witness the same move away from the specific sexual meaning of such terms as *TCB*¹² ('to take care of business—often sexual in nature') and *up-tight* ('feeling good, as one does when he is "up-tight" sexually with another'). Conversely, we have already seen the white informant population's shift from a generalized meaning to a specific drug related meaning in terms as *to bo gart*, *to get down*, *to get it on* and *to burn someone*.¹³

Such diversified data suggest the complexity involved in intercultural vernacular transmission. It promises to be a rich source of continued investigation.

The other term mentioned above, *to do the do*, seems to reflect usage that is related to geographical proximity of informants rather than to race or economics in particular. That is, the expression is one of two entries in the glossary shared at the response group level by A and D. It was known to only three Venice youths.

Two entries among the sex-related terminology, *to freak off with someone* and *to get over* are part of the lower class Black vocabulary on the list. The first expression means 'to have sex in a number of unconventional ways.' It was totally unknown beyond Groups A and B. The second term, which means 'to succeed in your sexual advances toward a young lady,' was known to only two BSU youths in Group D, but was known to all twenty-four lower class Black informants.

Before considering the next category of terms, mention should be made of one final sex-related item, the definition of which separates the informants along racial lines—at least in this particular study. The expression *cock* is such a term. All but one of the Black informants identified the term to mean 'a female's sexual organ;' only six white youths, three of whom were C ex-offenders, provided this definition. The majority of white informants who did provide a definition for the term indicated it to mean the penis.¹⁴

9. Interpersonal Relations and Personal Names.

There are a group of terms on the list that can be said to label or identify another person and his actions. To the degree that the expression is positive or negative, the term can also be said to designate our feelings or attitudes toward him. So for example, if we call another person an 'ass,' we not only label him but indicate our attitude toward him. The fourteen vernacular terms in this category function in much the same manner. They are primarily 'naming' terms. Of these fourteen items, eleven are part of the overall Black vocabulary; each of the three other terms are distributed among three groupings of informants: A, AB and ABCD.

Outside of the Black informant population, naming terms were best known by Group C ex-offenders. Given the voluntary *and* forced intimacy of the penal institution, whether adult or juvenile, it is not surprising that the lower class white ex-offender was familiar with a number of these name terms. As Kantrowitz (1969) indicated, the naming of individuals is exceedingly important in prison as a way of identifying the participants in the 'inmate culture,' and assigning them to their respective racial groups.

What is of particular interest about the C ex-offenders' knowledge of certain of these items is that a preponderance of the terms known are descriptive of a negative attitude. So, for example, six of the nine items correctly identified by C ex-offenders, were terms implying negative, or at best, neutral identification of an individual. On the other hand, four terms describing positive identification of another were virtually unknown to the ex-offenders in Group C. Though the data are limited, they suggest that the pressure and friction generated in the prison environment between different racial groups tends to emphasize the portion of the naming vocabulary reflective of that condition, i.e., negative rather than positive

terms. Thus, the majority of C ex-offenders were familiar with such terms as a *lame* ('an inexperienced person—particularly in sexual matters'); a *poot-butt* ('a socially inexperienced person; someone who doesn't know "what's happening"'), a *rootie-poot* (same as *poot-butt*), and a *Tom* ('a Black person who emulates whites or seeks their favor in any number of ways').

On the other hand, this same group was unfamiliar with terms such as *main stuff* ('a best friend, most often one's girl friend'); or *main squeeze* (the same as *main stuff*); or *stuff* ('a girl friend or a young lady in general'); or *cuz* ('an associate, a general term of greeting usually acknowledging another Black person'). These terms are probably not available to the C jail youth. That is, their secrecy is maintained even in the forced intimacy of jail. This is particularly true where the relations between Blacks and whites may be strained. (See Kantrowitz, 1969, for a discussion of the secrecy dimension reflected in the vocabulary of race relations in prison.)

Only one term in this category was known to a large number of middle class white youths—the expression *lame* mentioned above. It was known to the four heavy drug users in Group E. The E youths who correctly identified the term acknowledged the Black vernacular expression *lame*, but offered the term *lamer* as the white vernacular analogue. This is an additional example of the phonological changes which accompany the extension of Black terms into the white community.

The virtual absence of knowledge of the naming vocabulary among white middle class informants may reflect the continuing chasm between the white middle class youth and the ghetto Black. Though these two groups may meet each other within the world of drug transactions and superficial acquaintanceships, terms denoting personal relationships, either positive or negative, are not shared. Relationship terms of the sort identified in this glossary are still primarily an intraracial lexical phenomenon, at the most, 'shared' between Black and white youths in jail.

Four of the terms in this category (*main stuff*, *main squeeze*, *high yellow*, *chicken head*) were unknown to any white informant. Three of the terms reflect aspects of the vernacular that differentiate Black and white usage, as well as usage within the Black informant population.

The terms *main stuff* and *stuff* were assigned different meanings by the Blacks and whites interviewed. A majority of the Blacks provided the primary definitions already noted for the terms. The whites who offered a definition assigned drug-related meanings to both terms. *Main stuff* was defined as 'the drug one used regularly'; *stuff* was applied to a variety of drugs (notably heroin) and to marijuana.

Though the term *stuff* (and by association *main stuff*) has historically been associated with drugs within the Black culture, it has taken on another meaning in this study, with this Black population. Though the two terms were also assigned drug-related definitions by Black informants, the first, primary response to these

words was an identifying name for one's friend, or girl friend, or a young lady in general.

As we have seen before, there are a number of old terms retained in the ghetto and unknown beyond it. There are in addition, as exemplified by these terms, expressions that have been transmitted outside the ghetto with their original meaning intact and used outside in that sense. However, they have undergone semantic changes within the ghetto, thus creating different meanings between Blacks and whites.

High yellow (yella) ('an unusually light-skinned Afro-American, particularly a girl') is an interesting expression because it represents another of the terms that was little known outside the Black ghettos sampled, and had been identified as an old South Central vernacular term. This lower class Black entry was known to only two middle class Blacks, though the term and what it intimates about 'color consciousness' within the Black culture is a long-standing one.¹⁵

It is difficult to determine why so many middle class Black youths were unable to identify the meaning of an expression that has been part of the Black idiom for many years. Perhaps, the increasing awareness of one's Black identity relegated such a term to the vernacular junk heap. Yet, the two Black youths in Group D who did identify the term's meaning were both political activists. It can be argued that they, above all, would be attuned to such terms by virtue of their more intense involvement in moves to obliterate such a self-defeating categorization of one's people. This seems a simplistic explanation for a complex phenomenon.

Perhaps, all that can be concluded from the limited data is that old terms are retained in the vernacular vocabulary pool because they are reflections of Black history, and to the extent the terms are still used, reveal on-going social and psychological realities.

Finally the term *chickenhead* ('a particularly unattractive girl, usually one that has very close-cropped hair; an unkempt girl') is of interest because like *schoofer/skoobie* and *flake/flag* it has its equivalent in Venice vocabulary—*tackhead*. Though only four Venice youths identified the meaning of *chickenhead*, all twelve B informants provided the term *tackhead* or *tackyhead* as the Venice semantic counterpart.

Venice folk etymology (i.e., the informants interviewed) explains the terms *tackhead/tackyhead* as having derived from the term 'tacky' ('an adjective describing something cheap, badly made or ill conceived, in this case a young lady'). South Central 'etymologists' within the control group and Group A derive the term *chickenhead* from the chicken-like appearance of a young lady with close-cropped hair. Whatever the origin of the two terms, they are identical in meaning.

More than any other category of terms discussed thus far, vocabulary naming persons or identifying personal relationships can be uniquely identified as part of the Black idiom in the study.

Hannerz, in his observations of Washington, D.C. ghetto life, saw what he termed the 'vocabulary of soul' in operation. According to him, it functions above all to bind Black people together into a brotherhood of shared experience that 'no outsider is expected to understand.' Nowhere is the brotherhood of being Black more evident than in this category of terms where pejorative names are not only applied seriously but 'in affectionate mockery [to] signalize the understanding that they [Black people] are separate from the outside world' (1969, p. 157).

10. The Outsiders.

Just as black people are taught the meaning of blackness by other blacks, they learn about white people and race relations within the ghetto community rather than in face-to-face contacts with whites. White people are being typed by black people, just as white people among themselves are typing Black people. In both cases the vocabulary becomes a cultural storehouse for hostility, a part of the community's own information about its external affairs which is seldom contradicted by other sources (Hannerz, 1969, pp. 165-6).

This statement reveals the psychological and social importance of the terms described in this section. The statement also suggests another dimension exhibited by these terms, namely, that expressions of racial derision are generally 'in-house,' to be used by the Black community out of earshot of the persons or class of people they deride. These terms function much as the naming terms do, that is, as part of the private vocabulary of the Black. Informant responses to this terminology substantiate the essentially secret nature of the terms.

Of the seven terms descriptive of the white person, five are part of the lower class Black or overall Black vocabulary on the list. The other two terms, *paddy* and *honky* (both derogatory names for whites) have interesting patterns of shared usage and distribution. *Paddy* is an old Black vernacular term found in both the Major and Landy dictionaries. Its appearance in Landy's lexicon suggests that it has become relatively well-known among the segment of the 'underground' he refers to as the 'dopers.' Yet the term, which is part of Groups ABCD's vocabulary, was known to only two of the heavy drug users in Group E and to no other members of the middle class white group. On the other hand, the expression *honky* is known to Groups ABDE, but surprisingly was known to only one C informant (one of the four ex-offenders in that group).

Without more data it is impossible to determine the reasons for this particular distribution of white informant response to the two items. It would seem that the ex-offenders in Group C ought to have been familiar with such a commonly used term as *honky*, since they demonstrate knowledge of lesser known items in this category. Correspondingly, it is surprising that only two members of Group E knew the equally common expression, *paddy*. One would expect this term to

have been part of their personal experience, or, at the very least, to have arisen sometime during their readings or discussions in high school. With the exception of the term *honky*, Group E did not know any other terms in this category.

Hannerz has observed that the ghetto Black has little exposure to the white man in his daily dealings and, therefore, bases his responses on the few whites he does encounter, such as the police, the shopkeeper, the pawn broker or the social case worker. I have observed that the same is true of the white middle class youths. That is, aside from their drug dealings, most of the informants interviewed have little or no on-going contact with ghetto Blacks. None of the E informants had ever been to the South Central ghetto.

The terms described in this category are most often heard by whites (when they are heard at all) in moments of Black anger, hostility or frustration. The middle class white youth in this study has not been in the emotional or physical context that potentially fosters such pejoratives. For the most part, the E informant's contact with South Central Blacks has been a friendly often times momentary exchange on 'the Strip,' in Hollywood, or at a party. Again, I am speaking about the middle class white informants interviewed for this study. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the middle class white youth ignorant of the very terms that are used to 'put him down.'

On the other hand, one would expect the lower class white informant to know considerably more of these terms than his middle class racial counterpart, since his daily dealings might bring him into more frequent, even hostile contact with South Central Blacks. Again, this is not the case. Although Lennox is particularly close to the South Central ghetto, few of the C informants interviewed (a few of the 'low-riders' excepted) have more than passing contact with Black youths. There seem to be more hostile exchanges between rival white car clubs in the lower class Lennox-Lawndale-Hawthorne area than between any two racial groups.¹⁶

This isolation from the Black ghetto is reflected in Group C's lack of knowledge of the derogatory names for whites listed in the glossary. With the exception of the term already mentioned, *paddy*, none of the other words in this category was known by five or more Group C informants. On the other hand, six of the seven terms in this group were known by one or more of the ex-offenders in Group C. As already suggested, the shared jail experience often encourages an antagonistic atmosphere between whites and Blacks within which reciprocal name-calling might well occur.

Only one pejorative, *gray* ('white person'), was unknown to any of the Group C ex-offenders. This expression dates back to the 1930's (Major, 1970, p. 61) and seems to have fallen into disuse among a portion of the Black youths interviewed. Yet other equally dated terms, such as *honky*, *paddy*, and *peckerwood*, were well-known. Perhaps, it is infrequently used by this particular group. Or perhaps, it like the other old pejoratives on the list has given way to more graphic expressions for the white man.

The expression *beast* is included among Major's entries and is interesting from the standpoint of his study because it separates the lower class and middle class Black youths in terms of usage. All the lower class Blacks knew the term; three D informants (BSU members) correctly identified its meaning; three C jail youths and one E drug user also knew it.

The fact that so few Group D youths knew the term may be mere chance. However, it may also be true that the stronger, more graphic connotation of the term *beast*, when compared to less harsh names for the white man such as *honky* or *paddy*, more keenly approximates the stronger negative feelings experienced by the lower class Black in comparison to the middle class Black youth.

Heise (1966) has noted that one selects words whose connotations are in line with one's personal feelings about the subject or object being described. In so doing, the person 'avoids dissonance, by using only those words which are congruent with their personal experience' (p. 230). It is my feeling that a number of the terms in this section can be discussed in this light.

Finally, the expression *Irvine* ('the police') warrants attention. The term was known to all the control group in addition to all the Black response group informants. A single C ex-offender correctly identified its meaning. If any term on this list can be said to relate to the Black idiom, it is *Irvine*. In effect unknown to any white, it, along with the other 'pure' or virtually pure entries in this glossary, provides strong support for the existence of a Black argot that binds Blacks together across geography and economics and remains unknown to any sizeable segment of the dominant white culture.

11. Culture-Specific Miscellany

There are six terms in the glossary that do not lend themselves to classification. Along with the terms in sections 9 and 10, they provide additional indication of a well-formed private Black vocabulary pool. Only one of the six expressions, *funky* ('something unusual, good or bad'), was known by all the response groups. It has, more or less, assumed slang status. However, it too has a Black meaning unknown to any of the whites interviewed. A number of the Black informants also identified *funky* to mean 'having a strong body odor.'

Another entry, *git-go/get-go* ('beginning') was known to two of the Group C ex-offenders. Both claimed to have first heard the terms used in prison. The remaining four entries were unknown, with one exception, outside the Black informant population. Each of them is worth noting.

The expression *what it is?* ('a greeting, similar to "what's happening?"'), like *Irvine* above, was known to all the Blacks interviewed. Three C ex-offenders and one E informant identified its meaning. The expression is part of a longer, almost ritualized greeting that is uniquely Black as the 'speech events' cited by Labov (1968) are Black. One variation of this extended greeting proceeds as follows:

Speaker one: 'What it is, brother?' (What's happening?)
Speaker two: 'What it was.' (What has already happened.)
Speaker one: 'What's it gonna be?' (What'll we do?)

Like *the dozens* or the older term of greeting, *what's happening?* (and the possible reply: *ain't nothin' to it*), one can call upon different responses to an initial verbal opening, much as one responds to an opening move in chess. I have yet to hear a white youth engage in this type of elaborate and ritualized verbal exchange.¹⁷

Two of the expressions in this category are part of the lower class Black vernacular. They are: *mother's day* ('the first and sixteenth of each month'), and *bunny gunny* or *bani gani* ('what's happening?,' 'what's new?'). The expression *mother's day* is closely related to the experience of many ghetto youths. The term refers to the two days when Aid to Dependent Children relief checks are received by females on welfare. Only the lower class Blacks in this study knew the expression. No middle class Black identified its meaning. Once again we see an instance in which a phenomenon that is important is named. None of the twelve D informants or their families had received aid from the County, to the best of their knowledge. The vast majority of the lower class Blacks interviewed for this study had.

The other lower class Black term in this category, *bunny gunny* (*bani gani*) is one of the few entries on this particular list that can be seen to derive directly from the Black power movement. This term of greeting is an apparent distortion of the Swahili expression *abari ghani* which means 'what news?' Though the entry is part of the lower class Black vocabulary, it was known to twice as many South Central informants as Venice youths.

At the time of the South Central field work for this study, the US organization, which stresses the African heritage and culture of the transplanted Black American, had its headquarters in South Central Los Angeles. It was the US organization that popularized Swahili, both through formal classes held at South Central high schools, such as Fremont, and informally.

Though none of the youths who knew the expression *abani gani* had attended formal classes in Swahili, they had incorporated this expression and a variety of other foreign language phrases into their vocabulary. Most of them could be identified with particular political organizations. For example, the Swahili expression, *tutoa nana*, means 'until later;' 'see you later.' A number of the South Central youths interviewed for this study used the expression, *tuton nada* to express the same thought. In Swahili, *jema sana* means 'very fine;' the South Central equivalent for the same sentiment was *jeme sati*.

Because of the Muslim influence, smatterings of Arabic were also used by South Central informants. For instance, a few youths identified the expressions *assalah alink* and *aka linka solon* to mean 'peace be with you.' In Arabic, the same meaning is ascribed to the phrase *salaam aleikum* or its variant, *aleikum salaam*.

One can expect a number of terms associated with Black nationalism to find their way into the Black idiom. Whether or not the youths using these terms identify with the movement is a question that warrants further investigation. If response to the questionnaire used in the earlier study is any indication of Black youthful involvement in Black political organizations, it is minimal at best.

The terms and expressions isolated out for discussion in this monograph are representative of the multi-dimensional informant responses to the glossary. Though the many nuances of inter-cultural or intra-cultural usage have only been touched upon, the preceding discussion does suggest the wealth of sociolinguistic information that can be derived from even this limited collection of Black vernacular terms when administered to a variety of economic, geographic and racial groups.¹⁸

SUMMARY

The particular patterns of Black vernacular vocabulary sharing revealed above highlight a number of intra-cultural and inter-cultural concerns within the informant population.

The greatest single body of shared vernacular vocabulary that cut across race, economics and geography was that related to drugs and drug activities. The heavy drug users in both white groups and among the Blacks, particularly the lower class Black youths, monopolized knowledge of the terms in this category. Of considerable interest were the terms descriptive of pills. Of special note in this category were the number of phonological and semantic cognates for glossary terms that differentiated the groups racially, economically and geographically. With the exception of this category, the middle class whites did not display concentrated knowledge of any other category of terms.

If terms that characterized drugs and drug activities bound together white and Black youths (especially the middle class white drug users and the lower class Blacks), then terms related to acts of toughness, the care, maintenance and display of one's car, and some of the names assigned to whites and Blacks were of inter-cultural concern to lower class youths, regardless of race. This was particularly evident among those lower class youths who have 'served time' in jail.

Yet, a majority of the interests and concerns represented by the vernacular were race-bound. In each of the categories mentioned above, i.e., drugs, acts of toughness, car and car related activities, and names for Blacks and whites, many terms virtually unknown to the white informants. When we looked at terms related to material possessions, personal appearance, food and alcohol, generalized physical behavior and culture-specific miscellany, the scope of 'secret terms' was seen to widen. These categories not only separated out the white and Black informants, but also differentiated lower class and middle class Black youths. Terms related to conscious or ostentatious display of oneself or one's possessions were more widely known by lower class Black youths than by middle class Blacks. Nonetheless, both lower class and middle class Blacks demonstrated

concern with personal and material display, and a number of fashions and styles were shared within the Black informant population, as well as the terms describing them.

The terms that most visibly differentiated the lower class and middle class Blacks were old terms related to food and alcohol, personal appearance, material possessions and certain culture-specific miscellany. In fact, the South Central informant population tended to exhibit the greatest knowledge of and continued concern with a number of these activities and behaviors. The retention of these old terms in the vocabulary of the South Central informant in particular seemed to reflect their continued importance in describing on-going tastes and fashions, and the social and psychological realities of ghetto life. The vernacular can be said to constitute part of the oral history comprising the Black experience.

Aside from separating out particular intra-cultural and inter-cultural concerns among the informants, the study suggested a number of ways in which vocabulary was transmitted or transformed across race, economics and geography. As already noted, a number of the drug terms on the list had phonological cognates among various informant groups. Conversely, a number of the same terms possessed different meanings for groups of informants. These clearly differentiated white and Black informants, with the middle class Black group often standing between the two races in terms of their particular definition of items.

In addition, terms descriptive of generalized behavior or activity within the Black milieu were often used by white informants in a specified or circumscribed sense. Often, the meanings were particularized in terms of drugs or drug use. Conversely, certain vocabulary with specified meanings within the Black population took on generalized meanings when transmitted beyond the Black community. This was visible with some sex terms. Whether or not word meanings were made general or specific by the white or Black informants, the assigned definitions reflected a ranking of experiences in order of their importance to the particular group.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Folb (1972) for a detailed account of the subject.

²Unfortunately, only a minute portion of the 1,098 common vocabulary names and the 252 'racially unique names,' could be reprinted in the American Dialect Society article on the subject. Kantrowitz was kind enough to send me a copy of the unpublished manuscript entitled, 'Stateville Names: A Prison Vocabulary,' which was compiled between 1959 and 1963.

³In addition to sharpening verbal skill and transmitting cultural content, Abrahams (1962a) claims that these speech events provide a much needed psychological channel for venting anxieties and frustrations experienced by the Black living in an essentially hostile environment. In a subsequent article, Abrahams (1962b) enlarges the psychological function served by the speech event, particularly the 'toast,' by claiming that 'Black humor' provides a method of tolerating the real tragedy of one's personal life. It is interesting to note that this claim has also been made for the particular characteristics of Jewish humor (Rosten, 1968).

⁴I am indebted to William Labov for the notion of 'Black English vernacular,' from which I derived the concept of a 'Black vernacular vocabulary.' Also, I wish to acknowledge the comments made by David Maurer concerning my glossary of terms. His observations led me to revise my thinking about the nature of argot and the advisability of continuing to label the glossary I had collected as argot.

⁵See Folb (1972) Chapters 2-5, for an extensive discussion of methodology.

⁶See Miller (1958) for an examination of the 'focal concerns' operating in the lower class milieu of delinquent youth.

⁷Witness Proposition 19, the marijuana initiative, on the November ballot. Almost one million people in Los Angeles County voted for the legalization of marijuana, not all of whom were teenagers.

⁸Compare this popular bumper sticker expression with one pasted on the back fender of a young Black's car in downtown Los Angeles: 'When I die, bury me face down so the whole world can kiss my ass.'

⁹Cleaver (1968) provides the following definition of a 'low-rider:'

Originally the term was coined to describe the youth who had lowered the bodies of their cars so that they rode low to the ground; also implied was the style of driving that these youngsters perfected. Sitting behind the steering wheel and slumped low down in the seat, all that could be seen of them was from their eyes up, which used to be the cool way of driving (ftn. 1, p. 26).

¹⁰See *The Black Woman*, pp. 180-188, (1970), an anthology of writings by Black women, for an interesting group dialogue on the 'natural' and 'Afro' hairdos.

¹¹The advertising agencies are obviously aware of the continued attractiveness of the 'pimp' style for many Black males and females. At the time of the field work for the study, there was a billboard ad for 'Winston' cigarettes that was much in evidence throughout the Los Angeles Black community. In the foreground, an attractive Black male was pictured wearing a modified 'cowboy' outfit: a bright yellow, long sleeved silk shirt, a red scarf around his neck and a particularly stylish cowboy hat. He also sported a pair of dark sunglasses. In the background was an admiring female. The message that accompanied the picture read: 'Real and rich and Winston.' It was interesting to observe that the male figure selected was not one dressed in a dashiki or in a leather jacket or beret or, for that matter, in a suit and tie.

¹²A billboard advertisement for Broadway Federal Savings in Los Angeles read: 'Taking care of business.'

¹³This of course is not unique to such terms. It is often the case that the words in the standard lexicon undergo either 'generalization' or 'narrowing' at one time, for example, the word 'cheek' meant 'jaw.' Its meaning was narrowed. Or the slang word 'kisser' which first referred to the mouth was generalized to mean the 'face.' 'Manuscript' originally meant 'that which is written by hand.' 'Place' formally referred to an open square in a village or town with the present meaning extended to any location. 'Citizen' meant 'city dweller.' 'Knave' meant 'servant' (German—*knabe*).

¹⁴David Maurer has given one of the most erudite explanations for the different origin and use of the two homophones represented by the word *cock*:

The word applied to the male organ apparently goes back to the shape of the spigots used on medieval wine-casks. I have seen some of these in France with what were obviously the heads of roosters carved on the tap: of course, the shape of the tap may have been suggested by some relationship between the shape of the head of a rooster and the male organ, . . . But whichever came first is irrelevant. The point is that the French for *coq* gave us the English term *cock* for the male organ. This is in use today on a colloquial basis all over England and the U.S. The image involved is the passage of urine.

The term applied to the female genitalia comes also from France at a later time and the original term was *coquille*, the cockle-shell, which metaphorically described the interlocking of the *labia minora* to cover the clitoris and, partially, the vestibule to the vagina. . . This meaning infiltrated parts of English well before the migration to America. With the patterns of settlement, this meaning spread in the Colonies settled by people from England who had already been exposed to it. It may well have been reenforced by the French settlements in Louisiana (personal correspondence, 1972).

¹⁵See the chapter entitled 'Marriage and Love,' in *Black Rage* (1968) for a discussion of Black 'color consciousness.'

¹⁶One of the re-occurring topics in the Group C interviews was 'the fight' that took place between Lennox youths and those from the neighboring city of Hawthorne. The dispute started over territorial rights at Lennox Park.

¹⁷It is also interesting to note the syntactic structures of the greetings cited above. The expression, *what it is*, is used interrogatively and does not 'obey' the grammatical rules of standard American which requires the transposition of the copula (or auxiliary) and subject after a *Wh* interrogative.

¹⁸The scope of my investigation into Black vernacular usage is necessarily limited and circumscribed. No attempt is made to generalize the data gathered beyond the informant 'populations' discussed. Whether or not the same or similar statements can be made about others selected from the same target populations as the informants in this study is for future research to determine. However, evidence from a number of sources suggests that the conclusions reached are neither unique or isolated. Nonetheless, the observations made throughout this monograph are, at best, suggestive. To construe them otherwise is to claim for the study more than it claims for itself.

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APPENDIX A

Key to the Glossary

Since a variety of information is being presented in the glossary, the format warrants explanation. The vernacular vocabulary terms are arranged alphabetically according to the first key word in the entry. Some terms or phrases that are identical in meaning and similar in structure are offered as one entry. These multiple entries are either set off by commas, e.g., ACE, ACE BOON COON, ACE COON POON; or the words that vary within the phrase are placed in brackets, e.g.,

[MO
BLACK MOAT]

Where the pronunciation of a word or phrase is not self-evident, a phonetic transcription is offered.

Most of the entries list a single definition; some list two or three. In all cases, informant response is based upon the first meaning cited. Secondary definitions acknowledge the existence of less current or well-known meanings offered for various terms.

The designation 'Category' refers to the particular interest category(s) to which each item is assigned. The eleven categories are represented in the glossary by the following abbreviations:

1. Drug and drug related acts (DR)
2. Acts of toughness (T)
3. Verbal and physical forms of manipulation (MA)
4. Generalized Physical activity (PhA)
5. Material possessions (P)
6. Personal appearance (AP)
7. Food and eating (FE) / Alcohol and drinking (AL)
8. Sex and sex related acts (SX)
9. Interpersonal relations and personal names (RL)
10. Outsiders (O)
11. Culture-specific miscellany (MS)

'Group Vocabulary' refers to the particular responses groups who shared knowledge of the item (i.e., five or more informants in the given group knew it). 'Group Response' indicates the number of informants in each group who knew the item.

APPENDIX A

Glossary

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocabulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
1. ACE, ACE BOON COON, ACE COON POON	a close friend	RL	ABD	12	7	3	6	0
2. APPLE HATS, APPLES	large-brimmed oversized caps	P	ABD	12	11	0	12	0
3. to BASE ON SOMEONE	to verbally disparage someone	MA/T	AB	10	12	1	2	0
4. the BEAST	a white person	O	AB	12	12	3	3	1
5. BISQUITS	an 'Ivy League' type male shoe with a particularly large toe area	P	ABD	12	12	1	7	0
40 6. GUNNY, BLACK { GUNGEON GUNNY }	a particularly potent form of marijuana grown in Jamaica and Africa	DR	ABD	12	11	0	6	0
7. BLACK { MO MOAT }	a strong, dark form of marijuana	DR	ABC	12	7	6	2	2
8. a BLADE	i. a Cadillac, particularly a Coup de Ville or Fleetwood ii. any large, late model car iii. a knife	F	AB	6	5	0	2	0
9. to BLOW HIM AWAY	to kill someone; to shoot someone	T	ABD	12	11	4	6	0
10. to BLOW ON SOMEONE	i. to be particularly aggressive verbally with another, esp. a female; to monopolize a conversation with the intensity and longevity of your comments ii. to verbally 'put down' another person	MA	ABD	8	9	1	8	0

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocabulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
11. BLUNTS	i. diluted capsules of 'Seconal' ii. any 'black market' barbituate	DR	AB	11	5	0	2	0
12. to BO { GART GARD }	to take advantage; to take more than one's share of something	MA/T	ABCDE	12	12	9	10	7
13. a BOMBER	a large marijuana cigarette	DR	ABCDE	12	11	8	6	6
14. BULLETS, BULLETHEADS	i. large capsules of 'Seconal' ii. any barbituate in bullet-headed capsule form	DR	ABC	12	8	5	3	4
15. BONNY GONNY (banij ganij), BUNNY GUNNY	an expression of greeting, i.e. 'what's happening?'	MS	AB	11	5	0	4	0
41 16. to BURN SOMEONE	i. to 'steal' a male's woman from him ii. to cheat, rob or otherwise take advantage of someone	MA/T	ABD	11	10	1	8	0
17. BUSH	i. marijuana ii. the female pubes iii. hair	DR/SX/AP	AB	11	6	3	2	2
18. to { BUST POP } A CAP ON SOMEONE	to shoot a gun at someone	T	AB	12	11	2	1	0
19. to CAP ON SOMEONE	to verbally 'put down' another or another's family	MA	ABD	9	7	3	9	0
20. to CAP OUT	to pass out or fall asleep from excessive marijuana or pills	DR	ABD	11	7	1	8	0

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
21. to CATCH	to 'win over' a female with the intention of having sexual intercourse with her	SX	ABD	12	12	0	11	1
22. CHICAGO GREEN	a particular type of marijuana	DR	AB	8	5	1	2	1
23. a CHICKENHEAD	a female with short-cropped hair; any unkempt, unattractive female	RL	A	7	4	0	0	0
24. to CHUCK	to eat	FE	AB	11	7	1	2	0
25. CHUMP CHANGE	i. a small sum of money, usually less than a dollar ii. money for basic needs	MS	ABD	12	12	0	6	0
26. to be CLEAN	i. to be nicely dressed ii. to be free of drugs on one's person iii. to no longer take drugs	AP/DR	ABC	12	10	1	5	0
27. COCK	the female sexual organ	SX	ABCD	12	12	5	11	1
28. to COCK BLOCK	to interfere with a male's attempt to 'win over' a female, even if the other male is not interested in the female himself	MA	AB	11	11	0	1	0
29. to COP A MATCH	to secure a matchbox of marijuana from someone	DR	AB	10	10	0	3	1

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Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
30. to CREEP	i. to be some place you don't belong--particularly at the house of a female whose man is not at home; to sneak up behind someone and hit him ii. to drive slowly with one's parking lights on	MA/PhA T	ABD	12	12	4	5	0
31. CUZ (kAz)	i. shortened form for 'cousin'; used as a term of address, esp. between Blacks greeting one another ii. a friend	RL	ABD	8	11	1	7	0
32. to DANCE ON YOUR LIFTS	to operate the hydraulic lifts on one's car so that the body is made to bounce up and down (used to 'show off' one's car and equipment)	MA	ABCD	12	12	5	7	0
33. to be DECKED TO DEATH	to be particularly well-dressed	AP	AD	12	4	0	7	0
34. the DEVIL	a white person	O	ABD	12	7	2	6	1
35. a DO	a hair do	AP	AB	8	5	0	3	0
36. to DO THE DO	to have sexual intercourse with a female	SX	AD	8	3	0	8	0
37. to DO THE THING	to have sexual intercourse with a female	SX	ABD	12	8	0	5	0
38. you DON'T HAVE PAPERS ON ME	'you don't own me;' 'you're not married to me'	RL	ABD	11	8	1	5	0

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Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
39. DON'T LET YOUR MOUTH OVERLOAD YOUR ASS DON'T LET YOUR MOUTH BUY WHAT YOUR ASS CAN'T PAY FOR DON'T LET YOUR MOUTH WRITE A CHECK YOUR ASS CAN'T CASH	don't talk too much	T	AB	11	9	1	2	0
40. to be DOWN ON SOMEONE'S CASE	to verbally harass someone	MA/T	ABCDE	12	12	10	12	5
41. to DROP YOUR RIDE	to abruptly drop the body of one's car to the ground through the use of hydraulic lifts (used particularly to show off one's car and equipment)	MA	ABD	12	12	4	7	0
44 42. a DUBEE	a marijuana cigarette	DR	ABDE	10	12	1	5	5
43. F-40s	1½ grains of 'Seconal' (so called because the Eli Lilly drug company stamps this par- ticular barbituate with the identifying letter and number 'F40')	DR	ABCD	12	10	7	6	4
44. FENDER BENDERS	i. barbituates, esp. 'Seconal' ii. any type of pill	DR	AB	10	9	3	1	0
45. to FIEND ON SOMEONE	to show up someone, particularly while in one's car by using hydraulic lifts to abruptly drop the body to the ground	MA	A	12	2	0	0	0
46. to FIRE UP	to light up a marijuana cigarette	DR	ABCDE	12	12	11	11	5

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
47. to FLAKE	to pass out or fall asleep from excessive marijuana or pills	DR	AB	12	6	0	3	0
48. to FONK ON SOMEONE	to show up someone, particularly while in one's car by using hydraulic lifts to abruptly drop the body to the ground	MA	ABD	12	11	0	6	0
49. FONKY, FUNKY	i. something unusual, either good or bad ii. smelly	MS	ABCDE	12	11	10	12	11
50. to FREAK OFF SOMETHING	to fix up something, particularly to equip one's car with the latest accessories	P	AB	12	12	0	3	0
45 51. FRIED, DYED AND SWOOPED COMBED TO THE SIDE	a Black person's hair that has been straightened and styled in emulation of the white man	AP	AB	7	5	0	1	0
52. FOUL	cold-blooded; ruthless	T	ABD	12	12	3	8	2
53. to FREAK OFF WITH SOMEONE	to have sexual intercourse in any number of unconventional ways	SX	AB	7	6	0	0	0
54. a GANGSTER RIDE	an old model car, esp. from the era of the 30's and 40's; any old model car, with or without the latest accessories	P	AB	12	5	1	3	0
55. to GET DOWN	to do whatever one is going to do, esp. fight, have sexual intercourse, dance, take pills or smoke marijuana	PhA	ABD	12	12	4	8	2

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
56. to GET IT ON	to begin anything, esp. a fight, sexual intercourse, taking drugs, or smoking marijuana	PhA	ABCDE	12	12	9	12	9
57. to GET OVER	to 'win over' a female, particularly with sexual intercourse as the end	SX	AB	12	12	0	2	0
58. to GET SOME BCOTIE	i. to have sexual intercourse with a female ii. to have anal intercourse, esp. with another male	SX	ABD	11	11	4	9	3
59. to GET SOME {DUKE DUKE SHOOT}	to have anal intercourse, particularly with another male	SX	(JAIL)	8	4	2	1	0
48 60. to GET SOME {EYE BROWN EYE}	to have anal intercourse, particularly with another male	SX	(JAIL)	6	5	2	0	0
61. to GET SOME LEG	to have sexual intercourse with a female	SX	ABCD	12	12	6	11	4
62. the {GIT GO GET GO}	the beginning	MS	ABD	12	12	2	7	0
63. to GO DOWN	to help a friend when he is in trouble, esp. when a fight is imminent	T	ABD	11	12	2	6	0
64. to GO FOR WHAT YOU KNOW	to accomplish the best you can (used particularly within the context of a fight)	T	AB	12	12	2	3	0
65. GRAPES	wine	AL	AB	7	6	0	1	0

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
66. to GUSSLE, to GONSLE (gasl) (gansl)	to fight	T	AB	9	5	1	4	0
67. a GRAY	a white person	O	ABD	8	9	0	7	0
68. to GREASE (grijz)	to eat	FE	ABD	6	10	0	7	0
69. to HAVE YOUR NOSE WIDE OPEN	i. to be particularly infatuated or in love with another person ii. to be 'snorting' cocaine	MA/DR	AB	7	9	0	4	0
70. HEADS	males, esp. Black males	RL	ABD	12	9	1	7	0
71. to HEAT YOUR SPRINGS	to have the back springs of one's car heated so that the back end drops and becomes permanently lowered	PhA/P	ABC	12	10	9	2	0
47 72. to HIGH SIGN	i. to show off what one has. e.g. car, clothes, girlfriend, etc. ii. to display the colors, sign, etc. of one's special group affiliation	MA	ABD	12	11	0	6	0
73. HIGH {YELLA YELLOW YALLER} (yelə) (yɛ lr)	a particularly light-skinned Afro-American, esp. a female	RL	AB	9	8	0	2	0
74. HONKY	a white person	O	ABDE	12	12	1	12	6
75. a {HOOPDIE HOOPIE}	a car	P	ABD	12	12	0	5	0
76. HORS D'OEUVRES	capsules of 'Seconal'	DR	A	5	0	1	1	0

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
77. IF YOU FEEL { FROGGISH } { FROGGY } { LEAP } { TAKE A LEAP }	a challenge to fight: 'if you think you can beat me, come ahead'	T	AB	11	7	3	1	0
78. IRVINE (irvajn)	the police	O	ABD	12	12	1	12	0
79. to JACK UP SOMEONE	to physically assault someone, particularly with the intention of robbing them	T	ABCD	12	12	10	8	4
80. JIBS	lips; mouth	AP	AB	10	6	0	2	0
81. to be KEYED	to be 'high' on drugs	DR	ABD	11	6	1	6	0
82. a KITTY, CAT, KITTY CAT	a Cadillac	P	ABD	6	7	0	5	0
83. a LAME	a socially inexperienced person; someone who doesn't know 'what's happening'	RL	ABCD	12	12	8	10	4
84. to LAY SOME PIPE	to have sexual intercourse with a female	SX	A	7	3	0	2	0
85. to LEAN	a style of driving one's car in which the driver leans toward the right hand side of the car as if resting his elbow on a console or arm rest--whether or not it actually exists--while maneuvering the car with the left hand (popular among 'low-riders')	MA	ABD	11	10	0	5	0
86. { LILYS } { LILY F40s }	1½ grains of 'Seconal' (so called because the Eli Lilly drug company stamps this particular barbituate with the identifying letter and number 'F40')	DR	ABC	11	10	6	2	4

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
87. L.I.Q.	liquor store	AL	AB	7	6	0	0	0
88. to MACK	i. to talk, particularly to a female with the intention of impressing her ii. to kiss	MA	ABD	12	12	0	8	1
89. MAIN SQUEEZE	one's best friend; one's primary girl friend	RL	ABD	9	11	0	6	0
90. MAIN STUFF	i. one's primary girl friend ii. a close friend	RL	ABD	11	9	0	6	0
91. MAIN WHORE (how)	i. one's main woman--sexually, romantically or both ii. a pimp's number one money-making prostitute	RL	ABD	12	10	2	8	0
92. ME AND YOU	a challenge to fight: 'there's just me and you, so let's fight'	T	ABCD	12	11	6	5	0
93. MOTHER'S LAY	the first and sixteenth of each month (the two days that County welfare checks are issued to women receiving aid)	MS	AB	9	7	0	0	0
94. to OFF SOMEONE	to hit someone quickly before he can retaliate; to kill someone	T	ABD	12	11	2	8	0
95. OLD MAN COMFORTS	a high or low top male shoe resembling orthopedic shoes worn by old men	P	ABD	12	11	0	6	0
96. a PADDY	a white person	O	ABCD	12	12	6	10	2
97. a PECKERWOOD	a white person	O	ABD	12	10	3	9	0

	Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocabulary	Group Response				
					A	B	C	D	E
	98. PLUCK	wine	AL	AB	10	6	0	1	0
	99. POONTANG	a sexually desirable female; a female's sexual organ	SX	ABC	7	9	5	3	1
	100. a FOOT-BUTT	a 'square;' someone who doesn't know 'what's happening' (often refers to a young child)	RL	ABD	12	12	4	9	0
	101. to PUT HER ON THE BLOCK	to have a female working for one as a prostitute	SX	AB	12	9	4	4	0
	102. to RANK SOMEONE	to interfere with another male's attempt to 'win over' a female; to verbally 'put someone down'	MA	ABD	12	12	3	6	1
of	103. to RIDE { PUSSY FUNK THE BITCH'S SEAT }	to ride in the front seat of a car between two other males	MA	ABCD	10	12	8	10	3
	104. to RIDE SHOTGUN	i. to ride in the front seat of a car on the passenger's side ii. to ride in the middle between two other males, either in the front or back seat of a car iii. to ride in a car as the 'look-out' for any trouble that might occur	MA/T	ABCDE	12	12	11	9	8
	105. to RIP { OFF ON } SOMEONE	to have sexual intercourse with a female	SX	ABD	12	12	2	10	0
	106. to RIP OFF SOMETHING	to steal something	T	ABCDE	12	12	9	11	7
	107. a RIV	a Buick Riviera	P	ABD	10	11	4	5	0
	108. to ROCK OUT	to pass out or fall asleep from excessive marijuana or pills	DR	A	5	4	0	0	0

	Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocabulary	Group Response				
					A	B	C	D	E
	109. a ROCTIE-POCT	a 'square;' someone who doesn't know 'what's happening' (often refers to a young child)	RL	ABD	12	11	3	9	0
	110. to RUN OFF AT THE JIBS	to talk too much	PhA	ABD	11	12	4	8	1
	111. to { RUN ROLL } SETS ON SOMEONE	to hit a person with a series of double-fisted blows so quickly he is unable to retaliate	T	ABD	12	9	4	6	0
	112. to { SCARF SCOFF }	to eat	FE	ABCDE	11	10	8	5	7
	113. to SCOPE ON SOMEONE	to look intently at someone, esp. a female	MA	ABCD	12	12	5	9	2
of	114. to SEND SOMEONE ON A { HUMBUG HOMBUG }	to give someone false directions or instructions or information	MA	AB	11	12	2	3	0
	115. to SHINE SOMEONE ON	to ignore someone	MA	ABCDE	12	12	9	10	5
	116. a SHORT, SHOT, SHAW, SHOUT, SHAWL	a car	P	ABCDE	11	10	10	5	5
	117. a SHORT DOG	a small bottle of wine, esp. 'Ripple' or 'Silver Satin'	AL	AB	12	11	0	3	0
	118. to be SILKED TO THE BONE	i. to be exceptionally well-dressed to the extent that all clothes and accessories are made of silk ii. an exceptionally well-dressed person	AP	ABD	12	8	0	6	0
	119. SKOOFER, SKRUFER, SKOOFUS, SKRUFUS	a marijuana cigarette	DR	A	10	1	0	0	0

Entry	Definitions	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
120. STENCILS	long, thin marijuana cigarettes	DR	A	12	1	0	2	0
121. STUFF	i. any sexually attractive female ii. drugs, esp. heroin	RL/SX DR	ABD	12	11	0	6	0
122. STOMS, STUMS, STUMBLERS	barbituates, particularly 'Seconal'	DR	ABCD	12	12	7	6	4
123. to STYLE	to show off what one has, e.g. car, clothes, girlfriend, etc.	MA	ABD	12	12	3	12	1
124. to SWOOP	i. to come upon someone suddenly, as the police do when they make an arrest; to make a fast 'pickup' of a girl ii. a caravan of cars moving in a serpentine fashion down a street	MA	ABD	12	12	3	12	1
NS 125. THOUSAND EYES	male 'Florsheim' type shoes with a number of perforations in the toes	P	AB	12	11	2	4	0
126. THREE QUARTER LENGTH PIECE	a three-quarter length leather or suede jacket, often belted	P	ABD	12	10	1	8	0
127. THROW ME OUT WITH...	give me a marijuana cigarette, pills, money, etc.	DR	ABD	12	10	1	7	1
128. a THUMP	a fight	T	ABCD	12	12	8	11	2
129. to TIP	to leave; to be going some place one doesn't belong, e.g. to the home of a female whose man is not present	PhA/MA	AB	8	10	0	0	0
130. a TOM	i. any Black person who attempts to emulate or please the white man; someone who has 'sold out to whitey' ii. a Black informer	RL	ABD	10	11	3	10	0

Entry	Definition	Category	Group Vocab- ulary	Group Response				
				A	B	C	D	E
131. to TURN OUT A SET	to permanently disrupt a party in any number of ways, e.g. a fight, through verbal harassment, 'freaking out' on a drug, etc.	T	ABD	12	12	0	8	0
132. to TURN SOMEONE OUT	i. to introduce someone to his first homosexual experience ii. to introduce someone to his first experience with sex, drugs, etc.	SX	(JAIL)	11	3	3	0	0
133. to VAMP	to leave	PhA	ABD	9	5	0	5	0
134. to VAMP SOMEONE	to hit someone from behind; to sneak up on someone for the purpose of hitting them	T	A	9	0	0	4	0
ES 135. WHAT IT IS!	an expression of greeting similar to 'what's happening?'	MS	ABD	12	12	3	12	1
136. WHORE BOOTS (how butts)	knee or thigh high boots (associated with prostitutes who were seen to wear them frequently)	P	A	12	3	0	2	0
137. to BE { WIDE } WIRED	to be 'high' on drugs	DR	ABD	11	6	1	7	1
138. to WOOF	i. to playfully put another person down verbally; to joke around ii. to talk	MA	ABD	12	11	2	9	1

Year	Month	Day	Time	Location	Remarks
1901	Jan	1	10:00	...	...
1901	Jan	2	11:00	...	...
1901	Jan	3	12:00	...	...
1901	Jan	4	13:00	...	...
1901	Jan	5	14:00	...	...
1901	Jan	6	15:00	...	...
1901	Jan	7	16:00	...	...
1901	Jan	8	17:00	...	...
1901	Jan	9	18:00	...	...
1901	Jan	10	19:00	...	...
1901	Jan	11	20:00	...	...
1901	Jan	12	21:00	...	...
1901	Jan	13	22:00	...	...
1901	Jan	14	23:00	...	...
1901	Jan	15	24:00	...	...
1901	Jan	16	25:00	...	...
1901	Jan	17	26:00	...	...
1901	Jan	18	27:00
1901	Jan	19	28:00
1901	Jan	20	29:00
1901	Jan	21	30:00
1901	Jan	22	31:00

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