

# ***ECHO***

## ***INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY, AUTHENTICITY, AND CULTURAL COMMUNITY: THE PERCEPTION OF DIALECT BY STUDENTS FROM A HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY***

**Sheila Bridges-Bond, PhD**

*North Carolina Central University  
Durham, NC*

**Robin C. Gillespie, PhD**

*North Carolina Central University  
Durham, NC*

**Jasmyne Speller, MEd**

*Pitt County Schools  
Greenville, NC*

**James Osler, PhD**

*North Carolina Central University  
Durham, NC*

**Tom W. Scheft, PhD**

*North Carolina Central University  
Durham, NC*

### **ABSTRACT**

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) charges speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to be culturally competent in the delivery of services, including those deemed elective, because clinicians have both a “social and ethical responsibility . . . to objectively discuss the use of target dialect” (ASHA, 2003a, p. 2). Elective services, which are driven by an appreciation for and a thorough understanding of social attitudes, require data driven evidence. It is vital to the profession of speech-language pathology that SLPs understand the speaker’s perspective, especially given ethical charge from ASHA to provide culturally responsive services. The purpose of this article is to discuss the role of dialect in the perception of individual identity, authenticity, and cultural community from a cross disciplinary perspective and from the perspective of college students attending a Historically Black College /University (HBCU).

A 27-item electronic survey was administered to 108 college students attending an HBCU to identify their attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of African American English (AAE). The results of this study indicated that the students’ perceptions related to individual identity, authenticity, and cultural community proved to be strongly associated with the use of dialect.

**KEY WORDS:** African American English (AAE), dialect, Standard American English (SAE), college students, identity, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)

**Corresponding Author:**

Sheila Bridges-Bond, PhD  
Email: bridges@NCCU.EDU