



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Language Sciences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/langsci

Slurs, stereotypes, and in-equality: a critical review of “How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal”

Adam M. Croom*

Department of Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania, 619 Williams Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19104, United States

Department of Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania, 433 Cohen Hall, Philadelphia, PA 19104, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Slurs
Stereotypes
Re-appropriation
Semantics
Pragmatics
Philosophy of language

ABSTRACT

Are racial slurs always offensive and are racial stereotypes always negative? How, if at all, are racial slurs and stereotypes different and unequal for members of different races? Questions like these and others about slurs and stereotypes have been the focus of much research and hot debate lately, and in a recent article Embrick and Henricks (2013) aimed to address some of the aforementioned questions by investigating the use of racial slurs and stereotypes in the workplace. Embrick and Henricks (2013) drew upon the empirical data they collected at a baked goods company in the southwestern United States to argue that racial slurs and stereotypes function as symbolic resources that *exclude minorities but not whites* from opportunities or resources and that racial slurs and stereotypes are *necessarily considered as negative or derogatory irrespective of their particular context of use* (pp. 197–202). They thus proposed an account of slurs and stereotypes that supports the *context-insensitive* position of Fitten (1993) and Hedger (2013) yet challenges the *context-sensitive* position of Kennedy (2002) and Croom (2011). In this article I explicate the account of racial slurs and stereotypes provided by Embrick and Henricks (2013), outline 8 of their main claims, and then critically evaluate these claims by drawing upon recent empirical evidence on racial slurs (both in-group and out-group uses) and stereotypes (for both whites and blacks) to point out both strengths and weaknesses of their analysis. Implications of the present analysis for future work on slurs and stereotypes will also be discussed.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Are racial slurs always offensive and are racial stereotypes always negative? How, if at all, are racial slurs and stereotypes different and unequal for members of different races? Questions like these and others about slurs and stereotypes have been the focus of much research and hot debate lately (e.g., [Walton and Cohen, 2003](#); [Croom, 2011, 2013a,b](#); [Camp, 2013](#); [Jeshion, 2013](#)), and in their recent article “Discursive Colorlines at Work: How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal,” sociologists [David Embrick and Kasey Henricks \(2013\)](#) aimed to address some of the aforementioned questions by investigating the use of racial slurs and stereotypes in the workplace. [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) drew upon the empirical data they collected at a baked goods company in the southwestern United States to argue that racial

* Tel.: +1 2158988563.

E-mail address: adam.m.croom@gmail.com.

slurs and stereotypes generally function to perpetuate white supremacy, racial antagonism, and racial inequality, i.e., that racial slurs and stereotypes function as symbolic resources that *exclude minorities but not whites* from opportunities or resources and that racial slurs and stereotypes are *necessarily considered as negative or derogatory irrespective of their particular context of use* (pp. 197–202). They thus proposed an account of slurs and stereotypes that supports the *context-insensitive* position of [Fitten \(1993\)](#) and [Hedger \(2013\)](#) yet challenges the *context-sensitive* position of [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) and [Croom \(2011\)](#). For example, although they briefly consider the point made by legal scholar Randall [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) that racial slurs like *nigger* are not necessarily considered as negative or derogatory racial insults, particularly when they are used within certain *in-group contexts* (e.g., when a racial slur towards blacks is used among fellow blacks, or when a racial slur towards whites is used among fellow whites), [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are clear that they explicitly reject this point:

[Kennedy \(2002\)](#) argues that the term [*nigger*] has been the most socially consequential racial insult, but adds that *it need not be*. The word carries little meaning without context and to say otherwise is to transform it into a fetish ([Kennedy 2002](#)). *We disagree*. The term cannot be abstracted from the context it is derived. It is inseparable from a history of white-on-black oppression in which whites enslaved, lynched, and murdered millions of blacks, and often did so as while using this particular slur. (p. 201, my emphasis)

[Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) thus propose an account of slurs and stereotypes that is consonant with that suggested by other scholars like [Ronald Fitten \(1993\)](#) and [Joseph Hedger \(2013\)](#). For instance, in his article for *The Seattle Times* entitled “Fighting Words: No Matter Who Uses Them, Racial Slurs Ultimately Serve To Denigrate and Divide,” [Fitten \(1993\)](#) writes that:

attempts to “demystify” or “redefine” racial slurs are psychologically impossible [...] the use of racial slurs intra-racially perpetuates within the group all of its negative history and, on some levels, is a form of self-hatred [...] intra-racial references to racial slurs [also] have another effect: They make the group or groups originally responsible for creating stigmatizing language feel that the demeaning historical aspects of the words were, and still are, valid.

More recently, the philosopher [Joseph Hedger \(2013\)](#) has argued in his article “Meaning and Racial Slurs: Derogatory Epithets and the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface” that:

No matter the context of conversation, the use of a slur is offensive and expresses contempt. Although Christopher [Hom \(2008\)](#) purports to give some examples of non-derogatory uses of slurs, I follow [Anderson and Lepore \(2013\)](#) in urging that these examples are clearly offensive. Furthermore, I have yet to find a single informant who sides with [Hom \(2008\)](#) on this issue. Hence, since a slur word is offensive in any context, the offensiveness is part of the semantic meaning of slur words, and is not a result of any peculiar use of slurs. (p. 209)

So in contrast with the *context-sensitive* position of scholars like [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) and [Croom \(2011\)](#) which argues that the use of racial slurs *are not* necessarily negative or derogatory and that whether the use of a racial slur is considered negative or derogatory is *dependent* on its particular context of use, [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) support the *context-insensitive* position of scholars like [Fitten \(1993\)](#) and [Hedger \(2013\)](#) which argues that the use of racial slurs *are* necessarily negative or derogatory and that whether the use of a racial slur is considered negative or derogatory is *independent* of its particular context of use (pp. 197–202). This is why [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) argue for the *general* or *unqualified* claim about racial slurs and stereotypes, that their use:

represent how white supremacy is preserved [...] to reinforce material inequities. Because acted-upon epithets and stereotypes are racially unequal, their consequences further crystallize each group’s location within the racial order. They serve as resources that impose, confer, deny, and approve other capital rewards in everyday interactions. That is, they further exclude racial minorities, blacks and Latinas/os in particular, from opportunities and resources, all the while preserving the superior status of whites. (p. 211)

In the next section I more fully outline the account of slurs and stereotypes proposed by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) and explicate 8 of their main claims, before then turning to critically evaluate these claims by drawing upon recent empirical evidence on racial slurs (both in-group and out-group uses) and stereotypes (for both whites and blacks) to point out both strengths and weaknesses of their analysis. Finally, in the last section I conclude by reviewing our overall discussion of racial slurs and stereotypes and discussing implications for future work.

2. “How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal”

In their study [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) investigated the use of slurs and stereotypes in the workplace by conducting a 6-month case study with the staff of a baked-goods company in the southwestern United States

(pp. 199–201).¹ This case study involved informal observations and semi-structured interviews of 38 members from work, or approximately 20% of the company workforce. Informal observations were recorded five days a week and semi-structured interviews consisted of 50 questions dealing with issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. The gender profile for this group of participants was 90% men and 10% women, and the racial profile for this group of participants was 50% White, 25% Black, 20% Latina/o, and 5% Asian (for further discussion on methodology see Section 3).

Based on the results of their investigation [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) concluded that racial slurs and stereotypes against “whites” are not equivalent to racial slurs and stereotypes against “non-whites” or “racial minorities, blacks and Latinas/os in particular” (p. 197). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) summarized the results of their study as follows:

From our data, we contend stereotypes are racially unequal in two ways. One, they disproportionately describe whites positively and blacks and Latinas/os negatively. And two, white stereotypes are more three-dimensional, pluralistic, and even contradictory in nature, whereas nonwhite stereotypes, especially black and Latina/o ones, characterize these groups in a one-dimensional, monolithic manner. (p. 207)

Further claims by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) about how slurs and stereotypes are racially unequal include the claims that “racial slurs and stereotypes applied to whites by non-whites do not carry the same meaning or outcomes as they do when these roles are swapped” (p. 197), that “Whereas *nigger* and *wetback* are terms typically attached to *all* members of each respective group, some of the most popular white slurs, especially *honky* and *cracker*, have historically been reserved for segments of the white population” (p. 205), that “racial epithets directed toward whites are unlikely to affect their life chances in the same way that racial epithets directed toward minorities do” (p. 197), and that “Whites have power and agency to deny and apply epithets and stereotypes to themselves and other groups, while blacks and Latinas/os do not possess such power or privilege” (p. 198). For the sake of clarity I explicate 8 of the main claims (C1–C8) maintained by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), with (C1)–(C4) concerning racial stereotypes and (C5)–(C8) concerning racial slurs:

- Claim 1 (C1): Stereotypes of whites are positive whereas stereotypes of non-whites are negative. (p. 207)
- Claim 2 (C2): Stereotypes of whites are pluralistic whereas stereotypes of non-whites are monolithic. (p. 207)
- Claim 3 (C3): Stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites. (p. 197)
- Claim 4 (C4): The power to apply and deny stereotypes is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held by non-whites. (p. 198)
- Claim 5 (C5): Slurs applied to whites are restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members whereas slurs applied to non-whites are unrestricted in that they apply to (not some but) all of its prototypical members. (p. 205)

¹ To be maximally informative I have provided here the “Methods” section from [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) in its entirety: “Data were collected for this case study by the primary author. The field site was located at one of the largest baked goods companies in the southwestern United States (henceforth referred to as Whitebread). Because the author worked at a local distribution center owned by Whitebread, initial hardship of gaining access to corporate business, a problem faced by most researchers, was minimal. After obtaining IRB approval, as well as permission from the company’s human resource department, six months of participant observation were recorded at one of the main bakeries as well as at a number of various distribution depots (from January through June of 2002). Immediately following, in-depth, semistructured interviews, lasting an upwards of 2–3 h, were conducted with workers, supervisors, and lower level managers who worked in these places. The study was framed as a project exploring class dynamics present in everyday actions of workers and managers in a workplace dominated by men employees. Through direct contact, the first author informed both workers and managers that participant observation research was to be conducted. They were also informed that their daily routines and interactions would be routinely recorded on a daily basis for six months. After initial notification, Whitebread employees did not receive any other warning that they were being observed. In terms of selecting interviewees, snowballing techniques were utilized. This procedure tapped employees at worker, supervisor, and lower level manager levels. Because the services rendered by Whitebread consisted of numerous depots, some comprised of warehouses with 20 or more workers and others comprised of only one or two workers, snowballing techniques yielded an adequate sample of approximately 20% of the company workforce. In total, 38 respondents were interviewed: 35 with workers (33 men, 2 women) and three with managers (all men). The racial and gender demographics of Whitebread was mostly white (50% White, 25% Black, 20% Latina/o, 5% Asian) and men (90% male, 10% female). However, variations could be found depending on the particular department of Whitebread. For example, long-haul route driver positions were overwhelmingly held by white men while short-haul, inner-city driver positions tended to be more racially mixed. Participant observations were recorded daily (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday through Saturday). Jottings were written on notepads, which were kept in the primary author’s shirt pocket, while working alongside respondents throughout each workday. Notes were recorded during work hours that usually began at midnight and ended between 3 and 7 p.m. To minimize reactivity effects, the primary author cautiously recorded observations either during bathroom breaks or in the confines of his work truck. In situations where observations needed to be immediately recorded, or when the first author could not do this in solitude, notes were covertly written on an inventory clipboard. At the end of each day, notes were transcribed and expanded. Participant observation was purposely conducted before the interview process as a way to locate and select potential interviewees, but also to frame how interviewees’ comments could be interpreted. Most interviews lasted approximately two hours, but ranged from one to three hours. Participants were asked to first sign a consent form, then were asked a total of 50 questions dealing with issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. These were open-ended and semistructured to accommodate each respondent and his or her time limitations. Where necessary and when time permitted, however, other questions were incorporated to address some responses and allow participants to clarify themselves” (pp. 199–201).

- Claim 6 (C6): Slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites. (p. 197)
- Claim 7 (C7): Slurs applied to whites do not affect their life chances whereas slurs applied to non-whites do affect their life chances. (p. 197)
- Claim 8 (C8): The power to apply and deny slurs is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny slurs is not held by non-whites. (p. 198)

Claims (C1), (C2), and (C3) are further clarified with the table that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) provide outlining “Common Stereotypes for Whites, Blacks, and Latinas/os” (see [Table 1](#), p. 207).

In this table [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) suggest that stereotypes for whites are almost exclusively positive: with the exception of two slightly insulting names (i.e., “Hillbilly” and “rednecks”) they ascribed whites predominantly positive stereotypes including “Individualistic,” “Meritocratic,” “Elite,” “powerful (possess much privilege and authority),” “noble,” “humanitarian,” and “Rich and wealthy” (p. 207). Yet [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) suggest that stereotypes for blacks, in contrast to those for whites, are exclusively negative: without exception they ascribed blacks exclusively negative stereotypes including “Lazy,” “no work ethic,” “undependable,” “Biologically different,” “intellectually inferior,” “beast-like physical features,” “Dependency mentality (“freeloader” mindset),” “Primitive,” “savages,” “inhuman,” “Deviant,” “criminal-minded,” “Worthless,” “Destined for menial, physical labor,” “Prone to violence,” and “Hyper-sensitive to racial issues” (p. 207).² Given their assumption that stereotypes for blacks are exclusively negative whereas stereotypes for whites are for the most part positive, [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) suggested that “white epithets carry no *real* negative consequences for most whites” and that “whites [and whites alone] are afforded sanctuary from epithets and stereotypes that have historically justified the mistreatment of certain groups of people” (p. 198). Before arguing in the next section that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C1), (C2), (C4), (C5), (C7), and (C8), I first argue in this section that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C3) and (C6).

First consider claim 3 (C3) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites (p. 197). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C3) since there are studies supporting the claim that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites (i.e., whites and non-whites have different stereotypes). Consider for example research from the article “Assessing Stereotypes of Black and White Managers: A Diagnostic Ratio Approach,” where psychologists [Caryn Block et al. \(2012\)](#) had participants assess stereotypes and rate the likelihood that characteristics from each scale of the diagnostic ratio approach were descriptive of black and white managers (p. E128). In agreement with (C3), evidence from this study suggests that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites, since “White managers were stereotyped as more competent, ambitious, and manipulative; whereas Black managers were stereotyped as more interpersonally skilled and less polished” (p. E128).³ Consider also research from the article “Effects of Racial Stereotypes on Judgments of Individuals: The Moderating Role of Perceived Group Variability,” where psychologists [Carey Ryan et al. \(1996\)](#) had participants judge the variability and provide trait and confidence judgments of hypothetical group members (p. 199). In agreement with (C3), evidence from this study suggests that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites, since “Blacks were seen as more likely to be violent and have run-ins with the police than Whites [...] Similarly, Blacks were seen as less likely to be whimpy than Whites [...] the data indicate that the stereotype of African Americans as aggressive [in comparison to European Americans] remains intact today” (p. 95). Further still, in her article “Race and the Re-Embodied Voice in Hollywood,” linguist [Mary Bucholtz \(2011a\)](#) analyzed a dataset of Hollywood films ($n = 56$) that were released between 1980 and 2008 and concluded from her analysis that throughout popular culture there was “a widely circulating ideology of black masculinity as hyperphysical and hypersexual ([Hooks, 1992](#)) and of white masculinity as physically awkward, uptight, and emotionally disconnected” (p. 259; [Bucholtz, 1999](#)). Evidence of this kind showing that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C3).

Next consider claim 6 (C6) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites (p. 197). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C6) since there are studies supporting the claim that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites (i.e., slurs applied to whites and non-whites have different meanings). Consider for example research from the article “Race and the Re-Embodied Voice in Hollywood” ([Bucholtz, 2011a](#)). In agreement with (C6), evidence from this study suggests that

² Due to space limitations, I restrict the discussion of non-white minorities in this article to African Americans and do not further discuss empirical data concerning other non-white minority groups such as Latino Americans or Asian Americans, even though many of the points made in this article concerning African Americans does apply to other minority groups including Latino Americans and Asian Americans also. I focus the discussion here on African Americans because (1) this appears to be the first and most salient minority racial group [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) consider (p. 201), and (2) this appears to be the minority racial group from which the most empirical data can be gathered. I therefore reserve discussion of other minority groups, such as Latino Americans and Asian Americans, for future work (but see also [Croom, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013a,b, 2014a,b](#)).

³ The assessment of stereotypes in the study by [Block et al. \(2012\)](#) was carried out by 154 participants (25 men and 129 women) with a mean age of 26.2 years ($SD = 4.3$). For this group of participants the academic profile consisted of 86% graduate students and 14% undergraduate students, the gender profile consisted of 16% men and 84% women, and the racial profile consisted of 52% White, 12% Black, 6% Hispanic, 25% Asian, and 5% mixed-race or other ([Block et al., 2012, p. E133](#)).

Table 1
Common Racial Stereotypes Reported by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013, p. 207\)](#).

Whites	Blacks	Latinas/os
Individualistic (in principle, everyone is equal)	Lazy, no work ethic, undependable	Hyper-sensitive to racial issues
Meritocratic (success is based on hard work and determination)	Hyper-sensitive to racial issues	Culturally distinct; group-, familial-centered
Elite, powerful (possesses much privilege and authority)	Biologically different: intellectually inferior, beast-like physical features	Inhuman, animal-like
Noble, humanitarian	Dependency mentality (“freeloader” mindset)	All of Mexican decent
“Hillbilly,” “rednecks”	Primitive, savages, inhuman	Prone to violence
Rich and wealthy	Deviant, criminal-minded	Lazy, no work ethic, undependable
	Worthless	
	Destined for menial, physical labor	
	Prone to violence	

slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites, since the meaning of the racial slur *wigger* or *wigga* applied to whites concerns primarily “a white male hip hop fan, typically middle-class and suburban, often laughably inauthentic” whereas the meaning of the racial slur *nigger* or *nigga* applied to blacks concerns primarily “urban African American youth [...] being playas and gangstas – hard, cool, and down” ([Bucholtz, 2011a, pp. 257, 259](#)).⁴ Consider also two recent reports in the news, “‘Cracker’ Conveys History of Bigotry That Still Resonates” and “Where Did the N-Word Come From?” where CNN reporters [Tom Foreman \(2013\)](#) and [Don Lemon \(2013\)](#) discuss some of the history of racial slurs directed towards whites and blacks, respectively. In agreement with (C6), evidence from these reports suggest that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites, since the racial slur *cracker* applied to whites “is a demeaning, bigoted term [...] a sharp racial insult that resonates with white southerners” ([Foreman, 2013](#)) whereas the racial slur *nigger* applied to blacks is a “dark, degrading hateful insult for African Americans” ([Lemon, 2013](#)). Evidence of this kind showing that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C6).

3. A critical analysis of “How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal”

Having shown in the previous section that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are correct in arguing for (C3) and (C6), in this section I now turn to show that they are incorrect in arguing for (C1), (C2), (C4), (C5), (C7), and (C8). First consider claim 1 (C1) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that stereotypes of whites are positive whereas stereotypes of non-whites are negative (p. 207). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C1) since there are studies supporting the claim that some stereotypes of whites are negative and that some stereotypes of non-whites are positive. For example, consider research from the article “The Whiteness of Nerds: Superstandard English and Racial Markedness,” where [Bucholtz \(2001\)](#) conducted ethnographic fieldwork (1995–1996) on white American students at Bay City High School in San Francisco, California, and focused on investigating how these white American students enact and manage their social identities.⁵ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that whites do have negative stereotypes, which included characterizations of being “nerds,” “social underachievers,” “intellectual overachievers,” and “uncool” (p. 86). As [Bucholtz \(2001\)](#) explains, white students that enact “an extreme version of whiteness” are considered “nerds” and “are members of a stigmatized social category” (pp. 86, 85). Further support comes from research discussed in the article “Performing Blackness, Forming Whiteness: Linguistic Minstrelsy in Hollywood Film,” where linguists [Mary Bucholtz and Quiana Lopez \(2011\)](#) analyzed a large dataset of Hollywood films and focused on investigating how these Hollywood films stereotyped white and black social identities (p. 682).⁶ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that whites do have negative stereotypes, which included characterizations of “white masculinity as inadequate” (p. 698), being “uptight” (p. 682), “physically and emotionally repressed” (p. 698), “inauthentic” (p. 698), and “deficient” in qualities “including coolness,

⁴ In “The Semantics of Slurs: A Refutation of Pure Expressivism,” [Croom \(2014a\)](#) has also clarified the differential meanings of different slurs by pointing out how “an application of a particular slur in context does not occur at random, but instead based on considerations of their systematic differential application–conditions, which concern descriptive features of targets such as their racial or sexual identity. This is not only how speakers are able to systematically distinguish between relatively broader categories of slurs (e.g., the racial slur *nigger* from the sexual slur *faggot*) but further how speakers are able to systematically distinguish between relatively narrower categories of slurs (e.g., the racial slur *nigger* from the racial slur *gook*) within those broader categories. That there are in fact different types of slurs applied differentially towards targets is noncontroversial – as [Anderson and Lepore \(2013\)](#) rightly point out, there in fact exists a large variety of slurs “that target groups on the basis of race (‘nigger’), nationality (‘kraut’), religion (‘kike’), gender (‘bitch’), sexual orientation (‘fag’), immigrant status (‘wetback’) and sundry other demographics” (p. 25) – and accounting for this basic fact has been outlined in prior work as one of several conditions to be met by any explanatorily adequate account of slurs” (p. 228).

⁵ The fieldwork conducted by [Bucholtz \(2001\)](#) on white American students consisted in observing students from a large urban high school in San Francisco, California, over the course of a year, interviewing them, and conducting content analyses of their use of language in text (pp. 85–86, 89). [Bucholtz’s \(2001\)](#) analyses of the language use of white American students considered several factors, including phonological (pp. 91–93), grammatical, and lexical factors (pp. 93–94).

⁶ The analysis conducted by [Bucholtz and Lopez \(2011\)](#) consisted in compiling a dataset of Hollywood films ($n = 59$) that were released between 1976 and 2008 and subsequently conducting content analyses of these films (pp. 685–686).

physical toughness, and sexual self-confidence” (p. 682). As Bucholtz and Lopez (2011) explain, recent Hollywood films have popularly highlighted “the instability of racial, gender, and class hegemonies in the current sociohistorical era” which includes “a newly vulnerable white middle-class masculinity” (pp. 698, 681).

Further still, consider research from the article “Stigma Allure and White Antiracist Identity Management,” where sociologist Matthew Hughey (2012) conducted ethnographic fieldwork (2006–2007) on white American members of an antiracist group in the mid-Atlantic United States and focused on investigating how these members enact and manage their social identities.⁷ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that whites do have negative stereotypes, which included characterizations of being “inherently racist” (p. 231), “hypocrites reaping racial privilege from an unequal social order,” and “unerring beneficiaries of white supremacy” (p. 227). As Hughey (2012) explains, “The respondents in this study perceived their whiteness as inherently stigmatized due to their participation in racial segregation, their possession of racial stereotypes, and their lack of serious political and social unification with people of color” (p. 226). These findings are further supported with additional research from the article “Whiteness As Stigma: Essentialist Identity Work by Mixed-Race Women,” where sociologist Debbie Storr (1999) conducted ethnographic fieldwork on mixed-race women of white and non-white ancestry in the northwestern United States and focused on investigating how these women enact and manage their social identities.⁸ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that whites do have negative stereotypes, which included characterizations of being “discriminatory,” “oppressive,” “racist,” “patriarchal,” “bland,” “tasteless,” “devoid of meaning,” and “boring as the spiceless foods they prefer” (pp. 195–196). As Storr (1999) explains, “These women reject their white ancestry and culture because of their interpretation of this culture, and their ancestors, as racist, patriarchal, and discriminatory. Their narratives reveal that this negative characterization also captures, for them, the attitudes and behaviors of most whites [...] as biased and prejudiced by virtue of their social location in the racial hierarchy” (pp. 197, 196).

Not only do Embrick and Henricks (2013) fail to acknowledge the robustness of negative stereotypes for whites, but they further fail to acknowledge the robustness of positive stereotypes for non-whites as well. For instance, consider research from the article “Thinking Well of African Americans: Measuring Complimentary Stereotypes and Negative Prejudice,” where psychologists Alexander Czopp and Margo Monteith (2006) conducted a study involving students ($n = 4,404$) in Lexington, Kentucky, and focused on investigating how students stereotyped white and black social identities.⁹ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that blacks do have positive stereotypes, which included characterizations of being “hip” (p. 235), “socially savvy” (p. 235), “friendly” (p. 243), “funny” (p. 243), “family-oriented” (p. 243), “confident” (p. 243), “ambitious” (p. 243), “proud” (p. 243), “respectable” (p. 243), “underappreciated” (p. 243), “successful” (p. 243), “smart/educated” (p. 243), “good speakers” (p. 243), “good cooks” (p. 243), “open-minded” (p. 243), “artistic” (p. 243), “full of soul” (p. 243), “musically talented” (p. 243), “good dancers” (p. 243), “good at sports” (p. 243), “muscular” (p. 243), “good looking” (p. 243), “fashionable” (p. 235), “very attractive and stylish in their appearance and their physical and verbal mannerisms” (p. 235), and exuding a sense of “sexual mystique” (p. 235), “social and sexual competence” (p. 235), and “a unique sense of ‘coolness’” (p. 235). As Czopp and Monteith (2006) explain, “Racial prejudice toward African Americans has been largely measured and researched in terms of negative and hostile attitudes. However, there is considerable research to suggest the prevalence of evaluatively positive beliefs about Blacks” (p. 233; see also Sniderman and Piazza, 2002). These findings are

⁷ The fieldwork conducted by Hughey (2012) on white American antiracists consisted in attending their group meetings ($n = 27$) and informally observing them on a day-to-day basis for a year (2006–2007) (p. 225). Hughey (2012) also conducted semi-structured interviews with members ($n = 21$) and content analyses of group circulated texts ($n = 179$) including flyers, newsletters, and emails (p. 225).

⁸ The fieldwork conducted by Storr (1999) on women of white and non-white ancestry consisted in semi-structured interviews of women ($n = 27$) between 18 and 50 years of age and subsequent content analyses of these interviews (p. 189).

⁹ The study conducted by Czopp and Monteith (2006) consisted in validating a measure of Complimentary Stereotypes and Negative Prejudice (CSNP) through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses across 6 samples of subjects ($n = 4,404$). Data from the first sample of subjects included 388 participants. The gender distribution for this first sample consisted of 148 (38%) men and 227 (59%) women (the remaining 13 (3%) participants did not report their gender), and its racial distribution consisted of 326 (84%) White participants, 28 (7%) Black participants, and 10 (3%) Asian participants (with 15 (4%) of the remaining participants identifying as “Other” and 9 (2%) of the remaining participants not reporting their race). Data from the second sample of subjects included 85 participants. The gender distribution for this second sample consisted of 20 (23.5%) men and 65 (76.5%) women, and its racial distribution consisted of 70 (82%) White participants, 8 (9%) Black participants, 3 (3.5%) Hispanic participants, and 3 Asian (3.5%) participants (with 2 (2%) of the remaining participants identifying as “Other”). Data from the third sample of subjects included 1,269 participants. The gender distribution for this third sample consisted of 402 (32%) men and 814 (64%) women (the remaining 53 (4%) participants did not report their gender), and its racial distribution consisted of 1120 (88%) White participants and 42 (3%) Black participants (with 57 (5%) of the remaining participants identifying as “Other” and 50 (4%) of the remaining participants not reporting their race). Data from the fourth sample of subjects included 461 participants. The gender distribution for this fourth sample consisted of 170 (37%) men and 278 (60%) women (the remaining 13 (3%) participants did not report their gender), and its racial distribution consisted of 414 (90%) White participants, 18 (4%) Black participants, 11 (2%) Hispanic participants, and 2 (0.5%) Asian participants (with 3 (0.5%) of the remaining participants identifying as “Other” and 13 (3%) of the remaining participants not reporting their race). Data from the fifth sample of subjects included 1,102 participants. The gender distribution for this fifth sample consisted of 355 (32%) men and 689 (63%) women (the remaining 58 (5%) participants did not report their gender), and its racial distribution consisted of 966 (88%) White participants and 49 (4%) Black participants (with 29 (3%) of the remaining participants identifying as Asian, Hispanic, or “Other,” and 58 (5%) of the remaining participants not reporting their race). Data from the sixth sample of subjects included 1,099 participants. The gender distribution for this fifth sample consisted of 395 (36%) men and 701 (64%) women (the remaining 3 (0%) participants did not report their gender), and its racial distribution consisted of 1057 (96%) White participants and 26 (2.5%) Black participants (with 16 (1.5%) of the remaining participants identifying as Asian, Hispanic, or “Other”) (Czopp and Monteith, 2006, pp. 237–238). Also, the 30-item CSNP in this study consisted of two scales: the Complimentary Stereotype scale (CS) that measures positive stereotypes and the Negative Prejudice scale (NP) that measures hostile attitudes. Independent studies further supported the validity of CS and NP in evaluating positive and negative evaluations (pp. 233, 237–241).

further supported with additional research from the article “The Co-Construction of Whiteness in an MC Battle,” where linguist [Cecilia Cutler \(2007\)](#) analyzed a dataset of recorded MC Battles and focused on investigating how whites and blacks stereotyped social identities in these filmed hip-hop battles (p. 682).¹⁰ In disagreement with (C1), evidence from this study suggests that blacks do have positive stereotypes, which included characterizations of being “authentic” (p. 10), “real” (p. 11), “urban” (p. 17), “streetwise” (p. 17), “cool” (p. 17), “artistic creators” (p. 10), “trend setters” (p. 10), and “entrepreneurs” (p. 10). As [Cutler \(2007\)](#) explains, “There is quite a powerful discourse within hip-hop that privileges the Black body and the Black urban street experience and despite the visibility of White rappers such as Eminem, Whiteness is still marked against the backdrop of normative Blackness” with “Whites [often] being [stereotyped as] wannabes and dilettantes who think they can cross racial boundaries and participate in another cultural domain” (pp. 10, 16; see also [Cutler, 2009](#)).

Further still, in their article “Performing Blackness, Forming Whiteness,” [Bucholtz and Lopez \(2011\)](#) offer evidence suggesting that, in disagreement with (C1), blacks do have positive stereotypes, which included characterizations of “coolness” (p. 682), “confidence” (p. 698), “sexual self-assurance” (p. 699), “physical toughness” (p. 682), and “the ability to speak forthrightly” (p. 698). [Bucholtz and Lopez \(2011\)](#) point out that recent Hollywood films have popularly highlighted “the instability of racial, gender, and class hegemonies in the current sociohistorical era” which includes an “apparently positive valorization of African American culture and identity” (p. 698). One last source of evidence suggesting, in disagreement with (C1), that blacks do have positive stereotypes comes from the article “Whiteness As Stigma,” where [Storrs \(1999\)](#) offers evidence suggesting that stereotypes of blacks included characterizations of being “more interesting,” “spicy,” and exhibiting “zest,” “finesse,” and “a sort of in your face attitude” (p. 195). As [Storrs \(1999\)](#) explains, since “In their family and personal experiences, whites are stigmatized as the oppressors,” and “Given the dichotomous construction of racial boundaries, women portrayed non-whites in a contrasting manner by highlighting positive cultural characteristics” (p. 197). [Storrs \(1999\)](#) further discusses how:

the respondents in this study are not the only ones who are challenging racial meanings. In some ways, the women’s actions parallel the multiracial social movement that is occurring nationally. This larger movement attempts to shift racially mixed persons from a stigmatized category to one that is legitimately recognized and positively affirmed by the public. (p. 210)

Evidence of this kind showing that some stereotypes of whites are negative and that some stereotypes of non-whites are positive therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C1).

Next consider claim 2 (C2) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that stereotypes of whites are pluralistic whereas stereotypes of non-whites are monolithic (p. 207).¹¹ [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C2) since there are studies supporting the claim that stereotypes of non-whites (along with whites) are pluralistic rather than monolithic. Consider for example research from the article “Effects of Racial Stereotypes on Judgments of Individuals,” where [Ryan et al. \(1996\)](#) had participants judge target groups with respect to 16 attributes that included both traits and attitude statements.¹² In disagreement with (C2), evidence from this study suggests that stereotypes of non-whites are pluralistic rather than monolithic, since stereotypes for blacks included both negative and positive attributes.¹³ For instance, examples of negative traits for blacks included “Poor” and “Superstitious” and examples of negative attitude statements for blacks included “I’ve had a lot of run-ins with the police” and “I just can’t seem to keep a job very long,” whereas examples of positive traits for blacks included “Streetwise” and “Emotionally expressive” and examples of positive attitude statements for blacks included “I would enjoy singing in a church choir” and “I grew up close to my cousins, aunts, and uncles” ([Ryan et al., 1996, p. 86](#)).¹⁴ The point here that stereotypes of non-whites are pluralistic rather than monolithic has likewise been addressed in “Thinking Well of African Americans,” where [Czopp and Monteith \(2006\)](#) explain that:

When discussing issues related to interracial conflict, many people tend to assume that Whites’ perceptions of Blacks largely reflect hostility and antipathy. However, there is a good deal of research suggesting that Whites’ views of Blacks are not uniformly negative but represent a duality of positive and negative attributes. (p. 233)

Evidence of this kind showing that stereotypes of non-whites (along with whites) are pluralistic rather than monolithic therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C2).

¹⁰ The study conducted by [Cutler \(2007\)](#) consisted in analyzing recorded hip-hop battles that took place at the *Blaze Battle Face-Off 2000 World Championship*, which was broadcasted on HBO on 25 November 2013 (p. 12).

¹¹ [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) do not clearly explicate what they mean in using the contrasting terms “monolithic” and “pluralistic,” but it is suggested from their discussion on slurs and stereotypes that they use the term “monolithic” to mean singular or unitary in a given attribute or value judgment, whereas they use the term “pluralistic” to mean multiple or potentially conflicting in given attributes or value judgments (pp. 207–208, 212).

¹² The attributes and the mean percentages of blacks and whites that were perceived to possess each of them are presented in Table 2 of [Ryan et al. \(1996\)](#), p. 86.

¹³ [Ryan et al. \(1996\)](#) further mention that, “Black and White subjects agreed in their judgments of the attributes that were stereotypic and counter-stereotypic of the two target groups” (p. 87).

¹⁴ Evidence from this study also suggests that stereotypes of whites are pluralistic rather than monolithic, since stereotypes for whites included both negative and positive attributes as well. For instance, examples of negative traits for whites included “Sheltered” and “Stuffy” and examples of negative attitude statements for whites included “I believe my job is more important than family” and “I have usually been given whatever material things I needed or wanted without having to work for them,” whereas examples of positive traits for whites included “Competitive” and “Organized” and examples of positive attitude statements for whites included “If you want to get ahead, you have to take charge” and “A kid growing up in the U.S. has unlimited opportunities” ([Ryan et al., 1996, p. 86](#)).

Next consider claim 4 (C4) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held by non-whites (p. 198). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C4) since there are studies supporting the claim that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites. For example, consider research from the article “‘Keepin’ It Real’: White Hip-Hoppers’ Discourses of Language, Race, and Authenticity,” where [Cutler \(2003\)](#) conducted fieldwork in New York City on white hip-hop participants. In disagreement with (C4), evidence from this study suggests that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites, since they often have to “fight an uphill battle” against the many negative stereotypes directed against them within a thriving hip-hop culture (p. 224).¹⁵ As [Cutler \(2003\)](#) explains:

Hip-hop’s rootedness in underprivileged urban African American communities as well as its inherent antiestablishment ideology casts the participation of privileged white youth who represent part of that establishment into stark relief. Within hip-hop, the unequal black-white binary is subverted; blackness emerges as normative and authentic and whiteness – usually the unmarked invisible category – becomes visible and marked. (p. 229)

Consider also research from the article “An Ay for an Ah: Language of Survival in African American Narrative Comedy,” where linguist Jacquelyn [Rahman \(2007\)](#) analyzed the language use of speakers from a dataset of comedic narratives ($n = 15$) and focused on investigating how these comedic narratives stereotyped white and black social identities (p. 682).¹⁶ In disagreement with (C4), evidence from this study suggests that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites, since [Rahman \(2007\)](#) shows how it is often the case that:

African American characters are cast as humanly and culturally rich survivors whose common sense and resilience allow them to “make a way out of no way.” In contrast, [the white middle-class] establishment characters appear as narrowly logical, ethnically bland, and ineffectual. The positive portrayal of African Americans is itself a tool of survival that stems from a self-empowering community ideology that serves as a buffer against the effects of perceived racism. (p. 65; see also [Rahman, 2004](#))

Indeed, in their article “Stereotype Lift,” psychologists [Gregory Walton and Geoffrey Cohen \(2003\)](#) conducted a meta-analysis of relevant empirical studies ($n = 43$) on stereotypes and found that “When a negative stereotype impugns the ability or worth of an outgroup,” – where the *out-group* in cases like [Rahman’s \(2007\)](#) are *those of the white middle-class establishment* – “people [of the in-group] may experience *stereotype lift* – a performance boost that occurs when downward comparisons are made with a denigrated outgroup” (p. 456) which “is assumed to alleviate the doubt, anxiety, or fear of rejection [of in-group members] that accompanies the threat of failure” from engaging with those that are considered out-group members in relation to them (p. 457).¹⁷

Further still, consider research from the article “Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing,” where psychologists [Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers \(2011\)](#) had participants ($n = 417$) rate on a 10-point scale the extent to which they felt both blacks and whites were the targets of discrimination in each decade from the 1950s to the 2000s (p. 216). In disagreement with (C4), evidence from this study suggests that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites, since there is now “a broader belief in a new, generalized anti-White bias” and “That Whites now believe that anti-White bias is more prevalent than anti-Black bias” (p. 217). As [Norton and Sommers \(2011\)](#) explain, “White respondents were more likely to see decreases in bias against Blacks as related to increases in bias against Whites – consistent with a zero-sum view of racism among Whites” and that “not only do Whites think more progress has been made toward equality than do Blacks, but Whites also now believe that this progress is linked to a new inequality – at their expense” (p. 217).¹⁸ Evidence of this kind showing that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C4).

¹⁵ For more on language use and identity in the context of hip hop culture, see also [Alim, 2002, 2003a,b, 2004, 2005a,b, 2006, 2009a,b,c; Alim and Baugh, 2006; Alim et al., 2009, 2010; Baugh, 1983; Boyd, 2002; Lee, 2009a,b; Smitherman, 2000.](#)

¹⁶ The analysis conducted by [Rahman \(2007\)](#) consisted in compiling, over the course of a year, a dataset of comedic narratives ($n = 15$) from filmed programs (including *Comic View*, *Comedy Central Presents*, and *Comedy Remix*) and interviews with professional comedians (including Curtis Mathis and Bertice Berry) (p. 72).

¹⁷ The analysis conducted by [Walton and Cohen \(2003\)](#) consisted in compiling a dataset of relevant empirical studies on stereotypes ($n = 43$) and subsequently conducting a meta-analysis of these studies by calculating items including standard deviation (*SD*), the size of the stereotype lift effect (*d*), the *t* test statistic (*t*), and the *p* value corresponding to the *t* test (pp. 457–458).

¹⁸ It is interesting to note here how the *perception* of power could bear on the *actualization* of power in social contexts. For instance, as [Brown and Levinson \(1978\)](#) have previously proposed, a speaker *S* who implicates through their use of language that they are of higher social status or more powerful than their hearer *H* is engaging in talk that “is risky, but if he [the agent or speaker] gets away with it (H doesn’t retaliate, for whatever reason), *S* succeeds in actually altering the public definition of his relationship to *H*: that is, his successful exploitation becomes part of the history of interaction, and thereby alters the agreed values of *D* [social distance between *S* and *H*] or *P* [relative power between *S* and *H*]” (1978, p. 228). Accordingly, since our social identities are in part determined by the way that we are socially perceived, and so the way that social members come to interact and continue to interact with us ([Goffman, 1967](#)), the derogative use of slurs can be extremely destructive to the actual character of an individual that it attacks ([Croom, 2011, p. 354](#)). [Croom \(2011\)](#) has also previously suggested that “By ridiculing or derogating a member based on certain negative properties or features, the speaker employing the slur can support, enforce, and contribute to a history of acts that negatively alter the social identity of targeted members. This is done, presumably, for the purpose of increasing the difference in asymmetrical power relations among the interlocutors in the specific conversational context, or among the groups to which they belong more generally” (p. 354). For further discussion of this issue see [Croom \(2011, p. 354\)](#) and [Croom \(2013a, pp. 185–186\)](#).

Next consider claim 5 (C5) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that slurs applied to whites are restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members whereas slurs applied to non-whites are unrestricted in that they apply to (not some but) all of its prototypical members (p. 205). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C5) since independent reports support the claim that slurs applied to non-whites (as with whites) are restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members. One noteworthy source of evidence for this point comes from the memoir *All Souls: A Family Story From Southie*, where crime activist Michael [MacDonald \(2000\)](#) discusses how slurs were used in his linguistic community and offers evidence suggesting that, in disagreement with (C5), the racial slur *nigger* is in fact restricted in that it was used to apply to some (but not all) blacks. As [MacDonald \(2000\)](#) puts the point:

Of course, no one considered himself a nigger. It was always something you called someone who could be considered anything less than you. I soon found out that there were a few black families living in Old Colony. They'd lived there for years and everyone said that they were okay, that they weren't niggers but just black. (pp. 60–61)

The “few black families living in Old Colony [...] weren't niggers but just black,” as [MacDonald \(2000\)](#) suggests, because “They'd live there for years and everyone said they were okay” whereas the term “nigger” was understood as “always something you called someone who could be considered anything less than you” (pp. 60–61). So in this case the racial slur *nigger* is restricted in that it is used by speakers to apply (if at all) to some blacks – specifically, just those that the speaker does not consider okay but rather as inferior or not okay – but not to all blacks. This is the explicit point [MacDonald \(2000\)](#) is making when he says of some of the black families living in Old Colony that “they weren't niggers but just black” (pp. 61, my emphasis).¹⁹ In “How to Do Things with Slurs: Studies in the Way of Derogatory Words,” [Croom \(2013a\)](#) further suggests that racial slurs like *nigger* are restricted in that they are used (if at all) to apply to some (but not all) blacks, at least partly because the linguistic expressions *nigger* and *black* are understood to be of functionally distinct kinds and thus as having different conditions of application ([Croom, 2011, p. 345](#)).²⁰ The erroneous assumption that the racial slur *nigger* must for the sake of felicity apply to all blacks (i.e., that the racial slur *nigger* is unrestricted), for instance, is grounded on the equally erroneous assumption that the linguistic expressions *nigger* and *black* are of the same functional kind, which has already been falsified in the extant literature (see for instance [Croom, 2011, pp. 345–347](#); [Croom, 2013a, pp. 178–182](#)). In other words, the use of racial slurs like *nigger* are not just restricted by racial descriptions like *black* but are further restricted by whether the speaker intends to convey an evaluative attitude towards the racial target or not.²¹ As [Croom \(2013a\)](#) explains the functional difference between these kinds of linguistic resources:

slurring terms such as *nigger* differ from descriptive terms such as *African American* [or *black*] in that the former is commonly understood to carry derogatory force whereas the latter is not [...] That is to say, identifying someone as *African American* [or *black*] is not typically understood as an act of derogation but rather one of straightforward description, whereas identifying someone as a *nigger* typically is understood as an act of derogation. Accordingly [...] slurring terms and descriptive terms are understood by speakers to be of functionally different kinds, and [so it follows] that speakers will in turn use these terms differently in their communicative exchanges. (p. 179)

¹⁹ Louis [Szekely \(2008\)](#) has also made a similar point about the sex-based slur *faggot* in his standup performance *Chewed Up* (2008). In this popular and well-executed performance, [Szekely \(2008\)](#) discusses how in the linguistic environment where he grew up that:

“faggot didn't mean gay when I was a kid, you called someone a faggot for being a faggot, you know? [...] “you're not supposed to use those for that” [said in an annoying mocking voice as if from another person, then Louis C.K. replies normally] “shut up faggot!” [...] I would never call a gay guy a faggot, unless he was being a faggot. But not because he's gay, you understand” (quoted also in [Croom, 2011, p. 352](#)).

So in this case the sex-based slur *faggot* is restricted in that it is used by speakers to apply (if at all) to some homosexuals – specifically, just those that the speaker does not consider okay but rather as inferior or not okay – but not to all homosexuals. This is the very point that [Szekely \(2008\)](#) is making when he says, “I would never call a gay guy a faggot, unless he was being a faggot. But not because he's gay, you understand.” So in a way similar to the case of race-based slurs like *nigger* discussed by [MacDonald \(2000\)](#), we see that sex-based slurs like *faggot* are also restricted in that they are used (if at all) to apply to some (but not all) homosexuals. This is at least partly because the linguistic expressions *faggot* and *homosexual* are understood to be of functionally distinct kinds and thus as having different conditions of application. For further discussion on this point see for instance [Croom \(2011, p. 345\)](#).

²⁰ For a more comprehensive and nuanced account of slurs see [Croom \(2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013a,b, 2014a,b\)](#). For example, in previously published work I use a “family resemblance” ([Wittgenstein, 1953](#)) conception of category membership to show how the felicitous application of a slur *S* need not target someone instantiating an associated neutral descriptive property *D*, so that the felicitous application of the slur *nigger* need not be restricted to African Americans and the felicitous application of the slur *faggot* need not be restricted to homosexuals (see [Croom, 2011, pp. 352–357](#); [Croom, 2013a,b, pp. 190, 194–199](#)). That is to say, instead of considering *D* as necessary or criterial for the felicitous application of *S*, here I propose that one alternatively consider *D* as (what I would like to call) the “conceptual anchor” for *S*, or the most relevantly salient default descriptor that helps communicative agents ground the apt application of *S* towards its prototypical targets (for instance, the conceptual anchor for the family resemblance concepts on page 356 of [Croom \(2011\)](#) would be identified as property 1). Due to space limitations the discussion of slurs in the present article will have to remain somewhat less refined than elsewhere, but see also Footnotes 24 and 25.

²¹ For the sake of clarity on how uses of racial slurs by speakers are typically constrained by their intentions, I would like to point out that it is because speakers come to understand what a slur *S* is generally used to accomplish that they will selectively choose to use *S* in cases where they intend to accomplish the kind of action that the use of *S* generally affords. It is in this kind of way that uses of racial slurs by speakers are typically constrained by their intentions. Further, since competent speakers generally understand what specific words are used to accomplish, a speaker's choice to use a specific word rather than another can indicate to others what that speaker intends to do. I thank an anonymous reviewer for asking for further clarification on this point.

Evidence of this kind showing that slurs are generally restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C5).

Next consider claim 7 (C7) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that slurs applied to whites do not affect their life chances whereas slurs applied to non-whites do affect their life chances (p. 197). In further explicating this claim [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) assert that “white epithets carry no *real* negative consequences for most whites” and that “whites are afforded sanctuary from epithets and stereotypes that have historically justified the mistreatment of certain groups of people” (p. 198). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C7) since there are studies and explicit reports supporting the claim that slurs applied to whites (along with non-whites) do affect their life chances. Consider for example how [Foreman \(2013\)](#) discusses the use of the racial slur *cracker* applied to whites and suggests that “for plenty of rural, white southerners, “cracker” is a demeaning, bigoted term [...] a sharp racial insult that resonates with white southerners [...] offensive and evidence of ill intent.” Consider also how [Bucholtz \(2011a\)](#) discusses the use of the racial slur *wigger* applied to whites and suggests that it primarily targets “white male hip hop fan[s], typically middle-class and suburban, [that are] often laughably inauthentic,” “illegitimate,” and stereotypically considered to possess a “failed masculinity” (pp. 257, 259). As [Bucholtz \(2011a\)](#) explains, the discriminatory effects of whites being targeted by racial slurs like *cracker* and *wigger* “rests on a widely circulating ideology of black masculinity as hyperphysical and hypersexual ([Hooks, 1992](#)) and of white masculinity as physically awkward, uptight, and emotionally disconnected ([Pfeil, 1995](#))” (p. 259). Thus, insofar as racial slurs like *cracker* and *wigger* function to sharply insult their white targets, to express evidence of ill intent towards their white targets, or predicate or perpetuate stereotypically negative properties (such as being laughably inauthentic or having a failed masculinity) of their white targets, and insofar as social agents in general are negatively effected by being targeted in these ways, it stands to reason that racial slurs applied to whites are fully capable of affecting their life chances.

Consider further how [Norton and Sommers \(2011\)](#), in disagreement with (C7), suggest that there is an “emerging belief [that] reflects Whites’ view of racism as a zero-sum game, such that decreases in perceived bias against Blacks over the past six decades are associated with increases in perceived bias against Whites” (p. 215), that “Whites may fear that minorities’ imposition of their cultural values represent an attack on White cultural values and norms” (p. 217), that “affirmative action policies designed to increase minority representation may focus Whites’ attention on the impact of quota-like procedures [...] threatening their resources ([Haley and Sidanius, 2006](#))” (p. 217), and that “these changes in Whites’ conceptions of racism are extreme enough that Whites have now come to view anti-White bias as a bigger societal problem than anti-Black bias” (p. 215). [Storrs \(1999\)](#) further explains how the mixed-race women in her empirical study often “construct whiteness as normative, empty, and bland but also as oppressive, prejudicial, and discriminatory” and accordingly “reject assimilation into whiteness in part because whiteness is stigmatized” (p. 194). Finally, [Cutler \(2007\)](#) has further argued that because of the “powerful discourse within hip-hop that privileges the Black body and the Black urban street experience [...] that in this context interculturality plays a functional role in ratifying an alternative social reality in which Blackness is normative and Whiteness is marked” (pp. 10–11). This context, [Cutler \(2007\)](#) explains, is one in which a “critique [of] White hegemonic culture” takes place so that whites are often targeted as “wannabes and dilettantes who think they can cross racial boundaries and participate in another cultural domain” (p. 16).

Given the popularity and influence of hip-hop culture among people today,²² and given the importance people place in being socially well regarded by others, it stands to reason that a white person being publically called out as a *nerd* or *cracker* could as a result have their life chances negatively effected (e.g., they may lose “social capital” or respect among peers or now seem less appealing to potential mates; for further discussion on how slurs can be strategically used among speakers as a means for the negotiation of social capital see [Croom, 2013a, pp. 184–186](#)). Indeed, in their article “The Effect of Negative Performance Stereotypes on Learning,” psychologists Robert [Rydell et al. \(2010\)](#) conducted three empirical studies to test how people could be negatively effected by negative stereotypes and argued that their “research shows that stereotype threat harms more than just the execution of skills in the stereotyped domain by demonstrating that stereotype threat [also] reduces learning” (p. 894).²³ More specifically, [Rydell et al. \(2010\)](#) explain that stereotyped targets could have their life chances negatively effected since negative stereotype threats can “trigger” or influence (a) “worries about confirming the stereotype” (see also [Marx and Stapel, 2006](#)), (b) “increased arousal” (see also [Murphy et al., 2007](#)), (c) “reduced working memory” (see also [Schmader et al., 2008](#)), (d) a “decrease [in] motivation to learn” (see also [Steele, 1997](#)), and (e) a reduction in the “encoding of novel information that is necessary for skill execution” (p. 894). Accordingly, insofar as through the application of a slur towards a target an associated negative stereotype can threaten that target by (a) increasing how much they are worrying, (b) reducing their working memory, (c) decreasing their motivation to learn, or (d) degrading their ability to encode novel information necessary for skillful action, and insofar as (a)–(d) can negatively affect ones life chances, then it follows that the application of a slur towards a target can resultantly affect their life chances also, regardless of whether that target is

²² Note for instance that Jay Z text messages and chats about sports with President Obama ([Jackson, 2013](#)), that Jay Z has broken Elvis Presley’s album record ([BBC News, 2009](#)) and that Lil Wayne has broken Elvis Presley’s *Billboard* record ([Kaufman, 2012](#)). The point that hip-hop has broadly influenced the music and popular culture of our time seems to me uncontroversial.

²³ The empirical studies conducted by [Rydell et al. \(2010\)](#) consisted in examining whether stereotype threat had a detrimental impact on the ability of women ($n = 59$) to learn math and logic across 3 experiments (pp. 885–886), with experiment 1 (pp. 885–887) testing whether or not stereotype threat reduces learning by inhibiting women’s ability to encode mathematical information into memory, and experiment 2 (pp. 887–891) and experiment 3 (pp. 891–894) differentiating between (a) stereotype threat-based reductions in learning and (b) stereotype threat-based reductions in performance.

white or not. Evidence of this kind showing that slurs applied to whites (along with non-whites) can affect their life chances therefore suggests that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C7).

Finally, consider claim 8 (C8) by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#), which asserted that the power to apply and deny slurs is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny slurs is not held by non-whites (p. 198). [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) are incorrect in arguing for (C8) since there are studies supporting the claim that the power to apply and deny slurs is not held exclusively by whites. [Croom \(2013a\)](#) for example discusses the use of the racial slur *nigger* and draws upon empirical data to explain that within the context of certain in-group speakers the slur can often be used as a *norm reversed variant* of the original paradigmatic derogatory use and can thus be understood between in-group speakers as non-derogatory (pp. 190–194; see also [Sweetland, 2002](#)).²⁴ As [Bucholtz \(2011a\)](#) likewise suggests, “The term [*nigga*] is generally used by [...] some African Americans, especially men, as a neutral or even affiliative term of address and reference” (p. 260), so in disagreement with (C8), recent work by scholars such as [Bucholtz \(2001, 2011a,b\)](#), [Croom \(2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2014a,b\)](#), [Cutler \(2007\)](#), and [Sweetland \(2002\)](#) supports the earlier point made by [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) in *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* that racial slurs like *nigger* are not necessarily considered as negative or derogatory racial insults, particularly when they are used within certain *in-group contexts* (e.g., when a racial slur towards blacks is used among fellow blacks, or when a racial slur towards whites is used among fellow whites).²⁵ As [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) has previously pointed out, many blacks do in fact continue to exchange racial slurs non-offensively, “openly and frequently in conversations with one another” (p. 37; see also [Spears, 1998](#)), and as the hip-hop lyricist Talib Kweli has previously explained, “Our community has been using the word [*nigger*] and trying to redefine the context of it for a long time” and “the fact of the matter is that there’s a large segment of black people who grew up hearing the word intended as nothing but love” (quoted in [Echegoyen, 2006](#)). Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African American Research at Harvard University, similarly acknowledges that racial slurs like *nigger* are not necessarily considered as negative or derogatory racial insults, particularly when they are used within certain *in-group contexts* ([Gates, 2009](#)), and in a report on *CBS Sports* entitled “Lions’ Scheffler, Delmas Use Racial Slurs As Terms of Endearment,” [Ryan Wilson \(2013\)](#) discussed the longtime friendship of fellow Lions teammates Tony Scheffler and Louis Delmas and explained that between the two of them “racial slurs are considered a term of endearment.” (This report about Tony Scheffler and Louis Delmas was similarly covered by [Terry Foster \(2013\)](#) in his article “For Two Lions, Racial Slurs Are Friendly Banter” and by [Michael Smith \(2013\)](#) in his article “Two Lions Say Racial Slurs Show Their Friendship.”) Def Jam Records founder Russell Simmons further explains from his perspective on popular culture that:

When we say ‘nigger’ now, it’s very positive. Now all white kids who buy into hip-hop culture call each other ‘nigger’ because they have no history with the word other than something positive [...] When black kids call each other ‘a real nigger’ or ‘my nigger,’ it means you walk a certain way [...] have your own culture that you invent so you don’t have to buy into the US culture that you’re not really a part of. It means we’re special. We have our own language. (quoted in [Jackson, 2005](#))

Granted, [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) do briefly acknowledge how scholars like [Kennedy \(2002\)](#) have argued that every use of a racial slur like *nigger* “need not be” considered as a “racial insult” (p. 201), but [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) then immediately go on to brush aside the possibility that it might instead be used as a “term of affection or endearment by black people among black people” on the grounds that “whites rarely use it this way” (p. 201) and that it “is inseparable from a history of white-on-black oppression in which whites enslaved, lynched, and murdered millions of blacks” (pp. 201–202). But by forgoing more current consideration of the non-derogatory in-group use of the slur *nigger* simply because “whites rarely use it this way” (p. 201), [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) become guilty of what [Bucholtz \(2001\)](#) has identified as a “common scholarly misperception that the unmarked status of whiteness is impervious to history, culture, or other local conditions,” and that, “in viewing whiteness as a normative, hegemonic, and unmarked racial position, scholars may be unwittingly reifying a singular and static version of whiteness” (p. 84). By forgoing consideration of the non-derogatory in-group use of slurs [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) have also thereby failed to appreciate another point previously made by sociologist [Norman Denzin \(2001\)](#) in his article “Symbolic Interactionism, Poststructuralism, and the Racial Subject,” when he points out that “The meanings of any given racial terms can change, as when “black” became a signifier of pride as a result of the Black Power movement of the 1960s” (p. 246; see also [Miron and Inda, 2000](#); [Heffernan, 2005](#); [Fitzmaurice, 2010](#)).

In other words, the meanings of our linguistic expressions are not rigidly fixated on points of the past and thus impervious to semantic change, but rather the meanings of our linguistic expressions are open to semantic evolution and re-negotiation as speakers continue to make strategic use and sense of these expressions in the communicative exchanges of their social life. So even if it is historically true, for instance, that the racial slur *nigger* “is inseparable from a history of white-on-black

²⁴ [Croom \(2013a\)](#) has also suggested that speakers may strategically employ linguistic features characteristic of their in-group to strategically signal their in-group status, offering the following example of how this works:

Nigger + r-less-ness feature of AAVE = *Nigga*.

Relatively more derogatory → relatively less derogatory ([Croom, 2013a, p. 193](#)).

²⁵ It is important to note that the criteria for inclusion as an in-group member is not *absolutely strict*, for instance, see [Sweetland, 2002](#); [Croom, 2011, pp. 355–357](#); [Croom, 2013a,b, pp. 196–199](#)).

oppression” (Embrick and Henricks, 2013, p. 201), it is also true that the racial slur *nigger* is now also inseparable from a history of black-on-black non-oppression by virtue of their widespread and conventional non-derogatory in-group use (Jackson, 2005; Echegoyen, 2006). Further, not only is the slur applied differently now and so updated and adjusted in its significance, but speakers inevitably forget the past (horrible as it is), get old and die, and are replaced by new speakers, linguistic practices, and norms of expression. Consider for example research conducted by Associated Press-MTV involving 1,355 participants showing that 54% of respondents “think it’s OK to use them [slurs] within their own circle of friends” and that in such contexts the slur is non-offensive (Cass and Agiesta, 2011; Greene, 2011). In her article “The N Word: Its History and Use in the African American Community,” Rahman (2012) had one of the participants from her study explain that, “You see, the people who say they’re offended are the older adults. Young kids don’t understand what the big deal is about the word. They know it’s about black people and slavery, but they’re like ‘that’s over’” (p. 161). Consider also research from the article “Anti-Social Media,” where social media analysts Jamie Bartlett et al. (2014) analyzed the language use of social media users from a dataset of collected tweets involving slur expressions ($n = 126,975$) and focused on investigating (i) the way that slurs are used on Twitter, (ii) the volume of slur-use on Twitter, and (iii) the potential for automated machine learning techniques to accurately identify and classify slurs (pp. 5–6). In disagreement with claim 8 (C8), evidence from this study by Bartlett et al. (2014) suggests that “Slurs are used in a very wide variety of ways – both offensive and non-offensive,” that “There were very few cases that presented an imminent threat of violence, or where individuals directly or indirectly incited offline violent action,” and that “Slurs are most commonly used [on Twitter] in a non-offensive, non-abusive manner: to express in-group solidarity or non-derogatory description” (pp. 6–7).²⁶

Furthermore, in their article “The Reappropriation of Stigmatizing Labels: The Reciprocal Relationship Between Power and Self-Labeling,” psychologists Adam Galinsky et al. (2013) conducted ten empirical studies on re-appropriation to test its potential effects on speakers and listeners empirically and found that self-labeling with slurs can actually *weaken* their stigmatizing force (p. 1; see also Galinsky et al., 2003). More specifically, Galinsky et al. (2013) found the following results from their experiments 1 through 10 (E1)–(E10) which are relevant for our purposes here: (E1) showed that “participants in the high-power condition [...] were more likely to label themselves with the derogatory term [such as *nigger*, *honky*, *gook*, *chink*, *bitch*, or *slut*] than were participants in the low-power condition” (p. 3), (E2) showed that “participants in the group-power condition were more willing to label themselves with a derogatory group label [...] compared with participants in the individual-power condition” (pp. 3–4), (E3) showed that “Participants in the self-label condition recalled feeling more powerful [...] than did those in the other-label condition” (p. 4), (E4) showed that “Self-labeling led observers to view the labeled person as more powerful” (p. 5), (E5) showed that “a stigmatized minority, was seen as more powerful in the self-labeling condition [...] than in the other-label condition” (p. 5), (E6) showed that “self-labeling increased perceptions of the stigmatized group’s power” (p. 5), (E7) showed that “self-labeled participants viewed their own power as equivalent to the out-group member’s power,” or in other words, that “Self-labeling equalized the perceived power difference between the stigmatized self-labelers and the out-group individuals in the minds of the self-labelers” (pp. 6–7), (E8) showed that “Self-labeling increased perceptions of the stigmatized group’s power over the label, which attenuated the negativity of the label” (p. 7), (E9) showed that “Self-labeling improved the evaluation of a derogatory label relative to other-labeling” (p. 8), and (E10) showed that “Both men and women saw the stigmatizing label *bitch* as less negative and supported female empowerment more after witnessing a woman label herself with this term than after witnessing another person label her with it (or after no labeling)” (p. 8). Evidence of this kind showing that the power to apply and deny slurs is not held exclusively by whites therefore suggests that Embrick and Henricks (2013) are incorrect in arguing for (C8).²⁷

Although the study carried out by Embrick and Henricks (2013) on the use of slurs and stereotypes in the workplace offers an original contribution to the literature and has several merits, it has been demonstrated in this section that they incorrectly argue for (C1), (C2), (C4), (C5), (C7), and (C8), and that as a result their account of racial slurs and stereotypes remains inadequate. Arguably, Embrick and Henricks (2013) fail to provide an adequate account of racial slurs and stereotypes not

²⁶ The analysis conducted by Bartlett et al. (2014) consisted in compiling, over the course of 9 days, a dataset of tweets including slur expressions ($n = 126,975$) from the social media website Twitter. All of the tweets in the sample were publicly available to users of Twitter and an average of 14,100 tweets including slurs were collected each day from 19 November to 27 November 2012 (Bartlett et al., 2014, pp. 5–6).

²⁷ The empirical studies conducted by Galinsky et al. (2013) consisted of the following ten experiments. Experiment 1 tested participants ($n = 53$) on whether or not feelings of group power increase willingness to label oneself with a stigmatizing term (p. 3). Experiment 2 tested participants ($n = 61$) on whether power that was group based would have a greater effect on willingness to self-label with a stigmatizing group term than would power that was individually based (pp. 3–4). Experiment 3 tested participants ($n = 73$) on whether or not self-labeling with a stigmatizing group label increases an individual’s own sense of power (p. 4). Experiment 4 tested participants ($n = 33$) on whether or not observers confer power on individuals who label themselves with a stigmatizing group term, i.e., whether self-labeling is uniquely connected to perceptions of power (pp. 4–5). Experiment 5 tested participants ($n = 144$) on whether or not self-labeling would affect observers’ perceptions of the power of the group referred to by the label (pp. 5–6). Experiment 6 tested participants ($n = 83$) on whether or not perceptions of individual power would mediate the effect of self-labeling on perceptions of group power (pp. 5–6). Experiment 7 tested participants ($n = 74$) on whether or not self-labelers see the stigmatizing label as less negative because they feel more powerful (pp. 6–7). Experiment 8 tested participants ($n = 235$) on whether or not the relationship between self-labeling and stigma attenuation is mediated through group power (p. 7). Experiment 9 tested participants ($n = 205$) on the effects of self-labeling on the perceived negativity of the stigmatizing label *queer*, the perceived negativity of the non-stigmatizing equivalent label *LGBT* (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), and the perceived negativity of the non-stigmatizing majority-group label *straight* (pp. 7–8). Experiment 10 tested participants ($n = 109$) on the effects of self-labeling on the perceived negativity of different group labels in a naturalistic context by varying a Facebook page (pp. 8–9).

because of a mistake with their *empirical data* but rather because of a mistake with the *conceptual inferences* or conclusions that they draw from their data, that is to say, [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) draw overgeneralized conclusions about racial slurs and stereotypes from their data that extends beyond what their data legitimately warrants. Namely, [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) end up forming overly extreme and biased conclusions about the use of racial slurs and stereotypes because the population of speakers that they studied and drew their conclusions from was *itself racially biased*. Importantly, notice that the racial demographics of the staff at the company [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) investigated in the southwestern United States “was mostly white (50% White, 25% Black, 20% Latina/o, 5% Asian)” (p. 200, my emphasis).

The fact that most of the participants that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) studied were white has important implications for the extent to which *general* conclusions about slurs can be drawn. [Croom \(2013a\)](#) for one has pointed out that “it is less likely than otherwise that derogation would occur in conditions where the [relevant] properties of the speaker and target are sufficiently similar [e.g., interlocutors of the same race are less likely to derogate each other on the basis of race], and less likely than otherwise that in-group signification would occur in conditions where the [relevant] properties of the speaker and target are sufficiently different [e.g., interlocutors not of the same race are less likely to signify in-group status on the basis of race]” (p. 199). So given the fact that there are a variety of different slurs that target members of different groups (e.g., *cracker* primarily targets whites whereas *nigger* primarily targets blacks), and given the fact that the use of racial slurs between speakers of the same race differ in their expressed offensiveness than the use of racial slurs between speakers of different races (e.g., the use of *cracker* between whites is relatively less offensive or non-offensive compared to the use of *cracker* by a black person towards a white person, and the use of *nigger* between blacks is relatively less offensive or non-offensive compared to the use of *nigger* by a white person towards a black person), it is clear that before [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) can legitimately draw *general* conclusions about the use of racial slurs and stereotypes they must *not only* consider “the paradigmatic derogatory use of slurs” ([Croom, 2013a, p. 188](#)) by “mostly white” *out-group* speakers towards non-white minorities *but further* consider “the non-derogatory in-group use of slurs” ([Croom, 2013a, p. 190](#)) among *in-group* speakers of the same race (e.g., the use of *cracker* among whites and the use of *nigger* among blacks, etc.). Given the fact that [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) only investigated the derogatory out-group use of slurs and stereotypes by predominantly white speakers towards non-white minorities and did not investigate the non-derogatory in-group use of slurs and stereotypes among non-white minorities themselves (cf. [Brontsema, 2004](#); [Croom, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2014a,b](#)), it is not surprising that they mistakenly came to the *overly broad* conclusion that *all slurs always* function to perpetuate white supremacy, racial antagonism, and racial inequality (p. 197). In “The Semantics of Slurs: A Refutation of Pure Expressivism,” [Croom \(2014a\)](#) similarly criticized [Hedger \(2013\)](#) along with other linguists and philosophers of language ([Kaplan, 1999](#); [Kratzer, 1999](#); [Potts, 2003](#); [Potts and Kawahara, 2004](#); [Potts, 2005, 2007](#); [Pullum and Rawlins, 2007](#); [Potts et al., 2009](#)) for also illegitimately drawing overly broad conclusions about the semantics of slurs (i.e., that all slurs always function to express offense) from biased or limited empirical data. Future work on slurs and stereotypes should proceed with care with regard to this point.

There are at least two further reasons to be concerned with the context-insensitive account of racial slurs and stereotypes proposed by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#). First, recall that their focus on how predominantly white speakers use racial slurs and stereotypes towards non-white minorities resulted in [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) arguing that racial slurs and stereotypes function as symbolic resources that exclude *minorities but not whites* from opportunities and resources (pp. 197–202). But this account seems to dangerously suggest that *it is not possible for white targets to be negatively affected by racial slurs and stereotypes directed towards them* and that as a result *whites should never genuinely be considered the victims of racial discrimination and derogation*. But such a suggestion remains unsupported by the empirical evidence and incorrectly suggests that *whites are free from racial victimization*. Given the robust evidence we reviewed suggesting that whites are not free from racial victimization in *all* contexts, one reason to be concerned with the account of racial slurs and stereotypes proposed by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) is that it could unwittingly work to *exclude whites but not minorities* from opportunities and resources for their protection from racial discrimination.

Second, recall that their focus on how predominantly white speakers use racial slurs and stereotypes towards non-white minorities resulted in [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) arguing that *racial slurs are necessarily negative or derogatory irrespective of their particular context of use* (pp. 197–202). But this account seems to dangerously suggest that *it is not possible for in-group speakers to exchange racial slurs non-offensively* and that as a result *every use of a racial slur should genuinely be considered a form of racial discrimination and derogation*. But such a suggestion remains unsupported by the empirical evidence and incorrectly suggests that *robust populations of in-group speakers are naïvely wrong to think that they have been exchanging racial slurs non-offensively with each other, even among friends or in non-confrontational in-group contexts*. Such a suggestion also incorrectly suggests that *the re-appropriative use of racial slurs cannot weaken their stigmatizing force*, but this conflicts with empirical evidence to the contrary recently provided in ten empirical studies (E1)–(E10) by [Galinsky et al. \(2013\)](#). Given the robust evidence we reviewed suggesting that in-group speakers can exchange racial slurs non-offensively, another reason to be concerned with the account of racial slurs and stereotypes proposed by [Embrick and Henricks \(2013\)](#) is that it could be taken to condescendingly suggest that even in-group minority speakers explicitly claiming to use slurs non-derogatorily must in fact be using those slurs derogatorily, contrary to their “incorrect” self-reports, and that for some as-of-yet unexplained reason only out-group white majority speakers can *really* understand language and influence what it means. But there is no reason to suppose that the explicit reports of in-group minority speakers are any less credible than those of white majority speakers, or that only white majority speakers can influence the significance or meaning potential of language.

4. Conclusion

In their article “Discursive Colorlines at Work: How Epithets and Stereotypes are Racially Unequal,” Embrick and Henricks (2013) drew upon the empirical data they collected at a baked goods company in the southwestern United States to argue that racial slurs and stereotypes generally function to perpetuate white supremacy, racial antagonism, and racial inequality, i.e., that racial slurs and stereotypes function as symbolic resources that *exclude minorities but not whites* from opportunities or resources and that racial slurs and stereotypes are *necessarily considered as negative or derogatory irrespective of their particular context of use* (pp. 197–202). They thus proposed an account of slurs and stereotypes that supports the *context-insensitive* position of Fitten (1993) and Hedger (2013) yet challenges the *context-sensitive* position of Kennedy (2002) and Croom (2011). In order to critically evaluate the account of racial slurs and stereotypes provided by Embrick and Henricks (2013) the present article proceeded as follows. In Section 2 I outlined the account of racial slurs and stereotypes provided by Embrick and Henricks (2013) by explicating 8 of their main claims (C1–C8), and then I demonstrated that they were correct in arguing for (C3) that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites and (C6) that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites. The correctness of (C3) was demonstrated with studies showing that stereotypes applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as stereotypes applied to non-whites (i.e., whites and non-whites have different stereotypes) and the correctness of (C6) was demonstrated with studies showing that slurs applied to whites do not carry the same meaning as slurs applied to non-whites (i.e., slurs applied to whites and non-whites have different meanings).

In Section 3 I then took a critical turn against Embrick and Henricks (2013) and demonstrated that they were incorrect in arguing for (C1) that stereotypes of whites are positive whereas stereotypes of non-whites are negative (p. 207), (C2) that stereotypes of whites are pluralistic whereas stereotypes of non-whites are monolithic (p. 207), (C4) that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held by non-whites (p. 198), (C5) that slurs applied to whites are restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members whereas slurs applied to non-whites are unrestricted in that they apply to (not some but) all of its prototypical members (p. 205), (C7) that slurs applied to whites do not affect their life chances whereas slurs applied to non-whites do affect their life chances (p. 197), and (C8) that the power to apply and deny slurs is held by whites whereas the power to apply and deny slurs is not held by non-whites (p. 198). The incorrectness of (C1) was demonstrated with studies showing that there are negative stereotypes of whites and that there are positive stereotypes of non-whites, the incorrectness of (C2) was demonstrated with studies showing that stereotypes of non-whites (along with whites) are pluralistic rather than monolithic, the incorrectness of (C4) was demonstrated with studies showing that the power to apply and deny stereotypes is not held exclusively by whites, the incorrectness of (C5) was demonstrated with studies showing that slurs applied to non-whites are restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members, the incorrectness of (C7) was demonstrated with studies showing that slurs applied to whites do affect their life chances, and finally, the incorrectness of (C8) was demonstrated with studies showing that the power to apply and deny slurs is held by non-whites (along with whites).

To conclude, the purpose of this article was to critically evaluate the account of racial slurs and stereotypes provided by Embrick and Henricks (2013) by drawing upon recent empirical evidence on racial slurs (both in-group and out-group uses) and stereotypes (for both whites and blacks) covered from linguistics (e.g., Spears, 1998; Bucholtz, 2001, 2011a,b; Sweetland, 2002; Cutler, 2003, 2007, 2009; Brontsema, 2004; Rahman, 2004, 2007, 2012; Croom, 2010, 2012; Croom, 2013a,b, 2014a,b; Fitzmaurice, 2010; Bucholtz and Lopez, 2011), sociology (e.g., Storrs, 1999; Lee, 2009a,b; Hughey, 2012; Bartlett et al., 2014), and psychology (e.g., Ryan et al., 1996; Steele, 1997; Galinsky et al., 2003, 2013; Walton and Cohen, 2003; Czopp and Monteith, 2006; Haley and Sidanius, 2006; Marx and Stapel, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007; Schmader et al., 2008; Rydell et al., 2010; Norton and Sommers, 2011; Block et al., 2012) in order to discern which claims about racial slurs and stereotypes are in fact empirically plausible and which are not. In so doing, this article contributes to the literature on slurs and stereotypes by showing that (1) stereotypes for whites and non-whites need not be exclusively positive or exclusively negative but rather can contain a mixture of both positive and negative attributes, (2) stereotypes for both whites and non-whites are pluralistic rather than monolithic, (3) stereotypes for whites and non-whites do not contain the same attributes, (4) stereotypes can be applied and denied by both whites and non-whites, (5) slurs applied to both whites and non-whites can be restricted in that they apply to some (but not all) of its prototypical members, (6) slurs applied to whites and non-whites do not have the same meaning, (7) slurs applied to both whites and non-whites can affect their life chances, and (8) slurs can be applied and denied by both whites and non-whites. Finally, the aforementioned points (1), (2), (4), (5), and (8) suggest that a fully adequate account of slurs and stereotypes will require a context-sensitive rather than context-insensitive sensibility.

Acknowledgments

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the three peer-reviewers of this manuscript, as well as the editors of *Language Sciences*, for their very thoughtful feedback and support.

References

- Alim, H.S., 2002. Street-conscious copula variation in the hip hop nation. *Am. Speech* 77, 288–301. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00031283-77-3-288>.
 Alim, H.S., 2003. On some serious next millennium rap ish: Pharoahe Monch, hip hop poetics, and the internal rhymes of internal affairs. *J. Engl. Linguist.* 31, 60–84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0075424202250619>.

- Alim, H.S., 2003. "We are the streets": African American language and the strategic construction of a street conscious identity. In: Makoni, S., Smitherman, G., Bail, A.F., Spears, A.K. (Eds.), *Black Linguistics: Language, Society, and the Politics in Africa and the Americas*. Routledge, New York, pp. 40–59.
- Alim, H.S., 2004. *You Know My Steez: An Ethnographic and Sociolinguistic Study of Styleshifting in a Black American Speech Community*. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Alim, H.S., 2005. Critical language awareness in the United States: revisiting issues and revising pedagogies in a re-segregated society. *Educ. Res.* 34, 24–31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034007024>.
- Alim, H.S., 2005. Hearing what's not said and missing what is: black language in white public space. In: Kiesling, S.F., Paulston, C.B. (Eds.), *Intercultural Discourse and Communication: The Essential Readings*. Blackwell, New York, pp. 180–197.
- Alim, H.S., 2006. *Roc the MIC Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. Routledge, New York.
- Alim, H.S., 2009. Translocal style communities: hip hop youth as cultural theorists of style, language, and globalization. *Pragmatics* 19, 103–127.
- Alim, H.S., 2009. Hip hop nation language. In: Duranti, A. (Ed.), *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 272–290.
- Alim, H.S., 2009. Straight outta Compton, straight aus Munchen: global linguistic flows, identities, and the politics of language in a global hip hop nation. In: Alim, H.S., Ibrahim, A., Pennycook, A. (Eds.), *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. Routledge, New York, pp. 1–24.
- Alim, H.S., Baugh, J., 2006. *Talkin Black Talk: Language, Education, and Social Change*. Teachers College Press, New York.
- Alim, H.S., Ibrahim, A., Pennycook, A., 2009. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. Routledge, New York.
- Alim, H.S., Lee, J., Carris, L., 2010. "Short fried-rice-eating Chinese MCs" and "good hair-havin uncle Tom niggas": performing race and ethnicity in freestyle rap battles. *J. Linguist. Anthropol.* 20, 116–133. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2010.01052.x>.
- Anderson, L., Lepore, E., 2013. Slurring words. *Nous* 47, 25–48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0068.2010.00820.x>.
- Bartlett, J., Reffin, J., Rumball, N., Williamson, S., 2014. Anti-social media. *Demos*, 1–51 <http://apo.org.au/node/37598>.
- Baugh, J., 1983. *Black Street Speech: Its History, Structure, and Survival*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- BBC News, 2009. Jay-Z breaks Elvis album record. BBC News, 16 September. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/8259787.stm>.
- Block, C., Aumann, K., Chelin, A., 2012. Assessing stereotypes of black and white managers: a diagnostic ratio approach. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 42, E128–E149. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.01014.x>.
- Boyd, T., 2002. *The New H.N.I.C. (Head Niggas in Charge): The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop*. New York University Press, New York.
- Brontsema, R., 2004. A queer revolution: reconceptualizing the debate over linguistic reclamation. *Colorado Res. Linguist.* 17, 1–17 http://www.colorado.edu/ling/CRIL/Volume17_Issue1/paper_BRONTSEMA.pdf.
- Brown, P., Levinson, S., 1978. Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena. In: Goody, E. (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*. Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 56–289.
- Bucholtz, M., 2001. The whiteness of nerds: superstandard English and racial markedness. *Linguist. Anthropol.* 11, 84–100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2001.11.1.84>.
- Bucholtz, M., 2011. Race and the re-embodied voice in Hollywood. *Lang. Commun.* 31, 255–265. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2011.02.004>.
- Bucholtz, M., 2011. *White Kids: Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bucholtz, M., 1999. You da man: narrating the racial other in the production of white masculinity. *J. Sociolinguist.* 3, 443–460. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00090>.
- Bucholtz, M., Lopez, Q., 2011. Performing blackness, forming whiteness: linguistic minstrelsy in Hollywood film. *J. Sociolinguist.* 15, 680–706. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2011.00513.x>.
- Camp, E., 2013. Slurring perspectives. *Anal. Philos.* 54, 330–349. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/phib.12020>.
- Cass, C., Agiesta, J., 2011. Poll: young people see online slurs as just joking. MSNBC, 20 September. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44591677/ns/technology_and_science-tech_and_gadgets/t/poll-young-people-see-online-slurs-justjoking/.
- Croom, A.M., 2008. Racial epithets: what we say and mean by them. *Dialogue* 51, 34–45. <http://semanticsarchive.net/Archive/ThiMjU0N/Racial%20epithets%20What%20we%20say%20and%20mean%20by%20them%20-%20Croom%202008.pdf>.
- Croom, A.M., 2010. A game theoretical analysis of slurs and appropriate use. Fourth North American Summer School in Logic, Language, and Information, 26 June. Indiana University. <http://www.indiana.edu/~nasslli/NASSLLIwebprogram.pdf>.
- Croom, A.M., 2011. Slurs. *Lang. Sci.* 33, 343–358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2010.11.005>.
- Croom, A.M., 2012. Face, race, and the psychology of slurring in a cultural context. University of Pennsylvania Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism Annual Conference, 27 April. University of Pennsylvania.
- Croom, A.M., 2013. How to do things with slurs: studies in the way of derogatory words. *Lang. Commun.* 33, 177–204. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2013.03.008>.
- Croom, A.M., 2013. Racial epithets, characterizations, and slurs. *Anal. Metaphys.* 12, 11–24 <http://www.addletonacademicpublishers.com/contents-am/217-volume-12-2013/1967-racial-epithets-characterizations-and-slurs>.
- Croom, A.M., 2014. The semantics of slurs: a refutation of pure expressivism. *Lang. Sci.* 41, 227–242. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2013.07.003>.
- Croom, A.M., 2014. Remarks on "the semantics of racial slurs". *Linguist. Philos. Invest.* 13, 11–32. http://addletonacademicpublishers.com/images/Adam_M._Croom-Remarks_on_the_Semantics_of_Racial_Slurs%20.pdf.
- Cutler, C., 2003. "Keepin' it real": white hip-hoppers' discourses of language, race, and authenticity. *Linguist. Anthropol.* 13, 211–233. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2003.13.2.211>.
- Cutler, C., 2007. The co-construction of whiteness in an MC battle. *Pragmatics* 17, 9–22 <http://elanguage.net/journals/pragmatics/article/view/544/468>.
- Cutler, C., 2009. "You shouldn't be rappin", you should be skateboardin' the X-Games: the construction of Whiteness in an MC Battle. In: Alim, H., Ibrahim, A., Pennycook, A. (Eds.), *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. Routledge, New York, pp. 195–212.
- Czopp, A., Monteith, M., 2006. Thinking well of African Americans: measuring complimentary stereotypes and negative prejudice. *Basic Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 28, 233–250. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp2803_3.
- Denzin, N.K., 2001. Symbolic interactionism, poststructuralism, and the racial subject. *Symb. Interact.* 24, 243–249. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/si.2001.24.243>.
- Echegoyen, H. (Producer), 2006. *The n Word: Divided We Stand*. Post Consumer Media.
- Embrick, D.G., Henricks, K., 2013. Discursive colorlines at work: how epithets and stereotypes are racially unequal. *Symb. Interact.* 36, 197–215. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/symb.51>.
- Fitten, R.K., 1993. Fighting words: No matter who uses them, racial slurs ultimately serve to denigrate and divide. *The Seattle Times*, 19 March. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19930319&slug=1691293>.
- Fitzmaurice, S., 2010. Changes in the meanings of politeness in Eighteenth-century England: discourse analysis and historical evidence. In: Culpeper, J., Kadar, D. (Eds.), *Historical (Im)politeness*. Peter Lang, Bern, pp. 87–115.
- Foreman, T., 2013. "Cracker" conveys history of bigotry that still resonates. CNN, 2 July. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/01/us/zimmerman-trial-cracker>.
- Foster, T., 2013. For two lions, racial slurs are friendly banter. *The Detroit News*, 8 August. <http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20130808/SPORTS0101/308080035>.
- Galinsky, A.D., Hugenberg, K., Groom, C., Bodenhausen, G., 2003. The reappropriation of stigmatizing labels: implications for social identity. In: Polzer, J., Neale, M., Mannix, E. (Eds.), *Identity Issues in Groups*. Elsevier Science Press, Greenwich, pp. 221–256.
- Galinsky, A., Wang, C., Whitson, J., Anicich, E., Hugenberg, K., Bodenhausen, G., 2013. The reappropriation of stigmatizing labels: the reciprocal relationship between power and self-labeling. *Psychol. Sci.*, 1–10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797613482943>.

- Gates, H., 2009. 10 questions. *Time*, 16 February, 9.
- Goffman, E., 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. Doubleday Anchor, New York.
- Greene, R., 2011. Slurs: are the kids all right? *The Economist*, 20 September. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2011/09/slurs>.
- Haley, H., Sidanius, J., 2006. The positive and negative framing of affirmative action: a group dominance perspective. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 32, 656–668. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167205283442>.
- Hedger, J., 2013. Meaning and racial slurs: derogatory epithets and the semantics/pragmatics interface. *Lang. Commun.* 33, 205–213. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2013.04.004>.
- Heffernan, V., 2005. Epithet morphs from bad girl to weak boy. *New York Times*, 22 March. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/22/arts/television/22chie.html>.
- Hom, C., 2008. The semantics of racial epithets. *J. Philos.* 105, 416–440.
- Hooks, B., 1992. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. South Ends Press, Boston.
- Hughey, M., 2012. Stigma allure and white antiracist identity management. *Soc. Psychol. Q.* 75, 219–241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0190272512446756>.
- Jackson, D., 2005. Epithet stung, even for Pryor. *The Boston Globe*, 14 December. http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/12/14/epithet_stung_even_for_pryor/.
- Jackson, D., 2013. Jay-Z: yes, I text with Obama. *USA Today*, 11 July. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/theoval/2013/07/11/obama-jay-z-texting-radio-interview/2509283/>.
- Jeshion, R., 2013. Slurs and stereotypes. *Anal. Philos.* 54, 314–329. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/phib.12021>.
- Kaplan, D., 1999. The Meaning of Ouch and Oops: Explorations in the Theory of Meaning as Use (Unpublished ms). Los Angeles: University of California.
- Kaufman, G., 2012. Lil Wayne breaks Elvis' Billboard record. *MTV News*, 27 September. <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1694500/lil-wayne-billboard-chart-appearances-elvis-presley.jhtml>.
- Kennedy, R., 2002. *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. Vintage Books, New York.
- Kratzer, A., 1999. Beyond ouch and oops: how descriptive and expressive meaning interact. Cornell Conference on Theories of Context Dependence.
- Lee, J., 2009. "Battlin'" on the corner: techniques for sustaining play. *Soc. Probl.* 56, 578–598. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sp.2009.56.3.578>.
- Lee, J., 2009. Escaping embarrassment: face-work in the rap cipher. *Soc. Psychol. Q.* 72, 306–324. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/019027250907200405>.
- Lemon, D., 2013. Where did the n-word come from? *CNN*, 1 July. <http://www.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/us/2013/07/02/lemon-special-dnt-history-of-n-word.cnn.html>.
- MacDonald, M., 2000. *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*. Ballentine, New York.
- Marx, D.M., Stapel, D., 2006. Distinguishing stereotype threat from priming effects: the role of the social self and threat-based concerns. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 91, 243–254. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.2.243>.
- Miron, L.F., Inda, J.X., 2000. Race as a kind of speech act. *Cultural Studies: A Research Annual* 5, 85–107.
- Murphy, M.C., Steele, C.M., Gross, J.J., 2007. Signaling threat: how situational cues affect women in math, science, and engineering settings. *Psychol. Sci.* 18, 879–885. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01995.x>.
- Norton, M., Sommers, S., 2011. Whites see racism as a zero-sum game that they are now losing. *Pers. Psychol. Sci.* 6, 215–218. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1745691611406922>.
- Pfeil, F., 1995. *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference*. Verso, London.
- Potts, C., 2003. Expressive content as conventional implicature. In: Kadowaki, M., Kawahara, S. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the North East Linguistics Society 33*. GLSA, Amherst, pp. 303–322.
- Potts, C., 2005. *The Logic of Conventional Implicature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Potts, C., 2007. The expressive dimension. *Theor. Linguist.* 33, 165–197. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/TL.2007.011>.
- Potts, C., Asudeh, A., Cable, S., Hara, Y., McCready, E., Alonso-Ovalle, L., Bhatt, R., Davis, C., Kratzer, A., Roeper, T., Walkow, M., 2009. Expressives and identity conditions. *Linguist. Inquiry* 40, 356–366. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/ling.2009.40.2.356>.
- Potts, C., Kawahara, S., 2004. Japanese honorifics as emotive definite descriptions. *Proc. Semantic. Linguist. Theory* 14, 235–254. <http://elanguage.net/journals/salt/article/view/14.253/1745>.
- Pullum, G., Rawlins, K., 2007. Argument or no argument? *Linguist. Philos.* 30, 277–287. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10988-007-9013-y>.
- Rahman, J., 2004. *It's a serious business: the linguistic construction of middle class white characters by African American narrative comedians* (Ph.D. dissertation). Stanford: Stanford University.
- Rahman, J., 2007. An ay for an ah: language of survival in African American narrative comedy. *Am. Speech* 82, 65–96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2007-003>.
- Rahman, J., 2012. The n word: its history and use in the African American community. *J. Engl. Linguist.* 40, 137–171. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0075424211414807>.
- Ryan, C., Judd, C., Park, B., 1996. Effects of racial stereotypes on judgments of individuals: the moderating role of perceived group variability. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 32, 71–103. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1996.0004>.
- Rydell, R., Rydell, M., Boucher, K., 2010. The effect of negative performance stereotypes on learning. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 99, 883–896. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0021139>.
- Schmader, T., Johns, M., Forbes, C., 2008. An integrated process model of stereotype threat on performance. *Psychol. Rev.* 115, 336–356. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.115.2.336>.
- Steele, C.M., 1997. A threat in the air: how stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *Am. Psychol.* 52, 613–629. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613>.
- Smith, D.M., 2013. Two lions say racial slurs show their friendship. *NBC Sports*, 8 August. <http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2013/08/08/two-lionssay-racial-slurs-show-their-friendship/>.
- Smitherman, G., 2000. *Black Talk: Words and Phrases from the Hood to the Amen Corner*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Sniderman, P., Piazza, T., 2002. *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Spears, A.K., 1998. African-American language use: ideology and so-called obscenity. In: Mufwene, S., Rickford, J., Bailey, G., Baugh, J. (Eds.), *African American English*. Routledge, New York, pp. 226–250.
- Sweetland, J., 2002. Unexpected but authentic use of an ethnically-marked dialect. *J. Sociolinguist.* 6, 514–536. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00199>.
- Szekely, L., 2008. *Offensive Words*. *Chewed Up*. Image Entertainment, Los Angeles.
- Storrs, D., 1999. Whiteness as stigma: essentialist identity work by mixed-race women. *Symb. Interact.* 22, 187–212. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/si.1999.22.3.187>.
- Walton, G.M., Cohen, G.L., 2003. Stereotype lift. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 39, 456–467. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031\(03\)00019-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031(03)00019-2).
- Wilson, R., 2013. Lions' Scheffler, Delmas use racial slurs as terms of endearment. *CBS Sports*, 8 August. <http://www.cbssports.com/nfl/blog/eye-onfootball/23069221/lions-scheffler-delmas-use-racial-slurs-as-terms-of-endearment->
- Wittgenstein, L., 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Blackwell, Oxford.