

18 Ethnicity

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What is *ethnicity*, and how is it reflected in language variation and change? Just as labeling by sex (i.e. assigning a speaker to the category “male” or “female”) cannot substitute for a careful study of the social practices that constitute gender in a particular community (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), race as a category is useless to us without an understanding of the construction of ethnicity by individuals and communities. As has been shown for gender, ethnicity is not about what one *is*, but rather about what one *does*. Unlike sex, however, where individuals can be grouped biologically into one of two basic categories, and those who cannot are relatively easy to identify, the category of race itself has historically been socially constructed, and is extremely difficult to delimit scientifically (as Zack 1993 and Healey 1997, among others, show).

Moreover, the population of “mixed-race” individuals is increasing dramatically in a number of countries, affecting the functions and definition of ethnicity. In the USA, individuals whose parents represent two different ethnic groups, for example, might choose to identify themselves as belonging to one of these ethnicities only, to both of them, or to neither, with resulting effects on language (Azoulay 1997, Harriman 2000). There is also the case of immigrants of African descent from Spanish-speaking countries such as Panama, who may bring with them a “combined” cultural ethnicity, e.g. “Black Latina” (Thomas 2000). Le-Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) found that a main feature of the construction of ethnicity in Belize was the unusually high number of individuals who would describe themselves as “Mixed” (1985: 244). Despite these intriguing facts, the use of sociolinguistic variables in the speech of mixed-race individuals has not been systematically investigated, as far as I know, yet it no doubt contains crucial insights for the study of language and ethnic identity.

Note that I have biased my discussion of this topic in such a way that the speaker’s self-selection of an ethnicity (or of several) is given priority. For the purposes of this chapter, I will use Giles’ definition of *ethnic group* as “those

individuals who perceive themselves to belong to the same ethnic category" (Giles 1979: 253).¹ Because this distinction is often relevant, I will use the term *minority ethnic group* to refer to groups that are not the politically dominant group in a particular country or region. Following Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), I will examine the uses of linguistic variables by members of different ethnic communities for their value as "acts of identity", related in complex ways to ethnicity. Phenomena such as *crossing*, to which I will return later, where speakers deliberately use styles associated with ethnic groups other than their own, particularly highlight the complex interaction between race and ethnicity, since an individual may, for example, "look white" but "sound black" (cf. Jacobs-Huey 1997). In studying the relationship of ethnicity to language, linguists would be well served by making more use of materials from fields such as anthropology, sociology, African-American studies, etc., where the social category of ethnicity has been the object of study in its own right (see the short annotated bibliography in the Appendix).

This chapter will explore some of the theoretical contributions of the study of language variation and change in minority ethnic communities to the field of sociolinguistics. Though there will be brief discussion of the role of European-American ethnic groups (such as Italian or Irish) in language change, the chapter deals predominantly with the language of non-white groups. (See Waters 1990 for a discussion of European-Americans "choices" about claiming ethnicity.) And while there exists a vast body of literature on the role of ethnicity in such processes as language maintenance, loss, and revitalization, and on the role of language choice in national identity, these topics will not be covered here. In addition, the chapter will not address attitudes toward minority ethnic dialects, or the ways in which linguistic research in this area might be applied to education. (See Rickford 1999 for discussion of these topics.) I have chosen to focus mainly on studies that feature sociolinguistic variables of some type, usually grammatical or phonological, and on communities within the USA, where a majority of the studies in the variationist tradition have been done. So many significant works have been produced on language and ethnicity that it will not be possible to discuss all of them; in many places I have selected illustrative examples, rather than trying to list everything that has been done on a particular theme.

1 Research on Ethnicity and Variation in Language

The majority of sociolinguistic studies of language and ethnicity have focused on variation, which I will discuss below, rather than on change, the topic of the next section.

1.1 *Relationship between minority ethnic and matrix dialects*

One of the first issues to be raised in studying language in minority ethnic groups is the relation of dialects from these communities to other dialects of the same region, particularly those spoken by European-Americans. Much of this research has focused on African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). Although there is not room in this chapter to do it justice, the debate over whether AAVE and various European-American dialects in the United States are diverging or converging has been a central focus of recent research (as in Fasold et al. 1987, Bailey and Maynor 1989). Rickford's contribution notes that different components of the various dialects must be looked at separately, since it is possible to have, for example, convergence in the phonology, and divergence in the grammar (1987: 57). Both Rickford and Wolfram (1987) provide diagrams illustrating the many permutations of convergence and divergence patterns that are possible between European-American and African-American dialects. They stress the importance of looking at the direction of changes in the relationship, determining whether dialects are becoming more alike (or more different), and whether one dialect is responsible for this increase (or decrease). Interestingly, the diagrams do not include the possibility of some varieties of AAVE converging with local European-American varieties, while others are diverging. There will be more discussion of these issues later in the chapter.

Even among those linguistic variables that are shared by both a minority ethnic variety and a European-American variety, the specifics of a variable's realization may be different. Santa Ana (1991, 1996), for example, found that final consonant cluster simplification in Chicano English, as spoken by Mexican-American speakers in the southwestern United States, was governed by slightly different constraints from those found in many European-American dialects. There have been numerous studies of this process in AAVE (e.g. Labov 1972a), which also show different orderings of constraints. Sometimes the differences between minority ethnic and other dialects for particular sociolinguistic variables involve a wider range of contexts for the feature. For example, with respect to multiple negation, African-American speakers in some communities use constructions that are not found in European-American dialects which permit multiple negation, e.g. negative inversion (*Didn't nobody play in the sandbox*) and transfer of negation to a lower clause (*Ain't no cat can't get in no coop*) (Labov 1972a, Wolfram 1969). The latter type of construction is also found in Chicano English (Fought 1999b), although apparently not in the Puerto Rican English of New York City (Wolfram 1974a).

In some cases, a variety associated with a minority ethnic group may integrate features of a separate language associated with that group, as is the case with many dialects of English spoken in Latino communities. Wald (1984), for example, refers to Chicano English as a "phonological creole" (1984: 21), whose

sound system originated in numerous non-native English systems of immigrants, which were later inherited by their children and developed into a stable dialect with phonological norms of its own. Chicano English also has unique semantic, intonational, and other features, some of which can be traced to the influence of Spanish, while others represent independent innovations (cf. Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985, Peñalosa 1980, García 1984, Wald 1984). Though historically more remote, the influences of African languages and patterns on AAVE are another example. Similarly, Leap (1993) provides an analysis of the role of ancestral languages in a number of dialects spoken by Native-Americans in different parts of the United States.

Finally, there exists the possibility of influence from the minority ethnic variety onto the surrounding mainstream version of the regional dialect. Of course such influence is clearly acknowledged in the realm of the lexicon (see Smitherman 1998), but less investigation of possible phonological and grammatical influences in this direction has been done. Wolfram (1974b) found evidence of African-American influence on European-Americans in the South with respect to copula absence (as in, e.g., *He my friend* instead of *He is my friend*). Moreover, Feagin (1997) concludes that non-rhoticity (lack of post-vocalic /r/) in European-American dialects of the South was influenced by the speech of African-Americans as well.

1.2 *What it means to be a member of a speech community*

In general, sociolinguists have relied on the notion of the “speech community” as the focus for the study of linguistic variation and change, although recently there has been some increase in approaches that focus on other units, such as social networks or the family (Milroy 1980, Hazen, this volume). But there has not always been agreement on how to define the community for purposes of situating individuals within a larger context. Studies of variation among minority group speakers have helped to enlighten us about what it means to be a “member” of a particular community, and have revealed some interesting facets of the role of language in signaling group identity.

In one of the early studies of variation in a minority community, Labov (1972a) found that among African-American adolescents in New York, being a “lame” (an individual who is not a member of a local vernacular peer group) correlated with less use of AAVE phonological and grammatical features. This result has serious implications for the sociolinguistic researcher because lames “are the typical informants made available to investigators who study non-standard language in schools, recreation centers, and homes” (Labov 1972a: 255). The study also shows that two speakers of the same ethnicity may not have the same relationship to the ethnic speech community, and that the notion of community itself must be constructed.

While the above study was concerned with the degree of membership of an individual *within* an ethnic community, there are also interesting issues revolving around the degree to which individuals of various ethnicities identify with dominant European-American communities in their region. Studies of variation can illuminate how speakers might choose to highlight their membership in a minority ethnic community as well as in the local, mainstream community, either in alternation or simultaneously.

If a particular ethnic group has a language other than the socially-dominant one at its disposal, individuals can use it in the construction and signaling of ethnic identity. This includes the selection of different languages for different symbolic purposes, as well as code-switching, which can be a quite dramatic illustration of moving back and forth linguistically between ingroup and outgroup cultures. There are numerous studies of variation in language choice. A particularly comprehensive work is Zentella (1997), which also contains a detailed analysis of code switching and its role in the construction of Puerto-Rican American identity.

While many code switching studies have focused, like Zentella's study, on Hispanic-American groups, there are also some interesting studies of the role of code switching in the construction of Asian ethnic identities. The work of Lesley Milroy and Li Wei (Milroy and Wei 1995, Wei et al. 1992) on a Chinese community in Britain (Tyneside) seeks to provide an integrated model of language choice and code switching. The researchers constructed an "ethnic index" of the strength of ties that a particular individual had to others of the same ethnic group. They found that this ethnic index helped to explain patterns of language choice that could not be predicted by a model based on age and generation, and that the use of certain code switching strategies was also related to ethnic network. An interesting study done in the USA is Lo (1999), one of the few studies addressing the linguistic construction of Asian-American identities. Lo analyzes a conversation in which code switching is used as a way of "crossing" by one of the participants, while another participant "rejects" the code switching and refuses to acknowledge the speaker's appropriation of Korean-American ethnicity. This study also raises issues about the role of others within a community in validating an individual's ethnicity (Azoulay 1997; also see Wieder and Pratt 1990 for a discussion of the role of the community in determining whether or not one is a "real Indian").

Even if a group does not have an additional language as a resource, there are ways for individuals to signal membership in the minority ethnic community as well as the surrounding regional communities. For ethnic minority speakers, the question of "membership" in the wider regional community is a particularly tricky one. The dialect of the dominant European-American ethnic group for an area is privileged as being representative of "regional speech" in that area. The stereotype of New York City, whether one sees it as positive or negative, involves *white* New Yorkers. Individuals who grow up in a minority ethnic community find themselves in a position where the linguistic signals of local (e.g. New York) identity are tied to European-American ethnicities. The

option of rejecting this local identity and signaling only their ethnic affiliation is technically open to them. However, there is usually pressure from outside (and sometimes from within) the community to assimilate, including the exhortation to learn “Standard English” in order to “get ahead” (Lippi-Green 1997). The borrowing of features from a neighboring minority ethnic group, which will be discussed below, is one of the ways in which speakers might signal affiliation with a local region beyond their specific community while avoiding “sounding white,” which is often viewed negatively (Jacobs-Huey 1997, Rickford 1992, Wolfram 2000).

2 The Role of Interethnic Contacts

2.1 *Contacts in large urban settings*

Interethnic contacts between a minority ethnic group and the local European-American majority group play an important role in language variation. From a historical perspective, for example, Rickford (1986b) examines the possible origins of AAVE habitual *be*, as in *He be at the playground* with the meaning “He is usually/often at the playground”, in contact with Irish English speakers, ultimately concluding that the feature comes from an earlier creole, with the Irish influence indirect rather than direct. Ash and Myhill (1986) looked in detail at contact between African-American and European-American speakers in Philadelphia, focusing particularly on those individuals who have a large number of contacts in the other ethnic group. They found that the effects of contact were asymmetrical across different components of the linguistic system. For European-American speakers with African-American contacts, phonological features seemed much more permeable than grammatical ones. The effects of contact were also asymmetrical for blacks and whites; numerous contacts outside the ethnic group affected the dialects of African-American individuals to a greater degree than those of European-American speakers, although both groups showed evidence of the contact. Labov and Harris (1986) also found linguistic asymmetry. African-Americans who had contacts in the Philadelphia white community showed shifts away from AAVE variables in their grammar, but did not adopt the phonological variables characteristic of Philadelphia European-Americans.

These findings are interesting in relation to the various patterns of divergence and convergence of dialects discussed earlier, where a number of possible patterns for the direction of convergence were proposed (Wolfram 1987, Rickford 1987). Edwards (1992) also found contact with European-Americans to be a significant factor which correlated with a relatively lower use of AAVE variables by young African-American speakers in Detroit. Generally, it would seem that in contact between European-American and other ethnic groups, the uneven power relationship and the pressure to assimilate would lead to more,

if not all, of the convergence coming from the minority ethnic group, as Ash and Myhill's (1986) study suggests. However, the recent phenomenon of crossing, typical particularly of members of the dominant European-American group, represents a small countercurrent in this respect.

A further possibility within the framework of using language to signal ethnic identity is that of a minority ethnic group borrowing linguistic features from another local minority community. This phenomenon has been well documented for Puerto Rican-American groups, where adolescents in particular have been found to use certain features of AAVE in their English. Wolfram (1974a), for example, found that Puerto Rican speakers in New York who had many African-American contacts used habitual *be*, or had surface realizations of /θ/ as [f] (cf. also Poplack 1978, Labov et al. 1968, Zentella 1997). Not surprisingly, the strongest use of AAVE features tends to occur among those who have the most extensive contacts in local African-American communities. However, as Wolfram (1974: 200) points out, even those with very few outgroup contacts may assimilate AAVE features from Latino speakers in their social circle who *do* have such contacts. Cutler (1999) highlights a similar function for white speakers with black contacts in the transmission of hip-hop culture, the urban teen subculture based on African-American styles including rap music. The role of such "dialect brokers" in dialect contact would be an interesting subject for future study.

2.2 *Contacts in rural settings*

A large number of the studies of language variation and ethnicity, including most of those mentioned above, involve speakers in urban settings. However, there are special insights about this topic to be gained by looking at smaller, rural, and somewhat isolated communities. Wolfram and Dannenberg (1999) discuss research on the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina. Their situation is of interest because it involves a particularly long period (almost 300 years) of tri-ethnic contact among Lumbee, African-American, and European-American groups. Wolfram and Dannenberg explore various aspects of the Lumbee Indians' construction of ethnic identity, including the legal classification of the Lumbee as "free people of color" or "mulattos" in 1835, and the many ways in which the Lumbee have worked towards an identity which goes beyond the white/non-white dichotomy that is the focus of the surrounding culture. Wolfram and Dannenberg's research on current Lumbee speakers found specific grammatical markers of Lumbee ethnicity (such as regularization of *was* to *were*) that the other varieties in the region do not share. The Lumbee also use features from the local variety of AAVE, but with a slightly different distribution, such as the extension of habitual *be* into non-habitual contexts. Similarly, Hazen (1997) discusses another Native-American group in North Carolina which adopts copula absence from AAVE but with a different pattern of distribution. This pattern of some shared and some distinct forms was found in

the Lumbee phonological system and lexicon as well. As with other cases of variables borrowed in a slightly different form, the use of variables from outside the community by the Lumbee Vernacular English speakers may serve to reinforce both local ties and a specific and separate ethnic identity.

Rickford (1985) looked at two older speakers, one white and one black, on one of the South Carolina Sea Islands. This study is interesting because it focuses on two individuals and how their life histories affect their use of language, an approach which has been disfavored by the variationist tradition (in which looking at large numbers of speakers is treated as crucial), but which has now begun to find favor again (e.g. Wolfram and Beckett 1999). Both speakers' histories involve a fair amount of contact with members of the other group. Rickford's hypothesis was that they would show the effects of this contact in their linguistic systems, and this was true at the phonological level. However, in terms of morphology and syntax, they were quite different despite their history of interethnic contact, which parallels the findings of Ash and Myhill discussed above. In particular, the European-American speaker showed a complete absence of the creole grammatical features used by the African-American speaker. Rickford's interpretation is that "non-standard phonological features are part of a regional Sea Island identity in which both Blacks and Whites participate, but non-standard morpho-syntactic features are more heavily marked as creole and serve as ethnic markers" (1985: 107). Here again we see the interplay of local vs. specifically ethnic identity. Despite their phonological similarities, the morpho-syntactic differences that have been preserved between the European-American and African-American speakers reflect the social distance between these groups that is characteristic of life on the island.

Wolfram et al. (1999) report on a similar case, that of Muzel Bryant, who grew up as a member of the single African-American family on Ocracoke, a North Carolina island populated by European-Americans. One might expect that without a separate minority ethnic community to "compete" with the European-American community, she would simply have assimilated to European-American language norms. However, Muzel's phonological system is basically typical of what Wolfram et al. call "a basilectal AAVE variety" (1999: 156). She shows relatively few phonological features of the local island dialect; particularly noticeable is her almost complete lack of use of the [ɔi] variant of /ai/, as in the pronunciation of "high" as [hɔi], which is a crucial marker of Ocracoke speech. In the areas of morphology and syntax, however, Muzel's speech is more mixed, and the researchers found both AAVE features (many occurring less frequently than in most AAVE varieties) and features of the local Outer Banks English. She also revealed a lack of familiarity with local terms such as *O'cocker* for "Ocracoker."

These cross-currents in Muzel Bryant's speech reflect the fact that though she had frequent contact with European-Americans, her ethnicity served as a significant barrier to integration in the island community. While Wolfram et al. (1999) report that the islanders now care for Muzel and speak fondly of her, they also note the historical evidence that this family was not fully accepted

into the social life of the community by the other islanders, and that this social distance is reflected in Muzel's speech. It is particularly interesting that the relative lack of assimilation in phonology coupled with more convergence in the area of morpho-syntactic features is an exact reversal of the findings from Rickford's Sea Islands study.

Wolfram et al. (1999) suggest that the phonology and lexicon are the components of the Ocracoke brogue that are most often identified as unique, and thus it makes sense that the social distance experienced by Muzel's family would be reflected more in these components, rather than in the morphology or syntax. This analysis coincides well with Rickford's discussion, in a footnote to the Sea Islands study, of the difference between *local* and *generalized* prestige. Rickford disagrees with the analysis by Labov (1984), in which sound changes are treated as associated with local identity and prestige while grammatical variables are associated with more generalized resources (Rickford 1985: 111). He accepts the distinction itself, but rejects the association of phonology with "local" and syntax or morphology with "general," and gives a number of examples of grammatical variables strongly associated with local communities, and phonological ones that seem to have a generalized prestige. This analysis can encompass both the speech of Muzel Bryant, which lacks the phonological features so symbolic of Ocracokers, and the speech of Mr. King which lacks the grammatical features most characteristic of Creole/black identity on the Sea Islands.

It is also clear from both these studies that the boundaries of ethnicity can be very strong indeed, rooted in prejudice and a deep sense of the "other", even in small isolated communities where a more complete integration than among large urban populations might have been expected. This returns us to the question of what it means to be a member of a community. Even where, on the surface, extensive inter-ethnic contact and integration might seem to be the norm, the study of linguistic variation reveals the underlying preservation and expression of identities divided along the lines of ethnicity. For example, Henderson (1996) discusses racial isolation in Philadelphia among African-Americans who seem completely integrated into European-American communities.

3 Intra-ethnic Variation and the Expression of Ethnicity

3.1 *Interaction with other social factors: socio-economic status, gender and age*

Numerous studies show the importance of social categories in analyzing the use of particular features within the dialect of minority ethnic groups. I have selected only a few as examples, though many others are mentioned elsewhere

in the chapter. One of the first and most comprehensive studies of socioeconomic status and linguistic variation in a minority community is Wolfram's (1969) Detroit study of AAVE. He reports strong correlations of social class with all the phonological and grammatical variables that he analyzed, although the differences were more marked for some of the variables than for others. Many of the variables showed effects of gender as well. More recently, Edwards (1990) looked at a number of AAVE phonological features, also in Detroit, and found that social class and gender interacted in their correlation with these features. Interestingly, Edwards found no gender differences in his later study of four linguistic variables within a working class African-American neighborhood (Edwards 1997). Edwards attributes this finding to the very similar social roles filled by men and women in this community.

A good example of the importance of age as a social category is Fasold's (1972) study of African-American speakers in Washington, DC. Fasold made a three way distinction between children, adolescents, and adults, and found that children had the highest use of each of the AAVE variables studied (and adults had the lowest). More recently, Edwards' (1992) study of African-Americans in Detroit found marked generational differences in the use of AAVE variables. Younger speakers, and particularly those whose networks included more contacts with Anglos, tended to use the AAVE variants of these features less frequently. Of course, in any case where age is a factor there exists the possibility of a change in progress. Though most of the variables in the studies I have mentioned so far are considered to be stable, cases of shifts toward or away from the "standard" norm will be discussed below in the section on change.

3.2 *Categories relevant to the particular community*

In addition to these broad social categories, there may be more localized distinctions, which must be accounted for if our study of the relation of language to community is to be complete. A typical example is the distinction between *jocks* and *burnouts* discussed by Eckert (1989). "Jock" students in the US high school where Eckert did fieldwork were oriented toward the activities and culture of the school, whereas "burnout" students were oriented toward the working-class urban culture outside the school, with corresponding differences in their use of local sociolinguistic variables. Another example is the categories related to gang membership, which were first studied in Labov (1972a). More recently, in Fought (1997), I found that the distinction between gang members and non-gang members sometimes overrode other categories such as social class or gender in its correlations with certain variables among adolescents of Mexican-American background in Los Angeles. This study also revealed an additional category of people who "know gangsters" which was crucial to an understanding of the social structure of this young adult group. Mendoza-Denton (1997) explored the complex construction of identity among

Latinas in Northern California. In her study, the distinction between two different gang groups (Norteñas and Sureñas), was of primary importance with respect to the linguistic variable she was studying – -in/-ing alternation. She also discusses a number of other distinctions with local significance.

Outside the USA, Meyerhoff (1997) found that among the Bislama speakers of northern Vanuatu, membership in a family clan was a crucial element of the social structure. Clan affiliation affected the variable use of inclusive vs. exclusive first person plural pronouns (*yumi* and *mifala*). Although many studies have uncovered such local categories in their ethnographic research on particular communities, there is still a tendency among variationists to focus on age, gender, and social class, and then consider the sociological part of the study complete. These general categories are certainly important. Nonetheless, it is crucial to do the ethnographic fieldwork, particularly when minority ethnic communities are studied by a linguist from outside the ethnic group, who may not have, a priori, enough information about culturally-relevant distinctions.

3.3 *The effect of interlocutors*

The field of sociolinguistics in general has begun to give more attention to the role of interlocutors as part of the context of speaking. For years, the sociolinguistic interview as a methodology has dominated the field, particularly in the variationist tradition. Though this method has numerous advantages, it also has the marked disadvantage of inserting someone who is usually to some degree an outsider into the speech situation, and this is of particular concern for those studying ethnicity and language, in light of the observations of ethnicity as a sociolinguistic boundary discussed above. Recently, some sociolinguists have shifted their focus to other methods of data collection (e.g. Bailey 1993, Cukor-Avila 1997), while others have initiated systematic research on the role of other interactants.

Two recent studies of interlocutor effects are of particular interest to the topic of ethnicity and language. Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) compared two interviews with the same young female African-American speaker: one where the interviewer was a 25-year-old European-American woman, and one where the interviewer was a 41-year-old African-American woman. As might be expected, the speaker used significantly higher levels of AAVE features with the African-American interviewer. That ethnicity is the key factor in such shifting, rather than some form of accommodation (cf. Giles and St. Clair 1979) specifically related to the interviewer's usage of the same forms, is suggested by an earlier study that Rickford and McNair-Knox cite, Fasold (1972). In Fasold's study, African-American speakers used vernacular variants more with African-American than with European-American interviewers, even though the African-American interviewers were generally middle-class speakers of "Standard English" (Fasold 1972: 214).

Another very relevant study is Bell and Johnson (1997), conducted in New Zealand. The authors selected four speakers as research subjects: a Maori ethnicity male, a Maori female, a Pakeha (Anglo ethnicity) male, and a Pakeha female. Each of these people was interviewed three times: once by a person who shared their gender and ethnicity, once by a person of the same sex but the other ethnicity, and once by a person from their same ethnic group, but of the opposite sex. Bell and Johnson were able to trace quite specific rises and falls in the levels of linguistic variables as the characteristics of the interviewer were varied. For example, the use of *eh* functioned primarily as a marker of ethnicity (Maori), but also secondarily as a gender marker associated with Maori men. Once again, this underscores the importance of looking at ethnicity in the context of other factors such as gender, rather than in isolation, and confirms that differences between intraethnic and interethnic discourse can have a tremendous effect on the realization of linguistic variables by a particular speaker. We must not forget that the identity of the interviewer will influence the type of data collected, and that such data may or may not be representative of that speaker's use of variables, particularly those related to ethnicity and identity, when the interviewer is not present (Rickford 1987).

3.4 *Crossing: "borrowing" someone else's ethnicity*

The phenomenon of "crossing", where speakers deliberately use styles associated with other ethnic groups (Rampton 1995), represents one of the most interesting current trends in research on language and ethnicity. Rampton (1995) looks at the use of several language varieties associated with particular ethnic groups in London (including Jamaican Creole, Asian-accented English, and Punjabi) by young people outside the particular ethnic group, such as Anglo Londoners using "creole". There was also a study of the same topic by Hewitt (1982), which focused on the role of creole use in black British identity, as well as at its symbolic use by white adolescents. Both of these studies explore the complex attitudes of the in-group users of a variety toward crossing by outsiders. Hewitt, for example, points out that while black youngsters in London often talk negatively about Anglos' use of the creole, even to the point of saying "they are stealing our language" (1982: 226), these same adolescents may have Anglo friends among whom they freely encourage creole use. Rampton (1995) discovered that an emblematic use of Punjabi (e.g. swearing terms and stock phrases) by out-group individuals seemed to reflect a sense of interethnic unity among Asians and their non-Asian friends.

Cutler (1999) is particularly revealing in the context of issues relating to language use and integration into the community. She focuses on a European-American speaker who used AAVE features, but clearly was not attempting to construct a black identity for himself, or to be integrated into an African-American peer group. Instead, he seemed to be "borrowing" elements of the African-American experience, through hip-hop culture, while maintaining an

identity that is “in opposition to the black community” (Cutler 1999: 435). Bucholtz (1999) also argues that crossing does not necessarily represent the breaking down of boundaries between ethnic groups, and that it can in fact be used to perpetuate racial stereotypes.

Hall (1995) shows that workers in the telephone sex industry sometimes use stereotypes of race in creating “characters” for their clients. In her interviews, Hall found that some European-American women were more successful at performing a stereotyped “Black identity” on the phone than African-American women (successful in the sense that clients were more likely to believe that they were black). Conversely, one of the managers told Hall that “the best white woman we ever had here was Black” (1995: 202). It is important to keep in mind that an individual speaker’s repertoire may include linguistic elements characteristic of his or her own ethnic group, of other groups, or of stereotypes of other groups.

4 Research on Ethnicity and Language Change

4.1 *The focus of research on language in minority ethnic groups*

The sociolinguistic research on which current theories of language change are based, particularly in the area of sound change, has focused on majority communities, often on speakers of European-American ethnicity in large urban settings. Almost all the variationist studies of dialects associated with minority ethnic groups have focused on the following areas:

- grammatical variables that are unique to the community in question, such as habitual *be* in AAVE (e.g. Rickford 1992, Bailey and Maynor 1987, etc.)
- stable variables found also in a number of European-American dialects, such as variation between [ɪn] and [ɪŋ], or simplification of consonant clusters (e.g. Labov 1972a, Gilbert 1986, Mendoza-Denton 1997, Santa Ana 1996, etc.)
- variation between standard and non-standard variants, whether grammatical or phonological, including changes that involve either more use of a prestige variant (such as post-vocalic /r/), or less use of a nonstandard variant (such as Ø for 3rd person singular –s, as in Wolfram 1969, Edwards 1992, Rickford 1992, etc.).

Surprisingly little has been done on internally-motivated sound changes in minority ethnic communities, despite the crucial role that changes in progress have played in sociolinguistic theory. Possible reasons for this will be discussed below.

4.2 *Minority ethnic group participation in European-American sound changes*

One factor that may have contributed to the inadequate research on phonological change among minority ethnic groups is the finding in a number of studies that members of these groups were not participating in the local sound changes affecting European-American speakers (e.g. Labov 1966, Labov and Harris 1986, Bailey and Maynor 1987). Taken as a group, these studies have been interpreted as illustrating a general fact about the role (or lack thereof) of non-European-American speakers in sound change. Labov (1994), for example, comments on the non-participation of minority speakers in regional vowel shifts by suggesting that they “are instead oriented to a national pattern of koine formation within the nonwhite groups” (1994: 157). The sociolinguistic literature shows a fairly uniform acceptance of these ideas.

There is clear evidence that African-Americans in *some* communities do not show evidence of *some* local European-American sound changes, and that ethnicity can act as a strong sociolinguistic boundary. This pattern, however, has been generalized into claims that go beyond what can be supported by the research that has been done so far on various minority ethnic groups in the United States. It is worth emphasizing the danger inherent in generalizing about “nonwhite” ethnic groups, e.g. taking the language behavior of African-Americans in Philadelphia as possibly indicative of what one might find among Chinese-Americans in Berkeley. In fact, Hinton et al. (1987) and Luthin (1986) found that the Asian speakers in their sample were participating in the sound changes characteristic of European-Americans in the Bay Area. Many minority ethnic communities in the United States have been under-researched by variationists: numerous Asian groups, Native-Americans, even African-Americans in places like Ohio or Oregon. It is risky to guess whether *specific* ethnic speakers in *specific* regions will participate in any local European-American sound changes without studying them.

This is particularly true in light of the fact that there *are* actually some studies which show members of minority communities participating in sound changes characteristic of local European-American speakers. Labov’s (1963) classic study of Martha’s Vineyard is a case in point. Both the Portuguese and the Native-American groups on the island were participating in the centralization of (aw) and (ay). In fact, in the youngest generation, these groups often showed more of the local variables than their European-American counterparts. Similarly, Poplack (1978) found that among Puerto Rican children in Philadelphia there was evidence of phonological influences from the European-American local community. Most notably, the children were participating in several Philadelphia vowel shifts, including the fronting of /ow/ and the raising and backing of the nucleus of /ay/ before voiceless consonants. In Fought (1997), I looked at young Chicano speakers in Los Angeles and found that they were participating in the fronting of /u/ and in the backing of /æ/, both known to be sound changes in progress in California (Hinton et al. 1987).

Although it is tempting to conclude from these studies that speakers from various other groups participate in sound changes, while African-Americans do not, there are studies which suggest that even this statement is too global. Wolfram et al. (1997) looked at language change in the Outer Banks region of North Carolina, and found that some sound changes were in progress in both the black and white communities, including ungliding of /ai/ and the loss of front-glided /au/. Anderson (1997) found the ungliding of /ai/ among a group of Native Americans in North Carolina as well. However, other changes originating among European-Americans were not picked up by African-American speakers. In general, older speakers showed more influence from the local European-American dialect than younger ones, who seemed to be mostly shifting away (see also Wolfram 2000).

Also relevant is Bailey (1993), which reports on a large-scale phone survey of the state of Texas. A number of features known to represent current changes in European-American Texan dialect varieties (including /ai/-ungliding, as in Wolfram et al. 1997) were analyzed, focusing particularly on African-Americans. Bailey found that “blacks and whites participate equally in changes that became robust before World War II but not in those that have become robust since the war” (1993: 310). Note that as Bailey says, the groups do not participate *equally* in recent changes; the figures he gives for the (recent) /ai/-ungliding, for example, are 27 percent among white Texans, and 10 percent among black Texans. However, these figures do not tell us whether some segments of the African-American population are using as much monophthongal /ai/ as European-Americans, while others use none, or if African-Americans are simply progressing through the same changes but at a slower rate. It would be worthwhile to track such patterns in other populations, particularly in areas of the north and west which have more recent histories of settlement, in order to learn more about when African-Americans do and do not take part in local sound changes.

We must be on our guard against overgeneralizing the findings from a particular type of community to all others. Unfortunately, and this is of course true in fields other than linguistics, when a finding has been replicated several times, it becomes part of the canon, and subsequent studies tend to take it as a given, the point from which they begin. It is particularly important not to discourage younger scholars from pursuing the many unexplored areas of variation and change in minority ethnic communities by suggesting that there is nothing of interest to find. With luck, future research on the many communities that have not yet been studied will resolve some of the questions raised here.

5 Research on Changes in Progress in Ethnic Minority Communities

There are a few studies which explore the role of different European-American ethnic groups in sound changes. Labov (1966) showed in detail how Jewish,

Italian, and Irish groups were involved in the various vowel shifts characteristic of New York City. Laferriere (1979) looked at phonological change among these same groups in Boston, and found that [v] was associated with Italian and Irish ethnicities, but stigmatized by Jewish speakers. These studies and some others (Knack 1991) show that ethnicity among European-American groups can be an important factor.

As mentioned in the first part of this section, the studies of changes in progress within non-European-American ethnic communities in the USA have overwhelmingly focused on areas other than internally-motivated sound changes. We do, however, have in-depth research on grammatical variables unique to particular minority ethnic varieties, such as increased use of habitual *be* in AAVE (e.g. Rickford 1992, Bailey and Maynor 1987). Overall, many of the same social factors that affected stable variation like consonant cluster deletion, are also relevant to these types of changes in progress: e.g. gender, age, social class. In addition, Cukor-Avila and Bailey (1996) investigate a social factor that I have not discussed yet: the urban/rural distinction. Their study not only examines some of the differences between urban and rural varieties of AAVE, but also documents, through a longitudinal study of one individual, how the urban variety (including features like copula deletion and habitual *be*) is spreading into rural areas.

Several studies have also looked at shifts toward more use of standard forms – in other words “change from above” (Labov 1972b: 178). Some of these focus mainly on grammatical variables. One very interesting study in this group is Nichols 1983. Her fieldwork with African-American speakers in a rural area of coastal South Carolina revealed complex correlations of gender with the use of creole-like vs. standard forms. In particular, while there was little difference between the oldest groups of men and women, young and middle-aged women led in the use of standard forms. Nichols shows how this pattern is related to different economic and employment opportunities for men and women of the younger generation. In a similar vein, Rickford (1992) looks at six different morphological and syntactic variables among African-Americans in East Palo Alto. Rickford’s results are intriguing in that the younger speakers in the study showed decreasing use of some nonstandard forms, but increasing use of others.

Other studies of change in the use of nonstandard features focus on phonological variables, although there are fewer of this type. Bailey and Thomas (1998), for example, report on the increased use of post-vocalic /r/ among African-American speakers in Texas. Denning (1989) looks at the tendency toward realizations of final /i/ (as in *happy*) among young AAVE speakers in East Palo Alto that are higher and fronter than those of older speakers. This represents a change away from the southern origins of the dialect and toward the surrounding European-American dialects of California. He also raises the possibility of some further phonological similarities between young African-American and European-American speakers in California, but as far as I know these have not been investigated further. Butters (1986) looks

at phonological, morphological, and syntactic features in Wilmington, NC, and finds a shift toward standard forms among younger speakers.

There are only a handful of studies that focus on “changes from below” (Labov 1972b: 179) in minority communities, and most of these do so in relation to changes taking place in the matrix dialect. As was mentioned earlier, my research on Mexican-American speakers in Los Angeles (Fought 1997, 1999a) revealed that these speakers are taking part in sound changes characteristic of the local European-American community, namely /u/-fronting, /æ/-backing, and /ɑ/-raising. The social factors that correlated with the use of these variables included gender, social class, and gang status, and the three factors interacted with one another in complicated ways.

Interestingly, the “curvilinear pattern” (Labov 1980) of interior social classes leading changes from below did not apply among these speakers. The effects of gang status and gender were more powerful than those of social class with respect to the variables in this community. This serves as a good reminder that until more research is done on change in minority ethnic communities, we cannot be certain which patterns associated with change among European-Americans will apply. There is no reason to expect that categories such as “working class,” for example, would have the same significance in majority European-American and other ethnic communities. The relationship of such categories to linguistic variables must be determined for each community (cf. Rickford 1986a, Edwards 1996).

Some studies of change among African-Americans in the South, discussed earlier, are also relevant here. Wolfram et al.’s (1997) study of an African-American family in the Outer Banks region found that the AAVE dialect of older speakers was strongly influenced by the local European-American dialect, but that younger speakers seemed to use fewer local dialect features and more “general” AAVE features. Bailey’s (1993) Texas phone survey data showed a difference for the participation of African-Americans in sound changes that became robust before and after World War II. It would be interesting to see if a detailed study of migration patterns to and from these areas revealed any correlations with the linguistic changes. Another report on the same Texas survey data is found in Bailey and Thomas (1998), which looks more broadly at the vowel systems for several African-American speakers, and tracks a number of changes across speakers representing different generations. The results confirmed the findings of Bailey (1993): the African-American speakers were more likely to show evidence of older changes from the European-American dialect. Like Wolfram et al. (1997), they found that older speakers’ systems were more similar to those of their European-American counterparts. Interestingly, where there were differences in this older group, Bailey and Thomas were often able to trace creole sources for the AAVE variants.

Each of these studies is motivated by questions about how the minority ethnic dialects, AAVE or Chicano English, fit in with the local European-American vernaculars. To my knowledge, *there has not been a single large-scale*

study of sound change internal to an ethnic minority community. That is, nobody has looked for sociolinguistic patterns of vowel shift within, say, an African-American community, in the same way that such shifts have been studied for European-American speakers in Philadelphia, Detroit, etc., focusing on the internal phonological system of the dialect without reference to European-American varieties. Bailey and Thomas' study is perhaps the one that comes closest to this idea, in that it looks at entire vowel systems and discusses, at least briefly, some features (e.g. lack of glide with /e/ and /o/) outside the context of comparisons with European-Americans. Nonetheless, it focuses on individuals, without investigating any correlation with other social factors, such as gender, social class, etc., and it ultimately emphasizes the question of convergence or divergence from European-American dialects. I do not mean to detract from what is in fact a fine and much needed study. However, the field lacks a comprehensive investigation of sound change "from below" and of the social factors with which it correlates within a community of speakers other than European-Americans.

Sound changes are a universal feature of languages over time, and as such must be present in AAVE, Chicano English, etc. Research on this topic could make great contributions to sociolinguistic theory. First, some minority ethnic communities might have a very different social organization from European-American communities in terms of class structure, local categories, etc. Also, with dialects such as Chicano English, the presence of a second language in the community (Spanish), with its historical influence on the phonological system, presents some intriguing possibilities. For example, do sound changes in Chicano English tend to move toward or away from Spanish phonology (or neither)?

Why has so little been done on this topic? It is easy to fall into a pattern of treating minority ethnic groups as marked, as the "other," even for those who come from non-European-American ethnic backgrounds themselves. The debate about divergence and convergence, the study of inter-ethnic contacts, the findings about when ethnic minority speakers do or do not participate in European-American sound changes, all have contributed to the field of sociolinguistics as a whole. Yet all of them can be seen as lenses for viewing the dialects of ethnic minority groups relative to a European-American standard. Even research on features such as habitual *be* is based in part on the fact that such features are perceptually salient due to their absence in other dialects. Here again, there is a parallel with sociolinguistic studies of gender, which have often focused on how women are different from men. In contrast with this earlier research, Coates (1996) focuses only on women's language, even though the study had collected data on men also. Researchers on ethnic minority communities and language should be similarly confident in taking an "internal" approach to this topic, and moving beyond comparisons with European-Americans. Wolfram (2000) takes a step in this direction in his discussion of the development and maintenance of vernacular language norms in two ethnic minority speech communities.

5.1 *Sound change and regional differences in minority ethnic dialects*

Very little systematic study of regional pronunciation differences within the dialects of ethnic minority groups, e.g. AAVE, has been done. In this section I will address the following questions, related to regional variation in AAVE (since it is the ethnic minority dialect that has been most studied to date):

- To what extent is there regional variation in AAVE?
- Is AAVE strikingly more homogeneous across the USA than European-American vernacular varieties? and if so, is this surprising?
- Is the degree of cross-regional similarity different for different components of the grammar (e.g. syntax vs. phonology)?
- What are the possible explanations for similarities and differences across AAVE dialects?

Despite the fact that much more cross-regional research on AAVE is needed, certain assumptions about regional variation (or lack thereof) in AAVE have become accepted within the field of sociolinguistics.

First of all, primary importance has been given to the grammatical similarities in the dialect that have been found across the country. Rickford (1992), in discussing real-time evidence of change, comments:

Implicit in Labov and Harris's [1986] original claims about divergence . . . was the assumption that *urban Vernacular Black English was pretty similar from one city to the next*, so that comparisons with earlier studies in other cities could serve as evidence of change in real time. This is by no means an ideal strategy, since the assumption of uniformity might be invalid for specific variables, and the social dynamics of change might be quite different from one city to the next. However, since no major grammatical differences have emerged from the study of Vernacular Black English in Detroit, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Atlanta, Wilmington, Berkeley, and Los Angeles, it seems reasonable to accept comparisons with earlier studies in other cities as preliminary real-time evidence.

(Rickford 1992: 262, italics added)

In a similar vein, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1999) give the following summary of regional variation in AAVE in their textbook *American English*, which, though not completely evident from its title, is a comprehensive, up-to-date survey of sociolinguistic topics.

Up to this point we have discussed AAVE as if it were a unitary variety in different regions of the United States. We must, however, admit regional variation within AAVE, just as we have to admit regional variation within vernacular Anglo American varieties. Certainly, some of the Northern metropolitan versions of AAVE are distinguishable from some of the Southern rural versions, and South Atlantic coastal varieties are different from those found in the Gulf region.

While admitting some of these regional variations, we hasten to point out that one of the most noteworthy aspects of AAVE is the common core of features shared across different regions. Features such as habitual *be*, copula absence, inflectional *-s* absence, among a number of other grammatical and phonological structures, are found in locations as distant as Los Angeles, California; New Haven, Connecticut; Meadville, Mississippi; Austin, Texas; and Wilmington, North Carolina, as well as in both urban and rural settings. Thus we recognize regional variation in AAVE while concluding, at the same time, that the regional differences do not come close to the magnitude of regional differences that exist across Anglo varieties. (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1999: 174–5)

This passage summarizes accurately the prevailing stance of sociolinguists toward the issue of regional variation in AAVE. It is known that there are some regional differences, but generally this is taken to be minor, relative to differences among European-American populations. A northern/southern dichotomy is often acknowledged, as in the citation above (and also Labov 1998: 147), but otherwise dialect variation within AAVE is rarely discussed.

There is a tremendous need for more research on the question of AAVE and regional variation. The major studies of AAVE grammar (e.g. Wolfram 1969, Fasold 1972, Labov 1972a, Baugh 1983, Rickford 1992) do not necessarily overlap completely in terms of the grammatical features on which they report. It might be worth exploring more carefully whether there are certain AAVE grammatical features that appear in some parts of the country and not others. With respect to the phonological component, as Bailey and Thomas put it “phonology is the neglected stepchild of research on . . . AAVE” (1998: 85). Even in what has been done, when researchers say that there are phonological similarities across AAVE dialects, they may be referring to anything from nonstandard features (e.g. [θ]/[f] alternation), which may themselves be variable within the dialect, to consonant cluster simplification, found in most other dialects of English but quantitatively different in AAVE. Again, we should find out more about exactly which subsets of these features are definitely characteristic of which regions, as well as exploring the phonological features which are *not* common across regional variants of AAVE. There can be no doubt, as Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1999) point out above, that there are distinguishable regional varieties of AAVE², but these have not been systematically explored.

A crucial question is whether the degree of similarity across AAVE dialects is noticeably greater than the regional variation found among European-American varieties, and if so, whether this is surprising. One explanation which has been proposed for similarities that have been found across AAVE dialects in different regions is that African-Americans all speak more or less the same way because they are oriented to a sense of ethnic solidarity and nation-wide cohesiveness. This is suggested, for example, in the citation from Labov (1994) above; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1999: 181) and Wolfram (2000) give similar explanations for the shift of younger speakers away from the local dialect in South Carolina. As far as I know, sociolinguists have not explored independently the validity of the social orientation implied in this interpretation.

Do African-Americans in Atlanta feel a strong sense of kinship with those in San Francisco, and at what level? Does this override their sense of local pride in being Atlantans (or Southerners)? These questions go back to the issue of how ethnicity is defined and constructed. If we believe that African-Americans are somehow involved in a process of keeping their dialects very similar across the country because of some sense of national black identity we must investigate how the social process of a shared identity works, quite apart from linguistic issues. (See Marable 1995 for a sociological discussion of divisions within African-American groups.) An additional, and in my opinion more promising, explanation is provided by Wolfram (2000), who suggests that patterns of expanded and regular contact among African-Americans in different regions, such as "homecoming" events and family reunions, may also play a role in the transmission of vernacular features across regions.

The only research that I know of which shows some evidence of increased use of "general" AAVE phonological features (as opposed to just a lack of local European-American features) is that of Wolfram and his associates (Wolfram et al. 1997, Wolfram 2000) done in the south. Wolfram (2000) found that the dialect of older AAVE speakers in Hyde County was associated with "sounding country" by the younger generation of African-Americans, which provides an explanation for their increased use of features associated with urban AAVE. Of course, this urban/rural distinction is not equally relevant in all areas of the country. It would be tremendously interesting to see whether phonological studies in other areas, particularly the west, north, etc., show evidence of this tendency toward "general AAVE" features among young speakers. Denning (1989) suggests that AAVE speakers in California, for example, may be moving away from these general norms.

It is possible that once the cross-regional research on AAVE phonology is undertaken, focusing not on specific stigmatized variants but on entire vowel systems, we may find some clear phonological differences in the AAVE of geographically distant regions. This pattern of strong grammatical similarities with significant phonological differences exactly parallels that of European-American dialects across the USA. The total number of grammatical differences in the English of different regions (and even different countries) is small compared with the vast and varied body of phonological differences, as discussed by Wald (1984: 17), and as is evident from the chapters on grammatical versus phonological differences in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1999). In sum, we may not need to treat regional variation (or lack thereof) in AAVE as a special or noteworthy case, qualitatively different from variation across European-American communities.

6 Future Directions

The most crucial direction for future research, in my view, is the study of sound change within ethnic minority communities, as discussed above. Sound

change has had a central role in sociolinguistic theory, and yet the vast majority of our data on this phenomenon comes from European-American communities. More research on communities outside the USA, particularly in areas where ethnic differences are an important part of the social structure, is also needed. Along with these projects, an in-depth study of regional dialect differences within AAVE and other dialects across the USA would be extremely interesting. In particular, the area of intonation in studies of AAVE, Chicano English and other dialects has been fairly sparse, although the few studies that exist suggest that this would be a very fruitful area (e.g. Thomas 1999, Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985).

In addition, more research on US communities that are neither African-American nor Latino is badly needed. There has been some work on Native-American communities (e.g. Leap 1993, Anderson 1997, Wolfram and Dannenberg 1999, etc.) but much less than for other groups, and there is very little study of Asian-American groups at all. There is no nationally recognized dialect associated with an Asian group, although there are occasional references in the literature to Vietnamese English (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1999: 167). The difficulties of an outsider doing fieldwork within, for example, the "Chinatown" areas found in many large urban centers may have contributed to the lack of research on these communities. With luck, linguistic researchers from inside the communities will be available in the future, since these ethnographically complex social settings could make great contributions to the field of sociolinguistics.

Finally, an area that has received very little attention from linguists is, as mentioned above, the construction of ethnicity by people of mixed race. Not everyone belongs unequivocally to a single ethnic group. Investigation of the speech of such individuals, along with an in-depth study of their construction of identity, both personally and within a community, could provide an exciting new area for sociolinguistic research on language and ethnicity.

Appendix: Sociological References on Ethnicity with Annotations

General theory of race/ethnicity

Anthias, F. and N. Yuval-Davis (1992). *Racialized Boundaries*. New York: Routledge.

Discusses race in the context of theories of nationalism, class, gender, and identity, focusing particularly on the situation in the UK.

Davis, F. J. (1991). *Who is Black? One nation's definition*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Very broad. Discusses laws about race, effects of skin tone, construction of race in other countries (Brazil, Korea, Haiti, etc.), trans-racial adoptions.

Gandy, O. (1998). The social construction of race. In O. Gandy, *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press. 35–92.

Various sociological theories of race, race (not just ethnicity) as constructed, identity and reference groups.

Healey, J. (1997). *Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the United States: Inequality, Group Conflict and Power*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Statistics on economic status, education, attitudes; also discusses interaction of race with gender, specific issues related to African-American, Native-American, Hispanic-American and Asian-American groups.

Omi, M. and H. Winant (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York and London: Routledge.

Political history of "race," class-based and other theoretical approaches.

Yinger, J. M. (1985). Ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology* 11: 151–80.

Review of sociological work on the definition and analysis of ethnicity, including a large bibliography.

Studies of ethnicity among African-Americans

Hecht, M., M. J. Collier and S. Ribeu (1993). *African American Communication: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Interpretation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Detailed information on theories of construction of identity, interactions of race/sex/class, communication patterns.

Marable, M. (1995). *Beyond Black and White: Rethinking Race in American Politics and Society*. London: Verso.

Links race and culture to power structures, history of the concept of "multiculturalism," effects of class within African-American communities.

Miscellaneous

Azoulay, K. (1997). *Black, Jewish and Interracial: It's Not the Color of Your Skin but the Race of your Kin, and other Myths of Identity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Interethnic (i.e. mixed race) identities, role of perception of others in identity, history of the concept of "biracial."

Waters, M. (1990). *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

The concept of ethnicity among European-Americans, "choice" of ethnicity, views on topics such as interracial marriage.

Zack, N. (1993). *Race and Mixed Race*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Social history of the concept of mixed race, "racial theory," laws about mixed race people.

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NOTES

- 1 Of course, this is not the only possible perspective. Anulka Thomas (p.c.) reports the experience of a Panamanian girl of African descent who was told by a teacher to check "Black" on the census form because "that's what people see when they look at you."
- 2 An anecdote told to me by John Fought (personal communication) confirms that these differences can be significant even at a relatively short geographical distance. While standing in line in Philadelphia, he overheard an exchange in AAVE between the person in front of him and the clerk who was assisting customers. The clerk was a local African-American man, and the customer was a young African-American woman. After the two had conversed very briefly about the transaction at hand, the clerk said, "You're not from around here, are you?" and the woman responded, "No, I'm from New York."

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