BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME: Monique T Mills

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login): MTMILLS

POSITION TITLE: Associate Professor

EDUCATION/TRAINING *(Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.)*

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE *(if applicable)*	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	B.S.	2001	Speech & Hearing Science
The Ohio State University	M.A.	2004	Speech & Hearing Science
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Ph.D.	2008	Speech & Hearing Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison	Postdoctoral Fellow	2010	Waisman Center

A. Personal Statement

The goal of the proposed study is to identify key dialect detection profiles of typically-developing African American children. We hypothesize that children with stronger language production skills will more quickly detect violations of phonology and grammar presented in both Mainstream American English (MAE) and African American English (AAE)—two dialects of American English. To date, my research has focused on AAE and narrative assessment in school-age African American children with and without giftedness. The goal of my research program is to develop dialect-fair measures that capture the spectrum of language ability in African American English (AAE)-speaking children. Candidate measures include false-belief mentioning (Mills & Fox, 2015) and rare vocabulary usage (Mills, Mahurin-Smith & Steele, 2017), as they were positively correlated with measures of language productivity and educational placement but not correlated with rate of AAE production. Although offline measures of language are promising, online measures are needed to understand how AAE speakers process language.

B. Positions and Honors

Positions and Employment
2018-present	Associate Professor, University of Houston
2016-2018	Associate Professor, The Ohio State University
2010-2016	Assistant Professor, The Ohio State University
2008-2010	Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Certifications
2011-present	Board Certified Specialist in Child Language
2011-present	ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology
2019-present	Texas Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Service Activities
2023-	Editor-in-Chief, *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups, Group 1*
2023-	Editorial Board, *Seminars in Speech and Language*
2022-	Editorial Board, *First Language*
2021-	Editorial Board, *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*

2020-	Editorial Board, *Language Development Research*
2019-2020	Guest Editor, *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*
2019-	National Advisory Board, Symposium for Research in Child Language Disorders
2018-	Member, Institutional Review Board, University of Houston
2018-2021	Coach, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
2017-2019	Associate Editor, *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*
2016-2017	Associate Editor, *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*

Professional Memberships
2018-present	Member, National Black Association for Speech-Language-Hearing
2008-present	Member, Society for Research in Child Development
2005-present	Member, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Community Affiliations
Planning Committee for the South Union Neighborhood Impact Project
Third Ward Community Cloth
Underrepresented Women of Color Coalition
Greater Houston Partnership
Literacy Partnership with Houston Astros

Honors
February 2021	Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Build and Broaden: Bridging Critical Research Collaborations for Faculty Success in Texas Minority-Serving Institutions, National Science Foundation
January 2021	1,000 Inspiring Black Scientists in America, The Community of Scholars, http://crosstalk.cell.com/blog/1000-inspiring-black-scientists-in-america
Fall 2020-Spring 2021	Cougar Chairs Leadership Academy, University of Houston
Fall 2019-Spring 2021	University of Houston Academic Women in Leadership Program, University of Houston
July 2017	Society for Research in Child Development Ethnic and Racial Issues Committee's Inaugural National Institutes of Health Grant-writing Bootcamp

C. Contributions to Science

1. Characterizing Narrative Language of School-Age African American Children

The first broad goal for my program of research centers on developing dialect-fair assessment tools that capture the spectrum of language ability in school-age African American English (AAE)-speaking children. Completed projects have set the stage for developing dialect-fair assessment tools by characterizing the narratives school-age speakers of AAE—a population for which best practices for narrative assessment are unavailable. First, I have addressed educational disproportionality by focusing on the underrepresentation of AA children in gifted children. To date, much of the work in my field has focused on achievement gaps at the lower end—overrepresentation of AA and other culturally and linguistically diverse children in special education. Early studies described the dialect that many African American children enter school having mastered—African American English (AAE; also known as "Ebonics" to laypersons). Because the dialect shares features with that of language impairment (e.g., copula absence "He here" instead of "He *is* here") it there was a critical need to indicate how the two language profiles were alike and unalike so that typically-developing AA children were not misdiagnosed with language impairment and subsequently placed in the most restrictive educational environment. Building on these earlier findings, which tended to focus on preschoolers, my work characterized the narrative language of school-age AA children enrolled in gifted classes. My work has indicated that structural aspects of narration do not differ between gifted children and typically-developing children; however, production of AAE features distinguishes gifted children from

typically-developing children: Although both are from AA backgrounds, GT children produce fewer AAE features than TD children.

a. Francois, I., Lapka, S., Berstein Ratner, N. & Mills, M.T. (2023). Assessing for developmental language disorder in the context of African American English, *Evidence-Based Practice Briefs, 16*, 1-8.

b. Johnson, K.N. & Mills, M.T. (2023). Exploratory examination of speech disfluencies in spoken narrative samples of school-age bidialectal children, *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 32*, 1182-1194.

c. Mills, M. T., Mahurin-Smith, J., & Steele, S. C. (2017). Does rare vocabulary use distinguish giftedness from typical development?: A study of school-age African American narrators. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 26*, 511-523.

d. Mills, M.T. & Fox, M. (2016). Language variation and theory of mind in typical development: An exploratory study of school-age African American narrators. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *25,* 426-440.

e. Mills, M.T. (2015a). Narrative performance of gifted African American school-aged children from low-income backgrounds. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 24*, 36-46.

f. Mills, M.T., Watkins, R.V., & Washington, J.A. (2013). Structural and dialectal characteristics of the fictional and personal narratives of school-age African American children. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, *44*, 211-223.

2. Characterizing Intervention Practices for Children from High-Need Communities

Secondly, collaborators and I have described the key ingredients of interventions that are effective for special populations of children. Drawing on effective word learning strategies for school-age children with TD, we examined word learning in two groups of school-age African American children from low-income backgrounds—children with and without LI. Children completed a dynamic assessment after reading novel words. Results indicated that the LI group performed more poorly than the TD group and that both groups recalled words better with semantic and combined (phonological-semantic) cues relative to control and phonological cues. We have also explored the effect of a social capital intervention on school-aged Dual Language Learners from low-income backgrounds. Social capital refers to relationships of trust and shared expectations. Families from two Hispanic communities attended an 8-week after-school program designed to increase parent-parent and parent-school social capital. Results showed that the intervention was most effective for children of parents with lower levels of English proficiency. These studies highlight the importance of examining within-group differences among children from low-income backgrounds through explorations of language ability and language proficiency.

a. Valdez, C. R., Mills, M. T., Bohling, A., & Kaplan, D. (2013). The role of parental language acculturation in the formation of social capital: Differential effects on high-risk children. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 44*, 334-350.

b. Steele, S. C., Willoughby, L. M., & Mills, M. T. (2013). Learning word meanings during reading: Effects of phonological and semantic cues on children with language impairment. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 27*, 354-370.

c. Steele, S. C., & Mills, M. T. (2010). Vocabulary intervention for school-age children with language impairment: A review of evidence and good practice. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 27*, 354-370.

3. Characterizing Differences in Narrative Elicitation Techniques

Next, I have filled in critical gaps in the literature by exploring how school-age children's narrative language differs as a function of how they are elicited. Findings from my studies show that narrative performance differs between personal and fictional narratives and across different visual condition such as no-visual, 5-picture sequence, and a single detailed picture. These basic findings lend immediate practical support to school-based professionals such as speech-language pathologists and teachers who determine whether AA children's narrative skills meet educational benchmarks like the Common Core State Standard.

a. Mahurin-Smith, J., Mills, M.T., & Chang, R. (2021). Rare vocabulary in school-age narrators from low-income communities. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 52*, 51-63.

b. Mills, M.T., (2021). Forum: Serving African American English Speakers in Schools through Interprofessional Education & Practice. Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 52, 1-3.

c. Mills, M.T., Moore, L.C., Chang, R. Kim, S. & Frick, B. (2021). Perceptions of Black Children's Narrative Language: A Mixed-Methods Study. Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 52, 84-99.

d. Mills, M.T. (2015b). The effects of visual stimuli on the spoken narrative performance of school-age African American children. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 46,* 337-351.

e. Mills, M.T., Watkins, R.V., & Washington, J.A. (2013). Structural and dialectal characteristics of the fictional and personal narratives of school-age African American children. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, *44*, 211-223.

f. Terry, N.P. & Mills, M.T., Bingham, G.E., Mansour, S., & Marencin, N. (2013). Oral narrative performance of African American pre-kindergartners who speak Nonmainstream American English. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, *44*, 291-305.

4. Characterizing Oral-to-Written Code-Switching

The fourth broad goal for my research program centers on understanding the underlying mechanisms for code-switching from oral- to written language in AAE-speaking children from low-income backgrounds—a population considered to be at-risk for academic failure. To initiate this work, I reviewed the extant literature to identify factors affecting code-switching so these are manipulated in future studies examining how code-switching is related to cognitive skills such as theory mind and executive function. A preliminary analysis showed a positive relationship between AAE dialect density on a sentence formulation task and local-global—a measure of cognitive shifting. By expanding the knowledge base on narrative performance and variation in school-age AAE-speaking children from low-income backgrounds, we can address educational disparities so that these citizens reach their full potential.

a. Mills, M.T. & Fox, M. (2016). Language variation and theory of mind in typical development: An exploratory study of school-age African American narrators. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *25,* 426-440.

b. Mills, M.T. & Washington, J.A. (2015). Chapter 30: Managing two varieties: Code-switching in context. In S. Lanehart (Ed.), *Oxford Handbook of African American Language* (pp. 566-581). New York: Oxford University Press.

c. Mills, M.T., & Fox, M. (2016, November). Language variation and theory of mind in typically-developing school-age children. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Philadelphia, PA.

d. Mills, M.T. & Nester, K. (2016, November). The effects of visual stimuli on language variation in school-age African American English speakers. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Philadelphia, PA.

e. Karasinski, C., Mills, M.T., & Weismer, S.E., Ruthven, M., & Scholtens, K. (2014, November). *The relation between dialect density and executive functioning in school-age speakers of African American English.* Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Orlando, FL.

f. Karasinski, C., Mills, M.T., & Ellis Weismer, S. (2014, June). Executive functioning and dialect density in African-American English-speaking children. Poster presented at the 35th annual Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders in Madison, Wisconsin.

D. Additional Information: Research Support and/or Scholastic Performance

Ongoing Research Support

2022-2024	2022 -2024 National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Deafness and Communication Disorders (NIH/NIDCD) 1R21DC019997-01A1. Dialect Detection in School-age Black Children: An Eye-tracking Study. Role: Principal Investigator.
2020-	Women of Color Coalition Stimulus Research Grant Program, University of Houston Title: Assessing Black Students' Narrative Language: Emic & Etic Perceptions Role: PI

Completed Research Support

2019-2021	Women of Color Coalition Stimulus Research Grant Program, University of Houston Title: Examination of Speech Disfluencies in Bidialectal Children Role: Co-PI