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ABSTRACT
              In devising an inventional scheme for considering
black communication behavior with possible implications for a more
general theory, four constituents must be considered: frame of mind,
scope of context, structure of code, and delivery of message. The
concepts of rhythm and styling seem indicative of the black frame of
mind, while the contextual scope of black language and communication
is contained within the characteristic practices resulting from a
special experience, environment, and heritage. Three components to
code structuring in black American rhetorical behavior include a
lyrical quality, vocal artifact, and indirection (a circuitous manner
of approaching the central issues of a subject). In the delivery of a
speech, a prime consideration is the impact it will have upon the
audience, so that a black speaker is sensitive to the situation and
to the audience. There is a need to accept these constituents of
black communication patterns to enable the concept of language in
American society to be extended. (JM)

A METATHEORY FOR BLACK COMMUNICATION

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What is argued in this paper is not a radical revelation of rhetorical or linguistic theory; my aim is considerably more modest. In fact, the only merit claimed for this paper is that of accurately reflecting symbolic invention in a multiethnic society. The occurrence, to which the implications of this paper refer, is pervasive and can hardly have escaped notice by other scholars; yet I have found no attention paid to the ramifications of symbolic engineering as it relates to language and ethno-rhetorics. My purpose is to suggest a metatheory of black communication behavior and assess the implications for the use and construction of symbols.

METATHEORY

A metatheory suggests the character and content of theories in the sense that it pre-scribes what a theory should explain (how black language developed or how it is exercised in urban communities or what is its essence) and what analytical methodologies are required for revealing and establishing concepts such as symbolic engineering and expressive artifact. A metatheory, then, is the product of decision rather than discovery and it is justified by the theories that are consonant to it. As Martin Steinmann has understood, "within metaresearch, there can be no investigation of any phenomenon, exercise of rhetorical ability or any other." The concept of the phoneme, for example, is a product of metagrammatical research (research in structural linguistics); and Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar is a metatheory of grammar. (1967:25).

Rhetoric is the productive thrust of language into the unknown in an attempt to find harmony in disharmony or, as the card falls, disharmony in harmony.[1] Language itself compounds the problems of the unknown for it is being made as the speaker speaks. That is why it is possible to say that the black speaker or any speaker who senses the nature

of words as artifacts glimpses the limits of rhetoric. Rhetoric is not a science; it is an art, that is to say, a certain skill is needed in managing words and sentences to be effective as a rhetor.

In the succeeding pages what will be presented is an inventional scheme for the consideration of black communication behavior with possible implications for a more general theory. Such a frame, in its metatheoretical dimensions, must be adequate in its breadth n order to accommodate diverse and conflicting approaches to the generation of something new. Every use of language is unlike any other; and some uses might even be contextually paradoxical. Adequacy of metatheory, therefore, is defined not by a single theoretical statement but by its allowance for the self-aggrandizement of any theory. In this sense the metatheory becomes architectonic as an organizing scheme by which all else is explained.

Generally this is an inclusive plan; specifically, it is a perspective; and it is therefore a comprehensive explanation of communication in black America. Such a metatheory must be inclusive in order to account for the diversities of spoken language in black America. Beyond that, it must explain the peculiar focus of black language in America and by that explanation become interpretative of symbolic engineering in a multiethnic situation.

As an inclusive plan, this metatheory places, for example, William Labov and Walt Wolfram's structural works in the same communication family as William Stewart's historical analysis of black language behavior. (Wolfram and Whiteman, 1971: 34-38; and Stewart, 1966: 47-49) This much is clear and surely reflective of traditional associative patterns along disciplinary lines. Even more, however, is the fact that Thomas Kochman's ethnography of black street language and the descriptive work on black spoken discourse, called ethno-rhetoric, belong to the same inclusive plan.

As a perspective, this metatheory utilizes whatever perceptions from social scientists and humanists, particularly those calling themselves afrologists, that enable us to comprehend the scope of black language behavior. Such a metatheory begins with a linguistic foundation, in the sense of an explication of structure, and moves toward an understanding

of the symbolisms employed in practical discourse. The path from one point to the other is tedious, but it is this process that must be explained if rhetoricians are ever to know where we are going.

If it is accepted that practicable theories are developed on the basis of plausible coherent principles which explain certain phenomena, then clearly one function of a meta-theory would be to accommodate principles for the explanation of theoretical phenomena related to black language and rhetoric. The various social class constructs, language deficit models, and case histories, as well as surrealistic rhetoric and the lyrical quality of black discourse style, can be successfully conceptualized within the framework of the metatheory. (Steinmann, 1967:26)

The constituents of the metatheory are: frame of mind, scope of context, structure of code, and delivery of message. This set of fundamental frame allows us to be open to the infinite potentialities of black communication. The constituents of this metatheory aid us in determining the innovations in black communicative behavior. Diagrammatically the fundamental frames of the metatheory are represented as follows:

METATHEORY

Frame of Mind ⟷ Structure of Code

Scope of Context ⟷ Delivery of Message
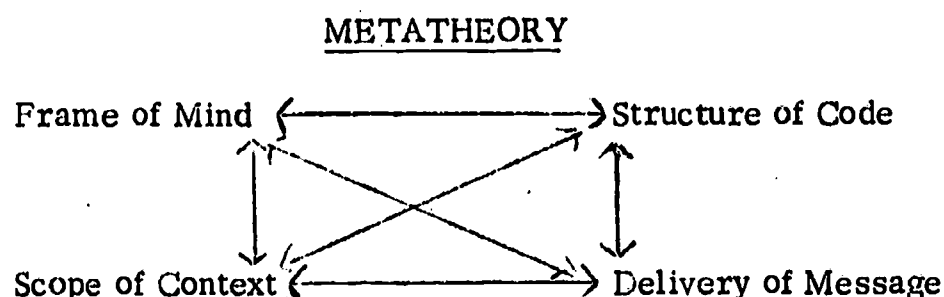
The significance of any metatheory is that it not only explains a given cluster of theories but also provides opportunity for enlarging human understanding generally. It is now possible to explore the relationships among the constituents as they help to interpret the sweep of black language and discourse patterns.

A metatheory is no more valid than the theories which are consonant to it, or more exactly those theories justify the metatheory. Insofar as I have chosen the metatheory on the basis of the theories, the metatheory has been decided upon in terms of the character of the theories. For example, the claim made by linguisticians that even when

specific vocabularies are no longer employed, the phonological and morphological patterns of certain groups of Afro-Americans reflect an African past is consistent with the metatheoretical constituents. Yet also true is Henry Mitchell's contention that the prevailing rhetorical quality of the black preacher is lyrical.

FRAME OF MIND

It would be nonsense to argue that theories which emerge about black language and discourse can claim uniformity of black behavior. But the degree of variance among blacks is less than between blacks and nonblacks. (Dixon and Foster, 1971:10) Dixon and Foster have stated that six essential elements comprise the black referent: (1) the value of humanism, (2) the value of communalism, (3) the attribute of oppression/paranoia, (4) the value of empathetic understanding, (5) the value of rhythm, and (6) the principle of limited reward. (1971:10) I shall add a seventh element which is the principle of styling. So in talking about the black frame of mind we are talking about how certain social, creative, and psychological factors contribute to a total view of language. In isolating any part of this language for linguistic or rhetorical (I mean at the simplest level, structural or persuasive) study, the frame of mind of the language user is important for analytical consideration. I know, for instance, that to the black preacher, speaking in the proper frame of mind, "Jesus is my subject" is not the same as saying "Jee-sas is my subject." Baraka has made a similar observation regarding the singing of the song "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." "Clos-ter" was the precision word he heard in the black churches. (Jones 1966:171; and 1969:26)

It is not my intention to discuss each of these elements: rather to concentrate on two elements that are more obviously related to the matter of language and rhetoric. The concepts of rhythm and styling seem indicative, in terms of our discussion, of the black frame of mind. Rhythm in spoken discourse is a basic measure of the successful black speaker. How well a speaker can regulate his flow of words with the proper pauses of audience indentations becomes the standard for the black speaker before a basically black

audience. Henry Mitchell knowingly refers to this as establishing "a kind of intimate fellowship." (Mitchell, 1971:185) Sound periodicity dictates the communicative terms of black language. The effective users of the language recognize, almost naturally, the need to employ some form of rhythm in vocal expression. Usually the speaker employs the characteristic style of his audience so that his cadences are familiar to his hearers. Martin Luther King utilized the spoken language of his followers and the "sounding good" quality frequently noted by observers contributed to his success. A basic element in sounding good is to know when not to sound. The rhetorical pause used so brilliantly by Malcolm X in his speeches is an essential factor in the black frame of mind as it relates to language.

But the regular recurrent clustering of tones according to accent and time value explains only a portion of the black frame of mind. Mitchell, perhaps more perceptive than others, has observed that the black style is dependent upon the audience's permissiveness. (Mitchell 1971:162). Most audiences (if allowed to be) are definers of communicative boundaries.

Styling refers to the conscious or unconscious manipulation of language or mannerisms to favorably influence the hearers of a message. A variety of behaviors are permitted to achieve the desired end. They may be classified according to the receiver's principal way of responding: (1) visual and (2) audio. Visual styling is affected by gestural or symbolic mannerisms. While the most common type of gesture in communication is purposive movement for meaning and emphasis, conscious movement for styling is highly regarded by black speakers and hearers. Conventional gesticulation is concerned with description and emphasis as in "the fish was this size" or "the point is well made that . . . "

Symbolic mannerisms such as Martin Luther King touching the small upper pocket on his coat is a matter of visual styling. This gesture lends presence to the speaker who, in taking this liberty, says to the audience that he is not an average speaker but someone capable of handling his platform tasks with ease. Every speaker is not gifted with the

ability to employ unconventional gestures during the speech. A certain amount of verbal skill accompanies the speaker who uses visual styling. Other forms of visual styling are environmental in the sense that they are connected to the principal constituents of a rhetorical situation (speaker, message, and receivers) but are primarily effected by arrangement of physical surroundings or the sartorial habits of the speaker or his friends, e.g., black leather jackets of Bobby Seale's staff, dashiki-clad youth on the platform behind Maulana Karenga, etc. It is the genius of the speaker that determines the quality of the visual styling.

What people hear is what we chiefly evaluate. Because of this the response to vocal, clues is significant. These clues may take several forms, including variations of pro-nunciations, intercalations, and malaprops. Words are frequently intoned to give them a "soulful" quality. Now I know that the behaviorists have yet to deal with that term but it can be illustrated. In an education meeting at Terre Haute, Indiana in 1968 a young black speaker, following Senator Vance Hartke, gave his view of education. He began by saying "education is for the C-O-M-M-U-N-I-T-Y. I mean com-mu'ni'-ty." He was styling and every black person familiar with black preaching knew that the speaker had seized upon this stylistic device to have an impact.

Intercalations are the filler expressions which often appear as deliberate attempts at styling but become habitual with repeated use. In this category is "you know," the reigning American intercalation. However, among blacks there are several other ex-pressions such as "lookit" and "hey" that have not found their way into the mainstreams because they are individualistic attempts at verbal styling. To be "cool" is to be cap-able of handling the verbal styling necessary to establish presence. Both rhythm and styling are major contributive factors in the black speaker's frame of mind as it relates to language. Thus, the intercalations manifest in styling are interrelated to rhythm as a recurring sound.

CONTEXT

A second constituent in a metatheory would be the contextual scope of black language and rhetoric; it provides a basis for understanding how symbols are engineered. What are the social realities governing the development of black language? And what are the constraints upon black speakers to create new rhetorics?

The context, therefore, must be comprised of the historical as well as the present moment in terms of resources for bringing about new language styles. One can describe the coming to be of a new object or event, whether new words, innovative phrases, or the dozens, by considering the creation in the light of these questions. What resources are available to the black person in the American Society for inventing effective symbols? How does the inventing person recognize the effective use of symbols in a multiethnic society? What are the structuring considerations?

A speaker governs his use of language under tutelage from his audience for it is the audience that determines his effectiveness. Therefore, when King said "I've been to the Mountaintop" to a black audience in Memphis, it is something he would not perhaps, rhetorically speaking, say if he had been speaking before a white audience at, say, Harvard Law School. The constraints upon him were ethnically determined. Black audiences demand to hear certain expressions, to see certain things, and to enjoy certain kinds of humor. As Jack Daniel has pointed out, proverbs are a part of the black speaker's context as well. Good speakers find in their audiences the commonplaces that are appealing. To say that is to say something about the folk talk within the black community whether it is "Your momma sure was good to me" or "Brothers and Sisters, we got a Rock on our side. Pray with me."

In yet another turn upon the scope of the context, arguments and stylistic devices are choices to be made within a certain framework for the black speaker. Despite the infinite variations upon language, the number of arguments are contextually constrained. Little wonder that the arguments of Martin Luther King and James Farmer in the late 1950's

sounded like the arguments of William Whipple in the 1830's; or that the positions taken by Malcolm X and Stokeley Carmichael were similar to those of Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker over a century before. Of course, changes in minute detail of style were present but the external reality with which these black rhetors dealt were basically unchanged. There could be no enlargement of argumentative possibilities for the black speaker without the corresponding enlargement, or better, alteration of the external reality. Clearly, therefore, black language and communication are framed by character-istic practices that are products of a special experience, environment, and heritage.

STRUCTURE

The structuring of the linguistic code is a creative task emanating from people's heri-tage. How ideas have been structured in the past dictates to a large extent how they will be structured in the future. Nuances are transmitted with the general fabric of the mores of a society. There are three components to code structuring in the rhetorical behavior of black Americans. They include a lyrical quality, vocal artifact, and indirection.

The Afro-American's approach to language is principally lyrical. Numerous examples have been descriptively documented indicating the expressive quality of the black preacher. But is not only the black preacher who combines brilliant imagination with music to make it a lyrical style; it also predominates among public platform orators whose roots are still firmly in the black community. The closer a black person moves to the white com-munity psychologically the further he moves from the lyrical approach to language. Among organizing patterns for platform speaking, narration is the most consistent form for a lyrical attitude. Thus, the narrative, similar it appears to the African storyteller's constructions, is most consonant to a lyrical approach to language. There is little wonder that black preachers are famous for sermons with titles such as "Dry Bones in the Valley," "The Three Hebrew Boys," "Daniel in the Lion's Dean," "The Prodigal Son," etc. These lyrically pregnant stories are demonstratively presented with em-phatic diversions to instruct audiences. They are not unlike the narratives of Ananse

or Brer Rabbit in their transmission of values and ideas. In fact, it may be argued in an Herskovitian fashion that these folk preachers retained for their African aud- iences the basic elements of the storytellers and by applying their skills to new mater- ials made the proverbs and folktales operative in an alien context. Black speakers tend to exhibit strong tendencies toward a lyrical approach to language which is structured accordingly.

Another aspect of code structuring has to do with vocal artifacts. What is conveyed here is the idea that words and their sounds are products of human workmanship and are, by this virtue, artifactitious. Intonation and tonal styling are substantive parts of most speaking blacks. And the intelligent speaker knows that speaking is an emotional as well as an intellectual process, and that how one alters a phoneme or a word in vocal expression is significant. To know how to say "cat" or "man" is to know the secrets of word magic. In such a sense the black speaker knows what his ancestors knew with their use of Nommo, that all magic is word magic, and the generation and transforma- tion of sounds contribute to a speaker's power. Thus, we are ready to say that whatever a speaker does with a word is a fact unto itself, apart from any reality the word has apart from the speaker. A speaker can alter the meaning of a word "basically the way one can change the word yeh from simple response to stern challenge simply by moving the tongue slightly." (Jones, 1969:26) There are a number of one syllable sounds that are conducive to the black speaker's timbre and pitch: cat, say, man, yeh, hey, what, right, etc. What is unusual about these sounds is the specificity that accompanies them among blacks. The disc jockey who lives in the spirit of the people knows precisely what and how to say something.

Sound is a rhetorical artifact inasmuch as it has a certain effect upon the hearers. Thus, when a speaker concludes a speech, the statement "He sure sounds good" is a proper approbation. A listener states his approval of the energy (form and context being inseparable) expended in the speech. But the approbation is made with particular

understanding of what glides and flights of sound were made. Effectiveness, therefore, is dependent upon vocal expression as a lasting impact, not upon gesture or supporting evidence, for obviously a speaker may claim evidence and perfect gesticulation and not be effective; whereas by appropriately modulating tones a speaker can make his evidence and gesticulation accomplish his ends.

The third component to code structuring, observable in stylistic development, is indirection. In speaking before a black audience the black speaker often approaches the central issues of his talk in a circuitous manner, in what might be called a rhetorical search mission. By stalking the issues like a hunter the speaker demonstrates his skill and arouses his hearers' interest. The person who goes directly to the issues is said to have little imagination and even less flair for rhetorical style.

Indirection is usually a matter of deduction as the speaker toys with related ideas and concepts before focusing on his prime target:

> I am not a Politician, nor the son of a Politician
>
> I am not a Republican, nor a Democrat
>
> Nor an American.

In this typical Malcolm X passage we see the formula for indirection. What could have been simply put "I know that I am not an American" is more elaborately clothed. Such embellishment in public speaking can also be derived from the speaker's metaphorical capabilities, or illustrations, or aphorisms, or a combination of these techniques. But whatever the speaker's choice he is certainly playing in the right ball park if he surrounds his issue before focusing in upon it. This behavior is not merely true of the platform speaker but also plays a role in dyadic conversation, say, in a male-female relationship. This procedure cannot be identified with what is called "beating around the bush" because it is always on the bush, though at times tapping it exceedingly lightly. How the linguistic code is structured by the traditional black speaker is dependent upon the three components discussed above.

DELIVERY

The spoken discourse as practiced by black Americans is characterized by its artistic instrumentation. As an art form, the speech, frequently interrupted by vocal responses from the hearers, is made with careful attention to effect. Like African art of the highest order it is functional and is not made for art's sake alone but for its impact. Therefore, when audiences respond with outbursts of "Amen," "that's right," "Tell the Truth," "hey," etc., they are testifying to the impact of the delivery of the message. It is difficult to refer to these vocal outbursts as interruptions of the speech; more accurately they are affirmations. Speakers who succeed in arousing in their audiences the desire to give vocal assent are prototypes for the black community. And the audiences' vocal affirmations, which are regulatory, comprise a monitoring system, (as feedback systems generally do) for effectiveness. This is similar to the common function of applause during certain American cultural events. When a speaker views delivery of a message as a performance, certain constraints and possibilities, that otherwise would not be, are placed upon him. Here then it is not just the linguistic code that he, as a speaker, must concern himself with, but his presence as a speaker (appearance, countenance, grace, and manner). And presence is integrally related to how a man chooses to argue, contend, affirm, or entertain; and too, how the listener chooses to respond to his language. By using language common to the audiences a speaker is not merely understandable, he is credible. This explains the success of folk preachers and some platform militants. But delivery, pronunciatio as it was called, however animated, cannot substitute for a speaker's genuine sensitivity to audiences. This holds for every dyadic communication situation whether speaker to audiences (many) or speaker to listener (one).

The kind of delivery indicates how a speaker regards his situation and audiences; that is, the choice of physical styles, e.g., pompous or conversational, reflects the rhetorical setting. Furthermore, the choice of modes, impromptu, manuscript, extemporaneous, or memorized, underscores the effect of situation and audiences upon speaker. The typical

rhetorical setting is persuasive and the proper decisions of the speaker influence the persuasive impact on audiences. As a consideration for a metatheory of black language and communication it should be noted that black speakers generally prefer the extemporaneous mode of delivery characterized by lively speaking and the coining of exact language at the moment of utterance. This is not to say that memorized speeches are unheard of, or that manuscript speeches are not given. When exactness of language and careful timing are essential, the speaker must react in a manner most suited to him. In most cases the manuscript speech serves a speaker's needs of exactness and definite timing. While presentation of a message is constrained by environmental conditions, it completes the speech act for the encoding person and is therefore essential to communication.

IMPLICATIONS

The present state of symbols in society reflects the monoethnicity which has persisted in American cultural phenomena. Spoken discourse as conceptualized and as practiced apart from the new directions outlined above (frame of mind, context, structure of code, and delivery) is demonstratively unrepresentative symbolically. What is needed is an expansion of ethnic perspectives and a reconceptualization of symbolic engineering. It is at this point that we can understand the role of black language in a more open society. Inasmuch as our perception of people, events, and objects can influence language, we surely must be cognizant that beyond the level of specific words in language that are monoethnic there are substantive influences upon language (a sort of Whorfian twist) that make our communicative habits sterile. The writers who have argued that the English language is the enemy of the black man have argued convincingly on the basis of "blackball," "blackmail," "black Friday,," etc.; but they have not argued thoroughly in terms of the total symbolic architection of society.

The imposition of a single symbol system onto a multiethnic society is one way to describe the conventional approach to language. By accepting the constituents of the black communication patterns we extend the concept of language in the American society. There are possible metatheories of other ethnic perspectives as well. In the creation of things to suggest other things by relationship and convention we have witnessed the invisibility of perceptions other than whites.

Thus it is difficult to have meaningful discourse when our points of reference are inherently biased. In fact, symbol imperialism rather than institutional racism is our major problem. It is both linguistic and rhetorical in our use of communication. Santa Claus as symbol is one example. In terms of discourse our perceptions of Santa Claus color our responses. As an ethnic symbol imposed as a universal symbol of benevolence, Santa is not adequate. But neither is Hanu-Claus nor is Saint Soul. Only a re-evaluation of the constituents of communication for a multiethnic society can establish meaningful dialogue. Flesh-colored Band-Aids, the traditional American combs, sunglasses or regular eyeglasses, or the nude look are indicative of such symbol imperialism. Language is the instrument of conveyance of attitudes and perceptions and these symbols must play havoc with symbolic structure. One can illustrate this point almost endlessly; that is not my objective here.

My concern is that those of us interested in the social uses of American speech give attention to the application of our research into black communication. Of course, much has been done in this regard, particularly as it relates to the classroom teacher's understanding of Afro-American and its various dialects. Clearly the statement of a metatheoretical position for black communication is suggestive for how we can structure our symbols. Ethno-rhetorics concerned with exploring the persuasive potentials of language within certain ethnic groups may be stimulants for a broader philosophical consideration of symbolic engineering. Therefore, the fundamental position we must assume is that of making an aggressive beginning.

NOTES

1. The uses of rhetoric are varied and it is necessary to include the production of disharmony in its utility. The presence of counteracting rhetorics sets up tensions which often thrust one rhetoric in the role of creating disharmony.

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