

# All of the above: New coalitions in sociocultural linguistics<sup>1</sup>

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As the history of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology shows, a sharp distinction between these fields and others concerned with the sociocultural investigation of language is untenable given their significant common ground. The article describes the current state of relations between sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and similar approaches to language, culture, and society. It then locates theoretical, methodological, thematic, and political points of commonality and explores emerging areas of productive dialogue among these closely overlapping research traditions. Two analytic examples, one focused on race talk in sociolinguistic interviews with European American youth and the other on ideologies of English among sexual and gender minorities in India, illustrate the benefits of bringing together different branches of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology.

**KEYWORDS:** Theory, methodology, interdisciplinarity, ethnoracial labels, gender and sexuality, identity, globalization

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## INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and the 1970s, U.S. researchers of language, culture, and society from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives made common cause to create a field that would put language at the center of social and cultural life. The intellectual, and especially the interdisciplinary, promise of this project generated excitement throughout the social sciences, particularly in anthropology, sociology, and psychology, as well as linguistics. In the United States, the scholars who laid the conceptual and institutional foundations for such a field include Richard Bauman, William Bright, Susan Ervin-Tripp, Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman, Erving Goffman, John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, Gail Jefferson, William Labov, Harvey Sacks, Gillian Sankoff, Emanuel Schegloff, and Joel Sherzer, among many others. Such scholars initiated and furthered a number of different approaches to language as a sociocultural phenomenon, among them variationist sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, symbolic interactionism, and the sociology of language. These developments led to a rich interdisciplinary investigation of language, culture, and society.

It was during this time that the label *sociolinguistics* came to be used as a cover term for these and other disparate areas of research. Despite the early recognition of important differences in their theoretical and methodological commitments, such varied perspectives were often treated as complementary rather than competing, as attested by a number of edited volumes incorporating work within multiple areas (e.g. Bauman and Sherzer 1974; Bright 1966; Giglioli 1972; Gumperz and Hymes 1964; Hymes 1964; Pride and Holmes 1972). As Duranti (2003: 328) notes, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology were closely connected both intellectually and institutionally in this period, with many linguistic anthropologists engaging more with scholarship on language in other disciplines than with the other subfields of anthropology.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, scholars involved in this research program were equally concerned with specialization and disciplinarity as they established the sociocultural study of language as a legitimate subspecialty within their own disciplines.

The terminological flux that emerged in early programmatic statements is indicative of the simultaneously disciplinary and interdisciplinary orientation of scholars during this era. For instance, in 1964 Hymes proposed the term *linguistic anthropology* for a field that he defined as 'the study of language within the context of anthropology' (1964: xxiii). Yet a decade later, acknowledging that the term had been eclipsed by the more widely used *anthropological linguistics*, he revised his terminology for pragmatic reasons: '“Sociolinguistics” is the most recent and most common term for an area of research that links linguistics with anthropology' (Hymes 1974: 83–85). Interestingly, in the original version of the paper on which the 1974 chapter is based, Hymes proposed a broader definition of sociolinguistics as 'an area of research that links linguistics with anthropology *and sociology*' (1971: 47; emphasis added). The elision of sociology as a contributor to sociolinguistics between the 1971 and 1974 versions appears to reflect the growing attention to disciplinary boundaries in this stage of the field's development.<sup>3</sup>

The differences between anthropological and linguistic approaches to sociolinguistics were also becoming apparent, with the former seeking to explicate culture through the investigation of speech events (e.g. Hymes 1974) and interactional practices (e.g. Gumperz 1982) and the latter largely drawing on social information to illuminate issues of linguistic structure, variation, and change. By the mid 1980s, *sociolinguistics* did not necessarily refer to the broad field originally conceptualized by Hymes and others; rather, the term was often used, especially in linguistics departments, to refer to a quantitative approach to language and society.<sup>4</sup> At this point, a disciplinary division of labor had emerged whereby statistical analysis was primarily reserved for sociolinguistics (in this new, narrower sense) and ethnographic work was carried out largely (but not entirely) under the rubric of linguistic anthropology; discourse analysis of various kinds was part of both fields, but it also retained a separate status as a subspecialty of linguistics that did not necessarily focus on sociocultural aspects of discourse. Nevertheless, *sociolinguistics* continued to be used by many scholars,

especially outside of linguistics departments, to denote a broadly interdisciplinary sociocultural approach to language.

The full details of many of these events have been told elsewhere, both by later observers and by the figures who played a central role in these developments (see Duranti 2001, 2003; Gumperz 1972, 1982, 1999; Koerner 1991; Lerner 2004; Murray 1998; Paulston and Tucker 1997; Shuy 1990), so we will not explore them further here. Instead, taking this historical sketch as our point of departure, in the present article we highlight the benefits of the original conception of language, culture, and society as a wide-ranging field of research. Building on the rich tradition of previous work, we seek to demonstrate that new theoretical and methodological advances reaffirm the importance of interdisciplinary connections (as exemplified, *inter alia*, by the contributions to this special issue).

Although the above discussion of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and related fields focuses on the U.S. context, with which we are most familiar, it is important to note that in many ways the field we describe has counterparts in other regions of the world. Sociocultural research on language has long been international in scope, extending to Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and both North and South America. Much of this work has been done under the disciplinary rubric of linguistics, via such subfields as sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and pragmatics. Conversely, linguistic anthropology is often framed by researchers in other countries as a largely American intellectual tradition, though one that has been very influential outside the North American context (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Rampton 2007). For example, Gumperz's (1982) concept of contextualization cues has had an impact in the United Kingdom and Europe within studies of cross-cultural interaction (Roberts, Davies and Jupp 1992) as well as the broader theorizing of context (Auer and Di Luzio 1992), linguistic-anthropological theories of genre by Bauman and others have been taken up in European studies of verbal art (Knoblauch and Kotthoff 2001), work on language ideologies by Silverstein, Woolard, Schieffelin, and other U.S.-based linguistic anthropologists has inspired related research elsewhere (e.g. Blommaert 1999; Rumsey 1990), and Hymes's program for the ethnography of communication informs the recent consolidation of 'linguistic ethnography' in the U.K. context (Rampton, Maybin and Tusting 2007).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the development and spread of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, along with discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and many other approaches, has created an interdisciplinary foundation for the study of language, culture, and society. These fields do not come together under a single disciplinary banner but rather forge an alliance or coalition that fosters dialogue and collaboration between complementary approaches. In recent years, new connections along these lines have been made as scholars both explore new questions and address familiar issues from innovative theoretical and methodological perspectives.

After summarizing what we see as the common themes and trends in contemporary research on language, culture, and society, we focus in detail on two examples from our own work that illustrate how methodologies and theories from different approaches may be productively brought together. Both examples illustrate two of the primary avenues of exploration in contemporary sociocultural linguistic research: the concern with the linguistic construction of identity in social interaction and the relationship between individual speaker agency and larger social structures and processes. Our first example addresses the growing cross-disciplinary focus in sociocultural-linguistic scholarship on the role of the researcher in the production of linguistic data. Conversation-analytic and linguistic-anthropological perspectives on the research interview are used to shed light on how ethnoracial categories, traditionally understood within quantitative sociolinguistics as static 'external variables' that influence linguistic variation, are in fact highly negotiable in the research context. Our second example considers how the theories and methods of linguistic anthropology enrich sociolinguistic and applied-linguistic perspectives on English as an international language. The analysis focuses on the effects of globalization on language use both in the center and at the periphery of modernity.

The convergence of these and many other strands of scholarship toward interdisciplinary research shows that an intellectual coalition for the study of language, culture, and society is already well established. For convenience and clarity, the term we use to refer to this coalition is *sociocultural linguistics*, which has the benefit of not having a long history of use, although other terms (including *sociolinguistics* in its original broad sense) would in principle do just as well.<sup>6</sup> This label also has the virtue of foregrounding the role of culture as well as society in linguistic investigations. Our intention in using this term is thus not to stake a territorial claim, but simply to highlight an interdisciplinary coalition that is already thriving but not always recognized. The present discussion focuses primarily on some of the areas of sociocultural linguistics where sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology have found common ground, but the fields that constitute sociocultural linguistics interact in many other complex ways that we cannot address here due to limits of space.

Before we turn to these issues, we should emphasize that our understanding of the development and current status of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology stems from our subject positions as academics who earned our PhDs in linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, in the mid 1990s. Our own graduate training was highly interdisciplinary, including coursework in anthropology, English, psychology, sociology, and women's studies, but at the same time we were acutely aware of the disciplinary divisions that separated linguistics from these other fields. As graduate students, we each sought scholars of like mind at a variety of conferences, such as the American Anthropological Association (which became the 'home' conference for both of us), the American Association for Applied Linguistics, the Modern Language Association, and New Ways of Analyzing Variation, and we tried to bring such scholars to our

own department by organizing conferences in language and gender through the Berkeley Women and Language Group (which has since evolved into the International Gender and Language Association).

Our scholarly identities were further shaped by our experience of the downturn in the 1990s academic job market, which led both of us to pursue positions outside the discipline in which we had earned our degrees. Between us, we have applied for positions in eight different fields and held jobs in three of these (anthropology, English, and linguistics). Through these and other encounters in disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, we have confronted a wide range of responses to our efforts to bring together perspectives from multiple areas of inquiry, from 'That's not linguistics (or anthropology or . . .)!' to 'Linguistics (or anthropology or . . .) has already done that!' to 'This is exactly what linguistics (or anthropology or . . .) needs!' We have found that we are both most comfortable working the boundaries rather than the center of academic fields, and happily, we have found an increasing number of colleagues in various disciplines around the world who share this preference.

The present article is our attempt to make sense of some of the changes we have witnessed and participated in during our academic careers up to this point. In the following pages, our emphasis on points of interdisciplinary (and intradisciplinary) intersection is designed not to deny or ignore the many areas of difference or even conflict between approaches, but to call attention to common ground that is sometimes overlooked in highly focused discipline-specific work as well as in the heat of academic debate. The perspective that we offer here is of course deeply informed by our own scholarly histories. No doubt readers coming from other academic trajectories and experiences would write their own account quite differently, and the commentaries at the end of this special issue, by Ben Rampton and by John Gumperz and Jenny Cook-Gumperz, offer additional points of view.

## DIRECTIONS IN SOCIOCULTURAL LINGUISTICS

The shape of sociocultural linguistics as an interdisciplinary field coheres less around a set of theories, methods, or topics than a concern with a general question: how does the empirical study of language illuminate social and cultural processes? The following outline of the methods, theories, sociocultural issues, linguistic phenomena, and political goals that have informed sociocultural linguistics from its beginnings to the present day gives some sense of the field's wide scope but also its abiding concern to place language at the center of scholarly inquiry about culture and society.

The methodological commitments of sociocultural linguistics lie both in quantitative and large-scale analysis and in qualitative and microlevel approaches such as ethnography (from anthropology and sociology) and discourse analysis and interactional analysis (from anthropological, sociological, social-psychological, and linguistic traditions, some of which are also influenced by

poststructuralist theories of discourse). While scholars have long combined these commitments in their concern to document and analyze the sociocultural context of language use in as much rich detail as possible, from the macrolevel social structures shaping language use to local community structures and practices to the moment-to-moment dynamics of interaction and language use, these combinations are beginning to take new forms. For example, Mendoza-Denton (2008) brings together variationist sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and social theory in her ethnographic study of Latina gang girls, and Jack Sidnell (2005) draws on both conversation analysis and linguistic-anthropological studies of kinship in his ethnography of a Caribbean community. Thus, the scope of research within as well as across studies may include close attention to linguistic structures and their functions and distribution; social, cultural, and political processes that can shed light on language use; and the interactional plane in which these sociolinguistic and sociocultural processes play out. This attention to context extends to the research encounter as a site of social, linguistic, and interactional work: many strands of sociocultural linguistics encourage reflexivity about the role of the researcher in data collection and analysis and the politics of representation in scholarly writing.

The interdisciplinarity of the field has also drawn researchers' attention to a number of theoretical concepts that have gained currency in the social sciences and humanities, many of them informed or inspired by linguistic insights; sociocultural-linguistic scholars have likewise produced their own indigenous theories. These theoretical resources include (but are not limited to) practice, performativity, indexicality, identity, ideology, emergence, agency, stance, activity, and representation. Because we have discussed these and related concepts in detail elsewhere (Bucholtz and Hall 2004a, 2005) and elaborate on some of them further below, we will not explore each of them in depth here. However, it is worth highlighting that it is this remarkably broad and fertile theoretical terrain, more than anything else, that distinguishes current sociocultural-linguistic research from that of earlier periods. While the general social, cultural, and linguistic structures and processes that researchers of language, culture, and society take up have long been the subject of sociocultural-linguistic investigation, these new theoretical perspectives allow scholars to view familiar types of phenomena in fresh ways.

Sociocultural-linguistic researchers of various stripes have also been steadily expanding the range of linguistic phenomena, both larger genres and the specific linguistic practices within them, that fall within their purview. Often such expansion creates connections between different approaches, as a field that has long examined a particular phenomenon gains a new vantage point from the fresh theoretical and methodological resources introduced by scholars in other areas. Thus, written texts and media of all kinds, long the domain of critical discourse analysis, for many years received far less attention than spoken language in linguistic-anthropological and sociolinguistic studies alike. Now, however, they are important data sources for the study of linguistic representation and language

ideology in these fields. Likewise, the institutional discourses of late modernity, a primary focus of applied linguistics and many traditions of discourse analysis, have gained ground in linguistic anthropology (e.g. Agha 1997; Collins and Blot 2003), and performance-based speech events, traditionally the domain of linguistic anthropology, have begun to attract greater interest within sociolinguistics (e.g. Chun 2004; Schilling-Estes 1998). All of these genres as well as many others are increasingly examined not as discourse types extractable from their context of use but as situated activity systems in which language is one resource among others for coordinating social action and endowing it with cultural and political meaning.

The specific linguistic resources available to language users for accomplishing sociocultural work are quite varied, from specific speech sounds to grammatical structures to entire genres, and so sociocultural linguistics has been alive to the full range of human linguistic and communicative activity. For example, it has been recognized that language is an embodied practice that must be analyzed as such (e.g. Goodwin 1994; Norris 2004). Likewise, once-unfashionable aspects of language – most notably the lexicon, which was previously set aside by many variationist sociolinguists as less systematic and hence less interesting than other parts of language – have received renewed attention, particularly with regard to how such linguistic forms function and vary within discourse (e.g. Agha 2003; Kiesling 2005). And in addition to bringing new analytic and theoretical perspectives to bear on linguistic phenomena of longstanding interest like language contact, code-switching, and multilingualism (e.g. Auer 1998; Milroy and Muysken 1995), and language shift, endangerment, and revitalization (e.g. Heller and Duchêne 2007; Tsitsipis 1998), sociocultural linguists are also turning to topics like style and stylization (e.g. Eckert 2000; Rampton 1999), language ideologies and attitudes (e.g. Blommaert 1999; Niedzielski and Preston 1999; Woolard, Schieffelin and Kroskrity 1998), and metalinguistics (e.g. Jaworski, Coupland and Galasinski 2004; Lucy 1993), all of which benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Finally, sociocultural linguistics, whose constituent fields have always been deeply committed to issues of social equality and social justice (e.g. Cameron et al. 1992; Fairclough 1992; Rickford 1997; Zentella 1996), has been re-energized as a coalitional approach through interaction with other disciplines engaged in these problems. One notable development is the study of identity, especially gender and sexuality on the one hand (e.g. Bucholtz, Liang and Sutton 1999; Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Livia and Hall 1997; Morrish and Sauntson 2007) and race and ethnicity on the other (e.g. Harris and Rampton 2003; Pagliai and Farr 2000) as social categories that are both embedded within systems of social inequality and shaped by the agentive practices of individual speakers; many other dimensions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity have also been examined (for overviews, see Bucholtz and Hall 2004a, 2004b, 2005). At the same time, researchers are offering innovative perspectives on large social structures and processes that replicate inequality, such as political economy (e.g. Cameron 2000; McElhinny

2007), nationalism and the nation-state (e.g. Gal 2001), and globalization and transnationalism (e.g. Besnier 2007; Coupland 2003). In this way, sociocultural linguistics continues to assert its status as a politically progressive field that has deep relevance for a wide range of sociopolitical issues around the world.

### EMERGING DIALOGUES IN SOCIOCULTURAL LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

Perhaps the most important characteristic of sociocultural linguistics as we see it taking shape today is a greater willingness by its practitioners to engage in dialogue across the borders of its constituent subfields. In a number of cases, lack of intellectual exchange has been due to the gulf between the concerns in each domain. But even when researchers in different fields have had a shared object of research focus, they have not always entered into dialogue with scholarship from other traditions. This lack of engagement with other paradigms is not necessarily due to lack of awareness of the work going on within them; in some cases it is motivated by a deliberate rejection of methodological commitments perceived as being at odds with one's own field. Thus, conversation analysis often rejects the ethnographic methodology of linguistic anthropology, much of quantitative sociolinguistics has shown little interest in the close examination of interaction which lies at the heart of conversation analysis, and both conversation analysis and linguistic anthropology frequently dismiss the statistical analysis characteristic of variationist-sociolinguistic research. However, in some cases, such differences between approaches have given rise to critical engagements and creative adaptations that have had the beneficial effect of initiating a dialogue across intellectual divides and moving sociocultural-linguistic inquiry in new directions. The articles in this special issue provide a number of different illustrations of such dialogues between sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology.

The contribution by Kathryn Woolard is centrally concerned with how the linguistic-anthropological concept of linguistic ideology can be brought to bear on an issue long fundamental to variationist sociolinguistics: sound change. As Woolard notes, Silverstein's (1985) original tripartite conceptualization of the 'total linguistic fact' gave equal attention to linguistic form, linguistic ideology, and social use, positioning linguistic ideology as the mediating link between the other two nodes. But linguistic anthropology has tended to focus on the relationship between linguistic ideology and social structure to the exclusion of linguistic form. Although numerous linguistic anthropologists have investigated the ways in which cultural readings of the place of language in social life contribute to the intensification of social hierarchy or the establishment of social identity, few have turned their attention to the potential of these readings for motivating particular kinds of sound change. Woolard addresses this gap by considering why it is that specific linguistic variables come to emerge in particular sociohistorical moments as sociolinguistic icons that drive sound change. Her

answer relies on Joseph Errington's (1985) use of the notion of 'relative pragmatic salience,' the phenomenon by which certain classes of morphemes and lexemes, among them personal pronouns and kin terms, are regarded by speakers as more conducive to doing social-semiotic work because of their prominence in mediating social relations. Revisiting a range of studies from both linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists, Woolard suggests that these pragmatically salient elements, by foregrounding specific phonological elements, can also provide ideological motivation for sound change. Her work thus brings together anthropological theories of linguistic ideology with variationist-sociolinguistic work on phonological change, offering an innovative-sociostructural answer to the question of why sociolinguistic icons become iconic.

If linguistic anthropology has often neglected to interrogate the question of linguistic form in its explorations of the total linguistic fact, variationist sociolinguistics has until recently neglected the issue of social meaning, a subject taken up by Penelope Eckert in her article. Challenging the traditional understanding of linguistic variables as merely reflecting speakers' membership in social categories, Eckert argues that variables are instead constituted within a fluid and ever-changing 'indexical field' of ideologically-related meanings, any one of which may become activated for particular purposes in localized and situated uses of the variable. Silverstein's (2003) exposition of the indexical order as involving a continuous process of reinterpretation provides fuel for Eckert's analysis; she seeks to underscore the ways in which the social meanings of variables are contextually bound and always in flux. While speakers may indeed use variables to invoke a pre-existing indexical value, as traditional studies of variation have emphasized, they may also use variables to stake claim to a new value, and these new values may themselves become the ground for future indexical innovations. Sound change is thus fundamentally a product of everyday discursive exchange, as speakers are everywhere involved in the ongoing reinterpretation of indexical links between form and meaning. As Eckert herself acknowledges, the small-scale perspective that she proposes will require the study of variables that are not transparently linked to the large-scale shifts that are the focus of more traditional variationist work. In this way, her work moves sociolinguistics onto new theoretical and analytic ground.

Jack Sidnell's contribution extends the discussion of interdisciplinarity in a different direction, as he brings a linguistic-anthropological understanding of local context to conversation analysis (CA), an area of study that has traditionally approached the structural properties of interaction as universal. While Sidnell supports CA's constitution of a set of generic principles that organize talk-in-interaction, he is interested in how these principles may be inflected or 'torqued' by local circumstances. Taking Gumperz's (1964) comparative study of speech practices in Khalapur, India, and Hemnesberget, Norway, as his point of departure, Sidnell compares the organization of other-initiated repair in two Caribbean communities – the Grenadine island of Bequia and the Indo-Guyanese village

of Callander – and finds systematic parallels as well as differences in how these communities initiate repair of a previous speaker's turn. But as his ultimate goal is explanatory and not descriptive, Sidnell traces the reasons for these findings to three causal factors situated in local circumstance: the grammatical patterning of yes-no questions in both communities; the onomastic system; and demographic patterns related to residence and marriage. The fact that the population of the Bequian community is more isolated and static than that of the exogamous Callanders, for instance, accounts for the islanders' use of a specialized repair strategy for dealing with the use of an unfamiliar name, since their conversations are based on the assumption that speakers will recognize other community members. For Sidnell, structures of social interaction are thus neither reflections of pre-existent social categories nor precipitates of ideology or social structure; rather, they are generic forms that are necessarily inflected by the local conditions in which they are embedded. This perspective on CA, which requires ethnographic methodology alongside the location and description of interactional structures, is fundamental to establishing sustained engagements between linguistic anthropology and conversation analysis.

Finally, Monica Heller's article speaks more broadly to the many subfields that constitute sociocultural linguistics by revisiting key theoretical concepts that have been central to research on language and society within the nation-state, particularly language, community, and identity. In an explication of the changing political-economic terrain of francophone Canada, Heller argues that researchers would do well to revise our understanding of these concepts to account for new forms of social organization produced by the demands of a globalized new economy, and especially the new economy of services and information. Given the mobility and multiplicity now associated with global flows of capital, as well as the commodification of language that such flows often encourage in state agendas, Heller argues, it is no longer viable to treat languages as bounded, identities as stable, or communities as uniform. Outlining a variety of global processes that are reshaping dominant understandings of each of these concepts in francophone Canada, she illustrates how a shift in focus from object to process – that is, from the boundaries or categories themselves to their creation – will enhance analysis across disciplinary divides.

We now turn to two examples of how our own work seeks to contribute to such creative alliances among sociocultural linguistic traditions. The first of these, which focuses on Bucholtz's research, examines how interactional and ethnographic insights into the research interview bring data on ethnoracial categories that sociolinguists have traditionally treated as mere 'background' information into the forefront of analysis. The second, which focuses on Hall's research, examines how the tremendous interest in globalization within applied linguistics and sociolinguistics can be enriched by the ethnographic sensibility of linguistic anthropology.

## MOVING MARGINALIA TO THE CENTER OF SOCIOCULTURAL LINGUISTICS

As the foregoing discussion of both long-standing and emergent scholarly coalitions suggests, the social and linguistic processes of interest in much recent sociocultural-linguistic research are increasingly those that were long viewed as marginal to the core concerns of any of the field's constituent perspectives. Calls for greater attention to social groups historically at the periphery of analysis have begun to be heeded, although a great deal of work remains to be done.<sup>7</sup> And in addition to increased interest in formerly marginalized linguistic topics such as embodied language and the lexicon, as mentioned above, researchers have also started to examine the most peripheral linguistic phenomenon of all: the off-record, backstage, and unofficial language use that is often treated as the unusable chaff of data collection processes. Data of this kind are a valuable resource for understanding how language is embedded in social, cultural, and interactional processes.

Acknowledgment of such peripheral phenomena is far from unprecedented: in developing the sociolinguistic-interview methodology as a technique for eliciting variants throughout the full range of a speaker's linguistic repertoire from vernacular to standard, Labov (1972a) found that it was precisely the talk at the interstices of the interview situation – when the phone rang, family members wandered in, or visitors dropped by – that was richest in the production of vernacular forms. Likewise, researchers have begun to make a virtue of so-called 'bad data' by showing the wealth of insights that can be gleaned from data that are often discarded as 'inauthentic' due to the artificiality of the speech situation or the speaker's awareness of the researcher's linguistic interest (e.g. Harrison 2005; Schilling-Estes 1998). From the standpoint of linguistic anthropology, Briggs (1986) demonstrates that the research interview is a valuable context for ethnographic discovery, as the interviewer learns (often through embarrassing blunders) culturally-appropriate practices of asking and answering. Such studies emphasize the ways in which speakers agentively negotiate the research context to accomplish their own social and interactional goals, which may not always intersect with those of the interviewer. In short, even 'bad' data can be put to good use, if researchers are open to looking at it from a fresh vantage point. And even parts of linguistic data that scholars often set aside or overlook as periphery, background, or undesirable 'noise' can yield new insights if they are subjected to the same level of analysis as the data that usually takes center stage (see also Mondada 2005; Myers 2006). Hence, in directing our analytic focus to the dark, unfrequented corners of our data, to the parts we usually fast-forward past (or the digital equivalent), we may find that unexpected and interesting issues arise, the analysis of which often requires a creative combination of theories and methods.

In fact, in an extremely encouraging trend, scholars in fields that have been most critical of interview methods, such as conversation analysis, have begun to bring techniques of interactional analysis to bear on research interviews and similar forms of elicited data in which the interactional context was not

foregrounded in the original analysis (Speer 2002a; van den Berg, Wetherell and Houtkoop-Steenstra 2004). One benefit of this approach is that the formerly intractable distinction between 'naturally occurring' or 'authentic' and 'artificial' or 'inauthentic' data no longer has the same force (Bucholtz 2003; Speer 2002b), although of course researcher-elicited data remains distinctive in genre from participant-driven data and must be analyzed with this difference in mind. As Brigg's (1986) work shows, an interactional approach to interviews is greatly enriched by an ethnographic perspective, which allows researchers to understand how interactional processes are connected to larger social and cultural phenomena of concern to the participants. In the following analysis, an aspect of speakers' identities that might be imagined (and, within traditional sociolinguistics, typically has been understood) to be a stable, fixed categorization – their ethnoracial self-classification – becomes subject to negotiation and contestation in the interview context. Such a situation not only demonstrates the importance of treating interviews as contextualized data rather than mere background information, but also reveals the shifting meaning of ethnoracial categories for white speakers in particular in a 'majority minority' ethnographic context.

The analysis presented below re-examines through an interactional lens a body of data originally considered only for its content. The data are taken from audiorecorded interviews of European American teenagers about their friendship groups, leisure activities, and language use, collected as part of an ethnographic sociolinguistic study of language, race, and youth culture conducted by Bucholtz in 1995–96 at 'Bay City High School,' an ethnically diverse and racially divided urban high school in the San Francisco Bay Area. The focus of the analysis is a little-examined yet crucial aspect of interviews: researcher requests for interviewees' basic demographic information. Such requests typically occur at the margins of the research interview; in the present data they fall at the beginning, but other researchers reserve such matters for the end. As the analysis shows, interviewees often take the opportunity presented by these requests to position themselves in relation to broader social categories, particularly ethnicity, thus reconfiguring a routinized preface to the interview 'proper' as a form of identity work within a local-cultural context where race and ethnicity are highly salient and – especially for many white students – highly problematic. These practices of ethnic self-classification are different from the interview-based race talk that has been the focus of much previous research, in which race is the explicit topic of discussion (e.g. Myers 2005; van den Berg, Wetherell and Houtkoop-Steenstra 2004; Wetherell and Potter 1992), but they are a useful complement to such work insofar as they introduce race and ethnicity not for their own sake but seemingly on the way to doing something else. They therefore can be very rich sites for analytic work on how identity is accomplished through talk.

Although the interviews Bucholtz conducted were ethnographic rather than Labovian in orientation, she included in the interviews a set of traditional social-science questions about students' demographic backgrounds, both to ensure that

she had such information for her records (indeed, she typically framed her request as being 'for the record') and to discover how students would classify themselves ethnoracially in this context. The informal script that was established for soliciting demographic information requests information about age, grade level, gender, and ethnicity, which were often but not necessarily listed in that order in individual interviews. (Although *ethnicity* was chosen as a more neutral term than *race* in this context, students' answers included both sorts of classifications.) A variation of this script was followed in nearly every interview. Generally the first question to the interviewee was a request to select a pseudonym followed by the request for demographic information. Although most teenagers generally answered the first three questions more or less straightforwardly, in answering the ethnicity question, interviewees developed a variety of response strategies and produced a wide range of ethnic self-classification labels. Due to lack of space, the present analysis does not examine labeling types and focuses only on one response strategy, problematizing the question.

The strategy of problematization is seen in example 1, taken from the first research interview with Claire (the name *Beth* appears in the example because Claire originally chose it as her pseudonym; line 1 is Mary's inaudible request for Claire to state her pseudonym). In response to the request for an ethnic self-classification, Claire exhibits a joking skepticism about her ability to classify herself. However, she goes on to express a strongly-negative stance toward the question after Mary shows amusement at her initial response (see Appendix for transcription conventions):

## (1)

- 1 Mary: x?  
 2 Claire: Beth.  
 3 Mary: A:nd (1.0) what is your (.) a:ge,  
 4 se:x,  
 5 (.) ethnicity,  
 6 and year in school.  
 7 Claire: Okay,  
 8 I'm sixteen years old,  
 9 (1.6) female,  
 10 (1.7) junior,  
 11 (1.7) I guess I'm w- white. @:  
 12 Mary: @@ You guess?  
 13 Claire: @@ Well,  
 14 @ I mean  
 15 I I I hate questions like that,  
 16 it's like,  
 17 we:ll,  
 18 @ let's see,  
 19 if you w- really want to trace my heritage, @  
 20 Mary: @@ Yeah,

- 21 if you want. =  
 22 = I mean however you would (.) describe yourself. =  
 23 Claire: = I'm a m:utt.  
 24 Mary: Okay.  
 25 <quieter> {Mutt's (.) good enough.}  
 26 U:m,

In lines 15–19, Claire mocks the very idea of tracing her heritage (a point Mary apparently misses, going on to encourage her to do precisely that) and offers a characterization of herself that is the antithesis of a 'heritage' (line 19): she is a 'mutt' (line 23). Mary positively evaluates Claire's unconventional responses with laughter in lines 12 and 20 and the assessment *good enough* in line 25, in contrast to her minimal responses to students who were more compliant. This difference may be due to the fact that part of the role of the interviewer is to put interviewees at ease and encourage them to talk. But Mary's more elaborated response also signals that what Claire has provided is not what was expected.

Interviewees who problematize the ethnicity question are fully aware that their response is unconventional. In fact, in a later interview with her friend Christine (example 2), Claire gives the same initial response that she provided in example 1, which indicates that her original response was not due to a lack of understanding of what a conventional response would entail:

## (2)

- 1 Claire: Be:th,  
 2 (1.0) sixteen,  
 3 junior,  
 4 (0.8) u:m,  
 5 (2.2) What else was it?  
 6 (1.0)  
 7 Mary: [U:h]  
 8 Christine: [Ethnic]ity and sex.  
 9 Claire: Female,  
 10 (0.9)  
 11 Uh,  
 12 (0.6) guess I'm white.  
 13 I me@a-  
 14 Christine: @@  
 15 Claire: @  
 16 Mary: @ R@ight,  
 17 [we went through this last time.]  
 18 Christine: [@ (Whatever.) ] @@@@!  
 19 Claire: Yeah. @  
 20 Mary: Probably white.  
 21 [@@@]  
 22 Christine: [@@@] .h  
 23 Claire: Well,

- 24 I mean when you say ethnicity,  
 25 (0.5)  
 26 <clears throat> [That sort of implies ]  
 27 Christine: [Who knows what it means.]  
 28 Claire: a culture.  
 29 Mary: Right.  
 30 Claire: @ <higher pitch> {I'm from Bay City.} @@  
 31 Mary: @@ Okay,  
 32 [(that sort of) works. ]  
 33 Christine: [What kind of white culture i@s (that)?]  
 34 Claire: I@ kno@w! [[@@: ]]  
 35 Mary: [[@@@@@ ]]  
 36 Christine: [[@@@ .h @@@]]  
 37 Claire: <smiling quality> {I have no culture.} =  
 38 Christine: = Okay. =  
 39 Claire: = Thank you very much. =  
 40 Mary: = Okay. =

Claire's response in line 12 (*I guess I'm white*) is identical in wording to her response in line 11 of example 1, and again she and the other participants orient to the unconventionality of this answer through laughter and elaborated reactions (lines 14, 16–18, 21–22, 33–36). Once again, Claire offers an account for her response that challenges the basis of the question by first noting that ethnicity implies culture (lines 24–28) and then stating that given where she is from, she has no culture (lines 30, 37). And, as in example 1, Mary initially fails to recognize the challenge, accepting *I'm from Bay City* (line 30) as a more or less adequate response to the question (*Okay, (that sort of) works*; lines 31–32). Christine, however, immediately understands the irony in Claire's statement, offering an elaboration of Claire's point in line 33 (*What kind of white culture i@s (that)?*) that then receives uptake from Claire (*I@ kno@w!*; line 34). Attending to classificatory responses rather than interactional dynamics and local ethnographic meanings leads the researcher to miss the point of this exchange until the very end.

These examples demonstrate the interactional flexibility of seemingly static categories such as ethnicity as well as the ethnographic specificity of how such categories are managed within talk. In this case, the larger analysis reveals that all the students who offered problematizing responses to the ethnicity question identified themselves (albeit reluctantly) as white. Thus when ethnic self-classification was a problem in these data, it was a problem specifically for white students. Here ethnography helps illuminate interactional patterns: for the European American students of Bay City High School, race and ethnicity were always politically charged issues. Whereas in many parts of the United States, whiteness is a racially-unmarked category due to the numeric majority of whites, in certain contexts it may become marked and visible (Bucholtz and Trechter 2001). The racial tensions of the school and the fact that white students were

not in the majority (although they were the largest racialized group) meant that whiteness could not be treated as invisible, and being made aware of their race and/or ethnicity in the school context was generally not a pleasant experience for European American teenagers. In response, students like Claire espoused a kind of colorblindness (or what Pollock 2005 calls 'colormuteness'), but in doing so they in effect reinscribed their whiteness onto the situation by asserting their right to be read as raceless. Moreover, despite its markedness in the local context, whiteness at Bay City High was not readily available as an ethnicity or culture but rather was often understood by white teenagers and students of color alike as an absence of culture, a common view in American society (cf. Frankenberg 1993). Thus, as Claire suggests in example 3, even as they claimed white privilege, many white students felt different from and inferior to students of color, who regularly participated in school-sponsored ethnically-based activities and performances. When pressed, as in a research interview, white teenagers could indeed produce an ethnic self-classification, often a fairly complex one, yet one that had little to do with their day-to-day identities.

The whiteness of the researcher is relevant here as well. In interviews with Bucholtz, white students felt free, even eager, to share stories of racial conflict and tension in which they were portrayed as the victims; the only students of color who told such stories were Asian American, who were sometimes perceived as allied with European American students in the color divide at the school. And Bucholtz's own whiteness authorized a skepticism about ethnicity on the part of white students that might have been more politically fraught with an interviewer of color.

In these and similar interactions, interviewees' responses hinged on their understanding of the research situation and their role within it. What was sought with these seemingly simple questions was a bit of 'objective' information to check the ethnic and racial categorizations emerging through ethnographic research, but what the interviewees provided was a complex set of ideologies and identity positionings in relation to the highly contested and inadequate categories of ethnicity and race available to Americans. Thus as many researchers in sociocultural linguistics have argued, the use of interview methodologies, so widespread in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, must be matched by the use of ethnographic and interactional methods of data analysis, in order to ensure that researchers approach interviews not as providing mere background information or as a medium from which to extract linguistic variables but as richly contextualized linguistic data in their own right.

## GLOBALIZATION AS A SOCIOCULTURAL LINGUISTIC ISSUE

A second area of study that calls for greater ethnographic and interactional sensibility is that of language and globalization, a subject that has gained increasing prominence in linguistic scholarship over the last decade. Although linguistic anthropology is often associated with the study of non-English-speaking

and non-Western societies, it is ironically sociolinguistics, a field often criticized by linguistic anthropologists for its inward focus on elite English-speaking nation-states, that has generated the bulk of existing scholarship on language and globalization. Much of this research has been written from the perspective of the sociology of language or applied (socio)linguistics. While these traditions often overlap and share common interests, the sociology of language tends to be concerned with the place of English in macrolevel relations of language, ethnicity, and nationalism, while applied linguistics focuses more specifically on the incorporation of English into language policy and planning and on the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Scholars associated with both fields have argued that English, as an international symbol of modernity, provides a kind of transnational capital that is all but irresistible to inhabitants of an increasingly globalized world (Fishman, Conrad and Rubal-Lopez 1996; Goke-Pariola 1993; Morrison and Lui 2000). Much of the research regarding international uses of English in education, for instance, has explored the ways in which developing nation-states are incorporating English into domestic-language policy in order to prepare their subjects for a more modernized future, particularly with respect to the domains of science and technology (e.g. Grabe and Kaplan 1986). This perspective is furthered by the scholarship on global uses of English in media and advertising, which explicates the ways in which global, national, and regional corporations increasingly use English to sell ideas and commodities associated with modernity (see Piller 2003).

Indeed, the dramatic growth and spread of English that has been documented in such studies has prompted a number of politically-engaged scholars to voice the concern that English will ultimately supersede, if not make obsolete, the more traditional-linguistic imaginings associated with the contemporary nation-state (e.g. Phillipson 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). But in assuming a teleological relationship between tradition and modernity and the languages associated with these positions, much of this literature ignores the anthropological and postcolonial deconstruction of this very dichotomy as Western-derived. Thus the literature unwittingly paints a one-sided portrait of English as an international tool of linguistic hegemony, a perspective Alistair Pennycook has critiqued as the 'homogeny position' (2003). Conversely, Braj Kachru's (1992) contrastive model of 'world Englishes,' referred to as the 'heterogeny position' in Pennycook's taxonomy, is certainly meant to counter the singular conceptualization of 'global English' by acknowledging the diverse forms and functions of English worldwide. Yet Kachru's association of world Englishes with national boundaries – where national Englishes such as Australian English or Indian English are categorized as belonging to either 'Inner,' 'Outer,' or 'Expanding' Circles – carries its own set of problems, not the least of which is an inability to evaluate diverse, or even oppositional, materializations of English within a single-nation state. Such a position easily leads to an apolitical understanding of English as a structural or functional entity, devoid of the sociopolitical symbolics that bestow and deny privilege.

The specifics of how speaking subjects themselves understand and use the English language in an increasingly globalized world are thus lost in both the homogeneity and the heterogeneity models. The teleological assumptions that govern the homogeneity position necessarily preclude research on communities that are resistant to, or simply uninterested in, such global appropriations, while the nation-bounded assumptions of the heterogeneity position preclude investigation into the ways in which, for example, speakers from different socio-economic classes orient to transnational-linguistic flows. More recent research has begun to challenge these limitations by examining how the 'global' is tempered, and perhaps transformed, by the 'local.' Media-centered work, for example, describes how English is often mixed with local languages in non-Anglophone advertising to make products attractive to groups more removed from the transnational lure of English (Bhatia 2000; Piller 2001), sometimes expanding beyond the usual discourse domains expected for it (Martin 2002). Scholarship on the global spread of alternative forms of English associated with hip hop has similarly emphasized the 'glocal' nature of international appropriations of English. Such research reveals how non-standard forms of English, in particular African American Vernacular English and Hip Hop Nation Language (Alim 2004), readily mix with local languages to become an index of hybridized and transnational identity, often in resistance to the ideological underpinnings of national-language policy (Pennycook 2006). Variationist work on language attitudes has furthered this trend, with researchers beginning to consider the possibility that variables previously attributed to external-prestige varieties of English might be better theorized in local terms as a kind of broadening of the vernacular, particularly when speakers themselves report them as such (Meyerhoff and Niedzielski 2003).

While these divergent tracks of research have productively challenged unitary portrayals of the forms and functions of global English, such investigations can be enhanced by on-the-ground ethnographic descriptions of reception and resistance within localized contexts, communities, and conversational interactions. The alternative-linguistic marketplaces that early on became the focal point of research within linguistic anthropology, initiated by the work of scholars like Susan Gal (1987) and Kathryn Woolard (1985), remain comparatively rare in the literature on language and globalization. This absence is in part due to the fact that globalization, and in particular global English, has only recently begun to attract the attention of linguistic anthropologists (e.g. Besnier 2004, 2007; Leap and Boellstorff 2004), who tend to be more concerned than applied linguists or media analysts with the localized subjectivities that emerge from ethnographic analysis. Thus, the existing literature has primarily focused on the international growth of English among educated elites. Studies of code choice between English and native languages in elite genres of discourse – e.g. journalism, television, film, education, advertising, government, business – have offered only cursory references to the perceptions and uses of English within communities associated with non-dominant class positions. Such research is indeed vitally

important, for it has advanced our understanding of the ways in which language ideologies can be exploited as a mechanism for maintaining social hierarchy at both the national and global levels. But the inattention to speaker subjectivity that characterizes such research has led to a disregard of minority perspectives, as well as oversights concerning the social complexities that govern the non-native use of English within particular social groups.<sup>8</sup> Ethnographically oriented studies of the reception of English within more local contexts provide an important corrective to top-down, consensus-oriented accounts of English hegemony. In many communities across the world, the use or non-use of globalized forms of English is indexical not simply of modernity or tradition but, more critically, of the ethnic, gendered, class-based, and sexual subjectivities that call modernity and tradition into being.

A case in point is the use of English by communities associated with sexual alterity in urban New Delhi, where the English language, particularly among Hindi-English multilingual elites, is seen to carry what might be termed *sociosexual capital*. Self-identified Delhi lesbians, for instance, embrace English as the appropriate medium for the expression of a progressive sexuality, rejecting Hindi as indexical of backwards and discriminatory attitudes about sex. Their life narratives, collected by Hall in 2000 and 2001 as part of a larger ethnographic study of language, sexuality, and modernity in northern India, pattern around this ideological dichotomy, with traditional and modern stances toward sexual identity indexed by Hindi and English, respectively. Example 3 below provides a telling illustration of this phenomenon. Sangita, a 34-year-old Delhi woman who is fluent in Hindi, English, and Panjabi, narrates her parents' reaction to her decision to travel to the United States to pursue a romantic relationship with a woman. Although Sangita and her parents predominantly speak Panjabi when together at home, here she reports the approving remarks of her father in English (lines 7–9) and the disapproving remarks of her mother in Hindi (lines 17–21, 23) (English is represented by standard font, Hindi and its English translation by italics):

## (3)

- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 1  | Sangita: | And I: (.) looked at him and I said but uh-   |
| 2  |          | Papa maybe-                                   |
| 3  |          | I still didn't have the guts <laughs> to say  |
| 4  |          | (.) the word without maybe,                   |
| 5  |          | I said but (.) maybe I feel the same for her. |
| 6  |          | And he just looked at me and he says          |
| 7  |          | "That's the end of the story then.            |
| 8  |          | That's okay,                                  |
| 9  |          | if you feel the same way for her."            |
| 10 |          | And- I mean that was the initial (war).       |

- 11 It ended that day (.) but  
 12 (.) of course my mother started feeling (.) lost.  
 13 I think that night it started  
 14 and for a good two three months,  
 15 her health just went down.  
 16 She just kept saying “*Babal* what-  
 She just kept saying “*Child*, what-  
 17 *tū kyā kar rahī hai,*  
*What are you doing?*  
 18 *tū kyā kar rahī hai,*  
*What are you doing?*  
 19 *di- di- dimāg mẽ (.) kisne yah bhar diyā hai.*  
*Who has corrupted your mind?*  
 20 *mat kar aise.*  
*Don’t do all this!*  
 21 *yahā̃ pe sab kuch hai.”*  
*Everything you need is here.”*  
 22 And then it was also like uh-  
 23 “*tū hamāre burhāpe kā sahārā thī.”*  
 “*You were going to support us in our old age.”*”

This code-based patterning of voices of approval and disapproval, pervasive and systematic within the narratives Hall collected from middle-class multilinguals, provides evidence that Hindi and English are intimately bound up with the performance of everyday sexual subjectivity in contemporary Delhi. It is widely recognized in linguistics that reported speech in narrative rarely conforms to any kind of previous conversational reality; rather, it is more often employed as a tool for offering evaluation of the action that is being reported (e.g. Tannen 1989). Indeed, when Sangita later relates other family interactions that reverse the approval-disapproval polarity – that is, her father is critical and her mother more accepting – the languages attributed to them are reversed as well. While women of Sangita’s socio-economic class have been fluent in various forms of Indian English since the days of British colonization, Hall’s ethnographic research suggests that this fluency now involves a kind of sexual pragmatics as well. Perceived as the global carrier of progressive ideas about sexuality, English is the expected, if not obligatory, medium for discussions of sexual practice, sexual physicality, and sexual identity.

The ethnographic observation that code-switching practices are in part controlled by ideological associations of linguistic varieties with specific pragmatic stances has long been a fundamental insight of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (e.g. Blom and Gumperz 1986 [1972]). This insight, with its focus on speaker subjectivity, ultimately provides a much richer account of the whats,

hows, and whys of such associations than is available in the homogeneity and heterogeneity models. An isolated analysis of Sangita's narrative could easily be used to support a teleological approach to global English, since Hindi and English occupy differently valued points on what appears to be a tradition-modernity continuum. Conversely, Sangita's narrative could be used as data for a politically neutral analysis of the forms and functions of Indian English. But even women who orient to slightly lower socio-economic classes than Sangita do not share this same symbolic, comfortably using Hindi as their own language for a 'modern' sexuality. When women with different socio-economic class orientations meet, as was the case in the non-governmental organization (NGO) support group for 'women who love women' where Hall conducted her fieldwork, the use of English versus Hindi emerges against a local backdrop of class struggle. Espousing a global view of HIV-AIDS prevention and sexual education, this NGO, like many across contemporary India, harbors a diverse community with respect to class, identity, and language, creating the potential for new articulations of social hierarchy. In addition to self-identified lesbians and gay men, who orient to the upper middle class, the NGO welcomes the relatively lower-class-oriented biologically-male transgender categories of *hijrā* and *koṭī* (Hall 2005) as well as self-identified *lar̥ke* ('boys'), a local female-to-male transgender category that orients to an understanding of sexual alterity that retains the polarized gender roles associated with traditional India (Hall forthcoming). Most significantly, boys aspire to undergo sexual reassignment surgery as part and parcel of having a girlfriend. This model stands in opposition to the same-sex model of sexuality, which is associated with the higher-class category of lesbian and tends to be the primary concern of everyday NGO discourses.

While boys and lesbians do not generally distinguish themselves along lines of class, viewing themselves as socio-economic equals, boys often orient to a semiotics of lower-classness in order to oppose what they perceive to be an elite and un-Indian conceptualization of sexual identity. While boys are bilingual in Hindi and English, they often talk about sex in Hindi, to the dismay of some of the group's more veteran members. Their use of Hindi at key moments in English-speaking discussion groups thus signals not an allegiance to traditional sexual values, but rather a rejection of the upper-class sexual model. But because English is so strongly associated with class mobility, its use in these localized contexts is never neutral. Indeed, many self-identified boys who join the group ultimately achieve mastery of the patterns of code-switching alluded to above, with English coming to represent a kind of sociosexual mobility for its users. Audio recordings over a period of several months reveal the details of how certain newcomers are socialized into the ideological patternings of their more veteran lesbian peers, moving from single-word uses of English within specific sexual domains to the more discursive kinds of patternings characteristic of Sangita's narrative. Changes in linguistic practice, though certainly promoted and furthered by dominant discourses of government, education, and media, are ultimately a matter of speaker subjectivity. In the case of this NGO in Delhi, boys who conform

to upper-middle-class patterns of code-switching no longer identify as boys, but rather as lesbians. This research thus highlights how the global spread of English – or in this case, the shift from Hindi to English in the domain of sexuality – is intimately bound up with identity work and is thus inseparable from the warp and weft of everyday life. Yet this localized process is importantly dependent upon hierarchical-macrolevel relations of class, with lower-class-oriented boys giving up traditional sexual subject positions for an English-based sociosexual mobility. The shift to English is thus hardly benign, producing differential effects on distinct class-based sexualities. It is only through ethnography that the complexities of this sociocultural situation clearly emerge.

These two brief examples from our own research illustrate the interdisciplinary potential of sociocultural linguistics. The first example demonstrated that the research interview is not simply a methodology for eliciting sociolinguistic variables or background information but rather is a social and perhaps even politicized interaction that itself merits close analytic attention. The second example revealed the deeper insights that become available when researchers examine the macrolevel phenomena of globalization and the spread of English through an ethnographic perspective that uncovers how English enters into local systems of meaning and identity. Both examples foreground how the combination of multiple approaches can more effectively capture the richly contextualized and complex reality of language as a sociocultural phenomenon.

## CONCLUSION

Although for several decades the disciplinary line separating sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and related approaches has been relatively well defined, the boundaries separating these fields have never been rigid, and recent developments have created the opportunity for new points of interaction and collaboration. From the very beginning of socio(cultural) linguistics, many scholars have been reluctant to claim allegiance to only one field, seeking instead to carry out research that contributes to two or more traditions simultaneously. The examples we have analyzed from our own research suggest that it is through creative combinations of diverse methodological and conceptual tools that sociocultural-linguistic researchers can most effectively pursue the investigation of broad social issues such as race and globalization, among others. The following articles document other emerging dialogues between different sociocultural-linguistic approaches and highlight the contributions of scholars working at the boundaries between traditions.

In an era of departmental downsizing, university budget cuts, and the corporatization of higher education, a coalitional approach to the study of language, culture, and society is not a scholarly luxury but a political necessity. Sociocultural linguistics, even in its most inclusive definitions, is a very small field, and forging alliances across disciplinary boundaries is an important way to keep it both intellectually dynamic and institutionally viable. To stay vibrant,

sociocultural linguistics must remain a broad and inclusive field. Prescriptive pronouncements that a particular research question or approach falls outside some scholarly mandate will simply reinstate the artificial borders that many researchers have been at pains to dismantle for some time now (Meyerhoff 2003). Nevertheless, as researchers we inevitably have our own biases and preferences about which lines of inquiry are most productive and interesting. We do not seek to impose these biases on others, because we believe that the most innovative ideas and approaches can only arise in a diverse intellectual climate. Our preferences are based on where the field currently stands, and they will no doubt change as the field changes. That being said, our personal 'dream team' of theories, methods, issues, and approaches for the sociocultural linguistics we want to see and do would include at least the following strengths from various constituent fields, some of which are exemplified in this special issue:

- the ethnographic grounding of linguistic anthropology and the ethnomethodological sensibility of conversation analysis, which in different ways privilege the perspectives of participants over those of the analyst;
- the rigorous analytic tools of quantitative sociolinguistics and conversation analysis for the detailed investigation of linguistic and interactional structures (for the former, see Eckert this issue; for the latter, see Sidnell this issue);
- the attentiveness to texts and media of all kinds within critical discourse analysis as a necessary and often-ignored complement to the analysis of unmediated face-to-face interaction;
- a sociocultural focus on the content of discourse as well as a linguistic focus on its structure, and especially on the connection between these two (Woolard this issue);
- the attention to social theory found especially in linguistic anthropology; critical discourse analysis; language, gender, and sexuality studies; and U.K.-based sociolinguistics (Heller this issue);
- the problem-solving orientation of applied linguistics coupled with the critical engagement and progressive-political commitment of critical discourse analysis; language, gender, and sexuality studies; and sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological research on minority languages and dialects.

This last item is particularly important. A concern with social justice motivated sociocultural linguistics from the very beginning (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Hymes 1974; Labov 1972b), and the vast majority of the research we have discussed here aims to expose the social inequities that play out in language in a variety of ways. Reaffirming this commitment to sociocultural linguistics as a political as well as an intellectual project will help move U.S. sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology toward the 'anthropolitical linguistics' that Zentella (1996) called for over a decade ago. Moreover, a practical focus that goes beyond documenting language issues to identifying social problems and offering

meaningful solutions will help ensure that as the academy and the field continue to change, sociocultural linguistics will remain relevant both in academia and in the 'real world' for the broad and deep insights it can offer into the linguistic dimensions of social life.

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## NOTES

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2. However, at times tensions could be seen between different approaches, as evidenced, for example, by critical comments on conversation analysis by Hymes (1974: 81; cited in Duranti 1997: 265) and by Goffman (1976).
3. Jack Sidnell (personal communication) observes that this shift in Hymes's view may have been due to two factors: the move of Goffman from sociology at Berkeley to anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1970s and the publication of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) paper on turn-taking, which may have made clear to Hymes the difference between the conversation-analytic approach within sociology and his own vision for sociolinguistics.
4. The descriptor *sociolinguistic*, however, continued to be widely used; Hymes's (1974: 86) observation in this regard still applies over thirty years later: 'It remains true that there is more willingness to define one's work as "sociolinguistic" than to define oneself as a "sociolinguist."'
5. The loose alliance of work that falls under the rubric of 'linguistic ethnography' is in some ways analogous to the coalitional approach we present. However, the field described here is somewhat broader in scope, insofar as it also incorporates non-ethnographic approaches to language, culture, and society.
6. There is of course the danger that the term *sociocultural linguistics* may be interpreted as locating this work primarily or solely within the discipline of linguistics, an implication we do not intend.
7. See discussion in Bucholtz (1999), Hall (2003) and Morgan (1999) for this issue in language and gender studies.
8. Studies of language and identity in socially oriented discourse analysis, in contrast, have been centrally concerned with minority speakers' use of code-switching practices involving English (e.g. Holmes, Stubbe and Marra 2003; Mendoza-Denton 1999; Zentella 1997). But because much of this research has been conducted in nation-states where English has long been the dominant native language – most notably the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand – such scholarship is generally not positioned as informing the literature on language and globalization.

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## APPENDIX:

### *Transcription Conventions*

Each line represents a single intonation unit.

.	end of intonation unit; falling intonation
,	end of intonation unit; fall-rise intonation
?	end of intonation unit; rising intonation
!	raised pitch and volume throughout the intonation unit
↑	pitch accent
:	length
=	latching; no pause between intonation units
—	self-interruption; break in the intonation unit
-	self-interruption; break in the word, sound abruptly cut off
(.)	pause of 0.5 seconds or less
(n.n)	measured pause of greater than 0.5 seconds
@	laughter; each token marks one pulse
“ ”	reported speech or thought
.h	inhalation
[ ]	overlapping speech
[ [ ] ]	overlapping speech in proximity to a previous overlap

()	uncertain transcription
x	unintelligible; each token marks one syllable
< >	transcriber comment; nonvocal noise
{ }	stretch of talk to which transcriber comment applies

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