Research by linguists and educators confirms the observation that aspects of the African-American experience are reflected in the grammatical, phonological, lexical, and stylistic features of African-American English and in the patterns of language use, including narrative, found in African-American speech communities. This study goes beyond prior research to investigate and characterize what Hymes refers to as the preferred patterns for the "organization of experience" among African-American adolescents. The results of the study revealed that, although subjects from several ethnic backgrounds stated a preference for using vernacular-based organizational patterns in informal oral exposition, African-American adolescents, in contrast to a group of Hispanic-American, Asian-American, and European-American adolescents, reported a strong preference for using vernacular-based patterns in academic writing tasks as they got older. These findings suggest that the organization of expository discourse is affected by cultural preference and years of schooling and that preference for organizational patterns can be viewed as an obstacle to or as a resource in successful literacy-related experiences.

Cultural Preference and the Expository Writing of African-American Adolescents

ARNETHA F. BALL
University of Michigan

Within the last few years, national concern about the quality of literacy programs in public schools has stirred interest in the oral and written skills of linguistically diverse students. Persistent trends of low academic achievement, high drop-out rates, and low graduation rates among African-American college students have focused attention on the oral and written skills of this population in particular. The

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dismal state of African-American students' academic achievement in traditional settings is well-documented (Gibbs, 1988). Despite modest nationwide improvement on standard measures of achievement in the 1970s and 1980s, African-American students continued by the early 1990s to lag significantly behind their European-American counterparts in all academic subject areas.[1]

The fact that many African-American students speak a vernacular that is distinct from standard academic English may contribute to problems in school performance. This vernacular, referred to as African-American English (AAE) or Black English Vernacular (BEV), is a variety of English spoken primarily by lower- and working-class African Americans. It is a logical and systematic variety of English characterized by certain linguistic features (e.g., particular uses of auxiliary verbs, uninflected *be*, and multiple negation) and associated with conventionalized uses of language (e.g., ritualized speech acts like "playing the dozens," "sounding," or "signifying") that distinguish it from academic, as well as mainstream, American English. Referring to society's view of African-American English speakers' conventionalized uses of language, Erickson (1984) noted that African-American English represents a "culturally patterned style of discourse that ranks low in prestige in the United States" (p. 84).

Over the past three decades, much research has focused on aspects of the African-American English linguistic code, including investigations of the variation between full, contracted, and zero forms of inflected copula and the auxiliary *be* as well as analyses of suffix /-s/ variation. Far less attention, however, has been given to culturally related ways of using this variety of English in oral and written expository forms. This omission from research is perplexing, especially because researchers such as Britton (1975) and Applebee (1981) have reported that expository writing accounts for 63% to 85% of adolescents' writing activity in U.S. and British schools and because there is a steady increase in the demand for competence in oral and written exposition as students progress through the educational system.

Focusing on African-American adolescents' stated preferences for certain textual patterns in written exposition, the current study investigates the influence of culture on the organization of ideas in a text following the scheme proposed by Calfee and Chambliss (1987a). This investigation of organizational patterns focuses on the strategies and conventions these students indicate they prefer for dividing, ordering, and relating discourse content.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

Discourse theorists have generally conceptualized the notion of text macrostructure in two ways: (a) text structure as the organization of ideas in a text and (b) text structure as the organization of various sections within a text. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) and Meyer (1985) have defined text structure as the organization of ideas in a text. Their analytical structures are multilayered, with higher layers conceptually superordinate to lower ones. Van Dijk and Kintsch have concentrated on how readers organize their mental representations of text and reader comprehension. They proposed a comprehension model in which readers turn each sentence into a proposition as they read and then link those propositions into coherent text bases that match the meaning of the text. In this model, readers constructing macrostructures make use of relevant text schemata to determine what information should be included. Although van Dijk and Kintsch explained that readers use text schemata to decide how to form macrostructures, they did not specify what those text schemata might look like or how the macrostructure might differ from text to text. Van Dijk and Kintsch's work has been useful in helping researchers understand what readers are doing as they read, but their discourse theory has not given much guidance in identifying particular text patterns or providing criteria for judging the adequacy of text structures (Calfee & Chambliss, 1987b, p. 6).

Meyer (1985) also defined text structure as the organization of ideas in a text. She developed a taxonomy of text patterns, identifying the text structure as the logical connections among ideas as well as the subordination of some ideas to others. Meyer called the structure in a text the content structure and explained that it represents the underlying logic and message of the text. She proposed five common patterns among content structure and maintained that these different patterns show different ways people think. According to Meyer, the mental representation of the expert reader has a structure parallel to the text's content structure. One disadvantage associated with both van Dijk and Kintsch's and Meyer's approaches is that in order to schematize ideas, these theorists started with a propositional transformation of the text information and then organized those translations of the text into a hierarchy (Calfee & Chambliss, 1987b, p. 1).

Calfee and Chambliss (1987a), on the other hand, focused on the organization of various sections within the text. They defined text structure as "the pattern resulting from certain elements linked ac-

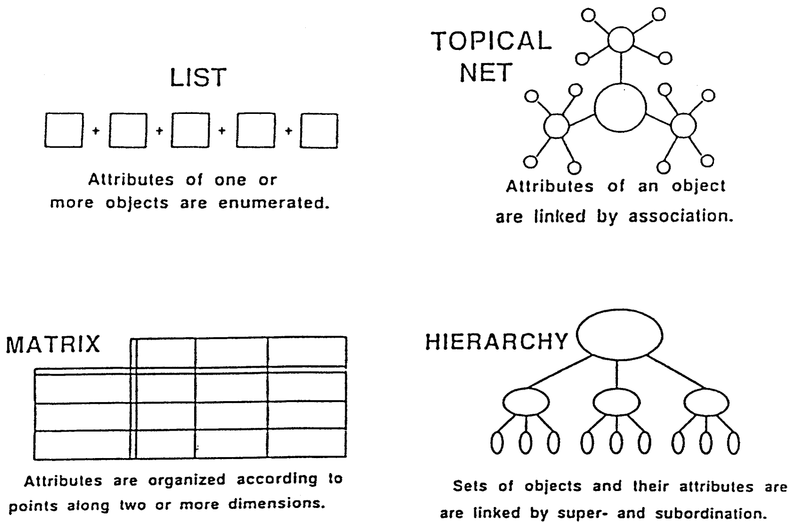


Figure 1: Calfee and Chambliss Diagrams of Descriptive Expository Text Structures
SOURCE: Adapted from Calfee and Chambliss (1987a, p. 364).

cording to an overarching theme" (p. 1). The Calfee and Chambliss analytical structures are also multilayered, but the highest level is the pattern of organization for the entire text,with lower layers representing the independent organizational patterns of each section. In descriptive exposition, Calfee and Chambliss diagrammed texts as lists, topical nets, hierarchies, or matrices depending upon how the author organizes the information. Figure 1 shows the four patterns. These diagrams can be used to schematize the organization of the text content and to evaluate its design.

Using the Calfee and Chambliss text analysis approach, analysts can identify poorly designed texts with incomplete patterns as a result of empty cells or nodes left in a diagram. They can also identify overly complex patterns (e.g., a matrix with 14 discrete points in one dimension) or incoherent combinations of patterns (e.g., a linear string, a matrix, and a list all in one text) (Calfee & Chambliss, 1987b). Finally, they can identify texts that are well-designed according to the Calfee and Chambliss schema.

Calfee and Chambliss (1987a) have identified expository text structures that educators attempt to teach students as a foundation for

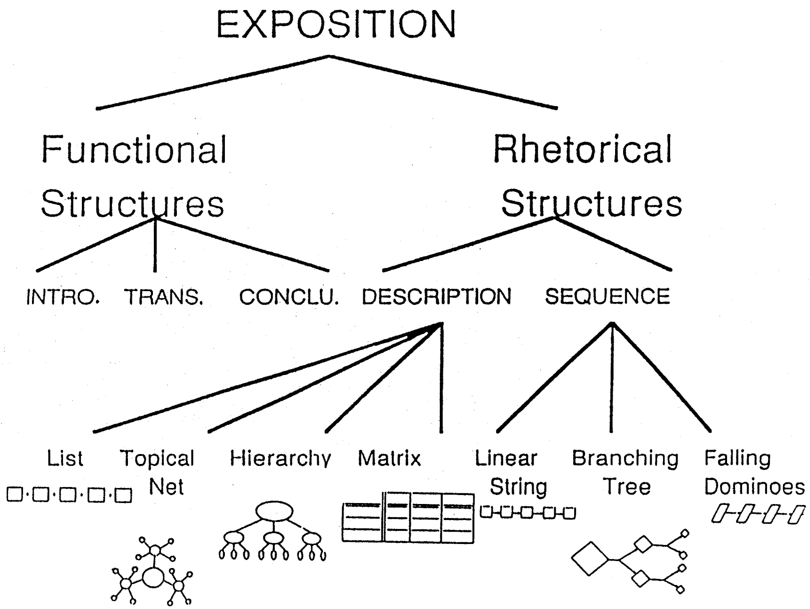


Figure 2: Calfee and Chambliss Multilayered Structure of an Expository Text
SOURCE: Adapted from Calfee and Chambliss (1988).

school-based literacy. For that reason, I refer to these structures as academic-based expository text structures. Figure 2 shows the Calfee and Chambliss (1988) multilayered structure of an expository text. At the lower levels, a piece of exposition may contain functional structures, including introductions, transitions, and conclusions, as well as rhetorical structures, including descriptive and sequential text structures. According to Calfee and Chambliss, if the writer decides to create a piece of exposition that is primarily descriptive, its rhetorical pattern may be that of a list, topical net, hierarchy, or matrix.

A list pattern simply enumerates attributes of the main topic and provides very few links to tie the text together. Although orderly, the list lacks an overall linking structure. Topically organized, the topical net groups attributes according to association and adds meaningful links within the text. Hierarchies group objects according to their attributes and add links based on superordinate relationships of information in the text. Matrices organize attributes according to

discrete points along two or more dimensions. The hierarchy and matrix patterns specify orderly links that allow for the efficient organization of large amounts of information.

Calfee and Chambliss (1987a, p. 364) also identified functional devices that serve to link the separate pieces of a text into a whole. These devices include introductions that foreshadow both the content and its organization and provide requisite background knowledge, transitions that link separate sections with one another, topic sentences that indicate where in the rhetorical pattern a particular piece of content fits, and conclusions that summarize the content and its organization and signal the end of the piece. These are aids that help readers construct accurate mental representations of a text. Calfee and Chambliss suggested that authors of well-designed texts use these devices.

HOW CULTURE INFLUENCES THE LANGUAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

The oral language most students use in everyday settings with their peers can be characterized as informal.[2] A shift from such informal language to formal academic language is required in classroom displays of knowledge, especially written displays. This requirement does not usually cause a problem for students whose informal language patterns are similar to formal academic language, as is the case with many middle-class students whose families employ strategies associated with school-related literate traditions in the home (Heath, 1983, chap. 7; Tannen, 1982, p. 3). However, when students' patterns of informal language use differ widely from teachers' academic expectations, difficulties often arise. The research of Michaels (1981) and Rose (1990) confirmed that students may be denied access to key literacy experiences depending on the degree to which students and teachers fail to share discourse conventions.

Current sociocognitive views of literacy recognize that variations in the organization of different text structures may be influenced by cultural contexts and expectations of language use. A sociocognitive perspective provides a broad view of literacy that does not focus on reading and writing abilities alone. Instead, it emphasizes communication skills that result from particular language and literacy behaviors that are valued and practiced by different cultural groups, in this

case, the African-American adolescent community. It recognizes that an individual's literacy learning is shaped by the social contexts in which it is embedded and can best be understood in relation to those social contexts.

The experiences of many African American's distinguish them from other ethnic groups, both culturally and linguistically (Smitherman, 1977). Baugh (1989) provided a brief review of these experiences when he stated that, historically, from the period of the slave trade until well after the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation, language policies in the United States were systematically designed to restrict African Americans' equal access to quality education and written literacy. He explained that these practices not only isolated African Americans socially and linguistically but also forced them to rely heavily on oral communication in their everyday interactions. Educators observe this reliance on strategies of oral communication (as well as other linguistic features, e.g., variations in the use of the copula *be* in AAE, which cannot be explained by reference to earlier language policies) whenever they interact with students who are native speakers of African-American English.

Researchers who have looked at communication in African-American communities have used a variety of approaches to investigate its linguistic features. These approaches have focused on phonological, lexical, or syntactic features as well as on style and discourse forms (e.g., rapping, story telling, etc.). These researchers agree that a majority of African Americans share some aspects of a style of speaking that distinguishes them from mainstream and academic American English speakers. This style of speaking is commonly referred to as African-American English (AAE). Smitherman (1977), Cooper (1980a, 1980b), and Kochman (1981) confirmed that systematic differences in language style are evidenced in African-American populations as a result of cultural experiences, and research on speech events (Hymes, 1974; Kochman, 1981), the art of Black preaching (Cook, 1985; Heath, 1983; Rosenberg, 1988), and the logic of nonstandard English (Labov, 1969/1972) has documented audiences, forms, and functions of AAE.

In 1971, Golden and Rieke's research analyzed the persuasive devices African Americans have used to accomplish strategies of assimilation, separation, and revolution. They proposed that there is a "black" way of saying things. Using the texts of addresses, sermons, essays, interviews, debates, and letters, Golden and Rieke demonstrated rhetorical approaches African Americans have used over a

300-year period. They suggested that most African Americans have a sense of oral communication that differs from that of mainstream American English speakers in several ways. For example, the African American continues to stress persuasion to motivate and mobilize campaigns to attain freedom, identity, or "the good life." Golden and Rieke concluded (1971) that "there is a unique quality in black rhetoric . . . a unity of purpose and a potential instrumentality among the various aspects of black rhetoric" that demands broad analysis of the communicative and rhetorical devices used (p. 15). The research of Erickson (1984) and Heath (1983) supported the notion that AAE speakers tend to have a keen sense of oral communication. It may be this heightened sense of oral communication and reported preference for using an oral tradition (Cooper, 1980a, 1980b) that constitute a primary difference between African-American adolescents' expository organization patterns and those of academic American English.

The research of Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor (1984) explored the relationship between communication styles similar to those used in African-American communities and the academic exposition of African-American students. Their research showed that the oral cohesive devices used by a basic writing student whose language contained features of African-American English could not easily be translated to expository prose because of grammatical constructions, use of cultural-specific idiomatic expressions, and lack of explicit thematic progression and signaling devices. Gumperz et al. (1984) concluded that styles of speaking that conform to generally accepted academic conventions are more easily transferred to expository prose than are other styles, such as those with numerous AAE characteristics. Such findings suggest the need for research that goes beyond text description and seeks to generalize about the abstract knowledge of discourse strategies that African Americans use.

ACADEMIC EXPOSITORY TEXTS

In order to produce responses to teacher instruction and academic assignments, middle school and high school students must recognize and employ the text patterns of academic expository prose. The primary forms of such writing are book reports, summaries, and essays. Without skill in these writing tasks, students experience difficulty in formal schooling. Halliday (1978) pointed out that most

problems of educational failure are not linguistic problems but problems associated with making transitions from familiar to unfamiliar discourse communities in school settings. An important task, therefore, for researchers and practitioners alike is to investigate properties and demands of different discourse communities and ways that individuals can master the conventions of discourse in mainstream contexts such as schools. Such research might improve our understanding of the problems of educational failure that are associated with African-American adolescents.

SETTING, PARTICIPANTS, AND METHOD

In traditional academic exposition, a text topic will be followed by elaboration on that topic. Calfee and Chambliss (1987a) have listed four organizational patterns used in descriptive expository texts—patterns that schools attempt to teach students as a foundation for academic literacy (see Figure 1). The impact of culture on organizational patterns is not addressed in the Calfee and Chambliss account of organizational structure.

An examination of patterns of oral language used by African-American ministers (Cook, 1985) and observed in Black street speech (Baugh, 1983) guided me in a previous investigation of organizational patterns in the oral and written discourse of academically successful African-American high school students (Ball, 1990). In that study, I proposed that three patterns might emerge in the expository language of African-American students: circumlocution, narrative interspersion, and recursion.

The circumlocution pattern is characterized by a series of implicitly associated topics with shifts that are lexically marked only by the use of *and* (Ball, 1990; Michaels & Collins, 1984). Students employing this pattern of organization were "not simply free associating or skipping from topic to topic in a random and unmotivated manner" (Michaels & Collins, p. 224). Rather, they were linking the anecdotes implicitly to a topical event or theme that was not overtly stated but that had to be inferred from the series of personal anecdotes. Thus, thematic development was typically accomplished through anecdotal association. This pattern is visually represented as a circumlocution pattern to depict ways in which the speaker discusses a topic, then diverts to discuss a related but different topic.

Friend,

1 I can still remember when we were freshmen and we planned to take a trip to Mexico. As soon as either one of us learned to drive we were gonna take off south of the border. I've been looking forward to it for three years and that's why I'm so dissappointed that we can't go. It's just that I know that we're gonna have to be shelling out the big bucks for our senior (year). I mean, with the prom, grad-night, pictures, etc.

2 Speaking of learning to drive, when are we going to get our licenses. I thought I was bad because I took safety ed and drivers training in November 1988. But you're worse. If I'm not mistaken, you took them both in June, '88. So I'm jammin' compared to you. I guess we're both just too lazy to go down to the DMV.

3 Speaking of lazy, I don't want to work mornings. I hate having to get up early just to feed cinnamon rolls to grouchy, half-awake, old people. I'd rather keep working afternoons and evenings when all the gorgeous guys drop in on their lunch breaks . . .

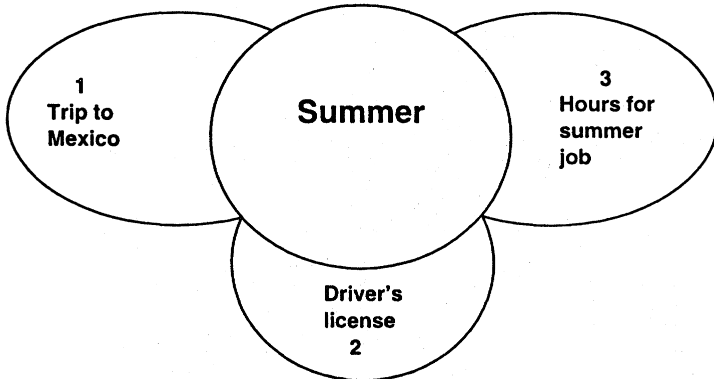


Figure 3: Vernacular-Based Expository Text Structure: Circumlocution Pattern

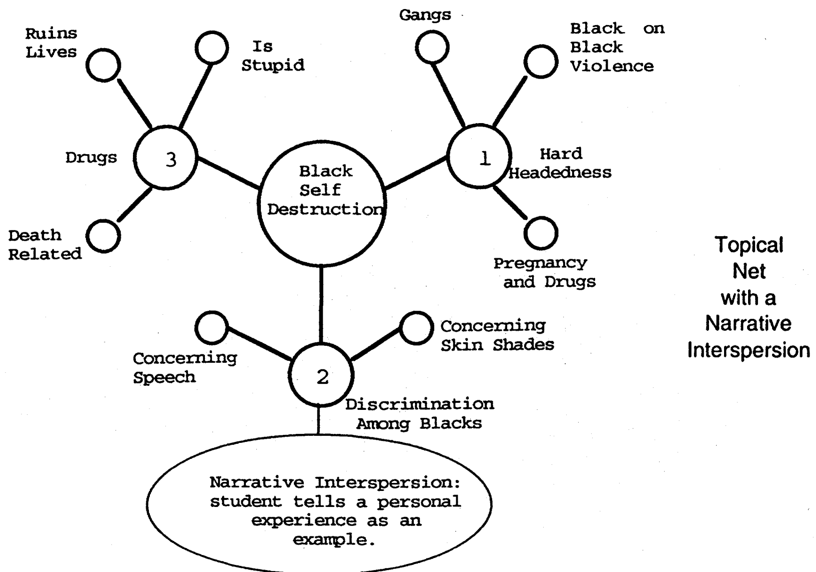
Figure 3 offers a visual representation of the pattern and a high school student's written example of the pattern. The writer, instructed to write an informal letter to a friend, discussed three topics that I contend are all related to summer. Summer would be a logical time to take a long-planned trip to Mexico even though finances and failure to obtain driver's licenses make such a trip impossible. Because both of these young women have taken the necessary courses, summer is

an ideal time for them to get their licenses. Finally, summer means a summer job, and the writer's current work schedule does not permit her to check out the "gorgeous guys." Obviously, determining the overarching theme of such a text requires many kinds of knowledge about the context of text production—in this case, the time of the year—as well as a willingness to look outside the text for connections among ideas in the text. This organizational pattern is commonly observed in the colloquial speech of persons from various ethnic groups; in this study, it also occurred in the writing of African-American students.

Narrative interspersion is a pattern, or a subpattern embedded within other patterns, in which the speaker or writer intersperses a narrative within expository text. I have chosen to represent the narrative by smooth-flowing, curved lines of an oval interspersed within the pattern that represents the structure of the rest of the text. Figure 4 contains a visual representation and sample text of a topical net with a narrative interspersion written by an African-American high school student. The numbers one, two, and three to the left of the student's text represent three topics related to black self-destruction. Here the embedded narrative is used to clarify or elaborate on a point or to link the subject matter to a personal experience related to topic number two.

The use of this pattern in the expository writing of many African-American students differed from the use of a narrative as an example or as a kind of evidence in the academically accepted mainstream pattern. The African-American students either relied on narrative to carry the main point of the text or they failed to distinguish narrative used as an example or evidence from the main point itself.

The recursion pattern is one in which the speaker discusses a topic and then restates it using different words or images. Figure 5 presents a visual representation of this pattern and an excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech titled "How Long? Not Long." King uses a recursive pattern to drive his point home and to give special emphasis to his message. He states the basic idea that he wants to emphasize, that "no wave of racism can stop us." He then repeats that same message five times using different specific images. The repeated syntactic structure and parallel reinforcing images characterize the pattern. This technique is commonly used in the tradition of Christian biblical texts (Rosenberg, 1988) and by African-American adolescents in conversational speech to add emphasis or to make a particular point.



1 Hey girl . . . what's up? . . . I guess I want to talk to you about "Self Destruction." Personally, I don't know anyone who uses drugs but I do know people who are hard headed and ignorant. And we both know girls who are always in trouble. . . . Too many girls out there are getting pregnant and using drugs. At the same time, they don't care. And all this stuff about "colors," you know Red and Blue, Chrips and Bloods . . . That's all B.S. Just another reason to shoot a brother. It's like Kool Moe Dee said, "I never ever ran from the Klu Klux Klan, and I shouldn't have to run from a Black man . . . cuz that's 'Self Destruction.' " It's a serious trip how most violence to Blacks is done by Blacks.

2 Then there's descrimination between Blacks because of lighter and darker shades. Like when people call me "white girl" before, of course, I got this tan. I'm sort of glad that I'm not light anymore. But, I'm still teased by the way I talk because it's too proper. But that's just the way I talk. One night I was talking on the phone to __________, my boyfriend, when some of his friends started to talking to me on the phone. Whenever they'd talk to me, they'd assume I was white. The first time they did that, it really made me mad. But I don't get mad anymore. I'm used to it. It gets me mad when they think that I'm better than them. But I don't think that.

3 And another thing I hate is drugs. That's stupid too. Drugs ruin people's lives and it's even worse that people are willing to die for them. . . .

Figure 4: Vernacular-Based Expository Text Structure: Narrative Interspersion Pattern

1. Yes, we're on the move now,
2. and no wave of racism can stop us;
3. and the burning of our churches will not deter us,
4. and the bombing of our homes will not dissuade us
5. and the beating and the killing of our clergymen and young people will not divert us.
6. The wanton release of their known murderers will not discourage us.
7. We're on the move now!

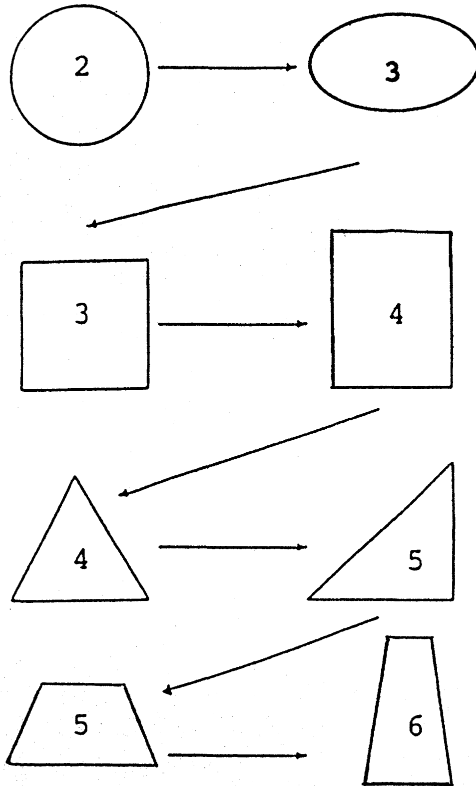


Figure 5: Vernacular-Based Expository Text Structure: Recursion Pattern

Narrative interspersion, circumlocution, and recursion represent three vernacular-based organizational patterns commonly used in African-American communities. These patterns have not previously been described. They were formulated as a result of my investigation of oral features in students' informal exposition and oral expository

patterns used by African-American ministers. Initial investigations revealed that African-American students also use the narrative interspersion and circumlocution patterns in written discourse. Although observed in oral discourse, the recursion pattern has not yet been observed in the students' written prose.

The current study was based on participant observation, collection of texts within students' naturally occurring informal contexts, and experimental intervention in classroom settings. The study first introduced students to the concept of expository text patterns and showed them the visual representations depicted in Figures 1, 3, 4, and 5. Students were then asked to demonstrate their ability to identify the organizational patterns found in various texts and indicate their preferred patterns for completing conversational tasks versus written academic tasks. The research questions guiding the study were (a) What organizational patterns do students from varying ethnic backgrounds say they prefer? and (b) How successful are these students at identifying organizational patterns?

The first question emerged from research on variations in text organization that may be influenced by cultural contexts and expectations of language use and from the research of Golden and Rieke (1971), Cooper (1980a, 1980b), Erickson (1984), and Heath (1983) that supports the notion that AAE speakers tend to have a keen sense of oral communication. Such research provided the groundwork for asking how these oral preferences translate into organizational patterns. The second research question emerged because I felt it was important to eliminate any notions that African-American students fail to use mainstream academic organization patterns because they lack the ability to understand them conceptually or distinguish among characteristics of various patterns.

Students' reported preferences were determined by having them rank-order specified patterns. Students' understanding of the patterns was determined by assessing their ability to identify correctly the organizational patterns of a series of prepared texts.

Subjects

One hundred two students from five urban classrooms participated in the study. Subjects included male and female students from diverse ethnic groups and levels of academic achievement. Forty-four African-American, 27 Hispanic-American, 11 Pacific Islander, 10 Asian-

American, and 9 European-American students participated. Fifty-five of these students were female, and 47 were male. The sample of 102 students included 67 intermediate (5/6th) grade students and 35 high school students. Two 5/6th grade classes were located at the same inner-city, predominantly African-American and Hispanic-American public intermediate school in a working-class community. The third 5/6th grade classroom was located in an ethnically mixed parochial school in a working-class community. The 9th and 11th graders were students in an inner-city, predominantly Hispanic-American, public high school located in a third working-class community. Cumulative grades based on report cards for the academic school year were averaged to determine students' level of academic achievement. Fifty-six students, those with an overall grade point average of 2.7 to 4.0 (on a 4-point scale), were classified as higher achievers. Forty-six students, with an overall grade point average of 0 to 2.6, were classified as lower achievers. These grade point average cut-off points were selected in an effort to achieve a balanced sample.

Materials

I designed 16 written passages of comparable length based on topics of interest to African-American adolescents in order to assess students' ability to identify organizational patterns. Topics were determined through a survey of 25 African-American students. The survey results indicated that rap music, African-American history, community issues (i.e., the drug situation), and sports were among the most frequent topics of interest. Using these topics, I created one passage on each topic. The initial texts were organized in a topical-net pattern. Next, the topical-net passages on each topic were rewritten to represent other types of organizational patterns: matrix, narrative interspersion, and circumlocution. Every effort was made to maintain the primary features of the original passage so that the main variation among the texts was the organizational pattern rather than some other feature of text or content.

In total, sets of texts on four topics were created: rap music, African-American history, drugs, and sports. Each set contained four texts: one in a topical-net pattern, one in a matrix pattern, one in a narrative-interspersion pattern, and one in a circumlocution pattern. One set of texts containing four passages on a single topic was presented to a classroom of students during each of four classroom visits (see Ap-

pendix A for sample texts). As Appendix A illustrates, the bottom of each page listed the four possible organizational patterns.

In each case, texts were read aloud to the entire class to eliminate the possibility that reading ability might influence the students' ability to complete the task. Students were instructed to circle the organizational pattern of the text appearing on that page. Each student could receive a total of 16 points for identifying the organizational pattern of all 16 texts correctly.

I asked students to rank patterns in order to determine their reported preferences for organizational patterns when completing oral and written expository tasks. Ranking sheets were designed to allow students to rank their preferred patterns for informal conversation with friends and their preferred pattern for completing writing assignments in class (see Appendix B).

Procedures

The study consisted of a series of visitations to the five urban classrooms. After an initial period geared toward establishing rapport with the students, collecting background information, and making observational field notes in the classrooms, I conducted an instructional program with the students. During the instructional program, I trained students to recognize the organization patterns represented in Figures 1, 3 and 4. I included two mainstream academic-based organizational patterns—the topical net and matrix—and two vernacular-based organizational patterns—the narrative interspersion and circumlocution patterns. I then gave students opportunities to practice identifying the various organizational patterns by having them identify the patterns of written passages on practice worksheets and writing their own passages in different patterns.

When training the students to recognize the organizational patterns, I tried to simplify the vocabulary and prevent confusion stemming from labels for the various patterns by allowing students to assign their own names to the patterns. Names offered by the students included "web-cluster" for the topical net, "weave" for the matrix, "everyday talk" for the circumlocution, and "a story inside" for the narrative interspersion. These names emerged after students saw the visual representations of each pattern and heard my description of each pattern. Using a sample set of texts, students received training to increase their ability to identify the organizational patterns cor-

rectly. Once students appeared comfortable with the task, I presented the texts to the students in sets of four over a 4-week period. One package was presented each week (Week 1, "Rap Is Here To Stay"; Week 2, "Sports"; Week 3, "Drugs"; Week 4, "African-American History").

RESULTS

The first question for this study was "What organizational patterns do students from varying ethnic backgrounds say they prefer?" Table 1 indicates the responses to this question.

All students, regardless of ethnicity or grade level, reported a preference for using the vernacular-based organizational patterns when completing conversational tasks. Forty-eight percent of the students reported a preference for the circumlocution pattern, and 30% reported a preference for narrative interspersion. Academic expository patterns were much less popular for conversational tasks. Only 10% of the students indicated a preference for using a topical net pattern for conversational tasks and 12% for a matrix.

Looking at students' preferred patterns for organizing academic writing tasks according to ethnicity and grade level, however, shows that African-American high school students' reported preferences were distinct from other groups. One hundred percent of the African-American high school students reported a preference for using vernacular-based patterns for academic writing. Only 56% of the non-African-American 5/6th graders, 43% of the African-American 5/6th graders, and 27% of the non-African-American high school students reported preferences for using the vernacular-based organizational patterns for academic written tasks (see Table 1).

These reported preferences and understanding of the task by African-American high school students were corroborated by survey and interview data collected from 20 African-American inner-city high school students (Ball, 1991). The survey data revealed that, although 88% of the respondents considered themselves to be AAE speakers much or all of the time, 71% felt they had to change their words and language use in order to produce academically successful compositions. The interview data revealed that many African-American high school students felt that "when we write, everything shouldn't have to be perfect. If teachers tell us to write about our feelings, they should accept the way we put our feelings down" (p. 69).

Table 1
Students' Reported Preferences for Organizational Patterns When Completing Conversational Versus Academic Written Tasks

	Conversational tasks						Academic written tasks						
Pattern type	Vernacular-based			Academic-based			Vernacular-based			Academic-based			
Pattern	Circum-locution	Narrative inter-spersion	Total %	Topical net	Matrix	Total %	Circum-locution	Narrative inter-spersion	Total %	Topical net	Matrix	Total %	*N*
African-American students													
5/6th grade	15	10	71%	3	7	29%	7	8	43%	11	9	57%	35
High school	5	4	100%	0	0	0%	8	1	100%	0	0	0%	9
Total % of African-American students	45%	32%	77%	7%	16%	23%	34%	21%	55%	25%	20%	45%	
Non-African-American students													
5/6th grade	19	4	72%	5	4	28%	5	13	56%	7	7	44%	32
High school	10	13	88%	2	1	12%	3	4	27%	13	6	73%	26
Total % Non-African-American students	50%	29%	79%	12%	9%	21%	14%	29%	43%	35%	22%	57%	
Overall totals	48%	30%		10%	12%		23%	25%		30%	22%		102

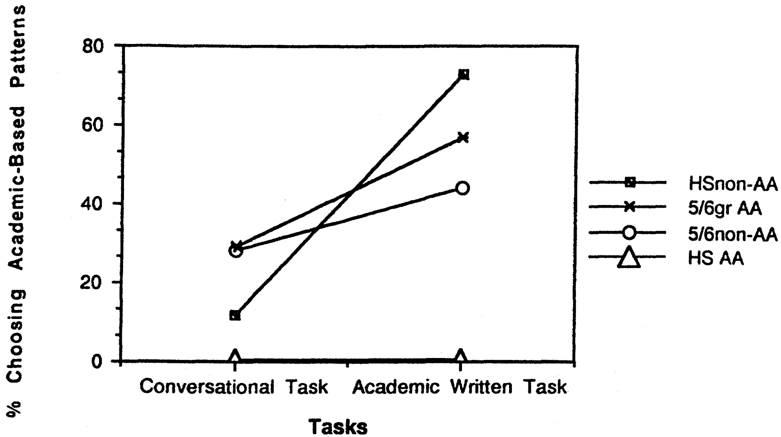


Figure 6: Students Reporting Preferences for Academic-Based Patterns to Organize Conversational Versus Academic Written Tasks

Figure 6 shows that whereas all students indicated a low preference for using academic expository patterns when organizing conversational tasks, African-American high school students indicated a distinctly lower preference than any other group for using these patterns when organizing academic written tasks—a trend that moves away from a preference for the patterns reinforced by traditional classroom teachers. In fact, this group of students indicated that they do not prefer to use the traditional academic-based patterns for either task. As Figure 6 illustrates, African-American high school students preferred academic-based patterns 0% of the time for both conversational and academic written tasks.

Analysis of variance performed on subjects' reported preferences for writing tasks revealed that the differences between African-American and non-African-American students were significant. Differences in the preferred written pattern scores revealed a significant main effect for students' ethnicity, $F(1, 102) = 6.221$, $MS_e = 1.519$, $p < .01$. The ethnicity by grade level interaction was also significant, $F(1, 102) = 12.378$, $MS_e = 3.022$, $p < .001$. Differences for preferred organizational pattern when completing conversational tasks were not significant.

The second research question was "How successful are these students at identifying texts' organizational patterns?" Most students were successful at this task. On the average, all scores were high,

indicating that most students were capable of comprehending the concept of organizational patterns and identifying texts organized in a variety of patterns. Over 80% of the higher-achieving 5/6th graders, higher-achieving high school students, and lower-achieving high school students identified at least 60% of the 16 sample tests correctly. Forty-two percent of the lower achieving 5/6th grade students identified at least 60% of the 16 sample texts correctly.

A MODEL OF EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE PATTERNS

In a related study (Ball, 1991), I investigated teachers' ratings of texts organized in varying organizational patterns. Teachers scored texts written in vernacular-based patterns (narrative interspersion and circumlocution) lower than those written in academic-based patterns (topical net and matrix). The fact that African-American high school students preferred organizational patterns that differ from the expository patterns that teachers reward in schools may constitute an obstacle to successful classroom display of knowledge.

The educational implications of the findings reported in this article and in Ball (1991) for African-American high school students who seem not to prefer using academic-based patterns for formal academic tasks deserve further study. To guide this investigation, I propose a Model of Expository Discourse Patterns that accommodates issues of culture.

Smitherman (1977), Golden and Rieke (1971), Cooper (1980a, 1980b), and Kochman (1981) confirmed that systematic differences in language style are evidenced in African-American populations as a result of cultural experiences. Hinds (1983), Hymes (1981), and Scollon and Scollon (1981) documented particular patterns of content organization in the discourse of culturally diverse populations. I propose that speakers of AAE who, because of their cultural and linguistic experiences, rely on oral discourse features may indicate vernacular-based preferences in expository patterns that have not been recognized previously. The model focuses on channel, purpose, register, and cultural preferences—components that contribute to sociocognitive investigation of expository language use (see Figure 7).

Although topic and audience are important factors in expository texts, these two elements were controlled in the research that inspired the model and are therefore not represented as separate factors here.

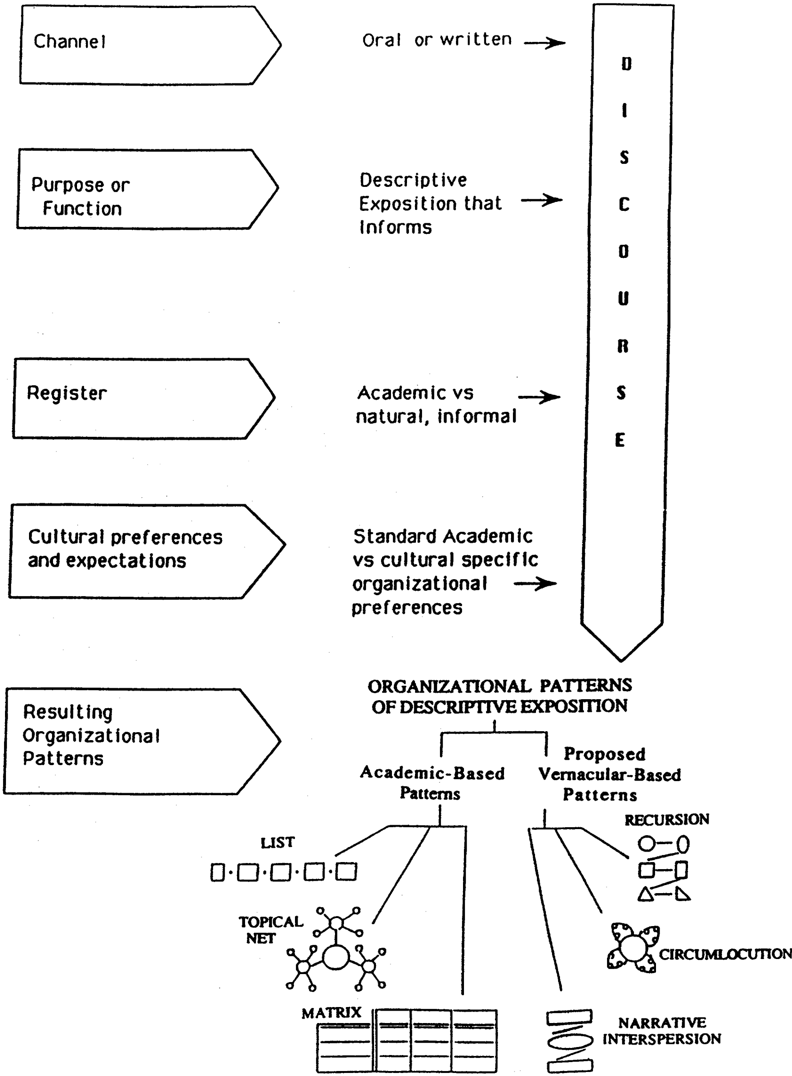


Figure 7: A Model of Expository Discourse Patterns

These elements should, however, be given serious consideration in research that investigates the structuring of expository texts. If one assumes that topic and audience are specified, Figure 7 represents the notion that discourse channel, purpose, register, and cultural preferences affect the structure of expository texts.

Channel

The model begins by showing that an individual must select a desired channel for conveying his or her message. In oral language, the speaker is able to rely on immediate feedback from an interlocutor. Semantic and pragmatic information is signaled through prosody, physical context, gesture, and paralinguistic cues. The written channel provides none of these resources. The writer does not have the benefit of moment-to-moment feedback about whether the point is getting across to the reader. Also, with the written channel, syntactic and lexical means must be used to specify referents, indicate semantic and pragmatic connections between propositions, and give thematic cohesion to the discourse.

Purpose

Like Gumperz et al. (1984), I focused on the "stretch of discourse" as the unit for analysis in my research. This unit of analysis consists of several sentences or, as Gumperz et al. (1984) explain, a "string of utterances that reflect the accomplishment of a communicative task" (p. 4). Narration, explanation, description, and evaluation are speech activities with communicative tasks or goals. A discourse will be structured by the speaker or writer in service of such a goal, and the hearer or reader will interpret the discourse in light of expectations arising from recognition of that goal.

Britton (1975) proposed a discourse classification system based on the function, or purpose, of the discourse. That system had three subcategories that were later refined by Applebee (1981). They included language used to inform or persuade (transactional/informational), language used to present an experience in a literary form (poetic/imaginative), and language that focused on the interests, activities, and feelings of a writer (expressive/personal). This study focused on language used for a transactional/informational function, to record

or to convey information or ideas. Subcategories within this function range from reporting to summarizing, analyzing, and theorizing.

Future research must consider the unit of analysis and purpose of the exposition investigated. Additionally, the prompts used should be carefully designed because they strongly influence whether students produce exposition that simply presents information as a listing of attributes or provide a more detailed analysis or explanation. Tasks that call for analytic expository discourse should be designed to build upon students' background knowledge.

Register

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), register is "the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns, that are typically drawn upon under the specific conditions, along with the words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings" (p. 23). In stylistics and sociolinguistic research, register refers to a "variety of language defined according to its use in social situations, e.g., a register of scientific, religious, or formal English" (Crystal, 1990, p. 261). Future research needs to explore students' informal as well as academic registers.

Cultural Preferences and Expectations

Research on inter-ethnic discourse has confirmed that successful communication depends on participant expectations and an inferential process by which participants judge the goals of the communicative task. Because research further indicates that these perceptions and interpretations may vary with cultural background (Abrahams, 1970, 1976; Fasold, 1978; Labov, 1972; Tannen, 1984), these factors must be seriously considered in research that investigates expository organizational patterns.

Resulting Organizational Patterns

Investigations of the organizational patterns used by African-American adolescents must be expanded to reflect cultural influence on organizational patterns. Among the vernacular-based patterns, the model includes, but should not be limited to, the circumlocution,

narrative interspersion, and recursion patterns that grew out of my (Ball, 1991) research.

DISCUSSION

This study examined adolescents' ability to identify organizational patterns and their stated preferences for such patterns in informal conversation and in written academic expository discourse. The study revealed no major differences between 5/6th graders' preferences for written expository organizational patterns and those rewarded in mainstream American academic settings. However, African-American high school students' responses suggested major differences between the written expository organizational patterns they preferred and those reinforced in mainstream American academic settings. Additionally, although younger (5/6th grade) African-American and non-African-American students did not indicate a difference in preference for grouping of organizational patterns when completing oral conversational and written academic tasks, high school African-American students indicated very different preferences for organizational patterns from non-African-American high school students. African-American high school students indicated a strong preference for using vernacular-based organizational patterns (narrative interspersion and circumlocution) for academic written as well as conversational tasks. Non-African-American high school students indicated a preference for using academic-based expository organizational patterns (topical nets and matrices) for written tasks in school and vernacular-based organizational patterns for conversational tasks.

Certainly, students and teachers should be made aware of systematic differences in preferred patterns students use in classrooms. The untapped language resources of AAE speakers should be examined as a basis for enriching learning activities in classrooms with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Discourse preferences, which are influenced by both social and cultural experiences, can have positive or adverse affects on students' academic experiences. An important task, therefore, for practitioners and researchers alike, is to investigate the relationships between students' informal language and the demands of academic discourse in schools and to explore ways of

helping students use patterns associated with academic discourse successfully.

Such knowledge can provide the foundation for educational programs that encourage educational parity across racial and social boundaries. Curricula can then be designed to use students' informal registers in learning activities. Such activities can help students build upon and expand their repertoire of registers to include those that schools want students to learn. Students can continue to use their informal language patterns while acquiring competence in new academic registers. These kinds of curricula mandate further research on creating bridges between patterns used in students' home discourse communities and those required for school success.

Perhaps a final task facing researchers is some thoughtful reflection on the expository forms of current research reporting and the goal of making research findings useful in pedagogical practice. Literacy in the 1990s is a central public idea; a highly diverse student population in public schools is widely acknowledged. Basic research across a number of disciplines bears considerable relevance to these issues. Yet, for whatever reasons, the research has not made its way into the classrooms. Perhaps the expository style of research reports and academic journals limits the access of those outside specialized areas of study to their research findings. Social scientists engaged in basic research on language use may thus want to reflect on the discourse styles of their own writing in order to take up the challenge of presenting information to audiences that include educators, policymakers, parents, and students.

APPENDIX A
Sample Texts Used to Assess Students' Ability to Identify Texts' Organizational Patterns

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TEXT STRUCTURE QUIZ

Name:__________________ Date:__________ School:_____________
Directions: Read each passage and circle the type of text structure you think it represents.

INSPIRING FIGURES IN BLACK HISTORY

History tells of many Black champions who spent their lives fighting to better the lives of others. First I will share some information with you on how they were inspired by memories of their own hard times. Then I will share some information with you about how they used their talents to fight for others. Finally I will share some information with you on how they fought for equal rights for all people.

First of all, many people in Black history remembered when they had hard times. These memories inspired them to help others. Mary McLeod Bethune and Frederick Douglass both overcame hard times to become famous. Dougalss was a former slave who became a world famous author, speaker, and fighter for human rights. Bethune was the daughter of former slaves and a field worker herself who became a college president. Their memories of poverty and seeing Blacks being treated badly motivated them to fight for equality for all.

Secondly, most Black champions used their ability to speak well to inspire others to join in the fight against discrimination. Douglass and Bethune were both good speakers. They were also very convincing. They spoke in front of many large groups of people. They were very devoted and put their lives in danger to speak many times.

Finally, these champions worked for their fellow Americans in many ways. They organized groups like the NAACP and other organizations to fight for the rights of freed slaves, women, and the youth. They fought for Civil Rights bills and for equal food, education, and housing for Blacks. Their help wasn't just given to the Black man, but to all people. They felt that we should not base any man's rights on the color of his skin.

These champions in Black history fought to break down barriers against equality. Their unselfishness and devotion to the true principles of democracy make them some of history's most inspiring heroes.

(circle one) ***This text pattern is*****: 1. circular pattern 2. matrix**
3. narrative inside 4. web clustering

(Note: This text is organized in a web clustering/topical net pattern.)

2 INSPIRING FIGURES IN BLACK HISTORY

History tells of many Black champions who spent their lives fighting for the rights of Blacks, for human rights, and for equality and peace. Among these champions were Mary McLeod Bethune and Frederick Douglass. They both overcame hard times to become famous.

But the struggle for the rights of Blacks had many set-backs. For instance, a law called "Plessy versus Fergusen" said that it was alright to have separate schools and separate everything else for Blacks and Whites. This law really hurt the fight for equal rights for Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and women.

Mary McLeod Bethune and Frederick Douglass did all they could for everybody. They supported the NAACP, women's rights and students' rights. They helped on the Underground Railroad and helped not just Black people but all people to fight for human rights and equality.

For another thing, groups like the KKK were against racial equality. They felt that one race is superior to another and don't believe in interracial marriage. Why can't people marry anybody they like? This is supposed to be a free country, isn't it? The KKK have killed a lot of people over these issues and caused a lot of misery in this country. We all have our own preferences, but racial prejudice never benefits anyone.

Black champions in history have fought to break down barriers against equality. Their unselfishness and devotion to the true principles of democracy have made them some of history's most inspiring heroes.

(circle one)
***This text pattern is*: 1. circular pattern 2. matrix**
3. narrative inside 4. web clustering

(Note: This text is organized in a circumlocution pattern.)

3 INSPIRING FIGURES IN BLACK HISTORY

History tells of many Black champions who spent their lives fighting for the rights of Blacks, for human rights, and for equality and peace. Among these champions, Mary McLeod Bethune is often compared to Frederick Douglass. Like him, she overcame many obstacles to rise to become famous. While Douglass, a former slave, became a world famous author, speaker, and fighter for human rights, Mary McLeod Bethune, once a field hand, became a college president and award winner.

Born in 1875, Mary McLeod Bethune was the seventeenth child of former slaves who had become sharecroppers in South Carolina. Schooling was hard to come by, but Mary walked the five miles to school when it was open and studied hard. She got a scholarship to go to college and became a teacher herself. She taught in many schools and opened a school that later became the Bethune-Cookman College. In her work for human rights she supported the

NAACP, fought for women's rights and students' rights, and served as advisor to the President of the United States. Mary McLeod Bethune believed in fighting against discrimination. Her philosophy is summed up in a phrase she often used when speaking to Black audiences: "This is our day!"

Born in Maryland in 1817, Frederick Douglass was taken from his mother at an early age and went hungry many times. He saw many slaves treated mean and sometimes killed. He decided to fight against slavery. At age twenty-one, he escaped by borrowing a sailor suit and some free papers. Schooling was so hard to come by that he never received a 'formal' education. He was self-taught, but he spoke eloquently against the horrors of slavery. In his work for human rights he helped on the Underground Railroad and fought for the rights of Blacks during and after the Civil War. He encouraged not just Black people but all people to fight for human rights and equality. His philosophy was that "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

These champions in Black history fought to break down barriers against equality. Their unselfishness and devotion to the true principles of democracy make them two of history's most inspiring heroes.

(circle one)
***This text pattern is*:** **1. circular pattern** **2. matrix**
3. narrative inside **4. web clustering**

(Note: This text is organized in a matrix pattern.)

4 INSPIRING FIGURES IN BLACK HISTORY

History tells of many Black champions who spent their lives fighting to better the lives of others. Among these champions, the story of Frederick Douglass stands out as a shining example. A former slave, Douglass overcame many hard times to become world famous.

Fred was born about 1817. He was better off than most of the other slaves because his Grandmama Betsey and Grandpa Isaac got to take care of him during the early years of his life. Unlike many slave children, he got lots of food and love during those years. When he was about 7, he had to go to work at the plantation. There he was treated mean and almost starved to death.

One sunny Saturday morning in the spring when he was about 10, Fred was dressed in a clean shirt and his first pair of pants. He was put aboard a ship bound for Baltimore. The beautiful water and the exciting city was like a fantasy-land to him. A sailor took Fred to his new house. When Fred saw Mr. and Mrs. Auld and their son, Tommy, smile at him, he knew fate had been kind to him. Instead of sleeping on the ground, he got to sleep on a straw bed. He had clean clothes and food in his belly. Here, Fred began to learn how to read and write.

When he was about 16, he was sent back to the plantation to hard times again. But he never forgot what it felt like to be treated like a real person instead of an animal. He determined in his heart that he would someday be a free man and that he would fight for the rights of others.

Champions like Douglass in Black history fought to break down barriers against equality. Their unselfishness and devotion to the true principles of democracy make them some of history's most inspiring heroes.

(circle one)

This text pattern is: **1. circular pattern** **2. matrix**
3. narrative inside **4. web clustering**

(Note: This text is organized in a narrative interspersion pattern.)

APPENDIX B
Ranking Sheet for Indicating Preferences for Organizational Patterns Used When Completing Different Tasks

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After reading the 4 texts, please rate the text patterns in order according to the ones you like best *for writing in class.* (1 = the one you *like the best* for *writing in class.* 4 = the one you like the least for organizing your own *writing.*)

_____ circular pattern (gets off the point; or goes around in circles)

_____ matrix (compares 2 or 3 things)

_____ narrative inside (has a personal story in the report)

_____ web clustering (each paragraph describes another point about the main topic)

Why do you like your #1 answer the best for writing?

Now, please rate the text patterns in order according to the ones you like best for *talking to your friends outside of class.* (1 = the one you like the best for *speaking.* 4 = the one you like the least for organizing your own *speaking.*)

_____ circular pattern (gets off the point; or goes around in circles)

_____ matrix (compares 2 or 3 things)

_____ narrative inside (has a personal story in the report)

_____ web clustering (each paragraph describes another point about the main topic)

Why do you like your #1 answer the best for talking to your friends?

NOTES

1. The National Assessment of Educational Progress publication, *America's Challenge: Accelerating Academic Achievement, a Summary of Findings from 20 Years of NAEP* (1990), reported that minority students, particularly African Americans, have made substantial progress since 1970 in narrowing the gap between their performance and that of their European-American counterparts. Nonetheless, the differences remain high—by age 17, these students are the equivalent of two grade levels below the norm in reading and four grades below in science.

2. The adolescents whose patterns of time usage and social interactions were reported in Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) spent 52% of their time with peers. Informal talk about topics familiar to those present has been shown to constitute the largest portion of talk among peers who make up voluntary social units (Romaine, 1984, pp. 182-195). Such topics call for informal oral language use that differs sharply from the language required for usual classroom displays of information in expository written form.

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Arnetha Ball is an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Michigan, where she teaches in the Reading and Literacy Program. Her research has focused on the oral and written expository language of African-American adolescents, linguistic competence, assessment and intervention strategies with culturally diverse populations, and language use in neighborhood-based organizations.