

In Your Own Words: Investigating voice, intertextuality, and credibility of Rachel Jeantel in the George Zimmerman trial

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Abstract. In February 2012, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman, who, after a month of highly-publicized trial, was acquitted of second-degree murder. In this paper, I examine the testimony of Martin's childhood friend and witness for the prosecution, Rachel Jeantel. I investigate the ways in which the intertextual strategy of *voicing* another, that is the representation of not only their words, but also the characteristics of their language variety, may effectively eliminate the witness's credibility. This work is motivated by the literature on the interaction between intertextual strategies (Bakhtin 1981, Becker 1994, Tannen 2007[1989]) and language ideologies (Matoesian 1999, Tannen 2010), especially as they relate to institutional discourse of courtroom interactions (Conley and O'Barr 1990, Conley et al. 1978, Magenau 2003, Cotterill 2003). My analysis shows that the prosecuting attorney standardizes Jeantel's African American English (AAE) and excuses the supposed lack of clarity of her testimony as due to her upbringing in a non-native English-speaking household. The defense attorney voices Jeantel in a much more adversarial manner and reflects her AAE as itself evidence for her testimony to be considered non-credible. And finally, the ways in which the court reporter, the "neutral" language authority of the court, requests clarification of Jeantel's testimony may actually be effectively discrediting the witness as it further highlights Jeantel's variety as non-standard and marked for the courtroom.

Keywords: intertextuality; voice; language ideologies; African American English; Rachel Jeantel; Trayvon Martin

1. Introducing the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman and the Analysis On a rainy night in February 2012, seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin, an African American man, was walking to his father's house in a gated community in Sanford, Florida on his way back from a convenience store. Twenty-nine year old George Zimmerman, a Peruvian-American, was on duty as neighborhood watch for this gated community and followed Trayvon Martin suspecting that Martin was "up to no good" according to the 911-tape (Jones 2012). There was a subsequent altercation between the two men, the details of which are unclear, but in the end, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin. The State of Florida filed an affidavit stating probable cause alleging that George Zimmerman racially profiled Martin and shot him, as Martin was committing no crimes. Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter, but Zimmerman argued that

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he had shot Martin in self-defense. After about a month of highly-publicized trial, the six-member jury of predominantly white women, acquitted Zimmerman of all charges.

The data used in this paper is the testimony of Trayvon Martin's childhood friend and key witness for the prosecution, Rachel Jeantel, who was nineteen at the time of her testimony. On this evening, the night of February 26th, 2012, Rachel Jeantel was on the phone with Trayvon Martin while he walked through the neighborhood in Sanford, Florida. The call was disconnected but Martin called her back a few minutes later. Jeantel testified that during this second call, Martin said a man was watching and following him. She further testified that she heard dialogue exchanged between Martin and the man, followed by an altercation before the phone went silent.

In this analysis, I examine the ways in which Jeantel's voice is portrayed by participants during the trial. I pay particular attention to the manner by which individuals repeat her words, request more information from her after an utterance, and how they treat her voice, including her language variety: African American English. Within this paper, I examine the practices of three institutional representatives within the courtroom: the prosecuting attorney, Bernardo de la Rionda, the defense attorney, Don West, and the court reporter, Shelly Coffey. My primary interest lies in investigating the representatives' use of *voice* within the testimony. That is, I investigate the ways in which the court reporter voices the words, utterances, and language varieties of the witness, Rachel Jeantel. Also, I consider how this voice is reflected within the official transcript.

Voice is closely linked to intertextuality, or the idea that texts and utterances incorporate other texts and utterances, past and future. I bring together the work of interactional sociolinguists (e.g. Gumperz 1982, Goffman 1974, Tannen 1995, 2007, 2010) and sociolegal scholars (Conley and O'Barr 1998, Conley, et al. 1978) to examine how these institutional representatives employ intertextual strategies and what interactional purposes may be motivating these strategies. Intertextual strategies are those that harken back to "shared prior texts", a term introduced by Becker (1994) that is the building block for the ways in which social groups establish relationships. Intertextuality relates directly to the concept of "double-voiced discourse", the notion that one's words can be produced by another's voice (Bakhtin 1981), and includes quoting another (Matoesian 1999), ventriloquizing (Tannen 2010), and numerous forms of repetition (Becker 1994, Tannen 2007). Scholars such as Matoesian (1999), Cotterill (2003), and Magenau (2003) have identified a link between intertextual strategies and exposure of language ideologies; for instance, when a speaker quotes another, they may also expose subtle biases they hold towards the speaker or that utterance. This paper expands upon their work and examines how language ideologies are revealed through these voicing practices, how this influences the portrayal of credibility of the witness's testimony and character, and what this portrayal may mean for cultural-wide and institutional-wide expectations within the courtroom.

In this paper, I first introduce the motivating literature and scholarship of my analysis of the relationship between intertextuality, language ideologies, and the courtroom institution. I will then examine the use of Jeantel's voice by the prosecuting attorney, the attorney on the same "side" as Jeantel, and the ways in which her voice may be serving to temper the expectations of the jury. I then illustrate how the defense attorney, the attorney for George Zimmerman, portrays Jeantel's voice to the jury and how this may be a strategy that is detrimental to her testimony. And finally, this analysis

will examine instances in which the “neutral” court reporter repeats Jeantel’s words and misrepresents her voice in the transcript, then I conclude with a hypothesis as to how these phenomena may serve to damage Jeantel’s credibility on the stand.

2. Relevant Literature and Motivating Scholarship

2.1. INTRODUCING INTERTEXTUALITY AND DEFINING “VOICE” A central topic of interest for my analysis is the notion of *intertextuality*, which I define as the phenomenon of a text or utterance incorporating and acknowledging its interaction with other texts. This notion is central to the courtroom as witnesses, victims, and suspects are asked to recount previous experiences and reminded of prior testimony over months, and sometimes years, of the duration of a trial. *Intertextuality* is a term originally coined by Julia Kristeva (1980 [1967]) as she introduced the texts of Mikhail Bakhtin, Russian philosopher and semiotician, to a western audience. Bakhtin’s work focused on the notion of *dialogicality* (1981), the idea that every word spoken or written is “half ours and half someone else’s” (1981: 345). A word only becomes one’s own, according to Bakhtin, when the speaker “populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word” (293).

This paper focuses on the relationship between the intertextual strategy of *voicing* another and the language ideologies held by the speaker. This is related to Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of *social voices*, or the idea that a register may be associated with a social class. When an individual is voicing not just the utterance of another, but imbuing their words with the *register* of another, the speaker may be indexing stereotypical social persona that accompanies a register. This directly relates to Tannen’s (2010) plenary address at the annual meeting of the Linguistics Society of America in which she introduces the topic of *ventriloquizing*. The broad definition of *ventriloquizing*, which I will be adopting here, is when “a speaker animates another’s voice in the presence of that other.” When this type of constructed dialogue, or Tannen’s preferred term of “taking on of voices”, occurs, it is a resource by which individuals negotiate the relative connection and power they hold towards one another. Tannen (2010: 6-7) states “[taking on of voices] allows them to introduce a persona, borrow characteristics associated with that persona, to, for example, downplay the relative hierarchy between themselves and interlocutors or create closeness with interlocutors or those whose personas they reference.” This type of *taking on of voices* may also be done in a manner that does not establish connection or downplay hierarchy; it may, in fact, be a resource used to establish dominance or distance oneself from the persona being referred to or the individual being ventriloquized.

Motivated by these scholars, I adopt the term “voice” to encompass the intertextual phenomenon of constructed dialogue, acknowledgement of register, and the associated characteristics of the person’s language variety.

2.2. INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE COURTROOM The legal process is inherently intertextual. Witnesses and suspects are asked to repeat recollections of events and what was said on a number of occasions: police interviews, depositions, pre-trial meetings witness preparations, direct examination, cross-examination, re-directs, to name a few (Cotterill 2003). According to Cotterill (2003), in an investigation of intertextuality during the O.J. Simpson trial, the rationale for such a high-degree of repetition is to test the individual

and the quality of the account being presented, which then determines the credibility of the witness. Greg Matoesian, building on Tannen's (2007 [1989]) analysis of "constructed dialogue" and its interaction with language ideologies, examines how a speaker makes subtle comments on a language or on a speaker of that language when quoting another. Matoesian (1999: 82) highlights this by arguing, "direct quotes do not represent an exact wording of prior speech inasmuch as they refer to a form of constructed speech in which the reporting voice subtly leaks into the reported utterance to strategically manipulate the audience's impression of the quoted speaker (Mayes, 1990, Waugh, 1995, Tannen, 1995)" (citations in original). These subtle leaks may also comment on additional ideological factors, such as race, gender, and class because, quoted speech, especially in the courtroom, highlights the asymmetry of knowledge and participatory rights between speaker (typically the attorney) and quoted voice (typically the witness or suspect) (Matoesian 1999).

Intertextuality in the courtroom not only relates to the phenomenon of voicing another or recontextualizing prior utterances into a different context; intertextuality within the courtroom can also be seen by the practice of transcribing the official record for the court. The court reporter is tasked with creating the official record of the trial. According to the United States Court Reporters Act 28 § 753, written in 1948, everything that was said or introduced into evidence "must be recorded verbatim by shorthand [or] mechanical means" by the court reporter (U.S.C. 28 § 753: 31). The court reporter then must also produce a written transcript of the proceedings if either party requests the transcript or if either party appeals the case.

Intertextuality in the courtroom appears as not simply the recontextualization of prior utterances into the present trial context, but also in the complex process of creating the official court record, including the transformation of utterances into shorthand and then into written orthography. As Bucholtz (2000: 1440) states in her analysis of the "Politics of transcription":

All transcripts take sides, enabling certain interpretations, advancing particular interests, favoring specific speakers, and so on...Embedded in the details of the transcription are indications of purpose, audience, and the position of the transcriber toward the text.

Just as speakers imbue their quotations with subtle comments on the speakers or utterances (Matoesian 1999), transcripts echo the opinions or biases the transcriber holds towards the speaker or utterance. This then holds immense implications for the representation of individuals' voices within the transcript.

2.3. INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES AND IDEOLOGIES OF "NONSTANDARD" VARIETIES In the literature on ideologies of language in the courtroom, sociolegal scholar William O'Barr (1982: 25) lays out the four varieties of language that may appear in American courtrooms: *formal legal language*, closely parallels written legal language and is typically used by judges; *standard English* is typically used by lawyers and most witnesses and is characterized by somewhat formal lexicon and roughly corresponds to what Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) identify as *formal or prescriptive standard English*; and *colloquial English* is spoken by some witnesses and a few lawyers who do so strategically to emulate the speech of "ordinary folks" for the jury, and corresponds to

informal standard English (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). The fourth type, *subcultural varieties*, is defined as:

Varieties of language spoken by segments of the society who differ in speech style and mannerisms from the larger community; in the case of particular courts studied in North Carolina, these varieties include Black English and the dialect of English spoken by poorly educated whites. (O’Barr 1982: 25)

I will henceforth characterize these varieties as *nonstandard* or *vernacular* (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). O’Barr (1982, et al. 1976) find that no one speaker ever used all four varieties of language, but most speakers tend to shift between the four possibilities when context requires it. O’Barr (1982: 25) lays out a few instances: lawyers are more likely to address prospective jurors during *voir dire*, or jury selection, using the colloquial variety “as though seeking solidarity with them” or “emulating the speech styles of ‘ordinary folks’.” He continues to state that “when questioning witnesses, they [lawyers] are likely to remove themselves from hostile witnesses ... by attempting to make the colloquial or subcultural varieties of language appear ‘stupid’ and unlike their own speech” (O’Barr 1982: 26).

Sociolinguist Diana Eades has made huge strides in introducing sociolinguistic evidence to the courtroom in Australia, most notably with regards to how Aboriginal English is treated in the courtroom. Her work has shown that certain linguistic features that are present in Aboriginal English, such as silence and “gratuitous concurrence” (e.g. responding ‘yes’ to a question regardless of the speaker’s agreement), were not understood in the courtroom and thus the speakers did not receive just and fair representation in the courtroom (Eades 2004). Eades’ work on this subject matter inspired a legal handbook that has been adopted in the Australian judicial system; this handbook lays out the communicative style of Aboriginal English speakers and it was written for the institutional representatives of the courtroom (Eades 1992). However, in a subsequent case, Eades found that defense attorneys, when cross-examining three young Aboriginal men, had utilized her own legal handbook as a mechanism to subvert the communication of the young men. Eades states that, “...knowledge of the Aboriginal English use of gratuitous concurrence was used by defence counsel to lead the boys to agree to conflicting proposition, and thus appear to be unreliable and untrustworthy witnesses” (Eades 2004: 501). Therefore, Eades calls for a new approach of sociolinguistic analysis within the courtroom because “it was clearly not a situation in which there was a misunderstanding of the cultural differences in the use of English” (502). She proposes a critical sociolinguistic approach in which analysts explore not just the power in the discourse, but the power *behind* the discourse, which she states is “impossible as long as sociolinguistic analysis of Aboriginal English in the legal system ignores socio-political issues” (502).

3. Data and Methodology The main dataset I analyze is excerpts from the approximately six hours of direct- and cross-examination testimony of Rachel Jeantel, witness for the State of Florida. Rachel Jeantel testified that she was on the phone with Trayvon Martin during the incident and had heard dialogue exchanged between Martin and Zimmerman.

Rachel Jeantel is multilingual and a native speaker of Haitian Creole, Spanish, and African American English. Her linguistic capabilities were of much debate inside the courtroom as well as in the news and social media. The stigma against AAE holds huge implication for gatekeeping institutions such as the classroom and the courtroom. John Rickford (2013) reminds us in his *Language Log* article on the Zimmerman Trial that in this courtroom, Rachel Jeantel’s voice is the closest proxy to the victim’s, Trayvon Martin’s, whose voice was silenced. Her voice was poorly received in the proceedings and poorly reflected in the transcript, which, combined, had enormous repercussions for the outcome of the trial.

A video recording of the testimony is available on YouTube (Grossman 2013), from which I have created a transcript using discourse analytic and interactional sociolinguistic transcription conventions. I also examined the official court transcript taken by court reporter, Shelley Coffey. I examine the data using the lens of interactional sociolinguistics and acknowledging the mechanisms of power involved in the relationship between African American people and the U.S. criminal justice system

4. Analyzing Rachel Jeantel’s Voice in the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman

In this section, I illustrate instances in which Rachel Jeantel’s voice, that is previous utterances and perhaps characteristics of her language variety, are repeated in the interaction (e.g. ventriloquized). In this analysis, those *voicing* Jeantel are the following institutional representatives: the prosecuting attorney, the defense attorney, and the court reporter. I analyze the ways in which these institutional representatives voice Jeantel and how this linguistic phenomenon may be serving to accomplish their vastly different institutional motives as well as tarnishing Jeantel’s credibility on the stand.

4.1. THE PROSECUTION Consider an interaction between a prosecuting attorney and their key witness. One would assume that the prosecuting attorney’s goal is to portray their witness as the most truthful, reliable, and trustworthy individual on the stand. Their institutional goal on the surface is to illustrate to the jury that their witness’s testimony and character is more credible than the opposition’s side.

This first example is an exchange between the prosecuting attorney, Bernardo de la Rionda, and his witness, Rachel Jeantel, during Jeantel’s direct examination about ten minutes into the first day of her testimony. Here, Jeantel is testifying to what she and Trayvon Martin were discussing on their phone call the night of his death. De la Rionda, identified below as “Prosecutor”, then interjects seemingly to clarify her testimony. The original utterance by Jeantel is underlined and the repeated utterance by the Prosecutor is then bolded.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|------------|---|
| (1) | 1 | Jeantel: | <u>He started walkin home.</u> [He told me – |
| | 2 | Prosector: | [Ok, let me- |
| | 3 | | Let me stop you. |
| → | 4 | | He said he started walking home? |
| | 5 | Jeantel: | Yeah, <u>he’s going to leave the area where the mailin area at.</u> |
| | 6 | Ct Rep.: | Ok. Say it again. |
| | 7 | Jeantel: | <u>He's going to leave the mailin area where he was at</u> |
| | 8 | Ct Rep: | The mailing area? |
| | 9 | Jeantel: | Yeah. Where you get your mail at. |

- 10 Prosecutor: Alright. And and I'll make sure everybody understands→
what you're saying.
- 11 Did you say he said **he's gonna leave the mailing area →
where he's at?**
- 12 Jeantel: Yes.
- 13 Prosecutor: And what did you take that to mean?
- 14 Jeantel: That he's leavin the area.
- 15 He say he's gonna start walking home.

In the first repetition, Line 4, the Prosecutor repeats Jeantel's utterance *he started walkin' home* almost verbatim, but does not use the alveolar variant of –ING. Instead, he applies the velar variant, associated with the “standard” variety of American English. When she then elaborates to say that Trayvon was leaving the *mailing area*, the court reporter interjects to request clarification (Line 6) and repeats the standard variant of –ING again in Line 8. Then, when the Prosecutor repeats Jeantel's phrase *mailing area* in Line 11, he does so again with stress and the standard variant, and even precedes his utterance with his rationale for repetition with “I'll make sure everybody understands what you're saying” (Line 10).

Although the Prosecutor may be serving to clarify her testimony to ensure that “everyone”, i.e. the court reporter and the jury members, understands her testimony, Jeantel's own explanation in Line 9 *where you get your mail at* may have been sufficient. It seems to be the case that the Prosecution's consistent elaborations of Jeantel's utterances and standardization of certain variants of English may be serving to discredit her on the stand. So the question remains, why would the prosecutor seek to discredit his witness? It may not be wholly a goal of discreditation. The repetition and standardization may be a strategy serving to manage expectations of the jury members.

Consider these next examples as signals of language ideologies towards vernacular variants of English that the Prosecution holds. Throughout the testimony, Jeantel was repeatedly asked by all the institutional representatives, the judge included, to repeat herself and speak up as the volume of her voice was very low. In this next example, the Prosecutor says the following after asking Jeantel to speak more loudly during the direct-examination:

- (2) The Prosecutor: And I know you grew up in a Haitian family,
So make sure that everybody can hear you.

Here, he is directly indexing a relationship between an immigrant or non-“American” family and unclear speech. This utterance may not be a result of ignorance or bigotry on the side of the Prosecutor because he states the following on the next day during Jeantel's re-direct examination:

- (3) 1 Prosecutor: I've got one of those last names that most people can't→
pronounce.
- 2 And so I'm curious.
- 3 You grew up, I guess, in a Haitian family?
- 4 Jeantel: Yes, sir.
- 5 Prosecutor: Your mother speaks Creole or Haitian?

6 Jeantel: Creole, yes, sir.
7 Prosecutor: The reason is I ask,
8 I wonder in terms from a cultural or just from learning →
English –
→ 9 English was not my native tongue.
→ 10 I spoke Spanish first.
11 So in doing that did you learn Creole first?
12 or did you learn English first in terms –
13 I'm curious.
14 Sometimes there's a cultural thing.
→ 15 We say things, it isn't as clear to everybody.
16 Jeantel: Creole and Spanish.

In this re-direct, on the last day of testimony, the Prosecutor seems to be building rapport with Jeantel by comparing their upbringings and language abilities as a non-native English speaker. However, he still seems to be indexing non-nativeness in a language and unclear speech.

I cannot speak to the motives of the Prosecutor, however, I can argue that this explicit connection between non-native language ability and unclear testimony may be a strategy to temper the expectations of the jury at the beginning of her testimony and then explain her lack of clarity at the end of the testimony. This trope and stereotype of low-performance or intelligence and non-native English background is rampant throughout Jeantel's testimony, but it is most surprising coming from her attorney.

4.2. THE DEFENSE Before analyzing the opposition's use of Jeantel's voice, first consider the organization of the United States' adversarial legal system. The adversarial legal system is structured to have two opposing parties, the prosecution and defense, present their positions before an impartial judge or jury. In order to demonstrate the veracity of their case, they must discredit the other party's case by any and all means at their disposal, which typically relies upon discrediting the witnesses of the opposing party during the cross-examination. Previous work on the language of the legal system (Matoesian 1999, Cotterill 2003, Magenau, 2003) has examined the strategies to discredit the witness, also known as impeaching the witness. One of the best-attested strategies for doing so is using the witness's own words against them (Matoesian 1999, Cotterill 2003, Magenau 2003). The attorney achieves this goal by identifying inconsistencies as they present the witness with their own words, thus portraying the witness as unreliable and untrustworthy.

Consider this exchange that occurred during the cross-examination. Here the defense attorney, Don West, challenges what Jeantel said during an interview with Martin family attorney, Benjamin Crump, about the dialogue exchanged between Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman. The notation below indicates the initials of the person being voiced and the scope of their utterance, as indicated with brackets.

(4) 1 Defense: So what you are saying is
2 that, *indeed*,
3 what you told Mr. Crump
4 in this recorded interview,

5 [RJ that what George Zimmerman said
 6 in response to *him* saying
 → 7 [TM “what you followin’ me,”
 → 8 or “*why* you following me?”]
 9 [RJ George Zimmerman said,
 → 10 [GZ “what are you talking →
 about?”]]]

This line of questioning is not only temporally complex, but it is complex in the voices being portrayed. Figure 1 below serves to clarify the embedded nature of the voices at play during this exchange by illustrating speakers and their utterances as concentric circles.

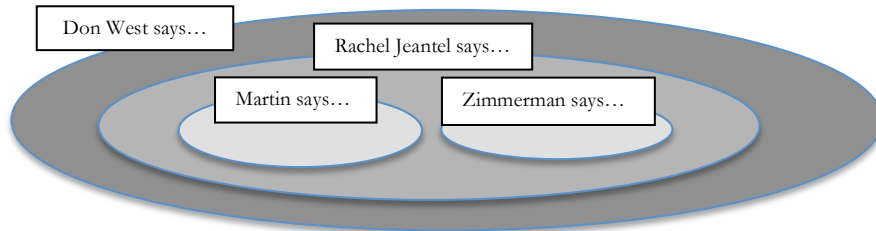


Figure 1: Voices at Play in the Cross-Examination of Rachel Jeantel

What is crucial to identify here is the contrast in voice between Lines 7 and 8 and Line 10. In Lines 7 and 8, the Defense is repeating what Jeantel had previously testified to about what was said between Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman. In these lines, it appears that he is re-voicing Jeantel’s production of Trayvon Martin’s words. In the quotation, *why you following me?*², a vernacular variant found in many varieties of AAE appear: copular *be* deletion. However, when compared to Line 10, George Zimmerman’s response, which is theoretically within the same scope of Jeantel’s voice (as indicated by Line 3, *What you told Mr. Crump...*) does not contain any vernacular variants associated with AAE. Instead, Zimmerman’s voice is portrayed as the “standard” variant with a copular *be* present and the velar variant of –ING.

It could also be argued that the Defense is voicing Trayvon Martin with the vernacular variant in Line 8 *why you following me*, therefore, it is fascinating that there is this subtle vernacular-standard distinction between the two parties. Then the question remains, why does the Defense, an individual who is not a speaker of AAE, chose to voice Trayvon Martin or his proxy, Rachel Jeantel, as having vernacular features associated with AAE? This reminds me of the findings of William O’Barr (1982: 26): “when questioning witnesses, they [lawyers] are likely to remove themselves from hostile witnesses ... by attempting to make the colloquial or subcultural varieties of language appear ‘stupid’ and unlike their own speech.”

Perhaps this strategy is utilized consciously by the Defense to make the vernacular variants seem “stupid” and “unlike [his] own” speech. Furthermore, those associated with the Prosecution are voiced as having vernacular variants and the one associated with the Defense is voiced as having the standard variant. Since the defense is

² This excludes Line 7 *what you followin’ me* under the speculation that this is a speech error, although one could hypothesize that there is a relationship between the Defense’s ideologies towards AAE features and markedness that may have effected the production of such a speech error.

seeking to discredit the testimony of Rachel Jeantel, perhaps this contrast between African American English features and the prosecution versus the “standard” Anglo American English and the defense illustrates an indexical link between African American English and non-credibility.

4.3. THE COURT REPORTER In some American courtrooms, a court reporter is present and tasked with taking down the official, “verbatim”, transcript of everything that was said or introduced into evidence (U.S.C. 28 § 753: 31). In general, court reporters’ participation in the interactional environment of the courtroom is limited, but they are allowed to request clarification when the witness or attorney is unclear, at their own discretion. The court reporter, then, appears to be purely egalitarian and neutral when it comes to their presence in the courtroom. However, in this and the following section, I show the how the court reporter’s participation may negatively influence the credibility of the witness on the stand.

In this following excerpt, I introduce an instance of participation by the court reporter in which she takes her turn at talk directly after the witness responds to a question posed by the attorney, and the court reporter then revoices Jeantel’s words. Here, Jeantel is responding to the Defense’s aforementioned line of questioning as to what she had told Mr. Crump she heard Zimmerman say in response to Trayvon Martin saying *why you followin(g) me*. Again, I indicate Jeantel’s original utterance with underlining and the repeated utterance with bolding. Compare the two columns with the original utterance on the left and the revoiced utterance on the right:

(5)	1	Jeantel:	<u>And I had told you</u>	9	Ct Rep:	“ ^{RJ} And I had told
	2		<u>and said on the</u>	10		you that in that
	3		<u>depo paper that</u>	11		depo paper that→
	4		<u>you have right now</u>			you have there
→	5		<u>that I had rush on</u>	12		that I have—”
	6		the interview	13	Jeantel:	<i>rush</i> on the interview
	7		between me and→	14		between me and→
			Crump.			Crump
→	8	Ct Rep:	No.			

In Line 5, Jeantel’s phrase *had rush on* reflects a frequently-occurring morphosyntactic feature of AAE in which simple past is represented as *had* + past as well as a reduction of the final consonant cluster in *rushed* to be pronounced as *rush*, which is also a frequently-occurring feature of AAE (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006).

Although the court reporter is instantaneously transcribing these utterances, she makes certain mistakes. There are more semantically negligible errors, including inaccuracies in the determiners being used (*the* vs. *that*) and certain lexical changes or omissions (*that you have right now* vs. *that you have there*). But crucially, in Line 12 there is the standardization of the morphosyntactic feature *had* + past to the “standard” *have* and then a pause before the word containing the consonant cluster reduction. The pause here is fascinating because it requires Jeantel to repeat the “problematic” lexical item. I say problematic here because it appears the court reporter is able to comprehend the previous utterance and standardize it for the record (*had* + past → *have*), but the

consonant cluster reduction requires repetition. This pause then further highlights the markedness of this vernacular variant and may portray Jeantel’s speech more negatively to the jurors.

Additionally, she begins her turn with *No*, which strongly suggests that the court reporter was not merely requesting clarification³; she was signaling that her expectations of the language of the court were violated, perhaps commenting on her institutional ideologies of vernacular varieties. This signal may not be as overtly adversarial as the Defense attorney’s in the previous section, nor may not be as underhandedly condescending as seen with the Prosecution, but it may have damaging effects to the witness’s credibility. Perhaps the jurors are influenced by this “neutral” party’s clear dislike of the speaker’s utterance (i.e. *No*) and thus negatively portray the witness in their own minds because this “neutral” party is the authority of the language in the courtroom.

To more clearly illustrate my argument that the court reporter’s institutional ideologies are reflected in the interaction, consider how Jeantel’s voice is portrayed within the official transcript of this trial.

4.4. THE OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT As illustrated in the previous section, the participation and manner of participation of the court reporter may negatively portray Jeantel’s voice as marked or in violation of the institutional expectations of the courtroom. This hypothesis is supported with evidence from the official transcript. In this following excerpt, the left column is my own transcription from the audiovisual recording of the testimony and on the right is a reproduction of the official transcript received from the court reporter herself. I have identified the defense attorney and court reporter by their roles and the witness, Rachel Jeantel by her last name. In the official transcript (the right column), Q indicates “Question” by the defense attorney, and A is “Answer” by Jeantel. The court reporter labels her own participation with “THE REPORTER” and the Jeantel’s answer with “THE WITNESS”. Compare the two transcripts side-by-side and attend to the phrase *I was been payin attention*:

<p>(6) Defense: And you have <i>this</i> → conversation with him (.) for a couple of minutes, (.) and then he says he sees the man again.</p> <p>Jeantel: Yes, sir</p> <p>Defense: And are you really paying → attention now?</p> <p>Jeantel: <u>I was <i>been</i> payin’ at--</u> <u>attention, [sir</u></p> <p>Ct Rep: [I’m- I’m sorry?</p> <p>Jeantel: <u>I was <i>been</i> payin’ attention, sir</u></p> <p>Ct Rep: I was—</p>	<p>Q. And you have this conversation with him for a couple of minutes, and then he says he sees the man again?</p> <p>A. Yes, sir.</p> <p>Q. And are you really paying attention now?</p> <p>A. I was - -</p> <p>THE REPORTER: I’m sorry? I was?</p> <p>THE WITNESS: <u>I was paying</u></p>
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³ Contrast this reaction to that in Section 4.1 in which the court reporter requested clarification of the phrase *mailing area* by saying “Ok. Say it again.”

<p>Jeantel: <u>I was <i>been</i> payin' attention, sir.</u></p> <p>(Lines omitted for brevity)</p> <p>Jeantel: <u>I was been paying attention, sir,</u> when I had call him back.</p>	<p>attention, sir.</p> <p>(Lines omitted for brevity)</p> <p>A. <u>I was been paying attention, sir,</u> when I had called him back</p>
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The phrase *I was been paying attention* contains a feature of AAE, stressed *BIN*, that indicates an event occurred in the remote past (or has been occurring since the remote past) (Green 1998, Rickford 2013). The court reporter's representation of Jeantel's voice in the official transcript, on the right column, is interesting as it does not accurately reflect the phrase *I was been paying attention* until the very last line. It appears Jeantel does not catch on to which aspect of her vernacular variety is "problematic" for the court reporter, seen in her last utterance where she stressed the velar variant of -ING in *paying*. Before that, the court reporter pauses before each instance of the stressed *BIN*, which again requires Jeantel to repeat the word, thus highlighting the vernacular nature of her language variety.

This and the previous section have shown that on the surface, yes, the court reporter is pursuing her institutional goal of writing down "verbatim" what was said in the interactional space of the courtroom. However, there is a certain amount of "editing" or "standardizing" and flexibility when it comes to this verbatim representation (for more on editing in the criminal justice system, see Walker [1985] and Bucholtz [2000]). The implications of such standardization, thus mis-representation of voices in the official transcript, may be much larger than the institution would assume. Imagine what the jurors, the six predominantly white women, are receiving as input from the "neutral" authority on the language of the courtroom: this young woman's testimony gets interrupted by requests for clarification from the one woman whose goal is to document the language; furthermore, this young woman gets her voice read back to her, not always reflecting the variety of her language, and is then forced to repeat phrases that contain vernacular features, thus highlighting the markedness of her language variety. This serves to greatly tarnish the credibility of Jeantel's testimony and character.

5. Conclusions This analysis has examined the trial of the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman and the intertextual phenomenon of *voice* that occurs within the testimony of Rachel Jeantel. In this investigation, I have illustrated instances in which the institutional representatives voicing Jeantel may not be doing so in an overtly adversarial manner (save, perhaps, for the defense attorney during cross-examination), but certain ideologies towards vernacular variations of the English language may still have been exposed. This paper identifies the interaction between exposure of institutional, or personal, ideologies towards language varieties and the portrayal of the witness as non-credible, which is ultimately decided by the jury. This paper did not directly discuss the juror's individual ideologies towards vernacular varieties as their verbal participation in the interactional environment was limited to only one instance, but it is important to address their presence as they are the intended audience for most of the proceedings within the courtroom.

For instance, when the prosecuting attorney standardizes Jeantel's utterances and then defends Jeantel's linguistic ability as a result of her non-native English-speaking upbringing, he seems to be subtly commenting to the jury that her testimony should be

evaluated through the lens of non-native proficiency of a language. Furthermore, when the opposing attorney, the Defense, contrasts Jeantel's voice (or Trayvon Martin's voice) as having AAE features to that of George Zimmerman's voice which reflects "standard" Anglo American features, he is creating an indexical link between AAE and non-credibility. This further portrays Jeantel's testimony to the jury as non-credible. Finally, and perhaps the most fascinating influence of the interaction, I found that the way in which the court reporter revoices Jeantel's utterances by standardizing her AAE features, as well as requiring Jeantel to complete phrases that contain vernacular variants, may be the most detrimental to her credibility. Furthermore, the misrepresentation of Jeantel's voice within the official transcript holds further implications for her treatment within the justice system, as the transcript is the building block upon which future legal interactions rely. This is perfectly illustrated in an excellent example in John Rickford's (2013) article on the Jeantel testimony. He stated that Rachel Jeantel's AAE may have made it difficult for the institutional representatives to understand her. This is seen with the incorrect transcription of Jeantel's utterances, where the transcript reflected her saying, *I couldn't hear Trayvon* [say get off me], but Rickford contends that the audio recording clearly stated that she said *I could, an' it was Trayvon*. When this question of mistranscription was brought up during her testimony, Jeantel defends herself and states:

(7) Jeantel: Trust me, they messed up. I could hear Trayvon.

In the recent years since this trial, the unfair treatment of Rachel Jeantel and her voice within the courtroom (and throughout social media) has sparked a nation-wide conversation about African Americans and speakers of African American English within the United States Judicial System. Therefore, I remain embedded in the data from this and similar trials to continue Rickford and King's (2013) work on seeking "Justice for Jeantels."

6. References

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